

THE SEVEN BOOKS OF ARNOBIUS AGAINST THE HEATHEN

by Arnobius

Arnobius' defense of Christianity against pagan accusations, refuting claims that the rise of Christianity caused divine displeasure and demonstrating the superiority of Christian truth over pagan superstition.

350 Chapters

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The Seven Books Of Arnobius Against The Heathen

Introductory Notice to Arnobius.

[a.d.297-303.] Arnobius appears before us, not as did the earlier apologists, but as a token that the great struggle was nearing its triumphant close. He is a witness that Minucius Felix and Tertullian had not preceded him in vain. He is a representative character, and stands forth boldly to avow convictions which were, doubtless, now struggling into light from the hearts of every reflecting pagan in the empire. In all probability it was the alarm occasioned by tokens that could not be suppressed -- of a spreading and deepening sense of the nothingness of Polytheism -- that stimulated the OEcumical rage of Diocletian, and his frantic efforts to crush the Church, or, rather, to overwhelm it in a deluge of flame and blood. In our author rises before us another contributor to Latin Christianity, which was still North-African in its literature, all but exclusively. He had learned of Tertullian and Cyprian what he was to impart to his brilliant pupil Lactantius. Thus the way was prepared for Augustine, by whom and in whom Latin Christianity was made distinctly Occidental, and prepared for the influence it has exerted, to this day, under the mighty prestiges of his single name. And yet Arnobius, like Boethius afterwards, is much discredited, and has even been grudged the name of a Christian. Coleridge is one of the many who have disparaged Arnobius, but he always talked like an inspired madman, and often contradicted himself. Enough to say, that, emerging from gross heathenism in mature life, and forced to learn as he could what is now taught to Christian children, our author is a witness to the diffusion of truth in his day. He shows also such a faculty of assimilation, that, as a practical Christian, Coleridge himself does not shine in comparison; and if, as is probable, he closed his life in martyrdom, we may well be ashamed to deny him our gratitude and the tribute of our praise. Our author is an interesting painter of many features of paganism in conflict with the Church, which we gain from no one else. Economizing Clement of Alexandria, he advances to an assured position and form of assault. He persistently impeaches Jove himself in a daring confidence that men will feel his terrible charges to be true, and that the victory over heathenism is more than half gained already. [3192] I doubt not that, as a heathen, he was influenced by a dream to study Christianity. As a believer, he discarded dreams as vain. Converted late in life, we need not wonder at some tokens of imperfect knowledge; but, on the whole, he seems a well-informed disciple, and shows how thoroughly the catechumens were trained. But what does he prove? In short, he gives us a most fascinating insight into the mental processes by which he, and probably Constantine soon after him, came to the conclusion that heathenism was outworn and must disappear. He proves that the Church was salt that had not "lost its savour." It is true, that, reasoning with pagans, he does not freely cite the Scriptures, which had no force with them; yet his references to the facts of Scripture show that he had studied them conscientiously, and could present the truths of the Gospel clearly and with power. Lardner has demonstrated [3193] this in a fair spirit and with conclusive evidence. Referring the reader to his admirable criticisms, I am glad to say that a full and satisfactory outline of his career is presented in the following: -- Translator's Introductory Notice.¹ Arnobius has been most unjustly neglected in modern times; but some excuse for this may be found in the fact that even less attention seems to have been paid to him in the ages immediately succeeding his own. We find no mention of him in any author except Jerome; and even Jerome has left only a few lines

about him, which convey very little information. In his list of ecclesiastical writers he says, [3194] "During the reign of Diocletian, Arnobius taught rhetoric with the greatest success, at Sicca, in Africa, and wrote against the heathen the books extant;" and again speaks of this work more particularly when he says, [3195] "Arnobius published seven books against the heathen." In his Chronicon, however, he writes under the year 2342, [3196] "Arnobius is considered a distinguished rhetorician in Africa, who, while engaged at Sicca in teaching young men rhetoric, was led by visions to the faith; and not being received by the bishop as hitherto a persistent enemy to Christ, composed very excellent books against his former belief." It must at once be seen that there is here a mistake, for Arnobius is put some twenty-three years later than in the former passage. Jerome himself shows us that the former date is the one he meant, for elsewhere [3197] he speaks of Lactantius as the disciple of Arnobius. Lactantius, in extreme old age, [3198] was appointed tutor of Constantine's son Crispus; and this, we are told in the Chronicon, [3199] was in the year 317. No one will suppose that if the disciple was a very old man in 317, his master could have been in his prime in 326. It is certain, therefore, that this date is not correct; and it seems very probable that Oehler's conjecture is true, who supposes that Jerome accidentally transposed his words from the year 303 to the place where we find them, misled by noticing the vicennial of Constantine when he was looking for those of Diocletian. It is with some difficulty that we can believe that Arnobius was led to embrace Christianity by dreams, as he speaks of these with little respect, [3200] -- which he could hardly have done if by them the whole course of his life had been changed; but in our utter ignorance we cannot say that this may not have been to some extent the case. The further statement, that his apology for Christianity was submitted as a proof of his sincerity to the bishop of Sicca, is even less credible, -- for these two reasons, that it is evidently the fruit not of a few weeks' but of protracted labour, and that it is hardly likely that any bishop would have allowed some parts of it to pass into circulation. It is just possible that the first or third books may have been so presented; but it is not credible that any pledge would be required of a man seeking to cast in his lot with the persecuted and terrified Church referred to in the fourth.² If we learn but little from external sources as to the life of Arnobius, we are not more fortunate when we turn to his own writings. One or two facts, however, are made clear; and these are of some importance. "But lately," he says, "O blindness, I worshipped images just brought from the furnaces, gods made on anvils and forged with hammers: now, led by so great a teacher into the ways of truth, I know what all these things are." [3201] We have thus his own assurance of his conversion from heathenism. He speaks of himself, however, as actually a Christian, -- not as a waverer, not as one purposing to forsake the ancient superstitions and embrace the new religion, but as a firm believer, whose faith is already established, and whose side has been taken and stedfastly maintained. In a word, he refers to himself as once lost in error, but now a true Christian. Again, in different passages he marks pretty accurately the time or times at which he wrote. Thus, in the first book [3202] he speaks of about three hundred years as the time during which Christianity had existed; and in the second, [3203] of a thousand and fifty, or not many less, having elapsed since the foundation of Rome. There has been much discussion as to what era is here referred to; and it has been pretty generally assumed that the Fabian must be intended, -- in which case 303 would be the year meant. If it is observed, however, that Arnobius shows an intimate acquaintance with Varro, and great admiration for him, it will probably be admitted that it is most likely that the Varronian, or common, era was adopted by him; and in this case the year referred to will be 297 a.d. This coincides sufficiently with the passage in the first book, and is in

harmony with the idea which is there predominant, -- the thought, that is, of the accusation so frequently on the lips of the heathen, that Christianity was the cause of the many and terrible afflictions with which the empire was visited. These accusations, ever becoming more bitter and threatening, would naturally be observed with care and attention by thoughtful Christians towards the close of the third century; and accordingly we find that the words with which Arnobius begins his apology, express the feeling of awakening anxiety with which he viewed the growth of this fear and hatred in the minds of the heathen. He declares, in effect, that one great object -- indeed the main object -- which he had proposed to himself, was to show that it was not because of the Christians that fresh evils and terrible calamities were continually assailing the state. And it must be remembered that we cannot refer such a proposal to a later period than that assigned. It would certainly not have occurred to a Christian in the midst of persecution, with death overhanging him, and danger on every side, to come forward and attempt calmly to show the heathen that there was no reason for their complaints against the Christians. In the later books there is a change in tone, upon which we cannot now dwell, although it is marked. In one passage he asks indignantly, [3204] "Why should our writings be given to the flames, our meetings be cruelly broken up, in which prayer is offered to the supreme God, peace and pardon are asked for all in authority, for soldiers, kings, friends, enemies?" In the calm tranquillity of the last half of the third century these words could hardly have been written, but they are a striking testimony to the terms of the imperial edict issued in the year 303 a.d. So, too, the popular expression of anger and disgust at the anti-pagan character of some of Cicero's works [3205] belongs to the incipient stages of persecution. Nor must it be supposed that the whole work may be referred to the era which ensued after the abdication of Diocletian, in 305. From this time an apology for Christianity with such a design would have been an anachronism, for it was no longer necessary to disarm the fears of the heathen by showing that the gods could not be enraged at the Christians. It has further to be noticed, that although it is perfectly clear that Arnobius spent much time on his apology, it has never been thoroughly revised, and does not seem to have been ever finished. [3206] We surely have in all this sufficient reason to assign the composition of these books *adversus Gentes* to the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries. Beyond this we cannot go, for we have no data from which to derive further inferences.³ We have seen that the facts transmitted to us are very few and scanty indeed; but, few as they are, they suggest an interesting picture. Arnobius comes before us in Sicca; we are made spectators of two scenes of his life there, and the rest -- the beginning and the end -- are shrouded in darkness. Sicca Veneria was an important town, lying on the Numidian border, to the south-west of Carthage. As its name signifies, it was a seat of that vile worship of the goddess of lust, which was dear to the Phoenician race. The same cultus was found there which disgraced Corinth; and in the temple of the goddess the maidens of the town were wont to procure for themselves, by the sacrifice of their chastity, the dowries which the poverty of their parents could not provide. In the midst of traditions of such bestial foulness Arnobius found himself, -- whether as a native, or as one who had been led to settle there. He has told us himself how true an idolater he was, how thoroughly he complied with the ceremonial demands of superstition; but the frequency and the vehemence of language with which his abhorrence of the sensuality of heathenism is expressed, tell us as plainly that practices so horrible had much to do in preparing his mind to receive another faith. In strong contrast to the filthy indulgences with which paganism gratified its adherents, must have appeared the strict purity of life which was enjoined by Christianity and aimed at by its followers; and perhaps it was in such a

place as Sicca that considerations of this nature would have most influence. There, too, the story of Cyprian's martyrdom must have been well known, -- may indeed have been told in the nursery of the young Arnobius, -- and many traditions must have been handed down about the persistency with which those of the new religion had held fast their faith, in spite of exile, torture, and death. However distorted such tales might be, there would always remain in them the evidence of so exalted nobility of spirit, that every disclosure of the meanness and baseness of the old superstition must have induced an uneasy feeling as to whether that could be impiety which ennobled men, -- that piety which degraded them lower than the brutes. For some time all went well with Arnobius. He was not too pure for the world, and his learning and eloquence won him fame and success in his profession. But in some way, we know not how, a higher learning was communicated to him, and the admired rhetorician became first a suspected, then a persecuted Christian. He has left us in no doubt as to the reason of the change. Upon his darkness, he says, there shone out a heavenly light, [3207] a great teacher appeared to him and pointed out the way of truth; and he who had been an earnest worshipper of images, of stones, of unknown gods, was now as earnest, as zealous in his service of the true God. Of the trials which he must have endured we know nothing. A terrible persecution swept over the world, and many a Christian perished in it. Such a man as Arnobius must have been among the first to be assailed, but we hear of him no more. With his learning and talents he could not have failed to make himself a name in the Church, or outside its pale, if he had lived. The conclusion seems inevitable, that he was one of the victims of that last fiery trial to which Christians under the Roman empire were exposed.⁴ The vast range of learning shown in this apology has been admitted on all sides. Even Jerome says that it should at times be read on account of the learning displayed in it. [3208] In another passage Jerome says, [3209] "Arnobius is unequal and prolix, confused from want of arrangement." This may be admitted to a certain extent; but although such defects are to be found in his work, they are certainly not characteristic of Arnobius. So, too, many passages may be found strangely involved and mystical, and it is at times hard to understand what is really meant. Solecisms and barbarisms are also met with, as Nourry has objected, so that it cannot be said that Arnobius writes pure Latin. Still we must not be misled into supposing that by enumerating these defects we have a fair idea of his style. If we remember that no man can wholly escape the influences of his age, and that Arnobius was so warm an admirer of Varro and Lucretius that he imitated their style and adopted their vocabulary, we shall be able to understand in what way he may be fairly spoken of as a good writer, although not free from defects. His style is, in point of fact, clear and lucid, rising at times into genuine eloquence; and its obscurity and harshness are generally caused by an attempt to express a vague and indefinite idea. Indeed very considerable power of expression is manifested in the philosophical reasonings of the second book, the keen satire of the fourth and fifth, and the vigorous argument of the sixth and seventh. Jerome's last stricture is scarcely applicable. Arnobius wrote *adversus Gentes*; he addressed himself to meet the taunts and accusations of the heathen, and in so doing he retorts upon them the charges which they preferred against the Christians. His work must therefore be criticised from this standpoint, not as a systematic exposition or vindication of Christianity. Christianity is indeed defended, but it is by attacking heathenism. We must consider, also, that evidently the work was not revised as a whole, and that the last book would have been considerably altered had Arnobius lived or found opportunity to correct it. [3210] If we remember these things, we shall find little to object to in the arrangement. After making all deductions, it may be said fairly that in Arnobius the

African Church found no unfitting champion. Living amidst impurity and corruption, and seeing on every side the effects of a superstitious and sensual faith, he stands forward to proclaim that man has a nobler ideal set before him than the worship of the foul imaginations of his depraved fancy, to call his fellows to a purer life, and to point out that the Leader who claims that men should follow Him is both worthy and able to guide. This he does with enthusiasm, vigour, and effect; and in doing this he accomplishes his end.⁵ Various opinions have been entertained as to the position which Arnobius occupied with regard to the Bible. We cannot here enter into a discussion of these, and shall merely present a brief statement of facts. It is evident that with regard to the Jews and the Old Testament Arnobius was in a state of perfect ignorance; for he confounds the Sadducees with the Pharisees, [3211] makes no allusion to the history of the Israelites, and shows that he was not acquainted with their forms of sacrifice. [3212] He was evidently well acquainted with the life of Christ and the history of the Church, and alludes at times to well-known Christian sayings; but how far in so doing he quotes the Gospels and Epistles, is not easily determined. Thus it has been supposed, and with some probability, that in referring to the miracles of Christ he must allude to the Gospels as recording them. But it must be observed that he ascribes to Christ a miracle of which the New Testament makes no mention, -- of being understood by men of different nations, as though He spoke in several languages at the same moment. [3213] So, too, his account [3214] of the passion differs from that of the New Testament. On the other hand, we find that he speaks of Christ as having taught men "not to return evil for evil," [3215] as "the way of salvation, the door of life, by whom alone there is access to the light," [3216] and as having been seen by "countless numbers of men" after His resurrection. [3217] Still further, he makes frequent references to accounts of Christ written by the apostles and handed down to their followers, [3218] and asks why their writings should be burned. [3219] In one place, [3220] also, he asks, "Have the well-known words never rung in your ears, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God?" where the reference seems to be very distinct; [3221] but he nowhere says that he is quoting, or mentions any books. This is, however, less remarkable when we take into account his mode of dealing with Clemens Alexandrinus and Cicero. The fourth, fifth, and sixth books are based on these two authors, and from Clement, in particular, whole sentences are taken unchanged. [3222] Yet the only reference made to either is the very general allusion in the third and fourth books. [3223] On the other hand, he quotes frequently and refers distinctly to many authors, and is especially careful to show that he has good authority for his statements, as will be seen by observing the number of books to which he refers on the mysteries and temples. If we bear this in mind, the principle which guided him seems to have been, that when he has occasion to quote an author once or twice, he does so by name, but that he takes it for granted that every one knows what are the great sources of information, and that it is therefore unnecessary to specify in each case what is the particular authority. There are many interesting questions connected with his subject, but these we must for the present leave untouched.⁶ No other works by Arnobius have been preserved, and only two mss. are known to exist. Of these, the one in Brussels is merely a transcript of that preserved in the public library at Paris, on which all editions have been based. This is a ms. of the ninth or tenth century, and contains the Octavius of Minucius Felix immediately after the seventh book *adversus Gentes*, in consequence of which that treatise was at first printed as the eighth book of Arnobius. Although it has been collated several times, we are still in doubt as to its true readings, -- Hildebrand, who last examined it, having done so with too little care. The first [3224] edition was printed at Rome in 1542, and was followed by that of Gelenius, [3225] in which

much was done for the emendation of the text; but arbitrary conjectures were too frequently admitted. Next in order follow those of Canterus, [3226] who did especial service by pointing out what use Arnobius has made of Clement, Ursinus, [3227] Elmenhorst, [3228] Stewechius, [3229] Heraldus, [3230] and the Leyden [3231] variorum edition, based on a recension of the text by Salmasius. [3232] The later editions are those of Oberthür, [3233] whose text is adopted by Orelli, [3234] Hildebrand, [3235] and Oehler. [3236] Oberthür's edition is of little importance, and that of Orelli is valuable solely as a collection of notes gathered from many sources into a crude and undigested mass. Hildebrand seems to have taken too little pains with his work; and Oehler, whose critical sagacity and industry might have given us a most satisfactory edition, was unfortunately hampered by want of space. No edition of Arnobius has been published in England; and the one Englishman who has taken any pains with this author seems to be John Jones, who, under the pseudonym of Leander de St. Martino, prepared summaries, which were added to a reprint of Stewechius at Douay, 1634. As this edition has not come into our hands, we are unable to speak of it more particularly.⁷ It will be observed that *adversus Gentes* is the title of this work in all editions except those of Hildebrand and Oehler, in which it is *adversus Nationes*. The difference is very slight, but it may be well to mention that neither can be said with certainty to be correct. The first is the form used by Jerome in two passages of his writings; [3237] and as he must have seen earlier mss. than that now extant, he is supposed to give the title which he found in them. In the Paris ms., however, at the end of the second book, the subscription is, "The second book of Arnobius *adversus Nationes* ends;" and it has been argued that, as the copyist would hardly have gone so far astray, while it is quite possible that Jerome did not attempt to do more than indicate generally the purpose of the book without quoting its titlepage, this must be the true title. The first page of the existing ms. is torn away, and the question remains therefore undecided: fortunately its decision is not of the slightest importance.⁸ This translation of Arnobius was begun in the hope that it would be possible to adhere throughout to the text of Orelli, and that very little attention to the various readings would be found necessary. This was, however, found to be impossible, not merely because Hildebrand's collation of the Paris ms. showed how frequently liberties had been taken with the text, but on account of the corrupt state of the text itself. It has therefore been thought advisable to lay before the reader a close translation founded on the ms., so far as known. A conjectural reading has in no case been adopted without notice. Throughout the Work use has been made of four editions, -- Oehler's, Orelli's, Hildebrand's, and that of Leyden; other editions being consulted only for special reasons. It is to be regretted that our knowledge of the single ms. of Arnobius is still incomplete; but it is hoped that this will soon be remedied, by the publication of a revised text, based upon a fresh collation of the ms., with a complete apparatus and a carefully digested body of notes. [3238]

1 Since I have found some who deem themselves very wise in their opinions

Since I have found some who deem themselves very wise in their opinions, acting as if they were inspired, [3239] and announcing with all the authority of an oracle, [3240] that from the time when the Christian people began to exist in the world the universe has gone to ruin, that the human race has been visited with ills of many kinds, that even the very gods, abandoning their accustomed charge, in virtue of which they were wont in former days to regard with interest our affairs, have been driven from the regions of earth, -- I have resolved, so far as my capacity and my humble power of language will allow, to oppose public prejudice, and to refute calumnious accusations; lest, on the one hand, those persons should imagine that they are declaring some weighty matter, when they are merely retailing vulgar rumours; [3241] and on the other, lest, if we refrain from such a contest, they should suppose that they have gained a cause, lost by its own inherent demerits, not abandoned by the silence of its advocates. For I should not deny that that charge is a most serious one, and that we fully deserve the hatred attaching to public enemies, [3242] if it should appear that to us are attributable causes by reason of which the universe has deviated from its laws, the gods have been driven far away, and such swarms of miseries have been inflicted on the generations of men.

2 Let us therefore examine carefully the real significance of that opinion

Let us therefore examine carefully the real significance of that opinion, and what is the nature of the allegation; and laying aside all desire for wrangling, [3243] by which the calm view of subjects is wont to be dimmed, and even intercepted, let us test, by fairly balancing the considerations on both sides, whether that which is alleged be true. For it will assuredly be proved by an array of convincing arguments, not that we are discovered to be more impious, but that they themselves are convicted of that charge who profess to be worshippers of the deities, and devotees of an antiquated superstition. And, in the first place, we ask this of them in friendly and calm language: Since the name of the Christian religion began to be used on the earth, what phenomenon, unseen before, [3244] unheard of before, what event contrary to the laws established in the beginning, has the so-called "Nature of Things" felt or suffered? Have these first elements, from which it is agreed that all things were compacted, been altered into elements of an opposite character? Has the fabric of this machine and mass of the universe, by which we are all covered, and in which we are held enclosed, relaxed in any part, or broken up? Has the revolution of the globe, to which we are accustomed, departing from the rate of its primal motion, begun either to move too slowly, or to be hurried onward in headlong rotation? Have the stars begun to rise in the west, and the setting of the constellations to take place in the east? Has the sun himself, the chief of the heavenly bodies, with whose light all things are clothed, and by whose heat all things are vivified, blazed forth with increased vehemence? has he become less warm, and has he altered for the worse into opposite conditions that well-regulated temperature by which he is wont to act upon the earth? Has the moon ceased to shape herself anew, and to change into former phases by the constant recurrence of fresh ones? Has the cold of winter, has the heat of summer, has the moderate warmth of spring and autumn, been modified by reason of the intermixture of ill-assorted seasons? Has the winter begun to have long days? has the night begun to recall the very tardy twilights of summer? Have the winds at all exhausted their violence? Is the sky not collected [3245] into clouds by reason of the blasts having lost their force, and do the fields when moistened by the showers not prosper? Does the earth refuse to receive the seed committed to it, or will not the trees assume their foliage? Has the flavour of excellent fruits altered, or has the vine changed in its juice? Is foul blood pressed forth from the olive berries, and is oil no longer supplied to the lamp, now extinguished? Have animals of the land and of the sea no sexual desires, and do they not conceive young? Do they not guard, according to their own habits and their own instinct, the offspring generated in their wombs? In fine, do men themselves, whom an active energy with its first impulses has scattered over habitable lands, not form marriages with due rites? Do they not beget dear children? do they not attend to public, to individual, and to family concerns? Do they not apply their talents as each one pleases, to varied occupations, to different kinds of learning? and do they not reap the fruit of diligent application? Do those to whom it has been so allotted, not exercise kingly power or military authority? Are men not every day advanced in posts of honour, in offices of power? Do they not preside in the discussions of the law courts? Do they not explain the

code of law? do they not expound the principles of equity? All other things with which the life of man is surrounded, in which it consists, do not all men in their own tribes practise, according to the established order of their country's manners?

3 Since this is so, and since no strange influence has suddenly manifested itself to break

Since this is so, and since no strange influence has suddenly manifested itself to break the continuous course of events by interrupting their succession, what is the ground of the allegation, that a plague was brought upon the earth after the Christian religion came into the world, and after it revealed the mysteries of hidden truth? But pestilences, say my opponents, and droughts, wars, famines, locusts, mice, and hailstones, and other hurtful things, by which the property of men is assailed, the gods bring upon us, incensed as they are by your wrong-doings and by your transgressions. If it were not a mark of stupidity to linger on matters which are already clear, and which require no defence, I should certainly show, by unfolding the history of past ages, that those ills which you speak of were not unknown, were not sudden in their visitation; and that the plagues did not burst upon us, and the affairs of men begin to be attacked by a variety of dangers, from the time that our sect [3246] won the honour [3247] of this appellation. For if we are to blame, and if these plagues have been devised against our sin, whence did antiquity know these names for misfortunes? Whence did she give a designation to wars? By what conception could she indicate pestilence and hailstorms, or how could she introduce these terms among her words, by which speech was rendered plain? For if these ills are entirely new, and if they derive their origin from recent transgressions, how could it be that the ancients coined terms for these things, which, on the one hand, they knew that they themselves had never experienced, and which, on the other, they had not heard of as occurring in the time of their ancestors? Scarcity of produce, say my opponents, and short supplies of grain, press more heavily on us. For, I would ask, were the former generations, even the most ancient, at any period wholly free from such an inevitable calamity? Do not the very words by which these ills are characterized bear evidence and proclaim loudly that no mortal ever escaped from them with entire immunity? But if the matter were difficult of belief, we might urge, on the testimony of authors, how great nations, and what individual nations, and how often such nations experienced dreadful famine, and perished by accumulated devastation. Very many hailstorms fall upon and assail all things. For do we not find it contained and deliberately stated in ancient literature, that even showers of stones [3248] often ruined entire districts? Violent rains cause the crops to perish, and proclaim barrenness to countries: -- were the ancients, indeed, free from these ills, when we have known of [3249] mighty rivers even being dried up, and the mud of their channels parched? The contagious influences of pestilence consume the human race: -- ransack the records of history written in various languages, and you will find that all countries have often been desolated and deprived of their inhabitants. Every kind of crop is consumed, and devoured by locusts and by mice: -- go through your own annals, and you will be taught by these plagues how often former ages were visited by them, and how often they were brought to the wretchedness of poverty. Cities shaken by powerful earthquakes totter to their destruction: -- what! did not bygone days witness cities with their populations engulfed by huge rents of the earth? [3250] or did they enjoy a condition exempt from such disasters?

4 When was the human race destroyed by a flood? was it not before us? When

When was the human race destroyed by a flood? was it not before us? When was the world set on fire, [3251] and reduced to coals and ashes? was it not before us? When were the greatest cities engulfed in the billows of the sea? was it not before us? When were wars waged with wild beasts, and battles fought with lions? [3252] was it not before us? When was ruin brought on whole communities by poisonous serpents? [3253] was it not before us? For, inasmuch as you are wont to lay to our blame the cause of frequent wars, the devastation of cities, the irruptions of the Germans and the Scythians, allow me, with your leave, to say, -- In your eagerness to calumniate us, you do not perceive the real nature of that which is alleged.

5 Did we bring it about, that ten thousand years ago a vast number of men

Did we bring it about, that ten thousand years ago a vast number of men burst forth from the island which is called the Atlantis of Neptune, [3254] as Plato tells us, and utterly ruined and blotted out countless tribes? Did this form a prejudice against us, that between the Assyrians and Bactrians, under the leadership of Ninus and Zoroaster of old, a struggle was maintained not only by the sword and by physical power, but also by magicians, and by the mysterious learning of the Chaldeans? Is it to be laid to the charge of our religion, that Helen was carried off under the guidance and at the instigation of the gods, and that she became a direful destiny to her own and to after times? Was it because of our name, that that mad-cap Xerxes let the ocean in upon the land, and that he marched over the sea on foot? Did we produce and stir into action the causes, by reason of which one youth, starting from Macedonia, subjected the kingdoms and peoples of the East to captivity and to bondage? Did we, forsooth, urge the deities into frenzy, so that the Romans lately, like some swollen torrent, overthrew all nations, and swept them beneath the flood? But if there is no man who would dare to attribute to our times those things which took place long ago, how can we be the causes of the present misfortunes, when nothing new is occurring, but all things are old, and were unknown to none of the ancients?

6 Although you allege that those wars which you speak of were excited through hatred of

Although you allege that those wars which you speak of were excited through hatred of our religion, it would not be difficult to prove, that after the name of Christ was heard in the world, not only were they not increased, but they were even in great measure diminished by the restraining of furious passions. For since we, a numerous band of men as we are, have learned from His teaching and His laws that evil ought not to be requited with evil, [3255] that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it, that we should rather shed our own blood than stain our hands and our conscience with that of another, an ungrateful world is now for a long period enjoying a benefit from Christ, inasmuch as by His means the rage of savage ferocity has been softened, and has begun to withhold hostile hands from the blood of a fellow-creature. But if all without exception, who feel that they are men not in form of body but in power of reason, would lend an ear for a little to His salutary and peaceful rules, and would not, in the pride and arrogance of enlightenment, trust to their own senses rather than to His admonitions, the whole world, having turned the use of steel into more peaceful occupations, would now be living in the most placid tranquillity, and would unite in blessed harmony, maintaining inviolate the sanctity of treaties.

7 But if, say my opponents, no damage is done to human affairs by you

But if, say my opponents, no damage is done to human affairs by you, whence arise those evils by which wretched mortals are now oppressed and overwhelmed? You ask of me a decided statement, [3256] which is by no means necessary to this cause. For no immediate and prepared discussion regarding it has been undertaken by me, for the purpose of showing or proving from what causes and for what reasons each event took place; but in order to demonstrate that the reproaches of so grave a charge are far removed from our door. And if I prove this, if by examples and [3257] by powerful arguments the truth of the matter is made clear, I care not whence these evils come, or from what sources and first beginnings they flow.

8 And yet, that I may not seem to have no opinion on subjects of this

And yet, that I may not seem to have no opinion on subjects of this kind, that I may not appear when asked to have nothing to offer, I may say, What if the primal matter which has been diffused through the four elements of the universe, contains the causes of all miseries inherent in its own constitution? What if the movements of the heavenly bodies produce these evils in certain signs, regions, seasons, and tracts, and impose upon things placed under them the necessity of various dangers? What if, at stated intervals, changes take place in the universe, and, as in the tides of the sea, prosperity at one time flows, at another time ebbs, evils alternating with it? What if those impurities of matter which we tread under our feet have this condition imposed upon them, that they give forth the most noxious exhalations, by means of which this our atmosphere is corrupted, and brings pestilence on our bodies, and weakens the human race? What if -- and this seems nearest the truth -- whatever appears to us adverse, is in reality not an evil to the world itself? And what if, measuring by our own advantages all things which take place, we blame the results of nature through ill-formed judgments? Plato, that sublime head and pillar of philosophers, has declared in his writings, that those cruel floods and those conflagrations of the world are a purification of the earth; nor did that wise man dread to call the overthrow of the human race, its destruction, ruin, and death, a renewal of things, and to affirm that a youthfulness, as it were, was secured by this renewed strength. [3258]

9 It rains not from heaven, my opponent says, and we are in distress from some

It rains not from heaven, my opponent says, and we are in distress from some extraordinary deficiency of grain crops. What then, do you demand that the elements should be the slaves of your wants? and that you may be able to live more softly and more delicately, ought the compliant seasons to minister to your convenience? What if, in this way, one who is intent on voyaging complains, that now for a long time there are no winds, and that the blasts of heaven have for ever lulled? Is it therefore to be said that that peacefulness of the universe is pernicious, because it interferes with the wishes of traders? What if one, accustomed to bask himself in the sun, and thus to acquire dryness of body, similarly complains that by the clouds the pleasure of serene weather is taken away? Should the clouds, therefore, be said to hang over with an injurious veil, because idle lust is not permitted to scorch itself in the burning heat, and to devise excuses for drinking? All these events which are brought to pass, and which happen under this mass of the universe, are not to be regarded as sent for our petty advantages, but as consistent with the plans and arrangements of Nature herself.

10 And if anything happens which does not foster ourselves or our affairs with joyous success

And if anything happens which does not foster ourselves or our affairs with joyous success, it is not to be set down forthwith as an evil, and as a pernicious thing. The world rains or does not rain: for itself it rains or does not rain; and, though you perhaps are ignorant of it, it either diminishes excessive moisture by a burning drought, or by the outpouring of rain moderates the dryness extending over a very long period. It raises pestilences, diseases, famines, and other baneful forms of plagues: how can you tell whether it does not thus remove that which is in excess, and whether, through loss to themselves, it does not fix a limit to things prone to luxuriance?

11 Would you venture to say that, in this universe

Would you venture to say that, in this universe, this thing or the other thing is an evil, whose origin and cause you are unable to explain and to analyze? [3259] And because it interferes with your lawful, perhaps even your unlawful pleasures, would you say that it is pernicious and adverse? What, then, because cold is disagreeable to your members, and is wont to chill [3260] the warmth of your blood, ought not winter on that account to exist in the world? And because you are unable [3261] to endure the hottest rays of the sun, is summer to be removed from the year, and a different course of nature to be instituted under different laws? Hellebore is poison to men; should it therefore not grow? The wolf lies in wait by the sheepfolds; is nature at all in fault, because she has produced a beast most dangerous to sheep? The serpent by his bite takes away life; a reproach, forsooth, to creation, because it has added to animals monsters so cruel.

12 It is rather presumptuous, when you are not your own master

It is rather presumptuous, when you are not your own master, even when you are the property of another, to dictate terms to those more powerful; to wish that that should happen which you desire, not that which you have found fixed in things by their original constitution. Wherefore, if you wish that your complaints should have a basis, you must first inform us whence you are, or who you are; whether the world was created and fashioned for you, or whether you came into it as sojourners from other regions. And since it is not in your power to say or to explain for what purpose you live beneath this vault of heaven, cease to believe that anything belongs to you; since those things which take place are not brought about in favour of a part, but have regard to the interest of the whole.

13 Because of the Christians, my opponents say, the gods inflict upon us all calamities

Because of the Christians, my opponents say, the gods inflict upon us all calamities, and ruin is brought on our crops by the heavenly deities. I ask when you say these things, do you not see that you are accusing us with bare-faced effrontery, with palpable and clearly proved falsehoods? It is almost three hundred years [3262] -- something less or more -- since we Christians [3263] began to exist, and to be taken account of in the world. During all these years, have wars been incessant, has there been a yearly failure of the crops, has there been no peace on earth, has there been no season of cheapness and abundance of all things? For this must first be proved by him who accuses us, that these calamities have been endless and incessant, that men have never had a breathing time at all, and that without any relaxation [3264] they have undergone dangers of many forms.

14 And yet do we not see that, in these years and seasons that have intervened

And yet do we not see that, in these years and seasons that have intervened, victories innumerable have been gained from the conquered enemy, -- that the boundaries of the empire have been extended, and that nations whose names we had not previously heard, have been brought under our power, -- that very often there have been the most plentiful yields of grain, seasons of cheapness, and such abundance of commodities, that all commerce was paralyzed, being prostrated by the standard of prices? For in what manner could affairs be carried on, and how could the human race have existed [3265] even to this time, had not the productiveness of nature continued to supply all things which use demanded?

15 Sometimes, however, there were seasons of scarcity; yet they were relieved by times of plenty.

Sometimes, however, there were seasons of scarcity; yet they were relieved by times of plenty. Again, certain wars were carried on contrary to our wishes. [3266] But they were afterwards compensated by victories and successes. What shall we say, then? -- that the gods at one time bore in mind our acts of wrong-doing, at another time again forgot them? If, when there is a famine, the gods are said to be enraged at us, it follows that in time of plenty they are not wroth, and ill-to-be-appeased; and so the matter comes to this, that they both lay aside and resume anger with sportive whim, and always renew their wrath afresh by the recollection of the causes of offence.

16 Yet one cannot discover by any rational process of reasoning

Yet one cannot discover by any rational process of reasoning, what is the meaning of these statements. If the gods willed that the Alemanni [3267] and the Persians should be overcome because Christians dwelt among their tribes, how did they grant victory to the Romans when Christians dwelt among their peoples also? If they willed that mice and locusts should swarm forth in prodigious numbers in Asia and in Syria because Christians dwelt among their tribes too, why was there at the same time no such phenomenon in Spain and in Gaul, although innumerable Christians lived in those provinces also? [3268] If among the Gætuli and the Tinguitani [3269] they sent dryness and aridity on the crops on account of this circumstance, why did they in that very year give the most bountiful harvest to the Moors and to the Nomads, when a similar religion had its abode in these regions as well? If in any one state whatever they have caused many to die with hunger, through disgust at our name, why have they in the same state made wealthier, ay, very rich, by the high price of corn, not only men not of our body, but even Christians themselves? Accordingly, either all should have had no blessing if we are the cause of the evils, for we are in all nations; or when you see blessings mixed with misfortunes, cease to attribute to us that which damages your interests, when we in no respect interfere with your blessings and prosperity. For if I cause it to be ill with you, why do I not prevent it from being well with you? If my name is the cause of a great dearth, why am I powerless to prevent the greatest productiveness? If I am said to bring the ill luck of a wound being received in war, why, when the enemy are slain, am I not an evil augury; and why am I not set forth against good hopes, through the ill luck of a bad omen?

17 And yet, O ye great worshippers and priests of the deities

And yet, O ye great worshippers and priests of the deities, why, as you assert that those most holy gods are enraged at Christian communities, do you not likewise perceive, do you not see what base feelings, what unseemly frenzies, you attribute to your deities? For, to be angry, what else is it than to be insane, to rave, to be urged to the lust of vengeance, and to revel in the troubles of another's grief, through the madness of a savage disposition? Your great gods, then, know, are subject to and feel that which wild beasts, which monstrous brutes experience, which the deadly plant natrix contains in its poisoned roots. That nature which is superior to others, and which is based on the firm foundation of unwavering virtue, experiences, as you allege, the instability which is in man, the faults which are in the animals of earth. And what therefore follows of necessity, but that from their eyes flashes dart, flames burst forth, a panting breast emits a hurried breathing from their mouth, and by reason of their burning words their parched lips become pale?

18 But if this that you say is true, -- if it has been tested and

But if this that you say is true, -- if it has been tested and thoroughly ascertained both that the gods boil with rage, and that an impulse of this kind agitates the divinities with excitement, on the one hand they are not immortal, and on the other they are not to be reckoned as at all partaking of divinity. For wherever, as the philosophers hold, there is any agitation, there of necessity passion must exist. Where passion is situated, it is reasonable that mental excitement follow. Where there is mental excitement, there grief and sorrow exist. Where grief and sorrow exist, there is already room for weakening and decay; and if these two harass them, extinction is at hand, viz., death, which ends all things, and takes away life from every sentient being.

19 Moreover, in this way you represent them as not only unstable and excitable

Moreover, in this way you represent them as not only unstable and excitable, but, what all agree is far removed from the character of deity, as unfair in their dealings, as wrong-doers, and, in fine, as possessing positively no amount of even moderate fairness. For what is a greater wrong than to be angry with some, and to injure others, to complain of human beings, and to ravage the harmless corn crops, to hate the Christian name, and to ruin the worshippers of Christ with every kind of loss?

20 Do they on this account wreak their wrath on you too

[3270] Do they on this account wreak their wrath on you too, in order that, roused by your own private wounds, you may rise up for their vengeance? It seems, then, that the gods seek the help of mortals; and were they not protected by your strenuous advocacy, they are not able of themselves to repel and to avenge [3271] the insults offered them. Nay rather, if it be true that they burn with anger, give them an opportunity of defending themselves, and let them put forth and make trial of their innate powers, to take vengeance for their offended dignity. By heat, by hurtful cold, by noxious winds, by the most occult diseases, they can slay us, they can consume [3272] us, and they can drive us entirely from all intercourse with men; or if it is impolitic to assail us by violence, let them give forth some token of their indignation, [3273] by which it may be clear to all that we live under heaven subject to their strong displeasure.

21 To you let them give good health, to us bad

To you let them give good health, to us bad, ay, the very worst. Let them water your farms with seasonable showers; from our little fields let them drive away all those rains which are gentle. Let them see to it that your sheep are multiplied by a numerous progeny; on our flocks let them bring luckless barrenness. From your olive-trees and vineyards let them bring the full harvest; but let them see to it that from not one shoot of ours one drop be expressed. Finally, and as their worst, let them give orders that in your mouth the products of the earth retain their natural qualities; but, on the contrary that in ours the honey become bitter, the flowing oil grow rancid, and that the wine when sipped, be in the very lips suddenly changed into disappointing vinegar.

22 And since facts themselves testify that this result never occurs

And since facts themselves testify that this result never occurs, and since it is plain that to us no less share of the bounties of life accrues, and to you no greater, what inordinate desire is there to assert that the gods are unfavourable, nay, inimical to the Christians, who, in the greatest adversity, just as in prosperity, differ from you in no respect? If you allow the truth to be told you, and that, too, without reserve, these allegations are but words, -- words, I say; nay, matters believed on calumnious reports not proved by any certain evidence.

23 But the TRUE gods, and those who are worthy to have and to wear the

But the true [3274] gods, and those who are worthy to have and to wear the dignity of this name, neither conceive anger nor indulge a grudge, nor do they contrive by insidious devices what may be hurtful to another party. For verily it is profane, and surpasses all acts of sacrilege, to believe that that wise and most blessed nature is uplifted in mind if one prostrates himself before it in humble adoration; and if this adoration be not paid, that it deems itself despised, and regards itself as fallen from the pinnacle of its glory. It is childish, weak, and petty, and scarcely becoming for those whom the experience of learned men has for a long time called demigods and heroes, [3275] not to be versed in heavenly things, and, divesting themselves of their own proper state, to be busied with the coarser matter of earth.

24 These are your ideas, these are your sentiments, impiously conceived

These are your ideas, these are your sentiments, impiously conceived, and more impiously believed. Nay, rather, to speak out more truly, the augurs, the dream interpreters, the soothsayers, the prophets, and the priestlings, ever vain, have devised these fables; for they, fearing that their own arts be brought to nought, and that they may extort but scanty contributions from the devotees, now few and infrequent, whenever they have found you to be willing [3276] that their craft should come into disrepute, cry aloud, The gods are neglected, and in the temples there is now a very thin attendance. Former ceremonies are exposed to derision, and the time-honoured rites of institutions once sacred have sunk before the superstitions of new religions. Justly is the human race afflicted by so many pressing calamities, justly is it racked by the hardships of so many toils. And men -- a senseless race -- being unable, from their inborn blindness, to see even that which is placed in open light, dare to assert in their frenzy what you in your sane mind do not blush to believe.

25 And lest any one should suppose that we, through distrust in our reply

And lest any one should suppose that we, through distrust in our reply, invest the gods with the gifts of serenity, that we assign to them minds free from resentment, and far removed from all excitement, let us allow, since it is pleasing to you, that they put forth their passion upon us, that they thirst for our blood, and that now for a long time they are eager to remove us from the generations of men. But if it is not troublesome to you, if it is not offensive, if it is a matter of common duty to discuss the points of this argument not on grounds of partiality, but on those of truth, we demand to hear from you what is the explanation of this, what the cause, why, on the one hand, the gods exercise cruelty on us alone, and why, on the other, men burn against us with exasperation. You follow, our opponents say, profane religious systems, and you practise rites unheard of throughout the entire world. What do you, O men, endowed with reason, dare to assert? What do you dare to prate of? What do you try to bring forward in the recklessness of unguarded speech? To adore God as the highest existence, as the Lord of all things that be, as occupying the highest place among all exalted ones, to pray to Him with respectful submission in our distresses, to cling to Him with all our senses, so to speak, to love Him, to look up to Him with faith, -- is this an execrable and unhallowed religion, [3277] full of impiety and of sacrilege, polluting by the superstition of its own novelty ceremonies instituted of old?

26 Is this, I pray, that daring and heinous iniquity on account of which the mighty

Is this, I pray, that daring and heinous iniquity on account of which the mighty powers of heaven whet against us the stings of passionate indignation, on account of which you yourselves, whenever the savage desire has seized you, spoil us of our goods, drive us from the homes of our fathers, inflict upon us capital punishment, torture, mangle, burn us, and at the last expose us to wild beasts, and give us to be torn by monsters? Whosoever condemns that in us, or considers that it should be laid against us as a charge, is he deserving either to be called by the name of man, though he seem so to himself? or is he to be believed a god, although he declare himself to be so by the mouth of a thousand [3278] prophets? Does Trophonius, [3279] or Jupiter of Dodona, pronounce us to be wicked? And will he himself be called god, and be reckoned among the number of the deities, who either fixes the charge of impiety on those who serve the King Supreme, or is racked with envy because His majesty and His worship are preferred to his own? Is Apollo, whether called Delian or Clarian, Didymean, Philesian, or Pythian, to be reckoned divine, who either knows not the Supreme Ruler, or who is not aware that He is entreated by us in daily prayers? And although he knew not the secrets of our hearts, and though he did not discover what we hold in our inmost thoughts, yet he might either know by his ear, or might perceive by the very tone of voice which we use in prayer, that we invoke God Supreme, and that we beg from Him what we require.

27 This is not the place to examine all our traducers

This is not the place to examine all our traducers, who they are, or whence they are, what is their power, what their knowledge, why they tremble at the mention of Christ, why they regard his disciples as enemies and as hateful persons; but with regard to ourselves to state expressly to those who will exercise common reason, in terms applicable to all of us alike, -- We Christians are nothing else than worshippers of the Supreme King and Head, under our Master, Christ. If you examine carefully, you will find that nothing else is implied in that religion. This is the sum of all that we do; this is the proposed end and limit of sacred duties. Before Him we all prostrate ourselves, according to our custom; Him we adore in joint prayers; from Him we beg things just and honourable, and worthy of His ear. Not that He needs our supplications, or loves to see the homage of so many thousands laid at His feet. This is our benefit, and has a regard to our advantage. For since we are prone to err, and to yield to various lusts and appetites through the fault of our innate weakness, He allows Himself at all times to be comprehended in our thoughts, that whilst we entreat Him and strive to merit His bounties, we may receive a desire for purity, and may free ourselves from every stain by the removal of all our shortcomings. [3280]

28 What say ye, O interpreters of sacred and of divine law? Are they attached to

What say ye, O interpreters of sacred and of divine law? [3281] Are they attached to a better cause who adore the Lares Grundules, the Aii Locutii, [3282] and the Limentini, [3283] than we who worship God the Father of all things, and demand of Him protection in danger and distress? They, too, seem to you wary, wise, most sagacious, and not worthy of any blame, who revere Fauni and Fatuæ, and the genii of states, [3284] who worship Pausi and Bellonæ: -- we are pronounced dull, doltish, fatuous, stupid, and senseless, who have given ourselves up to God, at whose nod and pleasure everything which exists has its being, and remains immoveable by His eternal decree. Do you put forth this opinion? Have you ordained this law? Do you publish this decree, that he be crowned with the highest honours who shall worship your slaves? that he merit the extreme penalty of the cross who shall offer prayers to you yourselves, his masters? In the greatest states, and in the most powerful nations, sacred rites are performed in the public name to harlots, who in old days earned the wages of impurity, and prostituted themselves to the lust of all; [3285] and yet for this there are no swellings of indignation on the part of the deities. Temples have been erected with lofty roofs to cats, to beetles, and to heifers: [3286] -- the powers of the deities thus insulted are silent; nor are they affected with any feeling of envy because they see the sacred attributes of vile animals put in rivalry with them. Are the deities inimical to us alone? To us are they most unrelenting, because we worship their Author, by whom, if they do exist, they began to be, and to have the essence of their power and their majesty, from whom, having obtained their very divinity, so to speak, they feel that they exist, and realize that they are reckoned among things that be, at whose will and at whose behest they are able both to perish and be dissolved, and not to be dissolved and not to perish? [3287] For if we all grant that there is only one great Being, whom in the long lapse of time nought else precedes, it necessarily follows that after Him all things were generated and put forth, and that they burst into an existence each of its kind. But if this is unchallenged and sure, you [3288] will be compelled as a consequence to confess, on the one hand, that the deities are created, [3289] and on the other, that they derive the spring of their existence from the great source of things. And if they are created and brought forth, they are also doubtless liable to annihilation and to dangers; but yet they are believed to be immortal, ever-existent, and subject to no extinction. This is also a gift from God their Author, that they have been privileged to remain the same through countless ages, though by nature they are fleeting, and liable to dissolution.

29 And would that it were allowed me to deliver this argument with the whole world

And would that it were allowed me to deliver this argument with the whole world formed, as it were, into one assembly, and to be placed in the hearing of all the human race! Are we therefore charged before you with an impious religion? and because we approach the Head and Pillar [3290] of the universe with worshipful service, are we to be considered -- to use the terms employed by you in reproaching us -- as persons to be shunned, and as godless ones? And who would more properly bear the odium of these names than he who either knows, or inquires after, or believes any other god rather than this of ours? To Him do we not owe this first, that we exist, that we are said to be men, that, being either sent forth from Him, or having fallen from Him, we are confined in the darkness of this body? [3291] Does it not come from Him that we walk, that we breathe and live? and by the very power of living, does He not cause us to exist and to move with the activity of animated being? From this do not causes emanate, through which our health is sustained by the bountiful supply of various pleasures? Whose is that world in which you live? or who hath authorized you to retain its produce and its possession? Who hath given that common light, enabling us to see distinctly all things lying beneath it, to handle them, and to examine them? Who has ordained that the fires of the sun should exist for the growth of things, lest elements pregnant with life should be numbed by settling down in the torpor of inactivity? When you believe that the sun is a deity, do you not ask who is his founder, who has fashioned him? Since the moon is a goddess in your estimation, do you in like manner care to know who is her author and framer?

30 Does it not occur to you to reflect and to examine in whose domain you

Does it not occur to you to reflect and to examine in whose domain you live? on whose property you are? whose is that earth which you till? [3292] whose is that air which you inhale, and return again in breathing? whose fountains do you abundantly enjoy? whose water? who has regulated the blasts of the wind? who has contrived the watery clouds? who has discriminated the productive powers of seeds by special characteristics? Does Apollo give you rain? Does Mercury send you water from heaven? Has Æsculapius, Hercules, or Diana devised the plan of showers and of storms? And how can this be, when you give forth that they were born on earth, and that at a fixed period they received vital perceptions? For if the world preceded them in the long lapse of time, and if before they were born nature already experienced rains and storms, those who were born later have no right of rain-giving, nor can they mix themselves up with those methods which they found to be in operation here, and to be derived from a greater Author.

31 O greatest, O Supreme Creator of things invisible! O Thou who art Thyself unseen

O greatest, O Supreme Creator of things invisible! O Thou who art Thyself unseen, and who art incomprehensible! Thou art worthy, Thou art verily worthy -- if only mortal tongue may speak of Thee -- that all breathing and intelligent nature should never cease to feel and to return thanks; that it should throughout the whole of life fall on bended knee, and offer supplication with never-ceasing prayers. For Thou art the first cause; in Thee created things exist, and Thou art the space in which rest the foundations of all things, whatever they be. Thou art illimitable, unbegotten, immortal, enduring for aye, God Thyself alone, whom no bodily shape may represent, no outline delineate; of virtues inexpressible, of greatness indefinable; unrestricted as to locality, movement, and condition, concerning whom nothing can be clearly expressed by the significance of man's words. That Thou mayest be understood, we must be silent; and that erring conjecture may track Thee through the shady cloud, no word must be uttered. Grant pardon, O King Supreme, to those who persecute Thy servants; and in virtue of Thy benign nature, forgive those who fly from the worship of Thy name and the observance of Thy religion. It is not to be wondered at if Thou art unknown; it is a cause of greater astonishment if Thou art clearly comprehended. [3293] But perchance some one dares -- for this remains for frantic madness to do -- to be uncertain, and to express doubt whether that God exists or not; whether He is believed in on the proved truth of reliable evidence, or on the imaginings of empty rumour. For of those who have given themselves to philosophizing, we have heard that some [3294] deny the existence of any divine power, that others [3295] inquire daily whether there be or not; that others [3296] construct the whole fabric of the universe by chance accidents and by random collision, and fashion it by the concourse of atoms of different shapes; with whom we by no means intend to enter at this time on a discussion of such perverse convictions. [3297] For those who think wisely say, that to argue against things palpably foolish, is a mark of greater folly.

32 Our discussion deals with those who, acknowledging that there is a divine race of beings

Our discussion deals with those who, acknowledging that there is a divine race of beings, doubt about those of greater rank and power, whilst they admit that there are deities inferior and more humble. What then? Do we strive and toil to obtain such results by arguments? Far hence be such madness; and, as the phrase is, let the folly, say I, be averted from us. For it is as dangerous to attempt to prove by arguments that God is the highest being, as it is to wish to discover by reasoning of this kind that He exists. It is a matter of indifference whether you deny that He exists, or affirm it and admit it; since equally culpable are both the assertion of such a thing, and the denial of an unbelieving opponent.

33 Is there any human being who has not entered on the first day of his

Is there any human being who has not entered on the first day of his life with an idea of that Great Head? In whom has it not been implanted by nature, on whom has it not been impressed, aye, stamped almost in his mother's womb even, in whom is there not a native instinct, that He is King and Lord, the ruler of all things that be? In fine, if the dumb animals even could stammer forth their thoughts, if they were able to use our languages; nay, if trees, if the clods of the earth, if stones animated by vital perceptions were able to produce vocal sounds, and to utter articulate speech, would they not in that case, with nature as their guide and teacher, in the faith of uncorrupted innocence, both feel that there is a God, and proclaim that He alone is Lord of all?

34 But in vain, says one, do you assail us with a groundless and calumnious charge

But in vain, says one, do you assail us with a groundless and calumnious charge, as if we deny that there is a deity of a higher kind, since Jupiter is by us both called and esteemed the best and the greatest; and since we have dedicated to him the most sacred abodes, and have raised huge Capitols. You are endeavouring to connect together things which are dissimilar, and to force them into one class, thereby introducing confusion. For by the unanimous judgment of all, and by the common consent of the human race, the omnipotent God is regarded as having never been born, as having never been brought forth to new light, and as not having begun to exist at any time or century. For He Himself is the source of all things, the Father of ages and of seasons. For they do not exist of themselves, but from His everlasting perpetuity they move on in unbroken and ever endless flow. Yet Jupiter indeed, as you allege, has both father and mother, grandfathers, grandmothers, and brothers: now lately conceived in the womb of his mother, being completely formed and perfected in ten months, he burst with vital sensations into light unknown to him before. If, then, this is so, how can Jupiter be God supreme, when it is evident that He is everlasting, and the former is represented by you as having had a natal day, and as having uttered a mournful cry, through terror at the strange scene?

35 But suppose they be one, as you wish, and not different in any power of

But suppose they be one, as you wish, and not different in any power of deity and in majesty, do you therefore persecute us with undeserved hatred? Why do you shudder at the mention of our name as of the worst omen, if we too worship the deity whom you worship? or why do you contend that the gods are friendly to you, but inimical, aye, most hostile to us, though our relations to them are the same? For if one religion is common to us and to you, the anger of the gods is stayed; [3298] but if they are hostile to us alone it is plain that both you and they have no knowledge of God. And that that God is not Jove, is evident by the very wrath of the deities.

36 But, says my opponent, the deities are not inimical to you

But, says my opponent, the deities are not inimical to you, because you worship the omnipotent God; but because you both allege that one born as men are, and put to death on the cross, which is a disgraceful punishment even for worthless men, was God, and because you believe that He still lives, and because you worship Him in daily supplications. If it is agreeable to you, my friends, state clearly what deities those are who believe that the worship of Christ by us has a tendency to injure them? Is it Janus, the founder of the Janiculum, and Saturn, the author of the Saturnian state? Is it Fauna Fatua, [3299] the wife of Faunus, who is called the Good Goddess, but who is better and more deserving of praise in the drinking of wine? Is it those gods Indigetes who swim in the river, and live in the channels of the Numicius, in company with frogs and little fishes? Is it Æsculapius and father Bacchus, the former born of Coronis, and the other dashed by lightning from his mother's womb? Is it Mercury, son of Maia, and what is more divine, Maia the beautiful? Is it the bow-bearing deities Diana and Apollo, who were companions of their mother's wanderings, and who were scarcely safe in floating islands? Is it Venus, daughter of Dione, paramour of a man of Trojan family, and the prostituer of her secret charms? Is it Ceres, born in Sicilian territory, and Proserpine, surprised while gathering flowers? Is it the Theban or the Phoenician Hercules, -- the latter buried in Spanish territory, the other burned by fire on Mount OEta? Is it the brothers Castor and Pollux, sons of Tyndareus, -- the one accustomed to tame horses, the other an excellent boxer, and unconquerable with the untanned gauntlet? Is it the Titans and the Bocchores of the Moors, and the Syrian [3300] deities, the offspring of eggs? Is it Apis, born in the Peloponnese, and in Egypt called Serapis? Is it Isis, tanned by Ethiopian suns, lamenting her lost son and husband torn limb from limb? Passing on, we omit the royal offspring of Ops, which your writers have in their books set forth for your instruction, telling you both who they are, and of what character. Do these, then, hear with offended ears that Christ is worshipped, and that He is accepted by us and regarded as a divine person? And being forgetful of the grade and state in which they recently were, are they unwilling to share with another that which has been granted to themselves? Is this the justice of the heavenly deities? Is this the righteous judgment of the gods? Is not this a kind of malice and of greed? is it not a species of base envy, to wish their own fortunes only to rise, -- those of others to be lowered, and to be trodden down in despised lowliness?

37 We worship one who was born a man.

We worship one who was born a man. What then? do you worship no one who was born a man? Do you not worship one and another, aye, deities innumerable? Nay, have you not taken from the number of mortals all those whom you now have in your temples; and have you not set them in heaven, and among the constellations? For if, perchance, it has escaped you that they once partook of human destiny, and of the state common to all men, search the most ancient literature, and range through the writings of those who, living nearest to the days of antiquity, set forth all things with undisguised truth and without flattery: you will learn in detail from what fathers, from what mothers they were each sprung, in what district they were born, of what tribe; what they made, what they did, what they endured, how they employed themselves, what fortunes they experienced of an adverse or of a favourable kind in discharging their functions. But if, while you know that they were born in the womb, and that they lived on the produce of the earth, you nevertheless upbraid us with the worship of one born like ourselves, you act with great injustice, in regarding that as worthy of condemnation in us which you yourselves habitually do; or what you allow to be lawful for you, you are unwilling to be in like manner lawful for others.

38 But in the meantime let us grant, in submission to your ideas

But in the meantime let us grant, in submission to your ideas, that Christ was one of us -- similar in mind, soul, body, weakness, and condition; is He not worthy to be called and to be esteemed God by us, in consideration of His bounties, so numerous as they are? For if you have placed in the assembly [3301] of the gods Liber, because he discovered the use of wine; Ceres, because she discovered the use of bread; Æsculapius, because he discovered the use of herbs; Minerva, because she produced the olive; Triptolemus, because he invented the plough; Hercules, because he overpowered and restrained wild beasts and robbers, and water-serpents of many heads, -- with how great distinctions is He to be honoured by us, who, by instilling His truth into our hearts, has freed us from great errors; who, when we were straying everywhere, as if blind and without a guide, withdrew us from precipitous and devious paths, and set our feet on more smooth places; who has pointed out what is especially profitable and salutary for the human race; who has shown us what God is, [3302] who He is, how great and how good; who has permitted and taught us to conceive and to understand, as far as our limited capacity can, His profound and inexpressible depths; who, in His great kindness, has caused it to be known by what founder, by what Creator, this world was established and made; who has explained the nature of its origin [3303] and essential substance, never before imagined in the conceptions of any; whence generative warmth is added to the rays of the sun; why the moon, always uninjured [3304] in her motions, is believed to alternate her light and her obscurity from intelligent causes; [3305] what is the origin of animals, what rules regulate seeds; who designed man himself, who fashioned him, or from what kind of material did He compact the very build of bodies; what the perceptions are; what the soul, and whether it flew to us of its own accord, or whether it was generated and brought into existence with our bodies themselves; whether it sojourns with us, partaking of death, or whether it is gifted with an endless immortality; what condition awaits us when we shall have separated from our bodies relaxed in death; whether we shall retain our perceptions, [3306] or have no recollection of our former sensations or of past memories; [3307] who has restrained [3308] our arrogance, and has caused our necks, uplifted with pride, to acknowledge the measure of their weakness; who hath shown that we are creatures imperfectly formed, that we trust in vain expectations, that we understand nothing thoroughly, that we know nothing, and that we do not see those things which are placed before our eyes; who has guided us from false superstitions to the true religion, -- a blessing which exceeds and transcends all His other gifts; who has raised our thoughts to heaven from brutish statues formed of the vilest clay, and has caused us to hold converse in thanksgiving and prayer with the Lord of the universe.

39 But lately, O blindness, I worshipped images produced from the furnace

But lately, O blindness, I worshipped images produced from the furnace, gods made on anvils and by hammers, the bones of elephants, paintings, wreaths on aged trees; [3309] whenever I espied an anointed stone and one bedaubed with olive oil, as if some power resided in it I worshipped it, I addressed myself to it and begged blessings from a senseless stock. [3310] And these very gods of whose existence I had convinced myself, I treated with gross insults, when I believed them to be wood, stone, and bones, or imagined that they dwelt in the substance of such objects. Now, having been led into the paths of truth by so great a teacher, I know what all these things are, I entertain honourable thoughts concerning those which are worthy, I offer no insult to any divine name; and what is due to each, whether inferior [3311] or superior, I assign with clearly-defined gradations, and on distinct authority. Is Christ, then, not to be regarded by us as God? and is He, who in other respects may be deemed the very greatest, not to be honoured with divine worship, from whom we have already received while alive so great gifts, and from whom, when the day comes, we expect greater ones?

40 But He died nailed to the cross.

But He died nailed to the cross. What is that to the argument? For neither does the kind and disgrace of the death change His words or deeds, nor will the weight of His teaching appear less; because He freed Himself from the shackles of the body, not by a natural separation, but departed by reason of violence offered to Him. Pythagoras of Samos was burned to death in a temple, under an unjust suspicion of aiming at sovereign power. Did his doctrines lose their peculiar influence, because he breathed forth his life not willingly, but in consequence of a savage assault? In like manner Socrates, condemned by the decision of his fellow-citizens, suffered capital punishment: have his discussions on morals, on virtues, and on duties been rendered vain, because he was unjustly hurried from life? Others without number, conspicuous by their renown, their merit, and their public character, have experienced the most cruel forms of death, as Aquilius, Trebonius, and Regulus: were they on that account adjudged base after death, because they perished not by the common law of the fates, but after being mangled and tortured in the most cruel kind of death? No innocent person foully slain is ever disgraced thereby; nor is he stained by the mark of any baseness, who suffers severe punishment, not from his own deserts, but by reason of the savage nature of his persecutor. [3312]

41 And yet, O ye who laugh because we worship one who died an ignominious death

And yet, O ye who laugh because we worship one who died an ignominious death, do not ye too, by consecrating shrines to him, honour father Liber, who was torn limb from limb by the Titans? Have you not, after his punishment and his death by lightning, named Æsculapius, the discoverer of medicines, as the guardian and protector of health, of strength, and of safety? Do you not invoke the great Hercules himself by offerings, by victims, and by kindled frankincense, whom you yourselves allege to have been burned alive after his punishment, [3313] and to have been consumed on the fatal pyres? Do you not, with the unanimous approbation of the Gauls, invoke as a propitious [3314] and as a holy god, in the temples of the Great Mother, [3315] that Phrygian Atys [3316] who was mangled and deprived of his virility? Father Romulus himself, who was torn in pieces by the hands of a hundred senators, do you not call Quirinus Martius, and do you not honour him with priests and with gorgeous couches, [3317] and do you not worship him in most spacious temples; and in addition to all this, do you not affirm that he has ascended into heaven? Either, therefore, you too are to be laughed at, who regard as gods men slain by the most cruel tortures; or if there is a sure ground for your thinking that you should do so, allow us too to feel assured for what causes and on what grounds we do this.

42 You worship, says my opponent, one who was born a mere human being.

You worship, says my opponent, one who was born a mere human being. Even if that were true, as has been already said in former passages, yet, in consideration of the many liberal gifts which He has bestowed on us, He ought to be called and be addressed as God. But since He is God in reality and without any shadow of doubt, do you think that we will deny that He is worshipped by us with all the fervour we are capable of, and assumed as the guardian of our body? Is that Christ of yours a god, then? some raving, wrathful, and excited man will say. A god, we will reply, and the god of the inner powers; [3318] and -- what may still further torture unbelievers with the most bitter pains -- He was sent to us by the King Supreme for a purpose of the very highest moment. My opponent, becoming more mad and more frantic, will perhaps ask whether the matter can be proved, as we allege. There is no greater proof than the credibility of the acts done by Him, than the unwonted excellence of the virtues He exhibited, than the conquest and the abrogation of all those deadly ordinances which peoples and tribes saw executed in the light of day, [3319] with no objecting voice; and even they whose ancient laws or whose country's laws He shows to be full of vanity and of the most senseless superstition, (even they) dare not allege these things to be false.

43 My opponent will perhaps meet me with many other slanderous and childish charges which are

My opponent will perhaps meet me with many other slanderous and childish charges which are commonly urged. Jesus was a Magian; [3320] He effected all these things by secret arts. From the shrines of the Egyptians He stole the names of angels of might, [3321] and the religious system of a remote country. Why, O witlings, do you speak of things which you have not examined, and which are unknown to you, prating with the garrulity of a rash tongue? Were, then, those things which were done, the freaks of demons, and the tricks of magical arts? Can you specify and point out to me any one of all those magicians who have ever existed in past ages, that did anything similar, in the thousandth degree, to Christ? Who has done this without any power of incantations, without the juice of herbs and of grasses, without any anxious watching of sacrifices, of libations, or of seasons? For we do not press it, and inquire what they profess to do, nor in what kind of acts all their learning and experience are wont to be comprised. For who is not aware that these men either study to know beforehand things impending, which, whether they will or not, come of necessity as they have been ordained? or to inflict a deadly and wasting disease on whom they choose; or to sever the affections of relatives; or to open without keys places which are locked; or to seal the month in silence; or in the chariot race to weaken, urge on, or retard horses; or to inspire in wives, and in the children of strangers, whether they be males or females, the flames and mad desires of illicit love? [3322] Or if they seem to attempt anything useful, to be able to do it not by their own power, but by the might of those deities whom they invoke.

44 And yet it is agreed on that Christ performed all those miracles which He wrought

And yet it is agreed on that Christ performed all those miracles which He wrought without any aid from external things, without the observance of any ceremonial, without any definite mode of procedure, but solely by the inherent might of His authority; and as was the proper duty of the true God, as was consistent with His nature, as was worthy of Him, in the generosity of His bounteous power He bestowed nothing hurtful or injurious, but only that which is helpful, beneficial, and full of blessings good [3323] for men.

45 What do you say again, oh you -- ? Is He then a man

What do you say again, oh you [3324] -- ? Is He then a man, is He one of us, at whose command, at whose voice, raised in the utterance of audible and intelligible words, [3325] infirmities, diseases, fevers, and other ailments of the body fled away? Was He one of us, whose presence, whose very sight, that race of demons which took possession of men was unable to bear, and terrified by the strange power, fled away? Was He one of us, to whose order the foul leprosy, at once checked, was obedient, and left sameness of colour to bodies formerly spotted? Was He one of us, at whose light touch the issues of blood were stanchd, and stopped their excessive flow? [3326] Was He one of us, whose hands the waters of the lethargic dropsy fled from, and that searching [3327] fluid avoided; and did the swelling body, assuming a healthy dryness, find relief? Was He one of us, who bade the lame run? Was it His work, too, that the maimed stretched forth their hands, and the joints relaxed the rigidity [3328] acquired even at birth; that the paralytic rose to their feet, and persons now carried home their beds who a little before were borne on the shoulders of others; the blind were restored to sight, and men born without eyes now looked on the heaven and the day?

46 Was He one of us, I say, who by one act of intervention at once

Was He one of us, I say, who by one act of intervention at once healed a hundred or more afflicted with various infirmities and diseases; at whose word only the raging and maddened seas were still, the whirlwinds and tempests were lulled; who walked over the deepest pools with unwet foot; who trod the ridges of the deep, the very waves being astonished, and nature coming under bondage; who with five loaves satisfied five thousand of His followers: and who, lest it might appear to the unbelieving and hard of heart to be an illusion, filled twelve capacious baskets with the fragments that remained? Was He one of us, who ordered the breath that had departed to return to the body, persons buried to come forth from the tomb, and after three days to be loosed from the swathings of the undertaker? Was He one of us, who saw clearly in the hearts of the silent what each was pondering, [3329] what each had in his secret thoughts? Was He one of us, who, when He uttered a single word, was thought by nations far removed from one another and of different speech to be using well-known sounds, and the peculiar language of each? [3330] Was He one of us, who, when He was teaching His followers the duties of a religion that could not be gainsaid, suddenly filled the whole world, and showed how great He was and who He was, by unveiling the boundlessness of His authority? Was He one of us, who, after His body had been laid in the tomb, manifested Himself in open day to countless numbers of men; who spoke to them, and listened to them; who taught them, reproved and admonished them; who, lest they should imagine that they were deceived by unsubstantial fancies, showed Himself once, a second time, aye frequently, in familiar conversation; who appears even now to righteous men of unpolluted mind who love Him, not in airy dreams, but in a form of pure simplicity; [3331] whose name, when heard, puts to flight evil spirits, imposes silence on soothsayers, prevents men from consulting the augurs, causes the efforts of arrogant magicians to be frustrated, not by the dread of His name, as you allege, but by the free exercise of a greater power?

47 These facts set forth in sanctuary we have put forward

These facts set forth in sanctuary we have put forward, not on the supposition that the greatness of the agent was to be seen in these virtues alone. [3332] For however great these things be, how excessively petty and trifling will they be found to be, if it shall be revealed from what realms He has come, of what God He is the minister! But with regard to the acts which were done by Him, they were performed, indeed, not that He might boast Himself into empty ostentation, but that hardened and unbelieving men might be assured that what was professed was not deceptive, and that they might now learn to imagine, from the beneficence of His works, what a true god was. At the same time we wish this also to be known, [3333] when, as was said, an enumeration of His acts has been given in summary, that Christ was able to do not only those things which He did, but that He could even overcome the decrees of fate. For if, as is evident, and as is agreed by all, infirmities and bodily sufferings, if deafness, deformity, and dumbness, if shrivelling of the sinews and the loss of sight happen to us, and are brought on us by the decrees of fate and if Christ alone has corrected this, has restored and cured man, it is clearer than the sun himself that He was more powerful than the fates are when He has loosened and overpowered those things which were bound with everlasting knots, and fixed by unalterable necessity.

48 But, says some one, you in vain claim so much for Christ

But, says some one, you in vain claim so much for Christ, when we now know, and have in past times known, of other gods both giving remedies to many who were sick, and healing the diseases and the infirmities of many men. I do not inquire, I do not demand, what god did so, or at what time; whom he relieved, or what shattered frame he restored to sound health: this only I long to hear, whether, without the addition of any substance -- that is, of any medical application -- he ordered diseases to fly away from men at a touch; whether he commanded and compelled the cause of ill health to be eradicated, and the bodies of the weak to return to their natural strength. For it is known that Christ, either by applying His hand to the parts affected, or by the command of His voice only, opened the ears of the deaf, drove away blindness from the eyes, gave speech to the dumb, loosened the rigidity of the joints, gave the power of walking to the shrivelled, -- was wont to heal by a word and by an order, leprosy, agues, dropsies, and all other kinds of ailments, which some fell power [3334] has willed that the bodies of men should endure. What act like these have all these gods done, by whom you allege that help has been brought to the sick and the imperilled? for if they have at any time ordered, as is reported, either that medicine or a special diet be given to some, [3335] or that a draught be drunk off, or that the juices of plants and of blades be placed [3336] on that which causes uneasiness or have ordered that persons should walk, remain at rest, or abstain from something hurtful, -- and that this is no great matter, and deserves no great admiration, is evident, if you will attentively examine it -- a similar mode of treatment is followed by physicians also, a creature earth-born and not relying on true science, but founding on a system of conjecture, and wavering in estimating probabilities. Now there is no special merit in removing by remedies those ailments which affect men: the healing qualities belong to the drugs -- not virtues inherent in him who applies them; and though it is praiseworthy to know by what medicine or by what method it may be suitable for persons to be treated, there is room for this credit being assigned to man, but not to the deity. For it is, at least, no discredit that he [3337] should have improved the health of man by things taken from without: it is a disgrace to a god that he is not able to effect it of himself, but that he gives soundness and safety only by the aid of external objects.

49 And since you compare Christ and the other deities as to the blessings of health

And since you compare Christ and the other deities as to the blessings of health bestowed, how many thousands of infirm persons do you wish to be shown to you by us; how many persons affected with wasting diseases, whom no appliances whatever restored, although they went as suppliants through all the temples, although they prostrated themselves before the gods, and swept the very thresholds with their lips -- though, as long as life remained, they wearied with prayers, and importuned with most piteous vows Æsculapius himself, the health-giver, as they call him? Do we not know that some died of their ailments? that others grew old by the torturing pain of their diseases? that others began to live a more abandoned life after they had wasted their days [3338] and nights in incessant prayers, and in expectation of mercy? [3339] Of what avail is it, then, to point to one or another who may have been healed, when so many thousands have been left unaided, and the shrines are full of all the wretched and the unfortunate? Unless, perchance, you say that the gods help the good, but that the miseries of the wicked are overlooked. And yet Christ assisted the good and the bad alike; nor was there any one rejected by Him, who in adversity sought help against violence and the ills of fortune. For this is the mark of a true god and of kingly power, to deny his bounty to none, and not to consider who merits it or who does not; since natural infirmity and not the choice of his desire, or of his sober judgment, makes a sinner. To say, moreover, that aid is given by the gods to the deserving when in distress, is to leave undecided and render doubtful what you assert: so that both he who has been made whole may seem to have been preserved by chance, and he who is not may appear to have been unable to banish infirmity, not because of his demerit, but by reason of a heaven-sent weakness. [3340]

50 Moreover, by His own power He not only performed those miraculous deeds which have been

Moreover, by His own power He not only performed those miraculous deeds which have been detailed by us in summary, and not as the importance of the matter demanded; but, what was more sublime, He has permitted many others to attempt them, and to perform them by the use of His name. For when He foresaw that you were to be the detractors of His deeds and of His divine work, in order that no lurking suspicion might remain of His having lavished these gifts and bounties by magic arts, from the immense multitude of people, which with admiring wonder strove to gain His favour, He chose fishermen, artisans, rustics, and unskilled persons of a similar kind, that they being sent through various nations should perform all those miracles without any deceit and without any material aids. By a word He assuaged the racking pains of the aching members; and by a word they checked the writhings of maddening sufferings. By one command He drove demons from the body, and restored their senses to the lifeless; they, too, by no different command, restored to health and to soundness of mind those labouring under the inflictions of these demons. [3341] By the application of His hand He removed the marks of leprosy; they, too, restored to the body its natural skin by a touch not dissimilar. He ordered the dropsical and swollen flesh to recover its natural dryness; and His servants in the same manner stayed the wandering waters, and ordered them to glide through their own channels, avoiding injury to the frame. Sores of immense size, refusing to admit of healing, He restrained from further feeding on the flesh, by the interposition of one word; and they in like manner, by restricting its ravages, compelled the obstinate and merciless cancer to confine itself to a scar. To the lame He gave the power of walking, to the dark eyes sight, the dead He recalled to life; and not less surely did they, too, relax the tightened nerves, fill the eyes with light already lost, and order the dead to return from the tombs, reversing the ceremonies of the funeral rites. Nor was anything calling forth the bewildered admiration of all done by Him, which He did not freely allow, to be performed by those humble and rustic men, and which He did not put in their power.

51 What say ye, O minds incredulous, stubborn, hardened? Did that great Jupiter Capitolinus of yours

What say ye, O minds incredulous, stubborn, hardened? Did that great Jupiter Capitolinus of yours give to any human being power of this kind? Did he endow with this right any priest of a curia, the Pontifex Maximus, nay, even the Dialis, in whose name he is revealed as the god of life? [3342] I shall not say, did he impart power to raise the dead, to give light to the blind, restore the normal condition of their members to the weakened and the paralyzed, but did he even enable any one to check a pustule, a hang-nail, a pimple, either by the word of his mouth or the touch of his hand? Was this, then, a power natural to man, or could such a right be granted, could such a licence be given by the mouth of one reared on the vulgar produce of earth; and was it not a divine and sacred gift? or if the matter admits of any hyperbole, was it not more than divine and sacred? For if you do that which you are able to do, and what is compatible with your strength and your ability, there is no ground for the expression of astonishment; for you will have done that which you were able, and which your power was bound to accomplish, in order that there should be a perfect correspondence [3343] between the deed and the doer. To be able to transfer to a man your own power, share with the frailest being the ability to perform that which you alone are able to do, is a proof of power supreme over all, and holding in subjection the causes of all things, and the natural laws of methods and of means.

52 Come, then, let some Magian Zoroaster arrive from a remote part of the globe

Come, then, let some Magian Zoroaster [3344] arrive from a remote part of the globe, crossing over the fiery zone, [3345] if we believe Hermippus as an authority. Let these join him too -- that Bactrian, whose deeds Ctesias sets forth in the first book of his History; the Armenian, grandson of Hosthanes; [3346] and Pamphilus, the intimate friend of Cyrus; Apollonius, Damigero, and Dardanus; Velus, Julianus, and Bæbulus; and if there be any other one who is supposed to have especial powers and reputation in such magic arts. Let them grant to one of the people to adapt the mouths of the dumb for the purposes of speech, to unseal the ears of the deaf, to give the natural powers of the eye to those born without sight, and to restore feeling and life to bodies long cold in death. Or if that is too difficult, and if they cannot impart to others the power to do such acts, let themselves perform them, and with their own rites. Whatever noxious herbs the earth brings forth from its bosom, whatever powers those muttered words and accompanying spells contain -- these let them add, we envy them not; those let them collect, we forbid them not. We wish to make trial and to discover whether they can effect, with the aid of their gods, what has often been accomplished by unlearned Christians with a word only.

53 Cease in your ignorance to receive such great deeds with abusive language

Cease in your ignorance to receive such great deeds with abusive language, which will in no wise injure him who did them, but which will bring danger to yourselves -- danger, I say, by no means small, but one dealing with matters of great, [3347] aye, even the greatest importance, since beyond a doubt the soul is a precious thing, and nothing can be found dearer to a man than himself. There was nothing magical, as you suppose, nothing human, delusive, or crafty in Christ; no deceit lurked in Him, [3348] although you smile in derision, as your wont is, and though you split with roars of laughter. He was God on high, God in His inmost nature, God from unknown realms, and was sent by the Ruler of all as a Saviour God; whom neither the sun himself, nor any stars, if they have powers of perception, not the rulers and princes of the world, nor, in fine, the great gods, or those who, feigning themselves so, terrify the whole human race, were able to know or to guess whence and who He was -- and naturally so. But [3349] when, freed from the body, which He carried about as but a very small part of Himself, He allowed Himself to be seen, and let it be known how great He was, all the elements of the universe bewildered by the strange events were thrown into confusion. An earthquake shook the world, the sea was heaved up from its depths, the heaven was shrouded in darkness, the sun's fiery blaze was checked, and his heat became moderate; [3350] for what else could occur when He was discovered to be God who heretofore was reckoned one of us?

54 But you do not believe these things; yet those who witnessed their occurrence

But you do not believe these things; yet those who witnessed their occurrence, and who saw them done before their eyes -- the very best vouchers and the most trustworthy authorities -- both believed them themselves, and transmitted them to us who follow them, to be believed with no scanty measure of confidence. Who are these? you perhaps ask. Tribes, peoples, nations, and that incredulous human race; but [3351] if the matter were not plain, and, as the saying is, clearer than day itself, they would never grant their assent with so ready belief to events of such a kind. But shall we say that the men of that time were untrustworthy, false, stupid, and brutish to such a degree that they pretended to have seen what they never had seen, and that they put forth under false evidence, or alleged with childish asseveration things which never took place, and that when they were able to live in harmony and to maintain friendly relations with you, they wantonly incurred hatred, and were held in execration?

55 But if this record of events is false, as you say

But if this record of events is false, as you say, how comes it that in so short a time the whole world has been filled with such a religion? or how could nations dwelling widely apart, and separated by climate and by the convexities of heaven, [3352] unite in one conclusion? They have been prevailed upon, say my opponents, by mere assertions, been led into vain hopes; and in their reckless madness have chosen to incur voluntarily the risks of death, although they had hitherto seen nothing of such a kind as could by its wonderful and strange character induce them to adopt this manner of worship. Nay, because they saw all these things to be done by Christ Himself and by His apostles, who being sent throughout the whole world carried with them the blessings of the Father, which they dispensed in benefiting [3353] as well the minds as the bodies of men; overcome by the force of the very truth itself they both devoted themselves to God, and reckoned it as but a small sacrifice to surrender their bodies to you and to give their flesh to be mangled.

56 But our writers, we shall be told, have put forth these statements with FALSE effrontery

But our writers, we shall be told, have put forth these statements with false effrontery; they have extolled [3354] small matters to an inordinate degree, and have magnified trivial affairs with most pretentious boastfulness. And [3355] would that all things could have been reduced to writing, -- both those which were done by Himself, and those which were accomplished by His apostles with equal authority and power. Such an assemblage of miracles, however, would make you more incredulous; and perhaps you might be able to discover a passage from which [3356] it would seem very probable, both that additions were made to facts, and that falsehoods were inserted in writings and commentaries. But in nations which were unknown to the writers, and which themselves knew not the use of letters, all that was done could not have been embraced in the records or even have reached the ears of all men; or, if any were committed to written and connected narrative, some insertions and additions would have been made by the malevolence of the demons and of men like to them, whose care and study it is to obstruct [3357] the progress of this truth: there would have been some changes and mutilations of words and of syllables, at once to mar the faith of the cautious and to impair the moral effect of the deeds. But it will never avail them that it be gathered from written testimony only who and what Christ was; for His cause has been put on such a basis, that if what we say be admitted to be true, He is by the confession of all proved to have been God.

57 You do not believe our writings, and we do not believe yours.

You do not believe our writings, and we do not believe yours. We devise falsehoods concerning Christ, you say; and you put forth baseless and false statements concerning your gods: for no god has descended from heaven, or in his own person and life has sketched out your system, or in a similar way thrown discredit on our system and our ceremonies. These were written by men; those, too, were written by men -- set forth in human speech; and whatever you seek to say concerning our writers, remember that about yours, too, you will find these things said with equal force. What is contained in your writings you wish to be treated as true; those things, also, which are attested in our books, you must of necessity confess to be true. You accuse our system of falsehood; we, too, accuse yours of falsehood. But ours is more ancient, say you, therefore most credible and trustworthy; as if, indeed, antiquity were not the most fertile source of errors, and did not herself put forth those things which in discreditable fables have attached the utmost infamy to the gods. For could not falsehoods have been both spoken and believed ten thousand years ago, or is it not most probable that that which is near to our own time should be more credible than that which is separated by a long term of years? For these of ours are brought forward on the faith of witnesses, those of yours on the ground of opinions; and it is much more natural that there should be less invention in matters of recent occurrence, than in those far removed in the darkness of antiquity.

58 But they were written by unlearned and ignorant men

But they were written by unlearned and ignorant men, and should not therefore be readily believed. See that this be not rather a stronger reason for believing that they have not been adulterated by any false statements, but were put forth by men of simple mind, who knew not how to trick out their tales with meretricious ornaments. But the language is mean and vulgar. For truth never seeks deceitful polish, nor in that which is well ascertained and certain does it allow itself to be led away into excessive prolixity. Syllogisms, enthymemes, definitions, and all those ornaments by which men seek to establish their statements, aid those groping for the truth, but do not clearly mark its great features. But he who really knows the subject under discussion, neither defines, nor deduces, nor seeks the other tricks of words by which an audience is wont to be taken in, and to be beguiled into a forced assent to a proposition.

59 Your narratives, my opponent says, are overrun with barbarisms and solecisms

Your narratives, my opponent says, are overrun with barbarisms and solecisms, and disfigured by monstrous blunders. A censure, truly, which shows a childish and petty spirit; for if we allow that it is reasonable, let us cease to use certain kinds of fruit because they grow with prickles on them, and other growths useless for food, which on the one hand cannot support us, and yet do not on the other hinder us from enjoying that which specially excels, and which nature has designed to be most wholesome for us. For how, I pray you, does it interfere with or retard the comprehension of a statement, whether anything be pronounced smoothly [3358] or with uncouth roughness? whether that have the grave accent which ought to have the acute, or that have the acute which ought to have the grave? Or how is the truth of a statement diminished, if an error is made in number or case, in preposition, participle, or conjunction? Let that pomposity of style and strictly regulated diction be reserved for public assemblies, for lawsuits, for the forum and the courts of justice, and by all means be handed over to those who, striving after the soothing influences of pleasant sensations, bestow all their care upon splendour of language. But when we are discussing matters far removed from mere display, we should consider what is said, not with what charm it is said nor how it tickles the ears, but what benefits it confers on the hearers, especially since we know that some even who devoted themselves to philosophy, not only disregarded refinement of style, but also purposely adopted a vulgar meanness when they might have spoken with greater elegance and richness, lest forsooth they might impair the stern gravity of speech and revel rather in the pretentious show of the Sophists. For indeed it evidences a worthless heart to seek enjoyment in matters of importance; and when you have to deal with those who are sick and diseased, to pour into their ears dulcet sounds, not to apply a remedy to their wounds. Yet, if you consider the true state of the case, no language is naturally perfect, and in like manner none is faulty. For what natural reason is there, or what law written in the constitution of the world, that *paries* should be called *hic*, [3359] and *sella hæc*? -- since neither have they sex distinguished by male and female, nor can the most learned man tell me what *hic* and *hæc* are, or why one of them denotes the male sex while the other is applied to the female. These conventionalities are man's, and certainly are not indispensable to all persons for the use of forming their language; for *paries* might perhaps have been called *hæc*, and *sella hic*, without any fault being found, if it had been agreed upon at first that they should be so called, and if this practice had been maintained by following generations in their daily conversation. And yet, O you who charge our writings with disgraceful blemishes, have you not these solecisms in those most perfect and wonderful books of yours? Does not one of you make the plur. of *uter*, *utria*? another *utres*? [3360] Do you not also say *coelus* and *coelum*, *filus* and *filum*, *crocus* and *crocum*, *fretus* and *andfretum*? Also *hoc pane* and *hic panis*, *hic sanguis* and *hoc sanguen*? Are not *candelabrum* and *jugulum* in like manner written *jugulus* and *candelaber*? For if each noun cannot have more than one gender, and if the same word cannot be of this gender and of that, for one gender cannot pass into the other, he commits as great a blunder who utters masculine genders under the laws of feminines, as he who

applies masculine articles to feminine genders. And yet we see you using masculines as feminines, and feminines as masculines, and those which you call neuter both in this way and in that, without any distinction. Either, therefore, it is no blunder to employ them indifferently, and in that case it is vain for you to say that our works are disfigured with monstrous solecisms; or if the way in which each ought to be employed is unalterably fixed, you also are involved in similar errors, although you have on your side all the Epicadi, Cæsellii, Verrii, Scauri, and Nisi.

60 But, say my opponents, if Christ was God, why did He appear in human shape

But, say my opponents, if Christ was God, why did He appear in human shape, and why was He cut off by death after the manner of men? Could that power which is invisible, and which has no bodily substance, have come upon earth and adapted itself to the world and mixed in human society, otherwise than by taking to itself some covering of a more solid substance, which might bear the gaze of the eyes, and on which the look of the least observant might fix itself? For what mortal is there who could have seen Him, who could have distinguished Him, if He had decreed to come upon the earth such as He is in His own primitive nature, and such as He has chosen to be in His own proper character and divinity? He took upon Him, therefore, the form of man; and under the guise of our race He imprisoned His power, so that He could be seen and carefully regarded, might speak and teach, and without encroaching on the sovereignty and government of the King Supreme, might carry out all those objects for the accomplishment of which He had come into the world.

61 What, then, says my opponent, could not the Supreme Ruler have brought about those things

What, then, says my opponent, could not the Supreme Ruler have brought about those things which He had ordained to be done in the world, without feigning Himself a man? If it were necessary to do as you say, He perhaps would have done so; because it was not necessary, He acted otherwise. The reasons why He chose to do it in this way, and did not choose to do it in that, are unknown, being involved in so great obscurity, and comprehensible by scarcely any; but these you might perhaps have understood if you were not already prepared not to understand, and were not shaping your course to brave unbelief, before that was explained to you which you sought to know and to hear.

62 But, you will say, He was cut off by death as men are.

But, you will say, He was cut off by death as men are. Not Christ Himself; for it is impossible either that death should befall what is divine, or that that should waste away and disappear in death which is one in its substance, and not compounded, nor formed by bringing together any parts. Who, then, you ask, was seen hanging on the cross? Who dead? The human form, [3361] I reply, which He had put on, [3362] and which He bore about with Him. It is a tale passing belief, you say, and wrapt in dark obscurity; if you will, it is not dark, and is established by a very close analogy. [3363] If the Sibyl, when she was uttering and pouring forth her prophecies and oracular responses, was filled, as you say, with Apollo's power, had been cut down and slain by impious robbers, [3364] would Apollo be said to have been slain in her? If Bacis, [3365] if Helenus, Marcius, [3366] and other soothsayers, had been in like manner robbed of life and light when raving as inspired, would any one say that those who, speaking by their mouths, declared to inquirers what should be done, [3367] had perished according to the conditions of human life? The death of which you speak was that of the human body which He had assumed, [3368] not His own -- of that which was borne, not of the bearer; and not even this death would He [3369] have stooped to suffer, were it not that a matter of such importance was to be dealt with, and the inscrutable plan of fate [3370] brought to light in hidden mysteries.

63 What are these hidden and unseen mysteries, you will say

What are these hidden and unseen mysteries, you will say, which neither men can know, nor those even who are called gods of the world can in any wise reach by fancy and conjecture; which none can discover, [3371] except those whom Christ Himself has thought fit to bestow the blessing of so great knowledge upon, and to lead into the secret recesses of the inner treasury of wisdom? Do you then see that if He had determined that none should do Him violence, He should have striven to the utmost to keep off from Him His enemies, even by directing His power against them? [3372] Could not He, then, who had restored their sight to the blind, make His enemies blind if it were necessary? Was it hard or troublesome for Him to make them weak, who had given strength to the feeble? Did He who bade [3373] the lame walk, not know how to take from them all power to move their limbs, [3374] by making their sinews stiff? [3375] Would it have been difficult for Him who drew the dead from their tombs to inflict death on whom He would? But because reason required that those things which had been resolved on should be done here also in the world itself, and in no other fashion than was done, He, with gentleness passing understanding and belief, regarding as but childish trifles the wrongs which men did Him, submitted to the violence of savage and most hardened robbers; [3376] nor did He think it worth while to take account of what their daring had aimed at, if He only showed to His disciples what they were in duty bound to look for from Him. For when many things about the perils of souls, many evils about their...; on the other hand, the Introducer, [3377] the Master and Teacher directed His laws and ordinances, that they might find their end in fitting duties; [3378] did He not destroy the arrogance of the proud? Did He not quench the fires of lust? Did He not check the craving of greed? Did He not wrest the weapons from their hands, and rend from them all the sources [3379] of every form of corruption? To conclude, was He not Himself gentle, peaceful, easily approached, friendly when addressed? [3380] Did He not, grieving at men's miseries, pitying with His unexampled benevolence all in any wise afflicted with troubles and bodily ills, [3381] bring them back and restore them to soundness?

64 What, then, constrains you, what excites you to revile

What, then, constrains you, what excites you to revile, to rail at, to hate implacably Him whom no man [3382] can accuse of any crime? [3383] Tyrants and your kings, who, putting away all fear of the gods, plunder and pillage the treasuries of temples; who by proscription, banishment, [3384] and slaughter, strip the state of its nobles? who, with licentious violence, undermine and wrest away the chastity of matrons and maidens, -- these men you name indigites and divi; and you worship with couches, altars, temples, and other service, and by celebrating their games and birthdays, those whom it was fitting that you should assail with keenest [3385] hatred. And all those, too, who by writing books assail in many forms with biting reproaches public manners; who censure, brand, and tear in pieces your luxurious habits and lives; who carry down to posterity evil reports of their own times [3386] in their enduring writings; who seek to persuade men that the rights of marriage should be held in common; [3387] who lie with boys, beautiful, lustful, naked; who declare that you are beasts, runaways, exiles, and mad and frantic slaves of the most worthless character, -- all these with wonder and applause you exalt to the stars of heaven, you place in the shrines of your libraries, you present with chariots and statues, and as much as in you lies, gift with a kind of immortality, as it were, by the witness which immortal titles bear to them. Christ alone you would tear in pieces, [3388] you would rend asunder, if you could do so to a god; nay, Him alone you would, were it allowed, gnaw with bloody mouths, and break His bones in pieces, and devour Him like beasts of the field. For what that He has done, tell, I pray you, for what crime? [3389] What has He done to turn aside the course of justice, and rouse you to hatred made fierce by maddening torments? Is it because He declared that He was sent by the only true King to be your soul's guardian, and to bring to you the immortality which you believe that you already possess, relying on the assertions of a few men? But even if you were assured that He spoke falsely, that He even held out hopes without the slightest foundation, not even in this case do I see any reason that you should hate and condemn Him with bitter reproaches. Nay, if you were kind and gentle in spirit, you ought to esteem Him even for this alone, that He promised to you things which you might well wish and hope for; that He was the bearer of good news; that His message was such as to trouble no one's mind, nay, rather to fill all with less anxious expectation. [3390]

65 Oh ungrateful and impious age, prepared for its own destruction by its extraordinary obstinacy! If

Oh ungrateful and impious age, prepared [3391] for its own destruction by its extraordinary obstinacy! If there had come to you a physician from lands far distant and unknown to you before, offering some medicine to keep off from you altogether every kind of disease and sickness, would you not all eagerly hasten to him? Would you not with every kind of flattery and honour receive him into your houses, and treat him kindly? Would you not wish that that kind of medicine should be quite sure, and should be genuine, which promised that even to the utmost limits of life you should be free from such countless bodily distresses? And though it were a doubtful matter, you would yet entrust yourselves to him; nor would you hesitate to drink the unknown draught, indited by the hope of health set before you and by the love of safety. [3392] Christ shone out and appeared to tell us news of the utmost importance, bringing an omen of prosperity, and a message of safety to those who believe. What, I pray you, means [3393] this cruelty, what such barbarity, nay rather, to speak more truly, scornful [3394] pride, not only to harass the messenger and bearer of so great a gift with taunting words; but even to assail Him with fierce hostility, and with all the weapons which can be showered upon Him, and with all modes of destruction? Are His words displeasing, and are you offended when you hear them? Count them as but a soothsayer's empty tales. Does He speak very stupidly, and promise foolish gifts? Laugh with scorn as wise men, and leave Him in His folly [3395] to be tossed about among His errors. What means this fierceness, to repeat what has been said more than once; what a passion, so murderous? to declare implacable hostility towards one who has done nothing to deserve it at your hands; to wish, if it were allowed you, to tear Him limb from limb, who not only did no man any harm, but with uniform kindness [3396] told His enemies what salvation was being brought to them from God Supreme, what must be done that they might escape destruction and obtain an immortality which they knew not of? And when the strange and unheard-of things which were held out staggered the minds of those who heard Him, and made them hesitate to believe, though master of every power and destroyer of death itself He suffered His human form to be slain, that from the result [3397] they might know that the hopes were safe which they had long entertained about the soul's salvation, and that in no other way could they avoid the danger of death.

1 Here, if any means could be found, I should wish to converse thus with all

Here, if any means could be found, I should wish to converse thus with all those who hate the name of Christ, turning aside for a little from the defence primarily set up: -- If you think it no dishonour to answer when asked a question, explain to us and say what is the cause, what the reason, that you pursue Christ with so bitter hostility? or what offences you remember which He did, that at the mention of His name you are roused to bursts of mad and savage fury? [3399] Did He ever, in claiming for Himself power as king, fill the whole world with bands of the fiercest soldiers; and of nations at peace from the beginning, did He destroy and put an end to some, and compel others to submit to His yoke and serve Him? Did He ever, excited by grasping [3400] avarice, claim as His own by right all that wealth to have abundance of which men strive eagerly? Did He ever, transported with lustful passions, break down by force the barriers of purity, or stealthily lie in wait for other men's wives? Did He ever, puffed up with haughty arrogance, inflict at random injuries and insults, without any distinction of persons? (B) And if He was not worthy that you should listen to and believe Him, yet He should not have been despised by you even on this account, that He showed to you things concerning your salvation, that He prepared for you a path [3401] to heaven, and the immortality for which you long; although [3402] He neither extended the light of life to all, nor delivered all from the danger which threatens them through their ignorance. [3403]

2 But indeed, some one will say, He deserved our hatred because He has driven religion

But indeed, some one will say, He deserved our hatred because He has driven religion [3404] from the world, because He has kept men back from seeking to honour the gods. [3405] Is He then denounced as the destroyer of religion and promoter of impiety, who brought true religion into the world, who opened the gates of piety to men blind and verily living in impiety, and pointed out to whom they should bow themselves? Or is there any truer religion -- one more serviceable, [3406] powerful, and right -- than to have learned to know the supreme God, to know how to pray to God Supreme, who alone is the source and fountain of all good, the creator, [3407] founder, and framer of all that endures, by whom all things on earth and all in heaven are quickened, and filled with the stir of life, and without whom there would assuredly be nothing to bear any name, and have any substance? But perhaps you doubt whether there is that ruler of whom we speak, and rather incline to believe in the existence of Apollo, Diana, Mercury, Mars. Give a true judgment; [3408] and, looking round on all these things which we see, any one will rather doubt whether all the other gods exist, than hesitate with regard to the God whom we all know by nature, whether when we cry out, O God, or when we make God the witness of wicked deeds, [3409] and raise our face to heaven as though He saw us.

3 But He did not permit men to make supplication to the lesser gods.

But He did not permit men to make supplication to the lesser gods. Do you, then, know who are, or where are the lesser gods? Has mistrust of them, or the way in which they were mentioned, ever touched you, so that you are justly indignant that their worship has been done away with and deprived of all honour? [3410] But if haughtiness of mind and arrogance, [3411] as it is called by the Greeks, did not stand in your way and hinder you, you might long ago have been able to understand what He forbade to be done, or wherefore; within what limits He would have true religion lie; [3412] what danger arose to you from that which you thought obedience? or from what evils you would escape if you broke away from your dangerous delusion.

4 But all these things will be more clearly and distinctly noticed when we have proceeded

But all these things will be more clearly and distinctly noticed when we have proceeded further. For we shall show that Christ did not teach the nations impiety, but delivered ignorant and wretched men from those who most wickedly wronged them. [3413] We do not believe, you say, that what He says is true. What, then? Have you no doubt as to the things which [3414] you say are not true, while, as they are only at hand, and not yet disclosed [3415] they can by no means be disproved? But He, too, does not prove what He promises. It is so; for, as I said, there can be no proof of things still in the future. Since, then, the nature of the future is such that it cannot be grasped and comprehended by any anticipation, [3416] is it not more rational, [3417] of two things uncertain and hanging in doubtful suspense, rather to believe that which carries with it some hopes, than that which brings none at all? For in the one case there is no danger, if that which is said to be at hand should prove vain and groundless; in the other there is the greatest loss, even [3418] the loss of salvation, if, when the time has come, it be shown that there was nothing false in what was declared. [3419]

5 What say you, O ignorant ones, for whom we might well weep and be sad?

What say you, O ignorant ones, for whom we might well weep and be sad? [3420] Are you so void of fear that these things may be true which are despised by you and turned to ridicule? and do you not consider with yourselves at least, in your secret thoughts, lest that which to-day with perverse obstinacy you refuse to believe, time may too late show to be true, [3421] and ceaseless remorse punish you? Do not even these proofs at least give you faith to believe, [3422] viz., that already, in so short and brief a time, the oaths of this vast army have spread abroad over all the earth? that already there is no nation so rude and fierce that it has not, changed by His love, subdued its fierceness, and with tranquillity hitherto unknown, become mild in disposition? [3423] that men endowed with so great abilities, orators, critics, rhetoricians, lawyers, and physicians, those, too, who pry into the mysteries of philosophy, seek to learn these things, despising those in which but now they trusted? that slaves choose to be tortured by their masters as they please, wives to be divorced, children to be disinherited by their parents, rather than be unfaithful to Christ and cast off the oaths of the warfare of salvation? that although so terrible punishments have been denounced by you against those who follow the precepts of this religion, it [3424] increases even more, and a great host strives more boldly against all threats and the terrors which would keep it back, and is roused to zealous faith by the very attempt to hinder it? Do you indeed believe that these things happen idly and at random? that these feelings are adopted on being met with by chance? [3425] Is not this, then, sacred and divine? Or do you believe that, without God's grace, their minds are so changed, that although murderous hooks and other tortures without number threaten, as we said, those who shall believe, they receive the grounds of faith with which they have become acquainted, [3426] as if carried away (A) by some charm, and by an eager longing for all the virtues, [3427] and prefer the friendship of Christ to all that is in the world? [3428]

6 But perhaps those seem to you weak-minded and silly

But perhaps those seem to you weak-minded and silly, who even now are uniting all over the world, and joining together to assent with that readiness of belief at which you mock. [3429] What then? Do you alone, imbued [3430] with the true power of wisdom and understanding, see something wholly different [3431] and profound? Do you alone perceive that all these things are trifles? you alone, that those things are mere words and childish absurdities which we declare are about to come to us from the supreme Ruler? Whence, pray, has so much wisdom been given to you? whence so much subtlety and wit? Or from what scientific training have you been able to gain so much wisdom, to derive so much foresight? Because you are skilled in declining verbs and nouns by cases and tenses, and [3432] in avoiding barbarous words and expressions; because you have learned either to express yourselves in [3433] harmonious, and orderly, and fitly-disposed language, or to know when it is rude and unpolished; [3434] because you have stamped on your memory the Fornix of Lucilius, [3435] and Marsyas of Pomponius; because you know what the issues to be proposed in lawsuits are, how many kinds of cases there are, how many ways of pleading, what the genus is, what the species, by what methods an opposite is distinguished from a contrary, -- do you therefore think that you know what is false, what true, what can or cannot be done, what is the nature of the lowest and highest? Have the well-known words never rung in [3436] your ears, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God?

7 In the first place, you yourselves, too, see clearly that

In the first place, you yourselves, too, [3437] see clearly that, if you ever discuss obscure subjects, and seek to lay bare the mysteries of nature, on the one hand you do not know the very things which you speak of, which you affirm, which you uphold very often with especial zeal, and that each one defends with obstinate resistance his own suppositions as though they were proved and ascertained truths. For how can we of ourselves know whether we [3438] perceive the truth, even if all ages be employed in seeking out knowledge -- we whom some envious power [3439] brought forth, and formed so ignorant and proud, that, although we know nothing at all, we yet deceive ourselves, and are uplifted by pride and arrogance so as to suppose ourselves possessed of knowledge? For, to pass by divine things, and those plunged in natural obscurity, can any man explain that which in the Phædrus [3440] the well-known Socrates cannot comprehend -- what man is, or whence he is, uncertain, changeable, deceitful, manifold, of many kinds? for what purposes he was produced? by whose ingenuity he was devised? what he does in the world? (C) why he undergoes such countless ills? whether the earth gave life to him as to worms and mice, being affected with decay through the action of some moisture; [3441] or whether he received [3442] these outlines of body, and this cast of face, from the hand of some maker and framer? Can he, I say, know these things, which lie open to all, and are recognisable by [3443] the senses common to all, -- by what causes we are plunged into sleep, by what we awake? in what ways dreams are produced, in what they are seen? nay rather -- as to which Plato in the Theætetus [3444] is in doubt -- whether we are ever awake, or whether that very state which is called waking is part of an unbroken slumber? and what we seem to do when we say that we see a dream? whether we see by means of rays of light proceeding towards the object, [3445] or images of the objects fly to and alight on the pupils of our eyes? whether the flavour is in the things tasted, or arises from their touching the palate? from what causes hairs lay aside their natural darkness, and do not become gray all at once, but by adding little by little? why it is that all fluids, on mingling, form one whole; that oil, on the contrary, does not suffer the others to be poured into it, [3446] but is ever brought together clearly into its own impenetrable [3447] substance? finally, why the soul also, which is said by you to be immortal and divine, [3448] is sick in men who are sick, senseless in children, worn out in doting, silly, [3449] and crazy old age? Now the weakness and wretched ignorance of these theories is greater on this account, that while it may happen that we at times say something which is true, [3450] we cannot be sure even of this very thing, whether we have spoken the truth at all.

8 And since you have been wont to laugh at our faith

And since you have been wont to laugh at our faith, and with droll jests to pull to pieces our readiness of belief too, say, O wits, soaked and filled with wisdom's pure drought, is there in life any kind of business demanding diligence and activity, which the doers [3451] undertake, engage in, and essay, without believing that it can be done? Do you travel about, do you sail on the sea without believing that you will return home when your business is done? Do you break up the earth with the plough, and fill it with different kinds of seeds without believing that you will gather in the fruit with the changes of the seasons? Do you unite with partners in marriage, [3452] without believing that it will be pure, and a union serviceable to the husband? Do you beget children without believing that they will pass [3453] safely through the different stages of life to the goal of age? Do you commit your sick bodies to the hands of physicians, without believing that diseases can be relieved by their severity being lessened? Do you wage wars with your enemies, without believing that you will carry off the victory by success in battles? [3454] Do you worship and serve the gods without believing that they are, and that they listen graciously to your prayers?

9 What, have you seen with your eyes, and handled with your hands

What, have you seen with your eyes, and handled [3455] with your hands, those things which you write yourselves, which you read from time to time on subjects placed beyond human knowledge? Does not each one trust this author or that? That which any one has persuaded himself is said with truth by another, does he not defend with a kind of assent, as it were, like that of faith? Does not he who says that fire [3456] or water is the origin of all things, pin his faith to Thales or Heraclitus? he who places the cause of all in numbers, to Pythagoras of Samos, and to Archytas? he who divides the soul, and sets up bodiless forms, to Plato, the disciple of Socrates? he who adds a fifth element [3457] to the primary causes, to Aristotle, the father of the Peripatetics? he who threatens the world with destruction by fire, and says that when the time comes it will be set on fire, to Panætius, Chrysippus, Zeno? he who is always fashioning worlds from atoms, [3458] and destroying them, to Epicurus, Democritus, Metrodorus? he who says that nothing is comprehended by man, and that all things are wrapt in dark obscurity, [3459] to Archesilas, [3460] to Carneades? -- to some teacher, in fine, of the old and later Academy?

10 Finally, do not even the leaders and founders of the schools already mentioned

Finally, do not even the leaders and founders of the schools [3461] already mentioned, say those very things [3462] which they do say through belief in their own ideas? For, did Heraclitus see things produced by the changes of fires? Thales, by the condensing of water? [3463] Did Pythagoras see them spring from number? [3464] Did Plato see the bodiless forms? Democritus, the meeting together of the atoms? Or do those who assert that nothing at all can be comprehended by man, know whether what they say is true, so as to [3465] understand that the very proposition which they lay down is a declaration of truth? [3466] Since, then, you have discovered and learned nothing, and are led by credulity to assert all those things which you write, and comprise in thousands of books; what kind of judgment, pray, is this, so unjust that you mock at faith in us, while you see that you have it in common with our readiness of belief? [3467] But you say you believe wise men, well versed in all kinds of learning! -- those, forsooth, who know nothing, and agree in nothing which they say; who join battle with their opponents on behalf of their own opinions, and are always contending fiercely with obstinate hostility; who, overthrowing, refuting, and bringing to nought the one the other's doctrines, have made all things doubtful, and have shown from their very want of agreement that nothing can be known.

11 But, supposing that these things do not at all hinder or prevent your being bound

But, supposing that these things do not at all hinder or prevent your being bound to believe and hearken to them in great measure; [3468] and what reason is there either that you should have more liberty in this respect, or that we should have less? You believe Plato, [3469] Cronius, [3470] Numenius, or any one you please; we believe and confide in Christ. [3471] How unreasonable it is, that when we both abide [3472] by teachers, and have one and the same thing, belief, in common, you should wish it to be granted to you to receive what is so [3473] said by them, but should be unwilling to hear and see what is brought forward by Christ! And yet, if we chose to compare cause with cause, we are better able to point out what we have followed in Christ, than you to point out what you have followed in the philosophers. And we, indeed, have followed in him these things -- those glorious works and most potent virtues which he manifested and displayed in diverse miracles, by which any one might be led to feel the necessity of believing, and might decide with confidence that they were not such as might be regarded as man's, but such as showed some divine and unknown power. What virtues did you follow in the philosophers, that it was more reasonable for you to believe them than for us to believe Christ? Was any one of them ever able by one word, or by a single command, I will not say to restrain, to check [3474] the madness of the sea or the fury of the storm; to restore their sight to the blind, or give it to men blind from their birth; to call the dead back to life; to put an end to the sufferings of years; but -- and this is much easier [3475] -- to heal by one rebuke a boil, a scab, or a thorn fixed in the skin? Not that we deny either that they are worthy of praise for the soundness of their morals, or that they are skilled in all kinds of studies and learning; for we know that they both speak in the most elegant language, and that their words flow in polished periods; that they reason in syllogisms with the utmost acuteness; that they arrange their inferences in due order; [3476] that they express, divide, distinguish principles by definitions; that they say many things about the different kinds of numbers, many things about music; that by their maxims and precepts [3477] they settle the problems of geometry also. But what has that to do with the case? Do enthymemes, syllogisms, and other such things, assure us that these men know what is true? or are they therefore such that credence should necessarily be given to them with regard to very obscure subjects? A comparison of persons must be decided, not by vigour of eloquence, but by the excellence of the works which they have done. He must not [3478] be called a good teacher who has expressed himself clearly, [3479] but he who accompanies his promises with the guarantee of divine works.

12 You bring forward arguments against us, and speculative quibblings

You bring forward arguments against us, and speculative quibblings, [3480] which -- may I say this without displeasing Him -- if Christ Himself were to use in the gatherings of the nations, who would assent? who would listen? who would say that He decided [3481] anything clearly? or who, though he were rash and utterly [3482] credulous, would follow Him when pouring forth vain and baseless statements? His virtues have been made manifest to you, and that unheard-of power over things, whether that which was openly exercised by Him or that which was used [3483] over the whole world by those who proclaimed Him: it has subdued the fires of passion, and caused races, and peoples, and nations most diverse in character to hasten with one accord to accept the same faith. For the deeds can be reckoned up and numbered which have been done in India, [3484] among the Seres, Persians, and Medes; in Arabia, Egypt, in Asia, Syria; among the Galatians, Parthians, Phrygians; in Achaia, Macedonia, Epirus; in all islands and provinces on which the rising and setting sun shines; in Rome herself, finally, the mistress of the world, in which, although men are [3485] busied with the practices introduced by king [3486] Numa, and the superstitious observances of antiquity, they have nevertheless hastened to give up their fathers' mode of life, [3487] and attach themselves to Christian truth. For they had seen the chariot [3488] of Simon Magus, and his fiery car, blown into pieces by the mouth of Peter, and vanish when Christ was named. They had seen him, I say, trusting in false gods, and abandoned by them in their terror, borne down headlong by his own weight, lie prostrate with his legs broken; and then, when he had been carried to Brunda, [3489] worn out with anguish and shame, again cast himself down from the roof of a very lofty house. But all these deeds you neither know nor have wished to know, nor did you ever consider that they were of the utmost importance to you; and while you trust your own judgments, and term that wisdom which is overweening conceit, you have given to deceivers -- to those guilty ones, I say, whose interest it is that the Christian name be degraded -- an opportunity of raising clouds of darkness, and concealing truths of so much importance; of robbing you of faith, and putting scorn in its place, in order that, as they already feel that an end such as they deserve threatens them, they might excite in you also a feeling through which you should run into danger, and be deprived of the divine mercy.

13 Meantime, however, O you who wonder and are astonished at the doctrines of the learned

Meantime, however, O you who wonder and are astonished at the doctrines of the learned, and of philosophy, do you not then think it most unjust to scoff, to jeer at us as though we say foolish and senseless things, when you too are found to say either these or just such things which you laugh at when said and uttered by us? Nor do I address those who, scattered through various bypaths of the schools, have formed this and that insignificant party through diversity of opinion. You, you I address, who zealously follow Mercury, [3490] Plato, and Pythagoras, and the rest of you who are of one mind, and walk in unity in the same paths of doctrine. Do you dare to laugh at us because we [3491] revere and worship the Creator and Lord [3492] of the universe, and because we commit and entrust our hopes to Him? What does your Plato say in the Theætetus, to mention him especially? Does he not exhort the soul to flee from the earth, and, as much as in it lies, to be continually engaged in thought and meditation about Him? [3493] Do you dare to laugh at us, because we say that there will be a resurrection of the dead? And this indeed we confess that we say, but maintain that it is understood by you otherwise than we hold it. What says the same Plato in the Politicus? Does he not say that, when the world has begun to rise out of the west and tend towards the east, [3494] men will again burst forth from the bosom of the earth, aged, grey-haired, bowed down with years; and that when the remoter [3495] years begin to draw near, they will gradually sink down [3496] to the cradles of their infancy, through the same steps by which they now grow to manhood? [3497] Do you dare to laugh at us because we see to the salvation of our souls? -- that is, ourselves care for ourselves: for what are we men, but souls shut up in bodies? -- You, indeed, do not take every pains for their safety, [3498] in that you do not refrain from all vice and passion; about this you are anxious, that you may cleave to your bodies as though inseparably bound to them. [3499] -- What mean those mystic rites, [3500] in which you beseech some unknown powers to be favourable to you, and not put any hindrance in your way to impede you when returning to your native seats?

14 Do you dare to laugh at us when we speak of hell

Do you dare to laugh at us when we speak of hell, [3501] and fires [3502] which cannot be quenched, into which we have learned that souls are cast by their foes and enemies? What, does not your Plato also, in the book which he wrote on the immortality of the soul, name the rivers Acheron, Styx, [3503] Cocytus, and Pyriphlegethon, and assert that in them souls are rolled along, engulfed, and burned up? But though a man of no little wisdom, [3504] and of accurate judgment and discernment, he essays a problem which cannot be solved; so that, while he says that the soul is immortal, everlasting, and without bodily substance, he yet says that they are punished, and makes them suffer pain. [3505] But what man does not see that that which is immortal, which is simple, [3506] cannot be subject to any pain; that that, on the contrary, cannot be immortal which does suffer pain? And yet his opinion is not very far from the truth. For although the gentle and kindly disposed man thought it inhuman cruelty to condemn souls to death, he yet not unreasonably [3507] supposed that they are cast into rivers blazing with masses of flame, and loathsome from their foul abysses. For they are cast in, and being annihilated, pass away vainly in [3508] everlasting destruction. For theirs is an intermediate [3509] state, as has been learned from Christ's teaching; and they are such that they may on the one hand perish if they have not known God, and on the other be delivered from death if they have given heed to His threats [3510] and proffered favours. And to make manifest [3511] what is unknown, this is man's real death, this which leaves nothing behind. For that which is seen by the eyes is only a separation of soul from body, not the last end -- annihilation: [3512] this, I say, is man's real death, when souls which know not God shall [3513] be consumed in long-protracted torment with raging fire, into which certain fiercely cruel beings shall [3514] cast them, who were unknown [3515] before Christ, and brought to light only by His wisdom.

15 Wherefore there is no reason that that should mislead us

Wherefore there is no reason that that [3516] should mislead us, should hold out vain hopes to us, which is said by some men till now unheard of, [3517] and carried away by an extravagant opinion of themselves, that souls are immortal, next in point of rank to the God and ruler of the world, descended from that parent and sire, divine, wise, learned, and not within reach of the body by contact. [3518] Now, because this is true and certain, and because we have been produced by Him who is perfect without flaw, we live unblameably, I suppose, and therefore without blame; are good, just, and upright, in nothing depraved; no passion overpowers, no lust degrades us; we maintain vigorously the unremitting practice of all the virtues. And because all our souls have one origin, we therefore think exactly alike; we do not differ in manners, we do not differ in beliefs; we all know God; and there are not as many opinions as there are men in the world, nor are these divided in infinite variety. [3519]

16 But, they say, while we are moving swiftly down towards our mortal bodies

But, they say, while we are moving swiftly down towards our mortal bodies, [3520] causes pursue us from the world's circles, [3521] through the working of which we become bad, ay, most wicked; burn with lust and anger, spend our life in shameful deeds, and are given over to the lust of all by the prostitution of our bodies for hire. And how can the material unite with the immaterial? or how can that which God has made, be led by weaker causes to degrade itself through the practice of vice? Will you lay aside your habitual arrogance, [3522] O men, who claim God as your Father, and maintain that you are immortal, just as He is? Will you inquire, examine, search what you are yourselves, whose you are, of what parentage you are supposed to be, what you do in the world, in what way you are born, how you leap to life? Will you, laying aside all partiality, consider in the silence of your thoughts that we are creatures either quite like the rest, or separated by no great difference? For what is there to show that we do not resemble them? or what excellence is in us, such that we scorn to be ranked as creatures? Their bodies are built up on bones, and bound closely together by sinews; and our bodies are in like manner built up on bones, and bound closely together by sinews. They inspire the air through nostrils, and in breathing expire it again; and we in like manner drew in the air, and breathed it out with frequent respirations. They have been arranged in classes, female and male; we, too, have been fashioned by our Creator into the same sexes. [3523] Their young are born from the womb, and are begotten through union of the sexes; and we are born from sexual embraces, and are brought forth and sent into life from our mothers' wombs. They are supported by eating and drinking, and get rid of the filth which remains by the lower parts; and we are supported by eating and drinking, and that which nature refuses we deal with in the same way. Their care is to ward off death-bringing famine, and of necessity to be on the watch for food. What else is our aim in the business of life, which presses so much upon us, [3524] but to seek the means by which the danger of starvation may be avoided, and carking anxiety put away? They are exposed to disease and hunger, and at last lose their strength by reason of age. What, then? are we not exposed to these evils, and are we not in like manner weakened by noxious diseases, destroyed by wasting age? But if that, too, which is said in the more hidden mysteries is true, that the souls of wicked men, on leaving their human bodies, pass into cattle and other creatures, [3525] it is even more clearly shown that we are allied to them, and not separated by any great interval, since it is on the same ground that both we and they are said to be living creatures, and to act as such.

17 But we have reason, one will say, and excel the whole race of dumb animals

But we have reason, one will say, and excel the whole race of dumb animals in understanding. I might believe that this was quite true, if all men lived rationally and wisely, never swerved aside from their duty, abstained from what is forbidden, and withheld themselves from baseness, and if no one through folly and the blindness of ignorance demanded what is injurious and dangerous to himself. I should wish, however, to know what this reason is, through which we are more excellent than all the tribes of animals. Is it because we have made for ourselves houses, by which we can avoid the cold of winter and heat of summer? What! do not the other animals show forethought in this respect? Do we not see some build nests as dwellings for themselves in the most convenient situations; others shelter and secure themselves in rocks and lofty crags; others burrow in the ground, and prepare for themselves strongholds and lairs in the pits which they have dug out? But if nature, which gave them life, had chosen to give to them also hands to help them, they too would, without doubt, raise lofty buildings and strike out new works of art. [3526] Yet, even in those things which they make with beaks and claws, we see that there are many appearances of reason and wisdom which we men are unable to copy, however much we ponder them, although we have hands to serve us dexterously in every kind of work.

18 They have not learned, I will be told, to make clothing

They have not learned, I will be told, to make clothing, seats, ships, and ploughs, nor, in fine, the other furniture which family life requires. These are not the gifts of science, but the suggestions of most pressing necessity; nor did the arts descend with men's souls from the inmost heavens, but here on earth have they all been painfully sought out and brought to light, [3527] and gradually acquired in process of time by careful thought. But if the soul [3528] had in itself the knowledge which it is fitting that a race should have indeed which is divine and immortal, all men would from the first know everything; nor would there be an age unacquainted with any art, or not furnished with practical knowledge. But now a life of want and in need of many things, noticing some things happen accidentally to its advantage, while it imitates, experiments, and tries, while it fails, remoulds, changes, from continual failure has procured for itself [3529] and wrought out some slight acquaintance with the arts, and brought to one issue the advances of many ages.

19 But if men either knew themselves thoroughly, or had the slightest knowledge of God

But if men either knew themselves thoroughly, or had the slightest knowledge of God, [3530] they would never claim as their own a divine and immortal nature; nor would they think themselves something great because they have made for themselves gridirons, basins, and bowls, [3531] because they have made under-shirts, outer-shirts, cloaks, plaids, robes of state, knives, cuirasses and swords, mattocks, hatchets, ploughs. Never, I say, carried away by pride and arrogance, would they believe themselves to be deities of the first rank, and fellows of the highest in his exaltation, [3532] because they [3533] had devised the arts of grammar, music, oratory, and geometry. For we do not see what is so wonderful in these arts, that because of their discovery the soul should be believed to be above the sun as well as all the stars, to surpass both in grandeur and essence the whole universe, of which these are parts. For what else do these assert that they can either declare or teach, than that we may learn to know the rules and differences of nouns, the intervals in the sounds of different tones, that we may speak persuasively in lawsuits, that we may measure the confines of the earth? Now, if the soul had brought these arts with it from the celestial regions, and it were impossible not to know them, all men would long before this be busied with them over all the earth, nor would any race of men be found which would not be equally and similarly instructed in them all. But now how few musicians, logicians, and geometricians are there in the world! how few orators, poets, critics! From which it is clear, as has been said pretty frequently, that these things were discovered under the pressure of time and circumstances, and that the soul did not fly hither divinely [3534] taught, because neither are all learned, nor can all learn; and [3535] there are very many among them somewhat deficient in shrewdness, and stupid, and they are constrained to apply themselves to learning only by fear of stripes. But if it were a fact that the things which we learn are but reminiscences [3536] -- as has been maintained in the systems of the ancients -- as we start from the same truth, we should all have learned alike, and remember alike -- not have diverse, very numerous, and inconsistent opinions. Now, however, seeing that we each assert different things, it is clear and manifest that we have brought nothing from heaven, but become acquainted with what has arisen here, and maintain what has taken firm root in our thoughts.

20 And, that we may show you more clearly and distinctly what is the worth of

And, that we may show you more clearly and distinctly what is the worth of man, whom you believe to be very like the higher power, conceive this idea; and because it can be done if we come into direct contact with it, let us conceive it just as if we came into contact. Let us then imagine a place dug out in the earth, fit for dwelling in, formed into a chamber, enclosed by a roof and walls, not cold in winter, not too warm in summer, but so regulated and equable that we suffer neither cold [3537] nor the violent heat of summer. To this let there not come any sound or cry whatever, [3538] of bird, of beast, of storm, of man -- of any noise, in fine, or of the thunder's [3539] terrible crash. Let us next devise a way in which it may be lighted not by the introduction of fire, nor by the sight of the sun, but let there be some counterfeit [3540] to imitate sunlight, darkness being interposed. [3541] Let there not be one door, nor a direct entrance, but let it be approached by tortuous windings, and let it never be thrown open unless when it is absolutely necessary.

21 Now, as we have prepared a place for our idea

Now, as we have prepared a place for our idea, let us next receive some one born to dwell there, where there is nothing but an empty void, [3542] -- one of the race of Plato, namely, or Pythagoras, or some one of those who are regarded as of superhuman wit, or have been declared most wise by the oracles of the gods. And when this has been done, he must then be nourished and brought up on suitable food. Let us therefore provide a nurse also, who shall come to him always naked, ever silent, uttering not a word, and shall not open her mouth and lips to speak at all, but after suckling him, and doing what else is necessary, shall leave him fast asleep, and remain day and night before the closed doors; for it is usually necessary that the nurse's care should be near at hand, and that she should watch his varying motions. But when the child begins to need to be supported by more substantial food, let it be borne in by the same nurse, still undressed, and maintaining the same unbroken silence. Let the food, too, which is carried in be always precisely the same, with no difference in the material, and without being re-cooked by means of different flavours; but let it be either pottage of millet, or bread of spelt, or, in imitation of the ancients, chestnuts roasted in the hot ashes, or berries plucked from forest trees. Let him moreover, never learn to drink wine, and let nothing else be used to quench his thirst than pure cold water from the spring, and that if possible raised to his lips in the hollow of his hands. For habit, growing into second nature, will become familiar from custom; nor will his desire extend [3543] further, not knowing that there is anything more to be sought after.

22 To what, then, you ask, do these things tend? We have brought them forward in

To what, then, you ask, do these things tend? We have brought them forward in order that -- as it has been believed that the souls of men are divine, and therefore immortal, and that they come to their human bodies with all knowledge -- we may make trial from this child, whom we have supposed to be brought up in this way, whether this is credible, or has been rashly believed and taken for granted, in consequence of deceitful anticipation. Let us suppose, then, that he grows up, reared in a secluded, lonely spot, spending as many years as you choose, twenty or thirty, -- nay, let him be brought into the assemblies of men when he has lived through forty years; and if it is true that he is a part of the divine essence, and [3544] lives here sprung from the fountains of life, before he makes acquaintance with anything, or is made familiar with human speech, let him be questioned and answer who he is, or from what father in what regions he was born, how or in what way brought up; with what work or business he has been engaged during the former part of his life. Will he not, then, stand speechless, with less wit and sense than any beast, block, stone? Will he not, when brought into contact with [3545] strange and previously unknown things, be above all ignorant of himself? If you ask, will he be able to say what the sun is, the earth, seas, stars, clouds, mist, showers, thunder, snow, hail? Will he be able to know what trees are, herbs, or grasses, a bull, a horse, or ram, a camel, elephant, or kite? [3546]

23 If you give a grape to him when hungry

If you give a grape to him when hungry, a must-cake, an onion, a thistle, [3547] a cucumber, a fig, will he know that his hunger can be appeased by all these, or of what kind each should be to be fit for eating? [3548] If you made a very great fire, or surrounded him with venomous creatures, will he not go through the midst of flames, vipers, tarantulæ, [3549] without knowing that they are dangerous, and ignorant even of fear? But again, if you set before him garments and furniture, both for city and country life, will he indeed be able to distinguish [3550] for what each is fitted? to discharge what service they are adapted? Will he declare for what purposes of dress the stragula [3551] was made, the coif, [3552] zone, [3553] fillet, cushion, handkerchief, cloak, veil, napkin, furs, [3554] shoe, sandal, boot? What, if you go on to ask what a wheel is, or a sledge, [3555] a winnowing-fan, jar, tub, an oil-mill, ploughshare, or sieve, a mill-stone, ploughtail, or light hoe; a carved seat, a needle, a strigil, a laver, an open seat, a ladle, a platter, a candlestick, a goblet, a broom, a cup, a bag; a lyre, pipe, silver, brass, gold, [3556] a book, a rod, a roll, [3557] and the rest of the equipment by which the life of man is surrounded and maintained? Will he not in such circumstances, as we said, like an ox [3558] or an ass, a pig, or any beast more senseless, look [3559] at these indeed, observing their various shapes, but [3560] not knowing what they all are, and ignorant of the purpose for which they are kept? If he were in any way compelled to utter a sound, would he not with gaping mouth shout something indistinctly, as the dumb usually do?

24 Why, O Plato, do you in the Meno put to a young slave certain questions

Why, O Plato, do you in the Meno [3561] put to a young slave certain questions relating to the doctrines of number, and strive to prove by his answers that what we learn we do not learn, but that we merely call back to memory those things which we knew in former times? Now, if he answers you correctly, -- for it would not be becoming that we should refuse credit to what you say, -- he is led to do so not by his real knowledge, [3562] but by his intelligence; and it results from his having some acquaintance with numbers, through using them every day, that when questioned he follows your meaning, and that the very process of multiplication always prompts him. But if you are really assured that the souls of men are immortal and endowed with knowledge when they fly hither, cease to question that youth whom you see to be ignorant [3563] and accustomed to the ways of men; [3564] call to you that man of forty years, and ask of him, not anything out of the way or obscure about triangles, about squares, not what a cube is, or a second power, [3565] the ratio of nine to eight, or finally, of four to three; but ask him that with which all are acquainted -- what twice two are, or twice three. We wish to see, we wish to know, what answer he gives when questioned -- whether he solves the desired problem. In such a case will he perceive, although his ears are open, whether you are saying anything, or asking anything, or requiring some answer from him? and will he not stand like a stock, or the Marpesian rock, [3566] as the saying is, dumb and speechless, not understanding or knowing even this -- whether you are talking with him or with another, conversing with another or with him; [3567] whether that is intelligible speech which you utter, or merely a cry having no meaning, but drawn out and protracted to no purpose?

25 What say you, O men, who assign to yourselves too much of an excellence not

What say you, O men, who assign to yourselves too much of an excellence not your own? Is this the learned soul which you describe, immortal, perfect, divine, holding the fourth place under God the Lord of the universe, and under the kindred spirits, [3568] and proceeding from the fountains of life? [3569] This is that precious being man, endowed [3570] with the loftiest powers of reason, who is said to be a microcosm, and to be made and formed after the fashion of the whole universe, superior, as has been seen, to no brute, more senseless than stock or stone; for he is unacquainted with men, and always lives, loiters idly in the still deserts although he were rich, [3571] lived years without number, and never escaped from the bonds of the body. But when he goes to school, you say, and is instructed by the teaching of masters, he is made wise, learned, and lays aside the ignorance which till now clung to him. And an ass, and an ox as well, if compelled by constant practice, learn to plough and grind; a horse, to submit to the yoke, and obey the reins in running; [3572] a camel, to kneel down when being either loaded or unloaded; a dove, when set free, to fly back to its master's house; a dog, on finding game, to check and repress its barking; a parrot, too, to articulate words; and a crow to utter names.

26 But when I hear the soul spoken of as something extraordinary

But when I hear the soul spoken of as something extraordinary, as akin and very nigh to God, and as coming hither knowing all about past times, I would have it teach, not learn; and not go back to the rudiments, as the saying is, after being advanced in knowledge, but hold fast the truths it has learned when it enters its earthly body. [3573] For unless it were so, how could it be discerned whether the soul recalls to memory or learns for the first time that which it hears; seeing that it is much easier to believe that it learns what it is unacquainted with, than that it has forgot what it knew but a little before, and that its power of recalling former things is lost through the interposition of the body? And what becomes of the doctrine that souls, being bodiless, do not have substance? For that which is not connected with [3574] any bodily form is not hampered by the opposition of another, nor can anything be led [3575] to destroy that which cannot be touched by what is set against it. For as a proportion established in bodies remains unaffected and secure, though it be lost to sight in a thousand cases; so must souls, if they are not material, as is asserted, retain their knowledge [3576] of the past, however thoroughly they may have been enclosed in bodies. [3577] Moreover, the same reasoning not only shows that they are not incorporeal, but deprives them of all [3578] immortality even, and refers them to the limits within which life is usually closed. For whatever is led by some inducement to change and alter itself, so that it cannot retain its natural state, must of necessity be considered essentially passive. But that which is liable and exposed to suffering, is declared to be corruptible by that very capacity of suffering.

27 So then, if souls lose all their knowledge on being fettered with the body

So then, if souls lose all their knowledge on being fettered with the body, they must experience something of such a nature that it makes them become blindly forgetful. [3579] For they cannot, without becoming subject to anything whatever, either lay aside their knowledge while they maintain their natural state, or without change in themselves pass into a different state. Nay, we rather think that what is one, immortal, simple, in whatever it may be, must always retain its own nature, and that it neither should nor could be subject to anything, if indeed it purposes to endure and abide within the limits of true immortality. For all suffering is a passage for death and destruction, a way leading to the grave, and bringing an end of life which may not be escaped from; and if souls are liable to it, and yield to its influence and assaults, they indeed have life given to them only for present use, not as a secured possession, [3580] although some come to other conclusions, and put faith in their own arguments with regard to so important a matter.

28 And yet, that we may not be as ignorant when we leave you as before

And yet, that we may not be as ignorant when we leave you as before, let us hear from you [3581] how you say that the soul, on being enwrap in an earthly body, has no recollection of the past; while, after being actually placed in the body itself, and rendered almost senseless by union with it, it holds tenaciously and faithfully the things which many years before, eighty if you choose to say so, or even more, it either did, or suffered, or said, or heard. For if, through being hampered by the body, it does not remember those things which it knew long ago, and before it came into this world, [3582] there is more reason that it should forget those things which it has done from time to time since being shut up in the body, than those which it did before entering it, [3583] while not yet connected with men. For the same body which [3584] deprives of memory the soul which enters it, [3585] should cause what is done within itself also to be wholly forgotten; for one cause cannot bring about two results, and these opposed to each other, so as to make some things to be forgotten, and allow others to be remembered by him who did them. But if souls, as you call them, are prevented and hindered by their fleshly members from recalling their former knowledge, [3586] how do they remember what has been arranged [3587] in these very bodies, and know that they are spirits, and have no bodily substance, being exalted by their condition as immortal beings? [3588] how do they know what rank they hold in the universe, in what order they have been set apart from other beings? how they have come to these, the lowest parts of the universe? what properties they acquired, and from what circles, [3589] in gliding along towards these regions? How, I say, do they know that they were very learned, and have lost their knowledge by the hindrance which their bodies afford them? For of this very thing also they should have been ignorant, whether their union with the body had brought any stain upon them; for to know what you were, and what to-day you are not, is no sign that you have lost your memory, [3590] but a proof and evidence that it is quite sound. [3591]

29 Now, since it is so, cease, I pray you

Now, since it is so, cease, I pray you, cease to rate trifling and unimportant things at immense values. Cease to place man in the upper ranks, since he is of the lowest; and in the highest orders, seeing that his person only is taken account of, [3592] that he is needy, poverty-stricken in his house and dwelling, [3593] and was never entitled to be declared of illustrious descent. For while, as just men and upholders of righteousness, you should have subdued pride and arrogance, by the evils [3594] of which we are all uplifted and puffed up with empty vanity; you not only hold that these evils arise naturally, but -- and this is much worse -- you have also added causes by which vice should increase, and wickedness remain incorrigible. For what man is there, although of a disposition which ever shuns what is of bad repute and shameful, who, when he hears it said by very wise men that the soul is immortal, and not subject to the decrees of the fates, [3595] would not throw himself headlong into all kinds of vice, and fearlessly [3596] engage in and set about unlawful things? who would not, in short, gratify his desires in all things demanded by his unbridled lust, strengthened even further by its security and freedom from punishment? [3597] For what will hinder him from doing so? The fear of a power above and divine judgment? And how shall he be overcome by any fear or dread who has been persuaded that he is immortal, just as the supreme God Himself, and that no sentence can be pronounced upon him by God, seeing that there is the same immortality in both, and that the one immortal being cannot be troubled by the other, which is only its equal? [3598]

30 But will he not be terrified by the punishments in Hades

But will he not be terrified by [3599] the punishments in Hades, of which we have heard, assuming also, as they do, many forms of torture? And who [3600] will be so senseless and ignorant of consequences, [3601] as to believe that to imperishable spirits either the darkness of Tartarus, or rivers of fire, or marshes with miry abysses, or wheels sent whirling through the air, [3602] can in any wise do harm? For that which is beyond reach, and not subject to the laws of destruction, though it be surrounded by all the flames of the raging streams, be rolled in the mire, overwhelmed by the fall of overhanging rocks and by the overthrow of huge mountains, must remain safe and untouched without suffering any deadly harm. Moreover, that conviction not only leads on to wickedness, from the very freedom to sin which it suggests, but even takes away the ground of philosophy itself, and asserts that it is vain to undertake its study, because of the difficulty of the work, which leads to no result. For if it is true that souls know no end, and are ever [3603] advancing with all generations, what danger is there in giving themselves up to the pleasures of sense -- despising and neglecting the virtues by regard to which life is more stinted in its pleasures, and becomes less attractive -- and in letting loose their boundless lust to range eagerly and unchecked through [3604] all kinds of debauchery? Is it the danger of being worn out by such pleasures, and corrupted by vicious effeminacy? And how can that be corrupted which is immortal, which always exists, and is subject to no suffering? Is it the danger of being polluted by foul and base deeds? And how can that be defiled which has no corporeal substance; or where can corruption seat itself, where there is no place on which the mark of this very corruption should fasten? But again, if souls draw near to the gates of death, [3605] as is laid down in the doctrine of Epicurus, in this case, too, there is no sufficient reason why philosophy should be sought out, even if it is true that by it [3606] souls are cleansed and made pure from all uncleanness. [3607] For if they all [3608] die, and even in the body [3609] the feeling characteristic of life perishes, and is lost; [3610] it is not only a very great mistake, but shows stupid blindness, to curb innate desires, to restrict your mode of life within narrow limits, not yield to your inclinations, and do what our passions have demanded and urged, since no rewards await you for so great toil when the day of death comes, and you shall be freed from the bonds of the body.

31 A certain neutral character, then, and undecided and doubtful nature of the soul

A certain neutral character, then, and undecided and doubtful nature of the soul, has made room for philosophy, and found out a reason for its being sought after: while, that is, that fellow [3611] is full of dread because of evil deeds of which he is guilty; another conceives great hopes if he shall do no evil, and pass his life in obedience to [3612] duty and justice. Thence it is that among learned men, and men endowed with excellent abilities, there is strife as to the nature of the soul, and some say that it is subject to death, and cannot take upon itself the divine substance; while others maintain that it is immortal, and cannot sink under the power of death. [3613] But this is brought about by the law of the soul's neutral character: [3614] because, on the one hand, arguments present themselves to the one party by which it is found that the soul [3615] is capable of suffering, and perishable; and, on the other hand, are not wanting to their opponents, by which it is shown that the soul is divine and immortal.

32 Since these things are so, and we have been taught by the greatest teacher that

Since these things are so, and we have been taught by the greatest teacher that souls are set not far from the gaping [3616] jaws of death; that they can, nevertheless, have their lives prolonged by the favour and kindness of the Supreme Ruler if only they try and study to know Him, -- for the knowledge of Him is a kind of vital leaven [3617] and cement to bind together that which would otherwise fly apart, -- let them, [3618] then, laying aside their savage and barbarous nature, return to gentler ways, that they may be able to be ready for that which shall be given. [3619] What reason is there that we should be considered by you brutish, as it were, and stupid, if we have yielded and given ourselves up to God our deliverer, because of these fears? We often seek out remedies for wounds and the poisoned bites of serpents, and defend ourselves by means of thin plates [3620] sold by Psylli [3621] or Marsi, and other hucksters [3622] and impostors; and that we may not be inconvenienced by cold or intense heat, [3623] we provide with anxious and careful diligence coverings in [3624] houses and clothing.

33 Seeing that the fear of death, that is, the ruin of our souls

Seeing that the fear of death, that is, the ruin of our souls, menaces [3625] us, in what are we not acting, as we all are wont, from a sense of what will be to our advantage, [3626] in that we hold Him fast who assures us that He will be our deliverer from such danger, embrace Him, and entrust our souls to His care, [3627] if only that [3628] interchange is right? You rest the salvation of your souls on yourselves, and are assured that by your own exertions alone [3629] you become gods; but we, on the contrary hold out no hope to ourselves from our own weakness, for we see that our nature has no strength, and is overcome by its own passions in every strife for anything. [3630] You think that, as soon as you pass away, freed from the bonds of your fleshly members, you will find wings [3631] with which you may rise to heaven and soar to the stars. We shun such presumption. and do not think [3632] that it is in our power to reach the abodes [3633] above, since we have no certainty as to this even, whether we deserve to receive life and be freed from the law of death. You suppose that without the aid of others [3634] you will return to the master's palace as if to your own home, no one hindering you; but we, on the contrary, neither have any expectation that this can be unless by the will of the Lord of all, nor think that so much power and licence are given to any man.

34 Since this is the case, what, pray, is so unfair as that we should be

Since this is the case, what, pray, is so unfair as that we should be looked on by you as silly in that readiness of belief at which you scoff, while we see that you both have like beliefs, and entertain the same hopes? If we are thought deserving of ridicule because we hold out to ourselves such a hope, the same ridicule awaits you too, who claim for yourselves the hope of immortality. If you hold and follow a rational course, grant to us also a share in it. If Plato in the Phædrus, [3635] or another of this band of philosophers, had promised these joys to us -- that is, a way to escape death, or were able to provide it and bring us to the end which he had promised, [3636] it would have been fitting that we should seek to honour him from whom we look for so great a gift and favour. Now, since Christ has not only promised it, but also shown by His virtues, which were so great, that it can be made good, what strange thing do we do, and on what grounds are we charged with folly, if we bow down and worship His name [3637] and majesty from whom we expect to receive both these blessings, that we may at once escape a death of suffering, and be enriched with eternal life? [3638]

35 But, say my opponents, if souls are mortal and of neutral character

But, say my opponents, if souls are mortal and [3639] of neutral character, how can they from their neutral properties become immortal? If we should say that we do not know this, and only believe it because said by [3640] One mightier than we, when will our readiness of belief seem mistaken if we believe [3641] that to the almighty King nothing is hard, nothing difficult, and that [3642] what is impossible to us is possible to Him and at His command? [3643] For is there anything which may withstand His will, or does it not follow [3644] of necessity that what He has willed must be done? Are we to infer from our distinctions what either can or cannot be done; and are we not to consider that our reason is as mortal as we ourselves are, and is of no importance with the Supreme? And yet, O ye who do not believe that the soul is of a neutral character, and that it is held on the line midway between life and death, are not all whatever whom fancy supposes to exist, gods, angels, dæmons, or whatever else is their name, themselves too of a neutral character, and liable to change [3645] in the uncertainty of their future? [3646] For if we all agree that there is one Father of all, who alone is immortal and unbegotten, and if nothing at all is found before Him which could be named, [3647] it follows as a consequence that all these whom the imagination of men believes to be gods, have been either begotten by Him or produced at His bidding. Are they [3648] produced and begotten? they are also later in order and time: if later in order and time, they must have an origin, and beginning of birth and life; but that which has an entrance into and beginning of life in its first stages, it of necessity follows, should have an end also.

36 But the gods are said to be immortal.

But the gods are said to be immortal. Not by nature, then, but by the good-will and favour of God their Father. In the same way, then, in which the boon [3649] of immortality is God's gift to these who were assuredly produced, [3650] will He deign to confer eternal life upon souls also, although fell death seems able to cut them off and blot them out of existence in utter annihilation. [3651] The divine Plato, many of whose thoughts are worthy of God, and not such as the vulgar hold, in that discussion and treatise entitled the *Timæus*, says that the gods and the world are corruptible by nature, and in no wise beyond the reach of death, but that their being is ever maintained [3652] by the will of God, their King and Prince; [3653] for that that even which has been duly clasped and bound together by the surest bands is preserved only by God's goodness; and that by no other than [3654] by Him who bound their elements together can they both be dissolved if necessary, and have the command given which preserves their being. [3655] If this is the case, then, and it is not fitting to think or believe otherwise, why do you wonder that we speak of the soul as neutral in its character, when Plato says that it is so even with the deities, [3656] but that their life is kept up by God's [3657] grace, without break or end? For if by chance you knew it not, and because of its novelty it was unknown to you before, now, though late, receive and learn from Him who knows and has made it known, Christ, that souls are not the children of the Supreme Ruler, and did not begin to be self-conscious, and to be spoken of in their own special character after being created by Him; [3658] but that some other is their parent, far enough removed from the chief in rank and power, of His court, however, and distinguished by His high and exalted birthright.

37 But if souls were, as is said, the Lord's children

But if souls were, as is said, the Lord's children, and begotten by [3659] the Supreme Power, nothing would have been wanting to make them perfect, as they would have been born with the most perfect excellence: they would all have had one mind, and been of one accord; they would always dwell in the royal palace; and would not, passing by the seats of bliss in which they had learned and kept in mind the noblest teachings, rashly seek these regions of earth, that [3660] they might live enclosed in gloomy bodies amid phlegm and blood, among these bags of filth and most disgusting [3661] vessels of urine. But, an opponent will say, it was necessary that these parts too should be peopled, and therefore Almighty God sent souls hither to form some colonies, as it were. And of what use are men to the world, and on account of what are they necessary, [3662] so that they may not be believed to have been destined to live here and be the tenants of an earthly body for no purpose? They have a share, my opponent says, in perfecting the completeness of this immense mass, and without their addition this whole universe is incomplete and imperfect. What then? If there were not men, would the world cease to discharge its functions? would the stars not go through their changes? would there not be summers and winters? would the blasts of the winds be lulled? and from the clouds gathered and hanging overhead would not the showers come down upon the earth to temper droughts? But now [3663] all things must go on in their own courses, and not give up following the arrangement established by nature, even if there should be no name of man heard in the world, and this earth should be still with the silence of an unpeopled desert. How then is it alleged that it was necessary that an inhabitant should be given to these regions, since it is clear that by man comes nothing to aid in perfecting the world, and that all his exertions regard his private convenience always, and never cease to aim at his own advantage?

38 For, to begin with what is important, what advantage is it to the world that

For, to begin with what is important, what advantage is it to the world that the mightiest kings are here? What, that there are tyrants, lords, and other innumerable and very illustrious powers? What, that there are generals of the greatest experience in war, skilled in taking cities; soldiers steady and utterly invincible in battles of cavalry, or in fighting hand to hand on foot? What, that there are orators, grammarians, poets, writers, logicians, musicians, ballet-dancers, mimics, actors, singers, trumpeters, flute and reed players? What, that there are runners, boxers, charioteers, vaulters, [3664] walkers on stilts, rope-dancers, jugglers? What, that there are dealers in salt fish, salters, fishmongers, perfumers, goldsmiths, bird-catchers, weavers of winnowing fans and baskets of rushes? What, that there are fullers, workers in wool, embroiderers, cooks, confectioners, dealers in mules, pimps, butchers, harlots? What, that there are other kinds of dealers? What do the other kinds of professors and arts, for the enumeration of which all life would be too short, contribute to the plan and constitution [3665] of the world, that we should believe [3666] that it could not have been founded without men, and would not attain its completeness without the addition of [3667] a wretched and useless being's exertion? [3668]

39 But perhaps, some one will urge, the Ruler of the world sent hither souls sprung

But perhaps, some one will urge, the Ruler of the world sent hither souls sprung from Himself for this purpose -- a very rash thing for a man to say [3669] -- that they which had been divine [3670] with Him, not coming into contact with the body and earthly limits, [3671] should be buried in the germs of men, spring from the womb, burst into and keep up the silliest wailings, draw the breasts in sucking, besmear and bedaub themselves with their own filth, then be hushed by the swaying [3672] of the frightened nurse and by the sound of rattles. [3673] Did He send souls hither for this reason, that they which had been but now sincere and of blameless virtue should learn as [3674] men to feign, to dissemble, to lie, to cheat, [3675] to deceive, to entrap with a flatterer's abjectness; to conceal one thing in the heart, [3676] express another in the countenance; to ensnare, to beguile [3677] the ignorant with crafty devices, to seek out poisons by means of numberless arts suggested by bad feelings, and to be fashioned [3678] with deceitful changeableness to suit circumstances? Was it for this He sent souls, that, living till then in calm and undisturbed tranquillity, they might find in [3679] their bodies causes by which to become fierce and savage, cherish hatred and enmity, make war upon each other, subdue and overthrow states; load themselves with, and give themselves up to the yoke of slavery; and finally, be put the one in the other's power, having changed the condition [3680] in which they were born? Was it for this He sent souls, that, being made unmindful of the truth, and forgetful of what God was, they should make supplication to images which cannot move; address as superhuman deities pieces of wood, brass, and stones; ask aid of them [3681] with the blood of slain animals; make no mention of Himself: nay more, that some of them should doubt their own existence, or deny altogether that anything exists? Was it for this He sent souls, that they which in their own abodes had been of one mind, equals in intellect and knowledge, after that they put on mortal forms, should be divided by differences of opinion; should have different views as to what is just, useful, and right; should contend about the objects of desire and aversion; should define the highest good and greatest evil differently; that, in seeking to know the truth of things, they should be hindered by their obscurity; and, as if bereft of eyesight, should see nothing clearly, [3682] and, wandering from the truth, [3683] should be led through uncertain bypaths of fancy?

40 Was it for this He sent souls hither, that while the other creatures are fed

Was it for this He sent souls hither, that while the other creatures are fed by what springs up spontaneously, and is produced without being sown, and do not seek for themselves the protection or covering of houses or garments, they should be under the sad necessity [3684] of building houses for themselves at very great expense and with never-ending toils, preparing coverings for their limbs, making different kinds of furniture for the wants [3685] of daily life, borrowing help for [3686] their weakness from the dumb creatures; using violence to the earth that it might not give forth its own herbs, but might send up the fruits required; and when they had put forth all their strength [3687] in subduing the earth, should be compelled to lose the hope with which they had laboured [3688] through blight, hail, drought; and at last forced by [3689] hunger to throw themselves on human bodies; and when set free, to be parted from their human forms by a wasting sickness? Was it for this that they which, while they abode with Him, had never had any longing for property, should have become exceedingly covetous, and with insatiable craving be inflamed to an eager desire of possessing; that they should dig up lofty mountains, and turn the unknown bowels of the earth into materials, and to purposes of a different kind; should force their way to remote nations at the risk of life, and, in exchanging goods always catch at a high price for what they sell, and a low one [3690] for what they buy, take interest at greedy and excessive rates, and add to the number of their sleepless nights spent in reckoning up thousands [3691] wrung from the life-blood of wretched men; should be ever extending the limits of their possessions, and, though they were to make whole provinces one estate, should weary the forum with suits for one tree, for one furrow; should hate rancorously their friends and brethren?

41 Was it for this He sent souls, that they which shortly before had been gentle

Was it for this He sent souls, that they which shortly before had been gentle and ignorant of what it is to be moved by fierce passions, should build for themselves markets and amphitheatres, places of blood and open wickedness, in the one of which they should see men devoured and torn in pieces by wild beasts, and themselves slay others for no demerit but to please and gratify the spectators, [3692] and should spend those very days on which such wicked deeds were done in general enjoyment, and keep holiday with festive gaiety; while in the other, again, they should tear asunder the flesh of wretched animals, some snatch one part, others another, as dogs and vultures do, should grind them with their teeth, and give to their utterly insatiable [3693] maw, and that, surrounded by [3694] faces so fierce and savage, those should bewail their lot whom the straits of poverty withheld from such repasts; [3695] that their life should be [3696] happy and prosperous while such barbarous doings defiled their mouths and face? Was it for this He sent souls, that, forgetting their importance and dignity as divine, they should acquire gems, precious stones, pearls, at the expense of their purity; should entwine their necks with these, pierce the tips of their ears, bind [3697] their foreheads with fillets, seek for cosmetics [3698] to deck their bodies, [3699] darken their eyes with henna; nor, though in the forms of men, blush to curl their hair with cringing-pins, to make the skin of the body smooth, to walk with bare knees, and with every other kind of wantonness, both to lay aside the strength of their manhood, and to grow in effeminacy to a woman's habits and luxury?

42 Was it for this He sent souls, that some should infest the highways and roads

Was it for this He sent souls, that some should infest the highways and roads, [3700] others ensnare the unwary, forge [3701] false wills, prepare poisoned draughts; that they should break open houses by night, tamper with slaves, steal and drive away, not act uprightly, and betray their trust perfidiously; that they should strike out delicate dainties for the palate; that in cooking fowls they should know how to catch the fat as it drips; that they should make cracknels and sausages, [3702] force-meats, tit-bits, Lucanian sausages, with these [3703] a sow's udder and iced [3704] puddings? Was it for this He sent souls, that beings [3705] of a sacred and august race should here practise singing and piping; that they should swell out their cheeks in blowing the flute; that they should take the lead in singing impure songs, and raising the loud din of the castanets, [3706] by which another crowd of souls should be led in their wantonness to abandon themselves to clumsy motions, to dance and sing, form rings of dancers, and finally, raising their haunches and hips, float along with a tremulous motion of the loins? Was it for this He sent souls, that in men they should become impure, in women harlots, players on the triangle [3707] and psaltery; that they should prostitute their bodies for hire, should abandon themselves to the lust of all, [3708] ready in the brothels, to be met with in the stews, [3709] ready to submit to anything, prepared to do violence to their mouth even? [3710]

43 What say you, O offspring and descendants of the Supreme Deity? Did these souls

What say you, O offspring and descendants of the Supreme Deity? Did these souls, then, wise, and sprung from the first causes, become acquainted with such forms of baseness, crime, and bad feeling? and were they ordered to dwell here, [3711] and be clothed with the garment of the human body, in order that they might engage in, might practise these evil deeds, and that very frequently? And is there a man with any sense of reason who thinks that the world was established because of them, and not rather that it was set up as a seat and home, in which every kind of wickedness should be committed daily, all evil deeds be done, plots, impostures, frauds, covetousness, robberies, violence, impiety, all that is presumptuous, indecent, base, disgraceful, [3712] and all the other evil deeds which men devise over all the earth with guilty purpose, and contrive for each other's ruin?

44 But, you say, they came of their own accord

But, you say, they came of their own accord, not sent [3713] by their lord. And [3714] where was the Almighty Creator, where the authority of His royal and exalted place, [3715] to prevent their departure, and not suffer them to fall into dangerous pleasures? For if He knew that by change of place they would become base -- and, as the arranger of all things, [3716] He must have known -- or that anything would reach them from without which would make them forget their greatness and moral dignity, -- a thousand times would I beg of Him to pardon my words, -- the cause of all is no other than Himself, since He allowed them to have freedom to wander [3717] who He foresaw would not abide by their state of innocence; and thus it is brought about that it does not matter whether they came of their own accord, or obeyed His command, since in not preventing what should have been prevented, by His inaction He made the guilt His own, and permitted it before it was done by neglecting to withhold them from action.

45 But let this monstrous and impious fancy be put far from us

But let this monstrous and impious fancy be put [3718] far from us, that Almighty God, the creator and framer, the author [3719] of things great and invisible, should be believed to have begotten souls so fickle, with no seriousness, firmness, and steadiness, prone to vice, inclining to all kinds of sins; and while He knew that they were such and of this character, to have bid [3720] them enter into bodies, imprisoned in which, [3721] they should live exposed to the storms and tempests of fortune every day, and now do mean things, now submit to lewd treatment; that they might perish by shipwreck, accidents, destructive conflagrations; that poverty might oppress some, beggary, others; that some might be torn in pieces by wild beasts, others perish by the venom of flies; [3722] that some might limp in walking, others lose their sight, others be stiff with cramped [3723] joints; in fine, that they should be exposed to all the diseases which the wretched and pitiable human race endures with agony caused by [3724] different sufferings; then that, forgetting that they have one origin, one father and head, they should shake to their foundations and violate the rights of kinship, should overthrow their cities, lay waste their lands as enemies, enslave the free, do violence to maidens and to other men's wives, hate each other, envy the joys and good fortune of others; and further, all malign, carp at, and tear each other to pieces with fiercely biting teeth.

46 But, to say the same things again and again

But, to say the same things again and again, [3725] let this belief, so monstrous and impious, be put far from us, that God, who preserves [3726] all things, the origin of the virtues and chief in [3727] benevolence, and, to exalt Him with human praise, most wise, just, making all things perfect, and that permanently, [3728] either made anything which was imperfect and not quite correct, [3729] or was the cause of misery or danger to any being, or arranged, commanded, and enjoined the very acts in which man's life is passed and employed to flow from His arrangement. These things are unworthy of [3730] Him, and weaken the force of His greatness; and so far from His being believed to be their author, whoever imagines that man is sprung from Him is guilty of blasphemous impiety, man, a being miserable and wretched, who is sorry that he exists, hates and laments his state, and understands that he was produced for no other reason than lest evils should not have something [3731] through which to spread themselves, and that there might always be wretched ones by whose agonies some unseen and cruel power, [3732] adverse to men, should be gratified.

47 But, you say, if God is not the parent and father of souls

But, you say, if God is not the parent and father of souls, by what sire have they been begotten, and how have they been produced? If you wish to hear unvarnished statements not spun out with vain ostentation of words, we, too, [3733] admit that we are ignorant of this, do not know it; [3734] and we hold that, to know so great a matter, is not only beyond the reach of our weakness and frailty, but beyond that also of all the powers which are in the world, and which have usurped the place of deities in men's belief. But are we bound to show whose they are, because we deny that they are God's? That by no means [3735] follows necessarily; for if we were to deny that flies, beetles, and bugs, dormice, weevils, and moths, [3736] are made by the Almighty King, we should not be required in consequence to say who made and formed them; for without incurring any censure, we may not know who, indeed, gave them being, and yet assert that not by the Supreme [3737] Deity were creatures produced so useless, so needless, so purposeless, [3738] nay more, at times even hurtful, and causing unavoidable injuries.

48 Here, too, in like manner, when we deny that souls are the offspring of God

Here, too, in like manner, when we deny that souls are the offspring of God Supreme, it does not necessarily follow that we are bound to declare from what parent they have sprung, and by what causes they have been produced. For who prevents us from being either ignorant of the source from which they issued and came, or aware that they are not God's descendants? By what method, you say, in what way? Because it is most true and certain [3739] that, as has been pretty frequently said, nothing is effected, made, determined by the Supreme, except that which it is right and fitting should be done; except that which is complete and entire, and wholly perfect in its [3740] integrity. But further, we see that men, that is, these very souls -- for what are men but souls bound to bodies? -- themselves show by perversely falling into [3741] vice, times without number, that they belong to no patrician race, but have sprung from insignificant families. For we see some harsh, vicious, presumptuous, rash, reckless, blinded, false, dissemblers, liars, proud, overbearing, covetous, greedy, lustful, fickle, weak, and unable to observe their own precepts; but they would assuredly not be so, if their original goodness defended [3742] them, and they traced their honourable descent from the head of the universe.

49 But, you will say, there are good men also in the world

But, you will say, there are good men also in the world, -- wise, upright, of faultless and purest morals. We raise no question as to whether there ever were any such, in whom this very integrity which is spoken of was in nothing imperfect. Even if they are very honourable men, and have been worthy of praise, have reached the utmost height of perfection, and their life has never wavered and sunk into sin, yet we would have you tell us how many there are, or have been, that we may judge from their number whether a comparison [3743] has been made which is just and evenly balanced. [3744] One, two, three, four, ten, twenty, a hundred, yet are they at least limited in number, and it may be within the reach of names. [3745] But it is fitting that the human race should be rated and weighed, not by a very few good men, but by all the rest as well. For the part is in the whole, not the whole in a part; and that which is the whole should draw to it its parts, not the whole be brought to its parts. For what if you were to say that a man, robbed of the use of all his limbs, and shrieking in bitter agony, [3746] was quite well, because in [3747] one little nail he suffered no pain? or that the earth is made of gold, because in one hillock there are a few small grains from which, when dissolved, gold is produced, and wonder excited at it when formed into a lump? [3748] The whole mass shows the nature of an element, not particles fine as air; nor does the sea become forthwith sweet, if you cast or throw into it a few drops of less bitter water, for that small quantity is swallowed up in its immense mass; and it must be esteemed, not merely of little importance, but even of none, because, being scattered throughout all, it is lost and cut off in the immensity of the vast body of water.

50 You say that there are good men in the human race

You say that there are good men in the human race; and perhaps, if we compare them with the very wicked, we may be led [3749] to believe that there are. Who are they, pray? Tell us. The philosophers, I suppose, who [3750] assert that they alone are most wise, and who have been uplifted with pride from the meaning attached to this name, [3751] -- those, forsooth, who are striving with their passions every day, and struggling to drive out, to expel deeply-rooted passions from their minds by the persistent [3752] opposition of their better qualities; who, that it may be impossible for them to be led into wickedness at the suggestion of some opportunity, shun riches and inheritances, that they may remove [3753] from themselves occasions of stumbling; but in doing this, and being solicitous about it, they show very clearly that their souls are, through their weakness, ready and prone to fall into vice. In our opinion, however, that which is good naturally, does not require to be either corrected or reprov'd; [3754] nay more, it should not know what evil is, if the nature of each kind would abide in its own integrity, for neither can two contraries be implanted in each other, nor can equality be contained in inequality, nor sweetness in bitterness. He, then, who struggles to amend the inborn depravity of his inclinations, shows most clearly that he is imperfect, [3755] blameable, although he may strive with all zeal and stedfastness.

51 But you laugh at our reply, because, while we deny that souls are of royal

But you laugh at our reply, because, while we deny that souls are of royal descent, we do not, on the other hand, say in turn from what causes and beginnings they have sprung. But what kind of crime is it either to be ignorant of anything, or to confess quite openly that you do not know that of which you are ignorant? or whether does he rather seem to you most deserving of ridicule who assumes to himself no knowledge of some dark subject; or he who thinks that he [3756] knows most clearly that which transcends human knowledge, and which has been involved in dark obscurity? If the nature of everything were thoroughly considered, you too are in a position like that which you censure in our case. For you do not say anything which has been ascertained and set most clearly in the light of truth, because you say that souls descend from the Supreme Ruler Himself, and enter into the forms of men. For you conjecture, do not perceive [3757] this; surmise, do not actually know it; for if to know is to retain in the mind that which you have yourself seen or known, not one of those things which you affirm can you say that you have ever seen -- that is, that souls descend from the abodes and regions above. You are therefore making use of conjecture, not trusting clear information. But what is conjecture, except a doubtful imagining of things, and directing of the mind upon nothing accessible? He, then, who conjectures, does not comprehend, [3758] nor does he walk in the [3759] light of knowledge. But if this is true and certain in the opinion of proper and very wise judges, your conjectures, too, in which you trust, must be regarded as showing your ignorance.

52 And yet, lest you should suppose that none but yourselves can make use of conjectures

And yet, lest you should suppose that none but yourselves can make use of conjectures and surmises, we too are able to bring them forward as well, [3760] as your question is appropriate to either side. [3761] Whence, you say, are men; and what or whence are the souls of these men? Whence, we will ask, are elephants, bulls, stags, mules, [3762] asses? Whence lions, horses, dogs, wolves, panthers; and what or whence are the souls of these creatures? For it is not credible that from that Platonic cup, [3763] which Timæus prepares and mixes, either their souls came, or that the locust, [3764] mouse, shrew, cockroach, frog, centipede, should be believed to have been quickened and to live, because [3765] they have a cause and origin of birth in [3766] the elements themselves, if there are in these secret and very little known means [3767] for producing the creatures which live in each of them. For we see that some of the wise say that the earth is mother of men, that others join with it water, [3768] that others add to these breath of air, but that some say that the sun is their framer, and that, having been quickened by his rays, they are filled with the stir of life. [3769] What if it is not these, and is something else, another cause, another method, another power, in fine, unheard of and unknown to us by name, which may have fashioned the human race, and connected it with things as established; [3770] may it not be that men sprang up in this way, and that the cause of their birth does not go back to the Supreme God? For what reason do we suppose that the great Plato had -- a man reverent and scrupulous in his wisdom -- when he withdrew the fashioning of man from the highest God, and transferred it to some lesser deities, and when he would not have the souls of men formed [3771] of that pure mixture of which he had made the soul of the universe, except that he thought the forming of man unworthy of God, and the fashioning of a feeble being not beseeming His greatness and excellence?

53 Since this, then, is the case, we do nothing out of place or foolish in

Since this, then, is the case, we do nothing out of place or foolish in believing that the souls of men are of a neutral character, inasmuch as they have been produced by secondary beings, [3772] made subject to the law of death, and are of little strength, and that perishable; and that they are gifted with immortality, if [3773] they rest their hope of so great a gift on God Supreme, who alone has power to grant such blessings, by putting away corruption. But this, you say, we are stupid in believing. What is that to you? In so believing, we act most absurdly, sillily. In what do we injure you, or what wrong do we do or inflict upon you, if we trust that Almighty God will take care of us when we leave [3774] our bodies, and from the jaws of hell, as is said, deliver us?

54 Can, then, anything be made, some one will say

Can, then, anything be made, some one will say, without God's will? We [3775] must consider carefully, and examine with no little pains, lest, while we think that we are honouring God [3776] by such a question, we fall into the opposite sin, doing despite to His supreme majesty. In what way, you ask, on what ground? Because, if all things are brought about by His will, and nothing in the world can either succeed or fail contrary to His pleasure, it follows of necessity that it should be understood that [3777] all evils, too, arise by His will. But if, on the contrary, we chose to say that He is privy to and produces no evil, not referring to Him the causes of very wicked deeds, the worst things will begin to seem to be done either against His will, or, a monstrous thing to say, while He knows it not, but is ignorant and unaware of them. But, again, if we choose to say that there are no evils, as we find some have believed and held, all races will cry out against us and all nations together, showing us their sufferings, and the various kinds of dangers with which the human race is every moment [3778] distressed and afflicted. Then they will ask of us, Why, if there are no evils, do you refrain from certain deeds and actions? Why do you not do all that eager lust has required or demanded? Why, finally, do you establish punishments by terrible laws for the guilty? For what more monstrous [3779] act of folly can be found than to assert that there are no evils, and at the same time to kill and condemn the erring as though they were evil? [3780]

55 But when, overcome, we agree that there are these things

But when, overcome, we agree that there are these things, [3781] and expressly allow that all human affairs are full of them, they will next ask, Why, then, the Almighty God does not take away these evils, but suffers them to exist and to go on without ceasing through all the ages? [3782] If we have learned of God the Supreme Ruler, and have resolved not to wander in a maze of impious and mad conjectures, we must answer that we do not know these things, and have never sought and striven to know things which could be grasped by no powers which we have, and that we, even thinking it [3783] preferable, rather remain in ignorance and want of knowledge than say that without God nothing is made, so that it should be understood that by His will [3784] He is at once both the source of evil [3785] and the occasion of countless miseries. Whence then, you will say, are all these evils? From the elements, say the wise, and from their dissimilarity; but how it is possible that things which have not feeling and judgment should be held to be wicked or criminal; or that he should not rather be wicked and criminal, who, to bring about some result, took what was afterwards to become very bad and hurtful, [3786] -- is for them to consider, who make the assertion. What, then, do we say? whence? There is no necessity that we should answer, for whether we are able to say whence evil springs, or our power fails us, and we are unable, in either case it is a small matter in our opinion; nor do we hold it of much importance either to know or to be ignorant of it, being content to have laid down but one thing, -- that nothing proceeds from God Supreme which is hurtful and pernicious. This we are assured of, this we know, on this one truth of knowledge and science we take our stand, -- that nothing is made by Him except that which is for the well-being of all, which is agreeable, which is very full of love and joy and gladness, which has unbounded and imperishable pleasures, which every one may ask in all his prayers to befall him, and think that otherwise [3787] life is pernicious and fatal.

56 As for all the other things which are usually dwelt upon in inquiries and discussions

As for all the other things which are usually dwelt upon in inquiries and discussions -- from what parents they have sprung, or by whom they are produced -- we neither strive to know, [3788] nor care to inquire or examine: we leave all things to their own causes, and do not consider that they have been connected and associated with that which we desire should befall us. [3789] For what is there which men of ability do not dare to overthrow, to destroy, [3790] from love of contradiction, although that which they attempt to invalidate is unobjectionable [3791] and manifest, and evidently bears the stamp of truth? Or what, again, can they not maintain with plausible arguments, although it may be very manifestly untrue, although it may be a plain and evident falsehood? For when a man has persuaded himself that there is or is not something, he likes to affirm what he thinks, and to show greater subtlety than others, especially if the subject discussed is out of the ordinary track, and by nature abstruse and obscure. [3792] Some of the wise think that the world was not created, and will never perish; [3793] some that it is immortal, although they say that it was created and made; [3794] while a third party have chosen to say that it both was created and made, and will perish as other things must. [3795] And while of these three opinions one only must be true, they nevertheless all find arguments by which at once to uphold their own doctrines, and undermine and overthrow the dogmas of others. Some teach and declare that this same world is composed of four elements, others of two, [3796] a third party of one; some say that it is composed of none of these, and that atoms are that from which it is formed, [3797] and its primary origin. And since of these opinions only one is true, but [3798] not one of them certain, here too, in like manner, arguments present themselves to all with which they may both establish the truth of what they say, and show that there are some things false [3799] in the others' opinions. So, too, some utterly deny the existence of the gods; others say that they are lost in doubt as to whether they exist anywhere; others, however, say that they do exist, but do not trouble themselves about human things; nay others maintain that they both take part in the affairs of men, and guide the course of earthly events. [3800]

57 While, then, this is the case, and it cannot but be that only one of

While, then, this is the case, and it cannot but be that only one of all these opinions is true, they all nevertheless make use of arguments in striving with each other, -- and not one of them is without something plausible to say, whether in affirming his own views, or objecting to the opinions of others. In exactly the same way is the condition of souls discussed. For this one thinks that they both are immortal, and survive the end of our earthly life; that one believes that they do not survive, but perish with the bodies themselves: the opinion of another, however, is that they suffer nothing immediately, but that, after the form of man has been laid aside, they are allowed to live a little longer, [3801] and then come under the power of death. And while all these opinions cannot be alike true, yet all who hold them so support their case by strong and very weighty arguments, that you cannot find out anything which seems false to you, although on every side you see that things are being said altogether at variance with each other, and inconsistent from their opposition to each other; [3802] which assuredly would not happen, if man's curiosity could reach any certainty, or if that which seemed to one to have been really discovered, was attested by the approval of all the others. It is therefore wholly [3803] vain, a useless task, to bring forward something as though you knew it, or to wish to assert that you know that which, although it should be true, you see can be refuted; or to receive that as true which it may be is not, and is brought forward as if by men raving. And it is rightly so, for we do not weigh and guess at [3804] divine things by divine, but by human methods; and just as we think that anything should have been made, so we assert that it must be.

58 What, then, are we alone ignorant? do we alone not know who is the creator

What, then, are we alone ignorant? do we alone not know who is the creator, who the former of souls, what cause fashioned man, whence ills have broken forth, or why the Supreme Ruler allows them both to exist and be perpetrated, and does not drive them from the world? have you, indeed, ascertained and learned any of these things with certainty? If you chose to lay aside audacious [3805] conjectures, can you unfold and disclose whether this world in which we dwell [3806] was created or founded at some time? if it was founded and made, by what kind of work, pray, or for what purpose? Can you bring forward and disclose the reason why it does not remain fixed and immoveable, but is ever being carried round in a circular motion? whether it revolves of its own will and choice, or is turned by the influence of some power? what the place, too, and space is in which it is set and revolves, boundless, bounded, hollow, or [3807] solid? whether it is supported by an axis resting on sockets at its extremities, or rather itself sustains by its own power, and by the spirit within it upholds itself? Can you, if asked, make it clear, and show most skilfully, [3808] what opens out the snow into feathery flakes? what was the reason and cause that day did not, in dawning, arise in the west, and veil its light in the east? how the sun, too, by one and the same influence, [3809] produces results so different, nay, even so opposite? what the moon is, what the stars? why, on the one hand, it does not remain of the same shape, or why it was right and necessary that these particles of fire should be set all over the world? why some [3810] of them are small, others large and greater, -- these have a dim light, those a more vivid and shining brightness?

59 If that which it has pleased us to know is within reach

If that which it has pleased us to know is within reach, and if such knowledge is open to all, declare to us, [3811] and say how and by what means showers of rain are produced, so that water is held suspended in the regions above and in mid-air, although by nature it is apt to glide away, and so ready to flow and run downwards. Explain, I say, and tell what it is which sends the hail whirling through the air, which makes the rain fall drop by drop, which has spread out rain and feathery flakes of snow and sheets of lightning; [3812] whence the wind rises, and what it is; why the changes of the seasons were established, when it might have been ordained that there should be only one, and one kind of climate, so that there should be nothing wanting to the world's completeness. What is the cause, what the reason, that the waters of the sea are salt; [3813] or that, of those on land, some are sweet, others bitter or cold? From what kind of material have the inner parts of men's bodies been formed and built up into firmness? From what have their bones been made solid? what made the intestines and veins shaped like pipes, and easily passed through? Why, when it would be better to give us light by several eyes, to guard against the risk of blindness, are we restricted to two? For what purpose have so infinite and innumerable kinds of monsters and serpents been either formed or brought forth? what purpose do owls serve in the world, -- falcons, hawks? what other birds [3814] and winged creatures? what the different kinds of ants and worms springing up to be a bane and pest in various ways? what fleas, obtrusive flies, spiders, shrew, and other mice, leeches, water-spinners? what thorns, briers, wild-oats, tares? what the seeds of herbs or shrubs, either sweet to the nostrils, or disagreeable in smell? Nay more, if you think that anything can be known or comprehended, say what wheat is, -- spelt, barley, millet, the chick-pea, bean, lentil, melon, cumin, scallion, leek, onion? For even if they are useful to you, and are ranked among the different kinds of food, it is not a light or easy thing to know what each is, -- why they have been formed with such shapes; whether there was any necessity that they should not have had other tastes, smells, and colours than those which each has, or whether they could have taken others also; further, what these very things are, -- taste, I mean, [3815] and the rest; and from what relations they derive their differences of quality. From the elements, you say, and from the first beginnings of things. Are the elements, then, bitter or sweet? have they any odour or [3816] stench, that we should believe that, from their uniting, qualities were implanted in their products by which sweetness is produced, or something prepared offensive to the senses?

60 Seeing, then, that the origin, the cause, the reason of so many and so important

Seeing, then, that the origin, the cause, the reason of so many and so important things, escapes you yourselves also, and that you can neither say nor explain what has been made, nor why and wherefore it should not have been otherwise, do you assail and attack our timidity, who confess that we do not know that which cannot be known, and who do not care to seek out and inquire into those things which it is quite clear cannot be understood, although human conjecture should extend and spread itself through a thousand hearts? And therefore Christ the divine, -- although you are unwilling to allow it, -- Christ the divine, I repeat, for this must be said often, that the ears of unbelievers may burst and be rent asunder, speaking in the form of man by command of the Supreme God, because He knew that men are naturally [3817] blind, and cannot grasp the truth at all, or regard as sure and certain what they might have persuaded themselves as to things set before their eyes, and do not hesitate, for the sake of their [3818] conjectures, to raise and bring up questions that cause much strife, -- bade us abandon and disregard all these things of which you speak, and not waste our thoughts upon things which have been removed far from our knowledge, but, as much as possible, seek the Lord of the universe with the whole mind and spirit; be raised above these subjects, and give over to Him our hearts, as yet hesitating whither to turn; [3819] be ever mindful of Him; and although no imagination can set Him forth as He is, [3820] yet form some faint conception of Him. For Christ said that, of all who are comprehended in the vague notion of what is sacred and divine, [3821] He alone is beyond the reach of doubt, alone true, and one about whom only a raving and reckless madman can be in doubt; to know whom is enough, although you have learned nothing besides; and if by knowledge you have indeed been related to [3822] God, the head of the world, you have gained the true and most important knowledge.

61 What business of yours is it, He says, to examine

What business of yours is it, He [3823] says, to examine, to inquire who made man; what is the origin of souls; who devised the causes of ills; whether the sun is larger than the earth, or measures only a foot in breadth: [3824] whether the moon shines with borrowed light, or from her own brightness, -- things which there is neither profit in knowing, nor loss in not knowing? Leave these things to God, and allow Him to know what is, wherefore, or whence; whether it must have been or not; whether something always existed, [3825] or whether it was produced at the first; whether it should be annihilated or preserved, consumed, destroyed, or restored in fresh vigour. Your reason is not permitted to involve you in such questions, and to be busied to no purpose about things so much out of reach. Your interests are in jeopardy, -- the salvation, I mean, [3826] of your souls; and unless you give yourselves to seek to know the Supreme God, a cruel death awaits you when freed from the bonds of body, not bringing sudden annihilation, but destroying by the bitterness of its grievous and long-protracted punishment.

62 And be not deceived or deluded with vain hopes by that which is said by

And be not deceived or deluded with vain hopes by that which is said by some ignorant and most presumptuous pretenders, [3827] that they are born of God, and are not subject to the decrees of fate; that His palace lies open to them if they lead a life of temperance, and that after death as men, they are restored without hindrance, as if to their father's abode; nor by that which the Magi [3828] assert, that they have intercessory prayers, won over by which some powers make the way easy to those who are striving to mount to heaven; nor by that which Etruria holds out in the Acherontic books, [3829] that souls become divine, and are freed from the law [3830] of death, if the blood of certain animals is offered to certain deities. These are empty delusions, and excite vain desires. None but the Almighty God can preserve souls; nor is there any one besides who can give them length of days, and grant to them also a spirit which shall never die, [3831] except He who alone is immortal and everlasting, and restricted by no limit of time. For since all the gods, whether those who are real, or those who are merely said to be from hearsay and conjecture, are immortal and everlasting by His good-will and free gift, how can it be that others [3832] are able to give that which they themselves have, [3833] while they have it as the gift of another, bestowed by a greater power? Let Etruria sacrifice what victims it may, let the wise deny themselves all the pleasures of life, [3834] let the Magi soften and soothe all lesser powers, yet, unless souls have received from the Lord of all things that which reason demands, and does so by His command, it [3835] will hereafter deeply repent having made itself a laughing-stock, [3836] when it begins to feel the approach [3837] of death.

63 But if, my opponents say, Christ was sent by God for this end

But if, my opponents say, Christ was sent by God for this end, that He might deliver unhappy souls from ruin and destruction, of what crime were former ages guilty which were cut off in their mortal state before He came? Can you, then, know what has become of these souls [3838] of men who lived long ago? [3839] whether they, too, have not been aided, provided, and cared for in some way? Can you, I say, know that which could have been learned through Christ's teaching; whether the ages are unlimited in number or not since the human race began to be on the earth; when souls were first bound to bodies; who contrived that binding, [3840] nay, rather, who formed man himself; whither the souls of men who lived before us have gone; in what parts or regions of the world they were; whether they were corruptible or not; whether they could have encountered the danger of death, if Christ had not come forward as their preserver at their time of need? Lay aside these cares, and abandon questions to which you can find no answer. [3841] The Lord's compassion has been shown to them, too, and the divine kindness [3842] has been extended to [3843] all alike; they have been preserved, have been delivered, and have laid aside the lot and condition of mortality. Of what kind, my opponents ask, what, when? If you were free from presumption, arrogance, and conceit, you might have learned long ago from this teacher.

64 But, my opponents ask, if Christ came as the Saviour of men

But, my opponents ask, if Christ came as the Saviour of men, as [3844] you say, why [3845] does He not, with uniform benevolence, free all without exception? I reply, does not He free all alike who invites all alike? or does He thrust back or repel any one from the kindness of the Supreme who gives to all alike the power of coming to Him, -- to men of high rank, to the meanest slaves, to women, to boys? To all, He says, the fountain of life is open, [3846] and no one is hindered or kept back from drinking. [3847] If you are so fastidious as to spurn the kindly [3848] offered gift, nay, more, if your wisdom is so great that you term those things which are offered by Christ ridiculous and absurd, why should He keep on inviting [3849] you, while His only duty is to make the enjoyment of His bounty depend upon your own free choice? [3850] God, Plato says, does not cause any one to choose his lot in life; [3851] nor can another's choice be rightly attributed to any one, since freedom of choice was put in His power who made it. Must you be even implored to deign to accept the gift of salvation from God; and must God's gracious mercy be poured into your bosom while you reject it with disdain, and flee very far from it? Do you choose to take what is offered, and turn it to your own advantage? You will in that case have consulted your own interests. Do you reject with disdain, lightly esteem, and despise it? You will in this case have robbed yourself of the benefit of the gift. [3852] God compels no one, terrifies no one with overpowering fear. For our salvation is not necessary to Him, so that He would gain anything or suffer any loss, if He either made us divine, [3853] or allowed us to be annihilated and destroyed by corruption.

65 Nay, my opponent says, if God is powerful, merciful

Nay, my opponent says, if God is powerful, merciful, willing to save us, let Him change our dispositions, and compel us to trust in His promises. This, then, is violence, not kindness nor the bounty of the Supreme God, but a childish and vain [3854] strife in seeking to get the mastery. For what is so unjust as to force men who are reluctant and unwilling, to reverse their inclinations; to impress forcibly on their minds what they are unwilling to receive, and shrink from; to injure before benefiting, and to bring to another way of thinking and feeling, by taking away the former? You who wish yourself to be changed, [3855] and to suffer violence, that you may do and may be compelled to take to yourself that which you do not wish, why do you refuse of your own accord to select that which you wish to do, when changed and transformed? I am unwilling, He says, and have no wish. What, then, do you blame God as though He failed you? do you wish Him to bring you help, [3856] whose gifts and bounties you not only reject and shun, but term empty [3857] words, and assail with jocose witticisms? Unless, then, my opponent says, I shall be a Christian, I cannot hope for salvation. It is just as you yourself say. For, to bring salvation and impart to souls what should be bestowed and must be added, Christ alone has had given into His charge and entrusted [3858] to Him by God the Father, the remote and more secret causes being so disposed. For, as with you, certain gods have fixed offices, privileges, powers, and you do not ask from any of them what is not in his power and permitted to him, so it is the right of [3859] Christ alone to give salvation to souls, and assign them everlasting life. For if you believe that father Bacchus can give a good vintage, but cannot give relief from sickness; if you believe that Ceres can give good crops, Æsculapius health, Neptune one thing, Juno [3860] another, that Fortune, Mercury, Vulcan, are each the giver of a fixed and particular thing, -- this, too, you must needs receive from us, [3861] that souls can receive from no one life and salvation, except from Him to whom the Supreme Ruler gave this charge and duty. The Almighty Master of the world has determined that this should be the way of salvation, -- this the door, so to say, of life; by Him [3862] alone is there access to the light: nor may men either creep in or enter elsewhere, all other ways being shut up and secured by an impenetrable barrier.

66 So, then, even if you are pure, and have been cleansed from every stain of

So, then, even if you are pure, and have been cleansed from every stain of vice, have won over and charmed [3863] those powers not to shut the ways against you and bar your passage when returning to heaven, by no efforts will you be able to reach the prize of immortality, unless by Christ's gift you have perceived what constitutes this very immortality, and have been allowed to enter on the true life. For as to that with which you have been in the habit of taunting us, that our religion is new, [3864] and arose a few days ago, almost, and that you could not abandon the ancient faith which you had inherited from your fathers, and pass over to barbarous and foreign rites, this is urged wholly without reason. For what if in this way we chose to blame the preceding, even the most ancient ages, because when they discovered how to raise crops, [3865] they despised acorns, and rejected with scorn the wild strawberry; because they ceased to be covered with the bark of trees and clad in the hides of wild beasts, after that garments of cloth were devised, more useful and convenient in wearing; or because, when houses were built, and more comfortable dwellings erected, they did not cling to their ancient huts, and did not prefer to remain under rocks and caves like the beasts of the field? It is a disposition possessed by all, and impressed on us almost from our cradles even, to prefer good things to bad, useful to useless things, and to pursue and seek that with more pleasure which has been generally regarded [3866] as more than usually precious, and to set on that our hopes for prosperity and favourable circumstances.

67 Therefore, when you urge against us that we turn away from the religion of past

Therefore, when you urge against us that we turn away from the religion [3867] of past ages, it is fitting that you should examine why it is done, not what is done, and not set before you what we have left, but observe especially what we have followed. For if it is a fault or crime to change an opinion, and pass from ancient customs to new conditions and desires, this accusation holds against you too, who have so often changed your habits and mode of life, who have gone over to other customs and ceremonies, so that you are condemned by [3868] past ages as well as we. Do you indeed have the people distributed into five [3869] classes, as your ancestors once had? Do you ever elect magistrates by vote of the people? Do you know what military, urban, and common [3870] comitia are? Do you watch the sky, or put an end to public business because evil omens are announced? When you are preparing for war, [3871] do you hang out a flag from the citadel, or practise the forms of the Fetiales, solemnly [3872] demanding the return of what has been carried off? or, when encountering the dangers of war, do you begin to hope also, because of favourable omens from the points of the spears? [3873] In entering on office, do you still observe the laws fixing the proper times? with regard to gifts and presents to advocates, do you observe the Cincian and the sumptuary laws in restricting your expenses? Do you maintain fires, ever burning, in gloomy sanctuaries? [3874] Do you consecrate tables by putting on them salt-cellars and images of the gods? When you marry, do you spread the couch with a toga, and invoke the genii of husbands? do you arrange the hair of brides with the hasta cælibaris? do you bear the maidens' garments to the temple of Fortuna Virginalis? Do your matrons work in the halls of your houses, showing their industry openly do they refrain from drinking wine? are their friends and relations allowed to kiss them, in order to show that they are sober and temperate?

68 On the Alban hill, it was not allowed in ancient times to sacrifice any but

On the Alban hill, it was not allowed in ancient times to sacrifice any but snow-white bulls: have you not changed that custom and religious observance, and has it not been enacted by decree of the senate, that reddish ones may be offered? While during the reigns of Romulus and Pompilius the inner parts, having been quite thoroughly cooked and softened, were burnt up in sacrificing to the gods, did you not begin, under king Tullius, [3875] to hold them out half-raw and slightly warm, paying no regard to the former usage? While before the arrival of Hercules in Italy supplication was made to father Dis and Saturn with the heads of men by Apollo's advice; have you not, in like manner, changed this custom too, by means of cunning deceit and ambiguous names? [3876] Since, then, yourselves also have followed at one time these customs, at another different laws, and have repudiated and rejected many things on either perceiving your mistakes or seeing something better, what have we done contrary to common sense and the discretion all men have, if we have chosen what is greater and more certain, and have not suffered ourselves to be held back by unreasoning respect for impostures?

69 But our name is new, we are told, and the religion which we follow arose

But our name is new, we are told, and the religion which we follow arose but a few days ago. Granting for the present that what you urge against us is not untrue, what is there, I would ask, among the affairs of men that is either done by bodily exertion and manual labour, or attained by the mind's learning and knowledge, which did not begin at some time, and pass into general use and practice since then? Medicine, [3877] philosophy, music, and all the other arts by which social life has been built up and refined, -- were these born with men, and did they not rather begin to be pursued, understood, and practised lately, nay, rather, but a short time since? Before the Etruscan Tages saw the [3878] light, did any one know or trouble himself to know and learn what meaning there was in the fall of thunderbolts, or in the veins of the victims sacrificed? [3879] When did the motion of the stars or the art of calculating nativities begin to be known? Was it not after Theutis [3880] the Egyptian; or after Atlas, as some say, the bearer, supporter, stay, and prop of the skies?

70 But why do I speak of these trivial things? The immortal gods themselves

But why do I speak of these trivial things? The immortal gods themselves, whose temples you now enter with reverence, whose deity you suppliantly adore, did they not at certain times, as is handed down by your writings and traditions, begin to be, to be known and to be invoked by names and titles which were given to them? For if it is true that Jupiter with his brothers was born of Saturn and his wife, before Ops was married and bore children Jupiter had not existed both the Supreme and the Stygian, [3881] no, nor the lord of the sea, nor Juno, nay more, no one inhabited the heavenly seats except the two parents; but from their union the other gods were conceived and born, and breathed the breath of life. So, then, at a certain time the god Jupiter began to be, at a certain time to merit worship and sacrifices, at a certain time to be set above his brothers in power. [3882] But, again, if Liber, Venus, Diana, Mercury, Apollo, Hercules, the Muses, the Tyndarian brothers, [3883] and Vulcan the lord of fire, were begotten by father Jupiter, and born of a parent sprung from Saturn, before that Memory, Alcmena, Maia, Juno, Latona, Leda, Dione, and Semele also bore children to Diespiter; these deities, too, were nowhere in the world, nor in any part of the universe, but by Jupiter's embraces they were begotten and born, and began to have some sense of their own existence. So then, these, too, began to be at a certain time, and to be summoned among the gods to the sacred rites. This we say, in like manner, of Minerva. For if, as you assert, she burst forth from Jupiter's head ungenerated, [3884] before Jupiter was begotten, and received in his mother's womb the shape and outline of his body, [3885] it is quite certain that Minerva did not exist, and was not reckoned among things or as existing at all; but from Jove's head she was born, and began to have a real existence. She therefore has an origin at the first, and began to be called a goddess at a certain time, to be set up in temples, and to be consecrated by the inviolable obligations of religion. Now as this is the case, when you talk of the novelty of our religion, does your own not come into your thoughts, and do you not take care to examine when your gods sprung up, -- what origins, what causes they have, or from what stocks they have burst forth and sprung? But how shameful, how shameless it is to censure that in another which you see that you do yourself, -- to take occasion to revile and accuse others for things which can be retorted upon you in turn!

71 But our rites are new; yours are ancient, and of excessive antiquity

But our rites are [3886] new; yours are ancient, and of excessive antiquity, we are told. And what help does that give you, or how does it damage our cause and argument? The belief [3887] which we hold is new; some day even it, too, will become old: yours is old; but when it arose, it was new and unheard of. The credibility of a religion, however, must not be determined by its age, but by its divinity; and you should consider not when, but what you began to worship. Four hundred years ago, my opponent says, your religion did not exist. And two thousand years ago, I reply, your gods did not exist. By what reckoning, you ask, or by what calculations, can that be inferred? They are not difficult, not intricate, but can be seen by any one who will take them in hand even, as the saying is. Who begot Jupiter and his brothers? Saturn with Ops, as you relate, sprung from Coelus and Hecate. Who begot Picus, the father of Faunus and grandfather of Latinus? Saturn, as you again hand down by your books and teachers? Therefore, if this is the case, Picus and Jupiter are in consequence united by the bond of kinship, inasmuch as they are sprung from one stock and race. It is clear, then, that what we say is true. How many steps are there in coming down [3888] from Jupiter and Picus to Latinus? Three, as the line of succession shows. Will you suppose Faunus, Latinus, and Picus to have each lived a hundred and twenty years, for beyond this it is that man's life cannot be prolonged? The estimation is well grounded and clear. There are, then, three hundred and sixty years after these? [3889] It is just as the calculation shows. Whose father-in-law was Latinus? Æneas'. Whose father was he? [3890] He was father of the founder of the town Alba. How many years did kings reign in Alba? Four hundred and twenty almost. Of what age is the city Rome shown to be in the annals? It reckons ten [3891] hundred and fifty years, or not much less. So, then, from Jupiter, who is the brother of Picus and father of the other and lesser gods, down to the present time, there are nearly, or to add a little to the time, altogether, two thousand years. Now since this cannot be contradicted, not only is the religion to which you adhere shown to have sprung up lately; but it is also shown that the gods themselves, to whom you heap up bulls and other victims at the risk of bringing on disease, are young and little children, who should still be fed with their mothers' milk. [3892]

72 But your religion precedes ours by many years, and is therefore

But your religion precedes ours by many years, and is therefore, you say, truer, because it has been supported by the authority of antiquity. And of what avail is it that it should precede ours as many years as you please, since it began at a certain time? or what [3893] are two thousand years, compared with so many thousands of ages? And yet, lest we should seem to betray our cause by so long neglect, say, if it does not annoy you, does the Almighty and Supreme God seem to you to be something new; and do those who adore and worship Him seem to you to support and introduce an unheard-of, unknown, and upstart religion? Is there anything older than Him? or can anything be found preceding Him in being, [3894] time, name? Is not He alone uncreated, immortal, and everlasting? Who is the head [3895] and fountain of things? is not He? To whom does eternity owe its name? is it not to Him? Is it not because He is everlasting, that the ages go on without end? This is beyond doubt, and true: the religion which we follow is not new, then, but we have been late in learning what we should follow and revere, or where we should both fix our hope of salvation, and employ the aid given to save us. For He had not yet shone forth who was to point out the way to those wandering from it, and give the light of knowledge to those who were lying in the deepest darkness, and dispel the blindness of their ignorance.

73 But are we alone in this position? What! have you not introduced into the number

But are we alone in this position? [3896] What! have you not introduced into the number of your gods the Egyptian deities named Serapis and Isis, since the consulship of Piso and Gabinius? [3897] What! did you not begin both to know and be acquainted with, and to worship with remarkable honours, the Phrygian mother -- who, it is said, was first set up as a goddess by Midas or Dardanus -- when Hannibal, the Carthaginian, was plundering Italy and aiming at the empire of the world? [3898] Are not the sacred rites of mother Ceres, which were adopted but a little while ago, called *Græca* because they were unknown to you, their name bearing witness to their novelty? Is it not said [3899] in the writings of the learned, that the rituals of Numa Pompilius do not contain the name of Apollo? Now it is clear and manifest from this, that he, too, was unknown to you, but that at some time afterwards he began to be known also. If any one, therefore, should ask you why you have so lately begun to worship those deities whom we mentioned just now, it is certain that you will reply, either because we were till lately not aware that they were gods, or because we have now been warned by the seers, or because, in very trying circumstances, we have been preserved by their favour and help. But if you think that this is well said by you, you must consider that, on our part, a similar reply has been made. Our religion has sprung up just now; for now He has arrived who was sent to declare it to us, to bring us to its truth; to show what God is; to summon us from mere conjectures, to His worship.

74 And why, my opponent says, did God, the Ruler and Lord of the universe

And why, my opponent says, did God, the Ruler and Lord of the universe, determine that a Saviour, Christ, should be sent to you from the heights of heaven a few hours ago, as it is said? We ask you too, on the other hand, what cause, what reason is there that the seasons sometimes do not recur at their own months, but that winter, summer, and autumn come too late? why, after the crops have been dried up and the corn [3900] has perished, showers sometimes fall which should have dropped on them while yet uninjured, and made provision for the wants of the time? Nay, this we rather ask, why, if it were fitting that Hercules should be born, Æsculapius, Mercury, Liber, and some others, that they might be both added to the assemblies of the gods, and might do men some service, -- why they were produced so late by Jupiter, that only later ages should know them, while the past ages [3901] of those who went before knew them not? You will say that there was some reason. There was then some reason here also that the Saviour of our race came not lately, but to-day. What, then, you ask, is the reason? We do not deny that we do not know. For it is not within the power of any one to see the mind of God, or the way in which He has arranged His plans. [3902] Man, a blind creature, and not knowing himself even, can [3903] in no way learn what should happen, when, or what its nature is: the Father Himself, the Governor and Lord of all, alone knows. Nor, if I have been unable to disclose to you the causes why something is done in this way or that, does it straightway follow, that what has been done becomes not done, and that a thing becomes incredible, which has been shown to be beyond doubt by such [3904] virtues and [3905] powers.

75 You may object and rejoin, Why was the Saviour sent forth so late? In unbounded

You may object and rejoin, Why was the Saviour sent forth so late? In unbounded, eternal ages, we reply, nothing whatever should be spoken of as late. For where there is no end and no beginning, nothing is too soon, [3906] nothing too late. For time is perceived from its beginnings and endings, which an unbroken line and endless [3907] succession of ages cannot have. For what if the things themselves to which it was necessary to bring help, required that as a fitting time? For what if the condition of antiquity was different from that of later times? What if it was necessary to give help to the men of old in one way, to provide for their descendants in another? Do ye not hear your own writings read, telling that there were once men who were demi-gods, heroes with immense and huge bodies? Do you not read that infants on their mothers' breasts shrieked like Stentors, [3908] whose bones, when dug up in different parts of the earth, have made the discoverers almost doubt that they were the remains of human limbs? So, then, it may be that Almighty God, the only God, sent forth Christ then indeed, after that the human race, becoming feebler, weaker, began to be such as we are. If that which has been done now could have been done thousands of years ago, the Supreme Ruler would have done it; or if it had been proper, that what has been done now should be accomplished as many thousands after this, nothing compelled God to anticipate the necessary lapse [3909] of time. His plans [3910] are executed in fixed ways; and that which has been once decided on, can in no wise be changed again. [3911]

76 Inasmuch then, you say, as you serve the Almighty God

Inasmuch then, you say, as you serve the Almighty God, and trust that He cares for your safety and salvation, why does He suffer you to be exposed to such storms of persecution, and to undergo all kinds of punishments and tortures? Let us, too, ask in reply, why, seeing that you worship so great and so innumerable gods, and build temples to them, fashion images of gold, sacrifice herds of animals, and all heap up [3912] boxfuls of incense on the already loaded altars, why you live subject to so many dangers and storms of calamity, with which many fatal misfortunes vex you every day? Why, I say, do your gods neglect to avert from you so many kinds of disease and sickness, shipwrecks, downfalls, conflagrations, pestilences, barrenness, loss of children, and confiscation of goods, discords, wars, enmities, captures of cities, and the slavery of those who are robbed of their rights of free birth? [3913] But, my opponent says, in such mischances we, too, are in no wise helped by God. The cause is plain and manifest. For no hope has been held out to us with respect to this life, nor has any help been promised or [3914] aid decreed us for what belongs to the husk of this flesh, -- nay, more, we have been taught to esteem and value lightly all the threats of fortune, whatever they be; and if ever any very grievous calamity has assailed us, to count as pleasant in that misfortune [3915] the end which must follow, and not to fear or flee from it, that we may be the more easily released from the bonds of the body, and escape from our darkness and [3916] blindness.

77 Therefore that bitterness of persecution of which you speak is our deliverance and not persecution

Therefore that bitterness of persecution of which you speak is our deliverance and not persecution, and our ill-treatment will not bring evil upon us, but will lead us to the light of liberty. As if some senseless and stupid fellow were to think that he never punished a man who had been put into prison [3917] with severity and cruelty, unless he were to rage against the very prison, break its stones in pieces, and burn its roof, its wall, its doors; and strip, overthrow, and dash to the ground its other parts, not knowing that thus he was giving light to him whom he seemed to be injuring, and was taking from him the accursed darkness: in like manner, you too, by the flames, banishments, tortures, and monsters with which you tear in pieces and rend asunder our bodies, do not rob us of life, but relieve us of our skins, not knowing that, as far as you assault and seek to rage against these our shadows and forms, so far you free us from pressing and heavy chains, and cutting our bonds, make us fly up to the light.

78 Wherefore, O men, refrain from obstructing what you hope for by vain questions

Wherefore, O men, refrain from obstructing what you hope for by vain questions; nor should you, if anything is otherwise than you think, trust your own opinions rather than that which should be revered. [3918] The times, full of dangers, urge us, and fatal penalties threaten us; let us flee for safety to God our Saviour, without demanding the reason of the offered gift. When that at stake is our souls' salvation and our own interests, something must be done even without reason, as Arrhianus approves of Epictetus having said. [3919] We doubt, we hesitate, and suspect the credibility of what is said; let us commit ourselves to God, and let not our incredulity prevail more with us than the greatness of His name and power, lest, while we are seeking out arguments for ourselves, through which that may seem false which we do not wish and deny to be true, the last day steal upon us, and we be found in the jaws of our enemy, death.

1 All these charges, then, which might truly be better termed abuse

All these charges, then, which might truly be better termed abuse, have been long answered with sufficient fulness and accuracy by men of distinction in this respect, and worthy to have learned the truth; and not one point of any inquiry has been passed over, without being determined in a thousand ways, and on the strongest grounds. We need not, therefore, linger further on this part of the case. For neither is the Christian religion unable to stand though it found no advocates, nor will it be therefore proved true if it found many to agree with it, and gained weight through its adherents. [3920] Its own strength is sufficient for it, and it rests on the foundations of its own truth, without losing its power, though there were none to defend it, nay, though all voices assailed and opposed it, and united with common rancour to destroy all faith [3921] in it.

2 Let us now return to the order from which we were a little ago compelled

Let us now return to the order from which we were a little ago compelled to diverge, that our defence may not, through its being too long broken off, be said to have given our detractors cause to triumph in the establishing of their charge. For they propose these questions: If you are in earnest about religion, why do you not serve and worship the other gods with us, or share your sacred rites with your fellows, and put the ceremonies of the different religions on an equality? We may say for the present: In essaying to approach the divine, the Supreme Deity [3922] suffices us, -- the Deity, I say, who is supreme, the Creator and Lord of the universe, who orders and rules all things: in Him we serve all that requires our service; in Him we worship all that should be adored, -- venerate [3923] that which demands the homage of our reverence. For as we lay hold of the source of the divine itself from which the very divinity of all gods whatever is derived, [3924] we think it an idle task to approach each personally, since we neither know who they are, nor the names by which they are called; and are further unable to learn, and discover, and establish their number.

3 And as in the kingdoms of earth we are in no wise constrained expressly to

And as in the kingdoms of earth we are in no wise constrained expressly to do reverence to those who form the royal family as well as to the sovereigns, but whatever honour belongs to them is found to be tacitly [3925] implied in the homage offered to the kings themselves; in just the same way, these gods, whoever they be, for whose existence you vouch, if they are a royal race, and spring from the Supreme Ruler, even though we do not expressly do them reverence, yet feel that they are honoured in common with their Lord, and share in the reverence shown to Him. Now it must be remembered that we have made this statement, on the hypothesis only that it is clear and undeniable, that besides the Ruler and Lord Himself, there are still other beings, [3926] who, when arranged and disposed in order, form, as it were, a kind of plebeian mass. But do not seek to point out to us pictures instead of gods in your temples, and the images which you set up, for you too know, but are unwilling and refuse to admit, that these are formed of most worthless clay, and are childish figures made by mechanics. And when we converse with you on religion, we ask you to prove this, that there are other gods than the one Supreme Deity in nature, power, name, not as we see them manifested in images, but in such a substance as it might fittingly be supposed that perfection of so great dignity should reside.

4 But we do not purpose delaying further on this part of the subject

But we do not purpose delaying further on this part of the subject, lest we seem desirous to stir up most violent strife, and engage in agitating contests. Let there be, as you affirm, that crowd of deities, let there be numberless families of gods; we assent, agree, and do not examine too closely, nor in any part of the subject do we assail the doubtful and uncertain positions you hold. This, however, we demand, and ask you to tell us, whence you have discovered, or how you have learned, whether there are these gods, [3927] whom you believe to be in heaven and serve, or some others unknown by reputation and name? For it may be that beings exist whom you do not believe to do so; and that those of whose existence you feel assured, are found nowhere in the universe. For you have at no time been borne aloft to the stars of heaven, at no time have seen the face and countenance of each; and then established here the worship of the same gods, whom you remembered to be there, as having been known and seen by you. But this, too, we again would learn from you, whether they have received these names by which you call them, or assumed them themselves on the days of purification. [3928] If these are divine and celestial names, who reported them to you? But if, on the other hand, these names have been applied to them by you, how could you give names to those whom you never saw, and whose character or circumstances you in no wise [3929] knew?

5 But let it be assumed that there are these gods

But let it be assumed that there are these gods, as you wish and believe, and are persuaded; let them be called also by those names by which the common people suppose that those meaner gods [3930] are known. [3931] Whence, however, have you learned who make up the list of gods under these names? [3932] have any ever become familiar and known to others with whose names you were not acquainted? [3933] For it cannot be easily known whether their numerous body is settled and fixed in number; or whether their multitude cannot be summed up and limited by the numbers of any computation. For let us suppose that you do reverence to a thousand, or rather five thousand gods; but in the universe it may perhaps be that there are a hundred thousand; there may be even more than this, -- nay, as we said a little before, it may not be possible to compute the number of the gods, or limit them by a definite number. Either, then, you are yourselves impious who serve a few gods, but disregard the duties which you owe to the rest; [3934] or if you claim that your ignorance of the rest should be pardoned, you will procure for us also a similar pardon, if in just the same way [3935] we refuse to worship those of whose existence we are wholly ignorant.

6 And yet let no one think that we are perversely determined not to submit to

And yet let no one think that we are perversely determined not to submit to [3936] the other deities, whoever they are! For we lift up pious minds, and stretch forth our hands in prayer, [3937] and do not refuse to draw near whithersoever you may have summoned us; if only we learn who those divine beings are whom you press upon us, and with whom it may be right to share the reverence which we show to the king and prince who is over all. It is Saturn, my opponent says, and Janus, Minerva, Juno, Apollo, Venus, Triptolemus, Hercules, Æsculapius, and all the others, to whom the reverence of antiquity dedicated magnificent temples in almost every city. You might, perhaps, have been able to attract us to the worship of these deities you mention, had you not been yourselves the first, with foul and unseemly fancies, to devise such tales about them as not merely to stain their honour, but, by the natures assigned to them, to prove that they did not exist at all. For, in the first place, we cannot be led to believe this, -- that that immortal and supreme nature has been divided by sexes, and that there are some male, others female. But this point, indeed, has been long ago fully treated of by men of ardent genius, both in Latin and Greek; and Tullius, the most eloquent among the Romans, without dreading the vexatiousness of a charge of impiety, has above all, with greater piety, [3938] declared -- boldly, firmly, and frankly -- what he thought of such a fancy; and if you would proceed to receive from him opinions written with true discernment, instead of merely brilliant sentences, this case would have been concluded; nor would it require at our weak hands [3939] a second pleading, [3940] as it is termed.

7 But why should I say that men seek from him subtleties of expression and splendour

But why should I say that men seek from him subtleties of expression and splendour of diction, when I know that there are many who avoid and flee from his books on this subject, and will not hear his opinions read, [3941] overthrowing their prejudices; and when I hear others muttering angrily, and saying that the senate should decree the destruction [3942] of these writings by which the Christian religion is maintained, and the weight of antiquity overborne? But, indeed, if you are convinced that anything you say regarding your gods is beyond doubt, point out Cicero's error, refute, rebut his rash and impious words, [3943] and show that they are so. For when you would carry off writings, and suppress a book given forth to the public, you are not defending the gods, but dreading the evidence of the truth.

8 And yet, that no thoughtless person may raise a FALSE accusation against us

And yet, that no thoughtless person may raise a false accusation against us, as though we believed God whom we worship to be male, -- for this reason, that is, that when we speak of Him we use a masculine word, -- let him understand that it is not sex which is expressed, but His name, and its meaning according to custom, and the way in which we are in the habit of using words. [3944] For the Deity is not male, but His name is of the masculine gender: but in your ceremonies you cannot say the same; for in your prayers you have been wont to say whether thou art god or goddess, [3945] and this uncertain description shows, even by their opposition, that you attribute sex to the gods. We cannot, then, be prevailed on to believe that the divine is embodied; for bodies must needs be distinguished by difference of sex, if they are male and female. For who, however mean his capacity, [3946] does not know that the sexes of different gender have been ordained and formed by the Creator of the creatures of earth, only that, by intercourse and union of bodies, that which is fleeting and transient may endure being ever renewed and maintained? [3947]

9 What, then, shall we say? That gods beget and are begotten? and that therefore they

What, then, shall we say? That gods beget and are begotten? [3948] and that therefore they have received organs of generation, that they might be able to raise up offspring, and that, as each new race springs up, a substitution, regularly occurring, [3949] should make up for all which had been swept away by the preceding age? If, then, it is so, -- that is, if the gods above beget other gods, and are subject to these conditions of sex, [3950] and are immortal, and are not worn out, by the chills of age, -- it follows, as a consequence, that the world [3951] should be full of gods, and that countless heavens could not contain their multitude, inasmuch as they are both themselves ever begetting, and the countless multitude of their descendants, always being increased, is augmented by means of their offspring; or if, as is fitting, the gods are not degraded by being subjected to sexual impulses, [3952] what cause or reason will be pointed out for their being distinguished by those members by which the sexes are wont to recognise each other at the suggestion of their own desires? For it is not likely that they have these members without a purpose, or that nature had wished in them to make sport of its own improvidence, [3953] in providing them with members for which there would be no use. For as the hands, feet, eyes, and other members which form our body, [3954] have been arranged for certain uses, each for its own end, so we may well [3955] believe that these members have been provided to discharge their office; or it must be confessed that there is something without a purpose in the bodies of the gods, which has been made uselessly and in vain.

10 What say you, ye holy and pure guardians of religion? Have the gods

What say you, ye holy and pure guardians of religion? Have the gods, then, sexes; and are they disfigured by those parts, the very mention of whose names by modest lips is disgraceful? What, then, now remains, but to believe that they, as unclean beasts, are transported with violent passions, rush with maddened desires into mutual embraces, and at last, with shattered and ruined bodies, are enfeebled by their sensuality? And since some things are peculiar to the female sex, we must believe that the goddesses, too, submit to these conditions at the proper time, conceive and become pregnant with loathing, miscarry, carry the full time, and sometimes are prematurely delivered. O divinity, pure, holy, free from and unstained by any dishonourable blot! The mind longs [3956] and burns to see, in the great halls and palaces of heaven, gods and goddesses, with bodies uncovered and bare, the full-breasted Ceres nursing Iacchus, [3957] as the muse of Lucretius sings, the Hellespontian Priapus bearing about among the goddesses, virgin and matron, those parts [3958] ever prepared for encounter. It longs, I say, to see goddesses pregnant, goddesses with child, and, as they daily increase in size, faltering in their steps, through the irksomeness of the burden they bear about with them; others, after long delay, bringing to birth, and seeking the midwife's aid; others, shrieking as they are attacked by keen pangs and grievous pains, tormented, [3959] and, under all these influences, imploring the aid of Juno Lucina. Is it not much better to abuse, revile, and otherwise insult the gods, than, with pious pretence, unworthily to entertain such monstrous beliefs about them?

11 And you dare to charge us with offending the gods

And you dare to charge us with offending the gods, although, on examination, it is found that the ground of offence is most clearly in yourselves, and that it is not occasioned by the insult which you think [3960] we offer them. For if the gods are, as you say, moved by anger, and burn with rage in their minds, why should we not suppose that they take it amiss, even in the highest degree, that you attribute to them sexes, as dogs and swine have been created, and that, since this is your belief, they are so represented, and openly exposed in a disgraceful manner? This, then, being the case, you are the cause of all troubles -- you lead the gods, you rouse them to harass the earth with every ill, and every day to devise all kinds of fresh misfortunes, that so they may avenge themselves, being irritated at suffering so many wrongs and insults from you. By your insults and affronts, I say, partly in the vile stories, partly in the shameful beliefs which your theologians, your poets, you yourselves too, celebrate in disgraceful ceremonies, you will find that the affairs of men have been ruined, and that the gods have thrown away the helm, if indeed it is by their care that the fortunes of men are guided and arranged. For with us, indeed, they have no reason to be angry, whom they see and perceive neither to mock, as it is said, nor worship them, and to think, [3961] to believe much more worthily than you with regard to the dignity of their name.

12 Thus far of sex.

Thus far of sex. Now let us come to the appearance and shapes by which you believe that the gods above have been represented, with which, indeed, you fashion, and set them up in their most splendid abodes, your temples. And let no one here bring up against us Jewish fables and those of the sect of the Sadducees, [3962] as though we, too, attribute to the Deity forms; [3963] for this is supposed to be taught in their writings, and asserted as if with assurance and authority. For these stories either do not concern us, and have nothing at all in common with us, or if they are shared in by us, as you believe, you must seek out teachers of greater wisdom, through whom you may be able to learn how best to overcome the dark and recondite sayings of those writings. Our opinion on the subject is as follows: -- that the whole divine nature, since it neither came into existence at any time, nor will ever come to an end of life, is devoid of bodily features, and does not have anything like the forms with which the termination of the several members usually. completes the union of parts. [3964] For whatever is of this character, we think mortal and perishable; nor do we believe that that can endure for ever which an inevitable end shuts in, though the boundaries enclosing it be the remotest.

13 But it is not enough that you limit the gods by forms

But it is not enough that you limit the gods by forms: -- you even confine them to the human figure, and with even less decency enclose them in earthly bodies. What shall we say then? that the gods have a head modelled with perfect symmetry, [3965] bound fast by sinews to the back and breast, and that, to allow the necessary bending of the neck, it is supported by combinations of vertebræ, and by an osseous foundation? But if we believe this to be true, it follows that they have ears also, pierced by crooked windings; rolling eyeballs, overshadowed by the edges of the eyebrows; a nose, placed as a channel, [3966] through which waste fluids and a current of air might easily pass; teeth to masticate food, of three kinds, and adapted to three services; hands to do their work, moving easily by means of joints, fingers, and flexible elbows; feet to support their bodies, regulate their steps, and prompt the first motions in walking. But if the gods bear these things which are seen, it is fitting that they should bear those also which the skin conceals under the framework of the ribs, and the membranes enclosing the viscera; windpipes, stomachs, spleens, lungs, bladders, livers, the long-entwined intestines, and the veins of purple blood, joined with the air-passages, [3967] coursing through the whole viscera.

14 Are, then, the divine bodies free from these deformities? and since they do not eat

Are, then, the divine bodies free from these deformities? and since they do not eat the food of men, are we to believe that, like children, they are toothless, and, having no internal parts, as if they were inflated bladders, are without strength, owing to the hollowness of their swollen bodies? Further, if this is the case, you must see whether the gods are all alike, or are marked by a difference in the contour of their forms. For if each and all have one and the same likeness of shape, there is nothing ridiculous in believing that they err, and are deceived in recognising each other. [3968] But if, on the other hand, they are distinguished by their countenances, we should, consequently, understand that these differences have been implanted for no other reason than that they might individually be able to recognise themselves by the peculiarities of the different marks. We should therefore say that some have big heads, prominent brows, broad brows, thick lips; that others of them have long chins, moles, and high noses; that these have dilated nostrils, those are snub-nosed; some chubby from a swelling of their jaws or growth of their cheeks, dwarfed, tall, of middle size, lean, sleek, fat; some with crisped and curled hair, others shaven, with bald and smooth heads. Now your workshops show and point out that our opinions are not false, inasmuch as, when you form and fashion gods, you represent some with long hair, others smooth and bare, as old, as youths, as boys, swarthy, grey-eyed, yellow, half-naked, bare; or, that cold may not annoy them, covered with flowing garments thrown over them.

15 Does any man at all possessed of judgment, believe that hairs and down grow on

Does any man at all possessed of judgment, believe that hairs and down grow on the bodies of the gods? that among them age is distinguished? and that they go about clad in dresses and garments of various shapes, and shield themselves from heat and cold? But if any one believes that, he must receive this also as true, that some gods are fullers, some barbers; the former to cleanse the sacred garments, the latter to thin their locks when matted with a thick growth of hair. Is not this really degrading, most impious, and insulting, to attribute to the gods the features of a frail and perishing animal? to furnish them with those members which no modest person would dare to recount, and describe, or represent in his own imagination, without shuddering at the excessive indecency? Is this the contempt you entertain, -- this the proud wisdom with which you spurn us as ignorant, and think that all knowledge of religion is yours? You mock the mysteries of the Egyptians, because they ingrafted the forms of dumb animals upon their divine causes, and because they worship these very images with much incense, and whatever else is used in such rites: you yourselves adore images of men, as though they were powerful gods, and are not ashamed to give to these the countenance of an earthly creature, to blame others for their mistaken folly, and to be detected in a similarly vicious error.

16 But you will, perhaps, say that the gods have indeed other forms

But you will, perhaps, say that the gods have indeed other forms, and that you have given the appearance of men to them merely by way of honour, and for form's sake [3969] which is much more insulting than to have fallen into any error through ignorance. For if you confessed that you had ascribed to the divine forms that which you had supposed and believed, your error, originating in prejudice, would not be so blameable. But now, when you believe one thing and fashion another, you both dishonour those to whom you ascribe that which you confess does not belong to them, and show your impiety in adoring that which you fashion, not that which you think really is, and which is in very truth. If asses, dogs, pigs, [3970] had any human wisdom and skill in contrivance, and wished to do us honour also by some kind of worship, and to show respect by dedicating statues to us, with what rage would they inflame us, what a tempest of passion would they excite, if they determined that our images should bear and assume the fashion of their own bodies? How would they, I repeat, fill us with rage, and rouse our passions, if the founder of Rome, Romulus, were to be set up with an ass's face, the revered Pompilius with that of a dog, if under the image of a pig were written Cato's or Marcus Cicero's name? So, then, do you think that your stupidity is not laughed at by your deities, if they laugh at all? or, since you believe that they may be enraged, do you think that they are not roused, maddened to fury, and that they do not wish to be revenged for so great wrongs and insults, and to hurl on you the punishments usually dictated by chagrin, and devised by bitter hatred? How much better it had been to give to them the forms of elephants, panthers, or tigers, bulls, and horses! For what is there beautiful in man, -- what, I pray you, worthy of admiration, or comely, -- unless that which, some poet [3971] has maintained, he possesses in common with the ape?

17 But, they say, if you are not satisfied with our opinion

But, they say, if you are not satisfied with our opinion, do you point out, tell us yourselves, what is the Deity's form. If you wish to hear the truth, either the Deity has no form; or if He is embodied in one, we indeed know not what it is. Moreover, we think it no disgrace to be ignorant of that which we never saw; nor are we therefore prevented from disproving the opinions of others, because on this we have no opinion of our own to bring forward. For as, if the earth be said to be of glass, silver, iron, or gathered together and made from brittle clay, we cannot hesitate to maintain that this is untrue, although we do not know of what it is made; so, when the form of God is discussed, we show that it is not what you maintain, even if we are still less able to explain what it is.

18 What, then, some one will say, does the Deity not hear? does He not speak?

What, then, some one will say, does the Deity not hear? does He not speak? does He not see what is put before Him? has He not sight? He may in His own, but not in our way. But in so great a matter we cannot know the truth at all, or reach it by speculations; for these are, it is clear, in our case, baseless, deceitful, and like vain dreams. For if we said that He sees in the same way as ourselves, it follows that it should be understood that He has eyelids placed as coverings on the pupils of the eyes, that He closes them, winks, sees by rays or images, or, as is the case in all eyes, can see nothing at all without the presence of other light. So we must in like manner say of hearing, and form of speech, and utterance of words. If He hears by means of ears, these, too, we must say, He has, penetrated by winding paths, through which the sound may steal, bearing the meaning of the discourse; or if His words are poured forth from a mouth, that He has lips and teeth, by the contact and various movement of which His tongue utters sounds distinctly.

19 If you are willing to hear our conclusions, then learn that we are so far

If you are willing to hear our conclusions, then learn that we are so far from attributing bodily shape to the Deity, that we fear to ascribe to so great a being even mental graces, and the very excellences by which a few have been allowed with difficulty to distinguish themselves. For who will say that God is brave, firm, good, wise? who will say that He has integrity, is temperate, even that He has knowledge, understanding, forethought? that He directs towards fixed moral ends the actions on which He determines? These things are good in man; and being opposed to vices, have deserved the great reputation which they have gained. But who is so foolish, so senseless, as to say that God is great by merely human excellences? or that He is above all in the greatness of His name, because He is not disgraced by vice? Whatever you say, whatever in unspoken thought you imagine concerning God, passes and is corrupted into a human sense, and does not carry its own meaning, because it is spoken in the words which we use, and which are suited only to human affairs. There is but one thing man can be assured of regarding God's nature, to know and perceive that nothing can be revealed in human language concerning God.

20 This, then, this matter of forms and sexes, is the first affront which you

This, then, this matter of forms and sexes, is the first affront which you, noble advocates in sooth, and pious writers, offer to your deities. But what is the next, that you represent to us [3972] the gods, some as artificers, some physicians, others working in wool, as sailors, [3973] players on the harp and flute, hunters, shepherds, and, as there was nothing more, rustics? And that god, he says, is a musician, and this other can divine; for the other gods cannot, [3974] and do not know how to foretell what will come to pass, owing to their want of skill and ignorance of the future. One is instructed in obstetric arts, another trained up in the science of medicine. Is each, then, powerful in his own department; and can they give no assistance, if their aid is asked, in what belongs to another? This one is eloquent in speech, and ready in linking words together; for the others are stupid, and can say nothing skilfully, if they must speak.

21 And, I ask, what reason is there, what unavoidable necessity

And, I ask, what reason is there, what unavoidable necessity, what occasion for the gods knowing and being acquainted with these handicrafts as though they were worthless mechanics? For, are songs sung and music played in heaven, that the nine sisters may gracefully combine and harmonize pauses and rhythms of tones? Are there on the mountains [3975] of the stars, forests, woods, groves, that [3976] Diana may be esteemed very mighty in hunting expeditions? Are the gods ignorant of the immediate future; and do they live and pass the time according to the lots assigned them by fate, that the inspired son of Latona may explain and declare what the morrow or the next hour bears to each? Is he himself inspired by another god, and is he urged and roused by the power of a greater divinity, so that he may be rightly said and esteemed to be divinely inspired? Are the gods liable to be seized by diseases; and is there anything by which they may be wounded and hurt, so that, when there is occasion, he [3977] of Epidaurus may come to their assistance? Do they labour, do they bring forth, that Juno may soothe, and Lucina abridge the terrible pangs of childbirth? Do they engage in agriculture, or are they concerned with the duties of war, that Vulcan, the lord of fire, may form for them swords, or forge their rustic implements? Do they need to be covered with garments, that the Tritonian [3978] maid may, with nice skill, [3979] spin, weave cloth for them, and make [3980] them tunics to suit the season, either triple-twilled, or of silken fabric? Do they make accusations and refute them, that the descendant [3981] of Atlas may carry off the prize for eloquence, attained by assiduous practice?

22 You err, my opponent says, and are deceived; for the gods are not themselves artificers

You err, my opponent says, and are deceived; for the gods are not themselves artificers, but suggest these arts to ingenious men, and teach mortals what they should know, that their mode of life may be more civilized. But he who gives any instruction to the ignorant and unwilling, and strives to make him intelligently expert in some kind of work, must himself first know that which he sets the other to practise. For no one can be capable of teaching a science without knowing the rules of that which he teaches, and having grasped its method most thoroughly. The gods are, then, the first artificers; whether because they inform the minds of men with knowledge, as you say yourselves, or because, being immortal and unbegotten, they surpass the whole race of earth by their length of life. [3982] This, then, is the question; there being no occasion for these arts among the gods, neither their necessities nor nature requiring in them any ingenuity or mechanical skill, why you should say that they are skilled, [3983] one in one craft, another in another, and that individuals are pre-eminently expert [3984] in particular departments in which they are distinguished by acquaintance with the several branches of science?

23 But you will, perhaps, say that the gods are not artificers

But you will, perhaps, say that the gods are not artificers, but that they preside over these arts, and have their oversight; nay, that under their care all things have been placed, which we manage and conduct, and that their providence sees to the happy and fortunate issue of these. Now this would certainly appear to be said justly, and with some probability, if all we engage in, all we do, or all we attempt in human affairs, sped as we wished and purposed. But since every day the reverse is the case, and the results of actions do not correspond to the purpose of the will, it is trifling to say that we have, set as guardians over us, gods invented by our superstitious fancy, not grasped with assured certainty. Portunus [3985] gives to the sailor perfect safety in traversing the seas; but why has the raging sea cast up so many cruelly-shattered wrecks? Consus suggests to our minds courses safe and serviceable; and why does an unexpected change perpetually issue in results other than were looked for? Pales and Inuus [3986] are set as guardians over the flocks and herds; why do they, with hurtful laziness, [3987] not take care to avert from the herds in their summer pastures, cruel, infectious, and destructive diseases? The harlot Flora, [3988] venerated in lewd sports, sees well to it that the fields blossom; and why are buds and tender plants daily nipt and destroyed by most hurtful frost? Juno presides over childbirth, and aids travailing mothers; and why are a thousand mothers every day cut off in murderous throes? Fire is under Vulcan's care, and its source is placed under his control; and why does he, very often, suffer temples and parts of cities to fall into ashes devoured by flames? The soothsayers receive the knowledge of their art from the Pythian god; and why does he so often give and afford answers equivocal, doubtful, steeped in darkness and obscurity? Æsculapius presides over the duties and arts of medicine; and why cannot men in more kinds of disease and sickness be restored to health and soundness of body? while, on the contrary, they become worse under the hands of the physician. Mercury is occupied with [3989] combats, and presides over boxing and wrestling matches; and why does he not make all invincible who are in his charge? why, when appointed to one office, does he enable some to win the victory, while he suffers others to be ridiculed for their disgraceful weakness?

24 No one, says my opponent, makes supplication to the tutelar deities

No one, says my opponent, makes supplication to the tutelar deities, and they therefore withhold their usual favours and help. Cannot the gods, then, do good, except they receive incense and consecrated offerings? [3990] and do they quit and renounce their posts, unless they see their altars anointed with the blood of cattle? And yet I thought but now that the kindness of the gods was of their own free will, and that the unlooked-for gifts of benevolence flowed unsought from them. Is, then, the King of the universe solicited by any libation or sacrifice to grant to the races of men all the comforts of life? Does the Deity not impart the sun's fertilizing warmth, and the season of night, the winds, the rains, the fruits, to all alike, -- the good and the bad, the unjust and the just, [3991] the free-born and the slave, the poor and the rich? For this belongs to the true and mighty God, to show kindness, unasked, to that which is weary and feeble, and always encompassed by misery, of many kinds. For to grant your prayers on the offering of sacrifices, is not to bring help to those who ask it, but to sell the riches of their beneficence. We men trifle, and are foolish in so great a matter; and, forgetting what [3992] God is, and the majesty of His name, associate with the tutelar deities whatever meanness or baseness our morbid credulity can invent.

25 Unxia, my opponent says, presides over the anointing of door-posts

Unxia, my opponent says, presides over the anointing of door-posts; Cinxia over the loosening of the zone; the most venerable Victa [3993] and Potua attend to eating and drinking. O rare and admirable interpretation of the divine powers! would gods not have names [3994] if brides did not besmear their husbands' door-posts with greasy ointment; were it not that husbands, when now eagerly drawing near, unbind the maiden-girdle; if men did not eat and drink? Moreover, not satisfied to have subjected and involved the gods in cares so unseemly, you also ascribe to them dispositions fierce, cruel, savage, ever rejoicing in the ills and destruction of mankind.

26 We shall not here mention Laverna, goddess of thieves

We shall not here mention Laverna, goddess of thieves, the Bellonæ, Discordiæ, Furiæ; and we pass by in utter silence the unpropitious deities whom you have set up. We shall bring forward Mars himself, and the fair mother of the Desires; to one of whom you commit wars, to the other love and passionate desire. My opponent says that Mars has power over wars; whether to quell those which are raging, or to revive them when interrupted, and kindle them in time of peace? For if he claims the madness of war, why do wars rage every day? but if he is their author, we shall then say that the god, to satisfy his own inclination, involves the whole world in strife; sows the seeds of discord and variance between far-distant peoples; gathers so many thousand men from different quarters, and speedily heaps up the field with dead bodies; makes the streams flow with blood, sweeps away the most firmly-founded empires, lays cities in the dust, robs the free of their liberty, and makes them slaves; rejoices in civil strife, in the bloody death of brothers who die in conflict, and, in fine, in the dire, murderous contest of children with their fathers.

27 Now we may apply this very argument to Venus in exactly the same way.

Now we may apply this very argument to Venus in exactly the same way. For if, as you maintain and believe, she fills men's minds with lustful thoughts, it must be held in consequence that any disgrace and misdeed arising from such madness should be ascribed to the instigation of Venus. Is it, then, under compulsion of the goddess that even the noble too often betray their own reputation into the hands of worthless harlots; that the firm bonds of marriage are broken; that near relations burn with incestuous lust; that mothers have their passions madly kindled towards their children; that fathers turn to themselves their daughters' desires; that old men, bringing shame upon their grey hairs, sigh with the ardour of youth for the gratification of filthy desires; that wise and brave [3995] men, losing in effeminacy the strength of their manhood, disregard the biddings of constancy; that the noose is twisted about their necks; that blazing pyres are ascended; [3996] and that in different places men, leaping voluntarily, cast themselves headlong over very high and huge precipices? [3997]

28 Can any man, who has accepted the first principles even of reason

Can any man, who has accepted the first principles even of reason, be found to mar or dishonour the unchanging nature of Deity with morals so vile? to credit the gods with natures such as human kindness has often charmed away and moderated in the beasts of the field? How, [3998] I ask, can it be said that the gods are far removed from any feeling of passion? that they are gentle, lovers of peace, mild? that in the completeness of their excellence they reach [3999] the height of perfection, and the highest wisdom also? or, why should we pray them to avert from us misfortunes and calamities, if we find that they are themselves the authors of all the ills by which we are daily harassed? Call us impious as much as you please, contemners of religion, or atheists, you will never make us believe in gods of love and war, that there are gods to sow strife, and to disturb the mind by the stings of the furies. For either they are gods in very truth, and do not do what you have related; or if [4000] they do the things which you say, they are doubtless no gods at all.

29 We might, however, even yet be able to receive from you these thoughts

We might, however, even yet be able to receive from you these thoughts, most full of wicked falsehoods, if it were not that you yourselves, in bringing forward many things about the gods so inconsistent and mutually destructive, compel us to withhold our minds from assenting. For when you strive individually to excel each other in reputation for more recondite knowledge, you both overthrow the very gods in whom you believe, and replace them by others who have clearly no existence; and different men give different opinions on the same subjects, [4001] and you write that those whom general consent has ever received as single persons are infinite in number. Let us, too, begin duty, then, with father Janus, whom certain of you have declared to be the world, others the year, some the sun. But if we are to believe that this is true, it follows as a consequence, that it should be understood that there never was any Janus, who, they say, being sprung from Coelus and Hecate, reigned first in Italy, founded the town Janiculum, was the father of Fons, [4002] the son-in-law of Vulturinus, the husband of Juturna; and thus you erase the name of the god to whom in all prayers you give the first place, and whom you believe to procure for you a hearing from the gods. But, again, if Janus be the year, neither thus can he be a god. For who does not know that the year is a fixed space [4003] of time, and that there is nothing divine in that which is formed [4004] by the duration of months and lapse of days? Now this very argument may, in like manner, be applied to Saturn. For if time is meant under this title, as the expounders of Grecian ideas think, so that that is regarded as Kronos, [4005] which is chronos, [4006] there is no such deity as Saturn. For who is so senseless as to say that time is a god, when it is but a certain space measured off [4007] in the unending succession of eternity? And thus will be removed from the rank of the immortals that deity too, whom the men of old declared, and handed down to their posterity, to be born of father Coelus, the progenitor of the dii magni, the planter of the vine, the bearer of the pruning-knife. [4008]

30 But what shall we say of Jove himself, whom the wise have repeatedly asserted to

But what shall we say of Jove himself, whom the wise have repeatedly asserted to be the sun, driving a winged chariot, followed by a crowd of deities; [4009] some, the ether, blazing with mighty flames, and wasting fire which cannot be extinguished? Now if this is clear and certain, there is, then, according to you, no Jupiter at all; who, born of Saturn his father and Ops his mother, is reported to have been concealed in the Cretan territory, that he might escape his father's rage. But now, does not a similar mode of thought remove Juno from the list of gods? For if she is the air, as you have been wont to jest and say, repeating in reversed order the syllables of the Greek name, [4010] there will be found no sister and spouse of almighty Jupiter, no Fluonia, [4011] no Pomona, no Ossipagina, no Februtis, Populonia, Cinxia, Caprotina; and thus the invention of that name, spread abroad with a frequent but vain [4012] belief, will be found to be wholly [4013] useless.

31 Aristotle, a man of most powerful intellect, and distinguished for learning

Aristotle, a man of most powerful intellect, and distinguished for learning, as Granius tells, shows by plausible arguments that Minerva is the moon, and proves it by the authority of learned men. Others have said that this very goddess is the depth of ether, and utmost height; some have maintained that she is memory, whence her name even, Minerva, has arisen, as if she were some goddess of memory. But if this is credited, it follows that there is no daughter of Mens, no daughter of Victory, no discoverer of the Olive, born from the head of Jupiter, no goddess skilled in the knowledge of the arts, and in different branches of learning. Neptune, they say, has received his name and title because he covers the earth with water. If, then, by the use of this name is meant the outspread water, there is no god Neptune at all; and thus is put away, and removed from us, the full brother of Pluto and Jupiter, armed with the iron trident, lord of the fish, great and small, king of the depths of the sea, and shaker of the trembling earth. [4014]

32 Mercury, also, has been named as though he were a kind of go-between

Mercury, also, has been named as though he were a kind of go-between; and because conversation passes between two speakers, and is exchanged by them, that which is expressed by this name has been produced. [4015] If this, then, is the case, Mercury is not the name of a god, but of speech and words exchanged by two persons; and in this way is blotted out and annihilated the noted Cyllenian bearer of the caduceus, born on the cold mountain top, [4016] contriver of words and names, the god who presides over markets, and over the exchange of goods and commercial intercourse. Some of you have said that the earth is the Great Mother, [4017] because it provides all things living with food; others declare that the same earth is Ceres, because it brings forth crops of useful fruits; [4018] while some maintain that it is Vesta, because it alone in the universe is at rest, its other members being, by their constitution, ever in motion. Now if this is propounded and maintained on sure grounds, in like manner, on your interpretation, three deities have no existence: neither Ceres nor Vesta are to be reckoned in the number [4019] of the gods; nor, in fine, can the mother of the gods herself, whom Nigidius thinks to have been married to Saturn, be rightly declared a goddess, if indeed these are all names of the one earth, and it alone is signified by these titles.

33 We here leave Vulcan unnoticed, to avoid prolixity; whom you all declare to be fire

We here leave Vulcan unnoticed, to avoid prolixity; whom you all declare to be fire, with one consenting voice. We pass by Venus, named because lust assails all, and Proserpina, named because plants steal gradually forth into the light, -- where, again, you do away with three deities; if indeed the first is the name of an element, and does not signify a living power; the second, of a desire common to all living creatures; while the third refers to seeds rising above ground, and the upward movements [4020] of growing crops. What! when you maintain that Bacchus, Apollo, the Sun, are one deity, increased in number by the use of three names, is not the number of the gods lessened, and their vaunted reputation overthrown, by your opinions? For if it is true that the sun is also Bacchus and Apollo, there can consequently be in the universe no Apollo or Bacchus; and thus, by yourselves, the son of Semele and the Pythian god are blotted out and set aside, -- one the giver of drunken merriment, the other the destroyer of Sminthian mice.

34 Some of your learned men -- men, too, who do not chatter merely because their

Some of your learned men [4021] -- men, too, who do not chatter merely because their humour leads them -- maintain that Diana, Ceres, Luna, are but one deity in triple union; [4022] and that there are not three distinct persons, as there are three different names; that in all these Luna is invoked, and that the others are a series of surnames added to her name. But if this is sure, if this is certain, and the facts of the case show it to be so, again is Ceres but an empty name, and Diana: and thus the discussion is brought to this issue, that you lead and advise us to believe that she whom you maintain to be the discoverer of the earth's fruits has no existence, and Apollo is robbed of his sister, whom once the horned hunter [4023] gazed upon as she washed her limbs from impurity in a pool, and paid the penalty of his curiosity.

35 Men worthy to be remembered in the study of philosophy

Men worthy to be remembered in the study of philosophy, who have been raised by your praises to its highest place, declare, with commendable earnestness, as their conclusion, that the whole mass of the world, by whose folds we all are encompassed, covered, and upheld, is one animal [4024] possessed of wisdom and reason; yet if this is a true, sure, and certain opinion, [4025] they also will forthwith cease to be gods whom you set up a little ago in its parts without change of name. [4026] For as one man cannot, while his body remains entire, be divided into many men; nor can many men, while they continue to be distinct and separate from each other, [4027] be fused into one sentient individual: so, if the world is a single animal, and moves from the impulse of one mind, neither can it be dispersed in several deities; nor, if the gods are parts of it, can they be brought together and changed into one living creature, with unity of feeling throughout all its parts. The moon, the sun, the earth, the ether, the stars, are members and parts of the world; but if they are parts and members, they are certainly not themselves [4028] living creatures; for in no thing can parts be the very thing which the whole is, or think and feel for themselves, for this cannot be effected by their own actions, without the whole creature's joining in; and this being established and settled, the whole matter comes back to this, that neither Sol, nor Luna, nor Æther, Tellus, and the rest, are gods. For they are parts of the world, not the proper names of deities; and thus it is brought about that, by your disturbing and confusing all divine things, the world is set up as the sole god in the universe, while all the rest are cast aside, and that as having been set up vainly, uselessly, and without any reality.

36 If we sought to subvert the belief in your gods in so many ways

If we sought to subvert the belief in your gods in so many ways, by so many arguments, no one would doubt that, mad with rage and fury, you would demand for us the stake, the beasts, and swords, with the other kinds of torture by which you usually appease your thirst in its intense craving for our blood. But while you yourselves put away almost the whole race of deities with a pretence of cleverness and wisdom, you do not hesitate to assert that, because of us, men suffer ill at the hands of the gods; [4029] although, indeed, if it is true that they anywhere exist, and burn with anger and [4030] rage, there can be no better reason for their showing anger against you, [4031] than that you deny their existence, and say that they are not found in any part of the universe.

37 We are told by Mnaseas that the Muses are the daughters of Tellus and Coelus

We are told by Mnaseas that the Muses are the daughters of Tellus and Coelus; others declare that they are Jove's by his wife Memory, or Mens; some relate that they were virgins, others that they were matrons. For now we wish to touch briefly on the points where you are shown, from the difference of your opinions, to make different statements about the same thing. Ephorus, then, says that they are three [4032] in number; Mnaseas, whom we mentioned, that they are four; [4033] Myrtilus [4034] brings forward seven; Crates asserts that there are eight; finally Hesiod, enriching heaven and the stars with gods, comes forward with nine names. [4035] If we are not mistaken, such want of agreement marks those who are wholly ignorant of the truth, and does not spring from the real state of the case. For if their number were clearly known, the voice of all would be the same, and the agreement of all would tend to and find issue in the same conclusion. [4036]

38 How, then, can you give to religion its whole power

How, then, can you give to religion its whole power, when you fall into error about the gods themselves? or summon us to their solemn worship, while you give us no definite information how to conceive of the deities themselves? For, to take no notice of the other [4037] authors, either the first [4038] makes away with and destroys six divine Muses, if they are certainly nine; or the last [4039] adds six who have no existence to the three who alone really are; so that it cannot be known or understood what should be added, what taken away; and in the performance of religious rites we are in danger [4040] of either worshipping that which does not exist, or passing that by which, it may be, does exist. Piso believes that the Novensiles are nine gods, set up among the Sabines at Trebia. [4041] Granius thinks that they are the Muses, agreeing with Ælius; Varro teaches that they are nine, [4042] because, in doing anything, that number is always reputed most powerful and greatest; Cornificius, [4043] that they watch over the renewing of things, [4044] because, by their care, all things are afresh renewed in strength, and endure; Manilius, that they are the nine gods to whom alone Jupiter gave power to wield his thunder. [4045] Cincius declares them to be deities brought from abroad, named from their very newness, because the Romans were in the habit of sometimes individually introducing into their families the rites [4046] of conquered cities, while some they publicly consecrated; and lest, from their great number, or in ignorance, any god should be passed by, all alike were briefly and compendiously invoked under one name -- Novensiles.

39 There are some, besides, who assert that those who from being men became gods

There are some, besides, who assert that those who from being men became gods, are denoted by this name, -- as Hercules, Romulus, Æsculapius, Liber, Æneas. These are all, as is clear, different opinions; and it cannot be, in the nature of things, that those who differ in opinion can be regarded as teachers of one truth. For if Piso's opinion is true, Ælius and Granius say what is false; if what they say is certain, Varro, with all his skill, [4047] is mistaken, who substitutes things most frivolous and vain for those which really exist. If they are named Novensiles because their number is nine, [4048] Cornificius is shown to stumble, who, giving them might and power not their own, makes them the divine overseers of renovation. [4049] But if Cornificius is right in his belief, Cincius is found to be not wise, who connects with the power of the dii Novensiles the gods of conquered cities. But if they are those whom Cincius asserts them to be, Manilius will be found to speak falsely, who comprehends those who wield another's thunder under this name. [4050] But if that which Manilius holds is true and certain, they are utterly mistaken who suppose that those raised to divine honours, and deified mortals, are thus named because of the novelty of their rank. But if the Novensiles are those who have deserved to be raised to the stars after passing through the life of men, [4051] there are no dii Novensiles at all. For as slaves, soldiers, masters, are not names of persons comprehended under them, [4052] but of officers, ranks, and duties, so, when we say that Novensiles is the name [4053] of gods who by their virtues have become [4054] gods from being men, it is clear and evident that no individual persons are marked out particularly, but that newness itself is named by the title Novensiles.

40 Nigidius taught that the dii Penates were Neptune and Apollo

Nigidius taught that the dii Penates were Neptune and Apollo, who once, on fixed terms, girt Ilium [4055] with walls. He himself again, in his sixteenth book, following Etruscan teaching, shows that there are four kinds of Penates; and that one of these pertains to Jupiter, another to Neptune, the third to the shades below, the fourth to mortal men, making some unintelligible assertion. Cæsius himself, also, following this teaching, thinks that they are Fortune, and Ceres, the genius Jovialis, [4056] and Pales, but not the female deity commonly received, [4057] but some male attendant and steward of Jupiter. Varro thinks that they are the gods of whom we speak who are within, and in the inmost recesses of heaven, and that neither their number nor names are known. The Etruscans say that these are the Consentes and Complices, [4058] and name them because they rise and fall together, six of them being male, and as many female, with unknown names and pitiless dispositions, [4059] but they are considered the counsellors and princes of Jove supreme. There were some, too, who said that Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva were the dii Penates, without whom we cannot live and be wise, and by whom we are ruled within in reason, passion, and thought. As you see, even here, too, nothing is said harmoniously, nothing is settled with the consent of all, nor is there anything reliable on which the mind can take its stand, drawing by conjecture very near to the truth. For their opinions are so doubtful, and one supposition so discredited [4060] by another, that there is either no truth in them all, or if it is uttered by any, it is not recognised amid so many different statements.

41 We can, if it is thought proper, speak briefly of the Lares also

We can, if it is thought proper, speak briefly of the Lares also, whom the mass think to be the gods of streets and ways, because the Greeks name streets *lauræ*. In different parts of his writings, Nigidius speaks of them now as the guardians of houses and dwellings; now as the Curetes, who are said to have once concealed, by the clashing of cymbals, [4061] the infantile cries of Jupiter; now the five *Digiti Samothracii*, who, the Greeks tell us, were named *Idæi Dactyli*. Varro, with like hesitation, says at one time that they are the *Manes*, [4062] and therefore the mother of the Lares was named *Mania*; at another time, again, he maintains that they are gods of the air, and are termed heroes; at another, following the opinion of the ancients, he says that the Lares are ghosts, as it were a kind of tutelary demon, spirits of dead [4063] men.

42 It is a vast and endless task to examine each kind separately

It is a vast and endless task to examine each kind separately, and make it evident even from your religious books that you neither hold nor believe that there is any god concerning whom you have not [4064] brought forward doubtful and inconsistent statements, expressing a thousand different beliefs. But, to be brief, and avoid prolixity, [4065] it is enough to have said what has been said; it is, further, too troublesome to gather together many things into one mass, since it is made manifest and evident in different ways that you waver, and say nothing with certainty of these things which you assert. But you will perhaps say, Even if we have no personal knowledge of the Lares, Novensiles, Penates, still the very agreement of our authors proves their existence, and that such a race [4066] takes rank among the celestial gods. And how can it be known whether there is any god, if what he is shall be wholly unknown? [4067] or how can it avail even to ask for benefits, if it is not settled and determined who should be invoked at each inquiry? [4068] For every one who seeks to obtain an answer from any deity, should of necessity know to whom he makes supplication, on whom he calls, from whom he asks help for the affairs and occasions of human life; especially as you yourselves declare that all the gods do not have all power, and [4069] that the wrath and anger of each are appeased by different rites.

43 For if this deity requires a black, that a white skin

For if this deity [4070] requires a black, that [4071] a white skin; if sacrifice must be made to this one with veiled, to that with uncovered head; [4072] this one is consulted about marriages, [4073] the other relieves distresses, -- may it not be of some importance whether the one or the other is Novensilis, since ignorance of the facts and confusion of persons displeases the gods, and leads necessarily to the contraction of guilt? For suppose that I myself, to avoid some inconvenience and peril, make supplication to any one of these deities, saying, Be present, be near, divine Penates, thou Apollo, and thou, O Neptune, and in your divine clemency turn away all these evils, by which I am annoyed, [4074] troubled, and tormented: will there be any hope that I shall receive help from them, if Ceres, Pales, Fortune, or the genius Jovialis, [4075] not Neptune and Apollo, shall be the dii Penates? Or if I invoked the Curetes instead of the Lares, whom some of your writers maintain to be the Digi Samothracii, how shall I enjoy their help and favour, when I have not given them their own names, and have given to the others names not their own? Thus does our interest demand that we should rightly know the gods, and not hesitate or doubt about the power, the name of each; lest, [4076] if they be invoked with rites and titles not their own, they have at once their ears stopped against our prayers, and hold us involved in guilt which may not be forgiven.

44 Wherefore, if you are assured that in the lofty palaces of heaven there dwells

Wherefore, if you are assured that in the lofty palaces of heaven there dwells, there is, that multitude of deities whom you specify, you should make your stand on one proposition, [4077] and not, divided by different and inconsistent opinions, destroy belief in the very things which you seek to establish. If there is a Janus, let Janus be; if a Bacchus, let Bacchus be; if a Summanus, [4078] let Summanus be: for this is to confide, this to hold, to be settled in the knowledge of something ascertained, not to say after the manner of the blind and erring, The Novensiles are the Muses, in truth they are the Trebian gods, nay, their number is nine, or rather, they are the protectors of cities which have been overthrown; and bring so important matters into this danger, that while you remove some, and put others in their place, it may well be doubted of them all if they anywhere exist.

1 We would ask you, and you above all, O Romans

We would ask you, and you above all, O Romans, lords and princes of the world, whether you think that Piety, Concord, Safety, Honour, Virtue, Happiness, and other such names, to which we see you rear [4079] altars and splendid temples, have divine power, and live in heaven? [4080] or, as is usual, have you classed them with the deities merely for form's sake, because we desire and wish these blessings to fall to our lot? For if, while you think them empty names without any substance, you yet deify them with divine honours, [4081] you will have to consider whether that is a childish frolic, or tends to bring your deities into contempt, [4082] when you make equal, and add to their number vain and feigned names. But if you have loaded them with temples and couches, holding with more assurance that these, too, are deities, we pray you to teach us in our ignorance, by what course, in what way, Victory, Peace, Equity, and the others mentioned among the gods, can be understood to be gods, to belong to the assembly of the immortals?

2 For we -- but, perhaps, you would rob and deprive us of common-sense -- feel

For we -- but, perhaps, you would rob and deprive us of common-sense -- feel and perceive that none of these has divine power, or possesses a form of its own; [4083] but that, on the contrary, they are the excellence of manhood, [4084] the safety of the safe, the honour of the respected, the victory of the conqueror, the harmony of the allied, the piety of the pious, the recollection of the observant, the good fortune, indeed, of him who lives happily and without exciting any ill-feeling. Now it is easy to perceive that, in speaking thus, we speak most reasonably when we observe [4085] the contrary qualities opposed to them, misfortune, discord, forgetfulness, injustice, impiety, baseness of spirit, and unfortunate [4086] weakness of body. For as these things happen accidentally, and [4087] depend on human acts and chance moods, so their contraries, named [4088] after more agreeable qualities, must be found in others; and from these, originating in this wise, have arisen those invented names.

3 With regard, indeed, to your bringing forward to us other bands of unknown gods

With regard, indeed, to your bringing forward to us other bands of unknown [4089] gods, we cannot determine whether you do that seriously, and from a belief in its certainty; or, merely playing with empty fictions, abandon yourselves to an unbridled imagination. The goddess Luperca, you tell us on the authority of Varro, was named because the fierce wolf spared the exposed children. Was that goddess, then, disclosed, not by her own power, but by the course of events? and was it only after the wild beast restrained its cruel teeth, that she both began to be herself and was marked by [4090] her name? or if she was already a goddess long before the birth of Romulus and his brother, show us what was her name and title. Præstana was named, according to you, because, in throwing the javelin, Quirinus excelled all in strength; [4091] and the goddess Panda, or Pantica, was named because Titus Tatius was allowed to open up and make passable a road, that he might take the Capitoline. Before these events, then, had the deities never existed? and if Romulus had not held the first place in casting the javelin, and if the Sabine king had been unable to take the Tarpeian rock, would there be no Pantica, no Præstana? And if you say that they [4092] existed before that which gave rise to their name, a question which has been discussed in a preceding section, [4093] tell us also what they were called.

4 Pellonia is a goddess mighty to drive back enemies.

Pellonia is a goddess mighty to drive back enemies. Whose enemies, say, if it is convenient? Opposing armies meet, and fighting together, hand to hand, decide the battle; and to one this side, to another that, is hostile. Whom, then, will Pellonia turn to flight, since on both sides there will be fighting? or in favour of whom will she incline, seeing that she should afford to both sides the might and services of her name? But if she indeed [4094] did so, that is, if she gave her good-will and favour to both sides, she would destroy the meaning of her name, which was formed with regard to the beating back of one side. But you will perhaps say, She is goddess of the Romans only, and, being on the side of the Quirites alone, is ever ready graciously to help them. [4095] We wish, indeed, that it were so, for we like the name; but it is a very doubtful matter. What! do the Romans have gods to themselves, who do not help [4096] other nations? and how can they be gods, if they do not exercise their divine power impartially towards all nations everywhere? and where, I pray you, was this goddess Pellonia long ago, when the national honour was brought under the yoke at the Caudine Forks? when at the Trasimene lake the streams ran with blood? when the plains of Diomede [4097] were heaped up with dead Romans when a thousand other blows were sustained in countless disastrous battles? Was she snoring and sleeping; [4098] or, as the base often do, had she deserted to the enemies' camp?

5 The sinister deities preside over the regions on the left hand only

The sinister deities preside over the regions on the left hand only, and are opposed to those [4099] on the right. But with what reason this is said, or with what meaning, we do not understand ourselves; and we are sure that you cannot in any degree cause it to be clearly and generally understood. [4100] For in the first place, indeed, the world itself has in itself neither right nor left, neither upper nor under regions, neither fore nor after parts. For whatever is round, and bounded on every side by the circumference [4101] of a solid sphere, has no beginning, no end; where there is no end and beginning, no part can have [4102] its own name and form the beginning. Therefore, when we say, This is the right, and that the left side, we do not refer to anything [4103] in the world, which is everywhere very much the same, but to our own place and position, we being [4104] so formed that we speak of some things as on our right hand, of others as on our left; and yet these very things which we name left, and the others which we name right, have in us no continuance, no fixedness, but take their forms from our sides, just as chance, and the accident of the moment, may have placed us. If I look towards the rising sun, the north pole and the north are on my left hand; and if I turn my face thither, the west will be on my left, for it will be regarded as behind the sun's back. But, again, if I turn my eyes to the region of the west, the wind and country of the south are now said to be on [4105] my left. And if I am turned to this side by the necessary business of the moment, the result is, that the east is said to be on the left, owing to a further change of position, [4106] -- from which it can be very easily seen that nothing is either on our right or on our left by nature, but from position, time, [4107] and according as our bodily position with regard to surrounding objects has been taken up. But in this case, by what means, in what way, will there be gods of the regions of the left, when it is clear that the same regions are at one time on the right, at another on the left? or what have the regions of the right done to the immortal gods, to deserve that they should be without any to care for them, while they have ordained that these should be fortunate, and ever accompanied by lucky omens?

6 Lateranus, as you say, is the god and genius of hearths

Lateranus, [4108] as you say, is the god and genius of hearths, and received this name because men build that kind of fireplace of unbaked bricks. What then? if hearths were made of baked clay, or any other material whatever, will they have no genii? and will Lateranus, whoever he is, abandon his duty as guardian, because the kingdom which he possesses has not been formed of bricks of clay? And for what purpose, [4109] I ask, has that god received the charge of hearths? He runs about the kitchens of men, examining and discovering with what kinds of wood the heat in their fires is produced; he gives strength [4110] to earthen vessels that they may not fly in pieces, overcome by the violence of the flames; he sees that the flavour of unspoilt dainties reaches the taste of the palate with their own pleasantness, and acts the part of a taster, and tries whether the sauces have been rightly prepared. Is not this unseemly, nay -- to speak with more truth -- disgraceful, impious, to introduce some pretended deities for this only, not to do them reverence with fitting honours, but to appoint them over base things, and disreputable actions? [4111]

7 Does Venus Militaris, also, preside over the evil-doing of camps

Does Venus Militaris, also, preside over the evil-doing [4112] of camps, and the debaucheries of young men? Is there one Perfica, [4113] also, of the crowd of deities, who causes those base and filthy delights to reach their end with uninterrupted pleasure? Is there also Pertunda, who presides over the marriage [4114] couch? Is there also Tutunus, on whose huge members [4115] and horrent fascinum you think it auspicious, and desire, that your matrons should be borne? But if facts themselves have very little effect in suggesting to you a right understanding of the truth, are you not able, even from the very names, to understand that these are the inventions of a most meaningless superstition, and the false gods of fancy? [4116] Puta, you say, presides over the pruning of trees, Peta over prayers; Nemestrinus [4117] is the god of groves; Patellana is a deity, and Patella, of whom the one has been set over things brought to light, the other over those yet to be disclosed. Nodutis is spoken of as a god, because he [4118] brings that which has been sown to the knots: and she who presides over the treading out of grain, Noduterensis; [4119] the goddess Upibilia [4120] delivers from straying from the right paths; parents bereaved of their children are under the care of Orbona, -- those very near to death, under that of Nænia. Again, [4121] Ossilago herself is mentioned as she who gives firmness and solidity to the bones of young children. Mellonia is a goddess, strong and powerful in regard to bees, caring for and guarding the sweetness of their honey.

8 Say, I pray you, -- that Peta, Puta, Patella may graciously favour you

Say, I pray you, -- that Peta, Puta, Patella may graciously favour you, -- if there were no [4122] bees at all on the earth then, or if we men were born without bones, like some worms, would there be no goddess Mellonia; [4123] or would Ossilago, who gives bones their solidity, be without a name of her own? I ask truly, and eagerly inquire whether you think that gods, or men, or bees, fruits, twigs, and the rest, are the more ancient in nature, time, long duration? No man will doubt that you say that the gods precede all things whatever by countless ages and generations. But if it is so, how, in the nature of things, can it be that, from things produced afterwards, they received those names which are earlier in point of time? or that the gods were charged with the care [4124] of those things which were not yet produced, and assigned to be of use to men? Or were the gods long without names; and was it only after things began to spring up, and be on the earth, that you thought it right that they should be called by these names [4125] and titles? And whence could you have known what name to give to each, since you were wholly ignorant of their existence; or that they possessed any fixed powers, seeing that you were equally unaware which of them had any power, and over what he should be placed to suit his divine might?

9 What then? you say; do you declare that these gods exist nowhere in the world

What then? you say; do you declare that these gods exist nowhere in the world, and have been created by unreal fancies? Not we alone, but truth itself, and reason, say so, and that common-sense in which all men share. For who there who believes that there are gods of gain, and that they preside over the getting of it, seeing that it springs very often from the basest employments, and is always at the expense of others? Who believes that Libentina, who that Burnus, [4126] is set over those lusts which wisdom bids us avoid, and which, in a thousand ways, vile and filthy wretches [4127] attempt and practise? Who that Limentinus and Lima have the care of thresholds, and do the duties of their keepers, when every day we see the thresholds of temples and private houses destroyed and overthrown, and that the infamous approaches to stews are not without them? Who believes that the Limi [4128] watch over obliquities? who that Saturnus presides over the sown crops? who that Montinus is the guardian of mountains; Murcia, [4129] of the slothful? Who, finally, would believe that Money is a goddess, whom your writings declare, as though she were the greatest deity, to give golden rings, [4130] the front seats at games and shows, honours in the greatest number, the dignity of the magistracy, and that which the indolent love most of all, -- an undisturbed ease, by means of riches.

10 But if you urge that bones, different kinds of honey

But if you urge that bones, different kinds of honey, thresholds, and all the other things which we have either run over rapidly, or, to avoid prolixity, passed by altogether, have [4131] their own peculiar guardians, we may in like manner introduce a thousand other gods, who should care for and guard innumerable things. For why should a god have charge of honey only, and not of gourds, rape, cunila, cress, figs, beets, cabbages? Why should the bones alone have found protection, and not the nails, hair, and all the other things which are placed in the hidden parts and members of which we feel ashamed, and are exposed to very many accidents, and stand more in need of the care and attention of the gods? Or if you say that these parts, too, act under the care of their own tutelar deities, there will begin to be as many gods as there are things; nor will the cause be stated why the divine care does not protect all things, if you say that there are certain things over which the deities preside, and for which they care

11 What say you, O fathers of new religions, and powers? Do you cry out

What say you, O fathers of new religions, and powers? [4132] Do you cry out, and complain that these gods are dishonoured by us, and neglected with profane contempt, viz., Lateranus, the genius of hearths; Limentinus, who presides over thresholds; Pertunda, [4133] Perfica, Noduterensis: [4134] and do you say that things have sunk into ruin, and that the world itself has changed its laws and constitution, because we do not bow humbly in supplication to Mutunus [4135] and Tutunus? But now look and see, lest while you imagine such monstrous things, and form such conceptions, you may have offended the gods who most assuredly exist, if only there are any who are worthy to bear and hold that most exalted title; and it be for no other reason that those evils, of which you speak, rage, and increase by accessions every day. [4136] Why, then, some one of you will perhaps say, do you maintain [4137] that it is not true that these gods exist? And, when invoked by the diviners, do they obey the call, and come when summoned by their own names, and give answers which may be relied on, to those who consult them? We can show that what is said is false, either because in the whole matter there is the greatest room for distrust, or because we, every day, see many of their predictions either prove untrue or wrested with baffled expectation to suit the opposite issues.

12 But let them be true, as you maintain, yet will you have us also believe

But let them [4138] be true, as you maintain, yet will you have us also believe [4139] that Mellonia, for example, introduces herself into the entrails, or Limentinus, and that they set themselves to make known [4140] what you seek to learn? Did you ever see their face, their deportment, their countenance? or can even these be seen in lungs or livers? May it not happen, may it not come to pass, although you craftily conceal it, that the one should take the other's place, deluding, mocking, deceiving, and presenting the appearance of the deity invoked? If the magi, who are so much akin to [4141] soothsayers, relate that, in their incantations, pretended gods [4142] steal in frequently instead of those invoked; that some of these, moreover, are spirits of grosser substance, [4143] who pretend that they are gods, and delude the ignorant by their lies and deceit, -- why [4144] should we not similarly believe that here, too, others substitute themselves for those who are not, that they may both strengthen your superstitious beliefs, and rejoice that victims are slain in sacrifice to them under names not their own?

13 Or, if you refuse to believe this on account of its novelty

Or, if you refuse to believe this on account of its novelty, [4145] how can you know whether there is not some one, who comes in place of all whom you invoke, and substituting himself in all parts of the world, [4146] shows to you what appear to be [4147] many gods and powers? Who is that one? some one will ask. We may perhaps, being instructed by truthful authors, be able to say; but, lest you should be unwilling to believe us, let my opponent ask the Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Chaldeans, Armenians, and all the others who have seen and become acquainted with these things in the more recondite arts. Then, indeed, you will learn who is the one God, or who the very many under Him are, who pretend to be gods, and make sport of men's ignorance. Even now we are ashamed to come to the point at which not only boys, young and pert, but grave men also, cannot restrain their laughter, and men who have been hardened into a strict and stern humour. [4148] For while we have all heard it inculcated and taught by our teachers, that in declining the names of the gods there was no plural number, because the gods were individuals, and the ownership of each name could not be common to a great many; [4149] you in forgetfulness, and putting away the memory of your early lessons, both give to several gods the same names, and, although you are elsewhere more moderate as to their number, have multiplied them, again, by community of names; which subject, indeed, men of keen discernment and acute intellect have before now treated both in Latin and Greek. [4150] And that might have lessened our labour, [4151] if it were not that at the same time we see that some know nothing of these books; and, also, that the discussion which we have begun, compels us to bring forward something on these subjects, although it has been already laid hold of, and related by those writers.

14 Your theologians, then, and authors on unknown antiquity, say that in the universe there are

Your theologians, then, and authors on unknown antiquity, say that in the universe there are three Joves, one of whom has Æther for his father; another, Coelus; the third, Saturn, born and buried [4152] in the island of Crete. They speak of five Suns and five Mercuries, -- of whom, as they relate, the first Sun is called the son of Jupiter, and is regarded as grandson of Æther; the second is also Jupiter's son, and the mother who bore him Hyperiona; [4153] the third the son of Vulcan, not Vulcan of Lemnos, but the son of the Nile; the fourth, whom Acantho bore at Rhodes in the heroic age, was the father of Ialysus; while the fifth is regarded as the son of a Scythian king and subtle Circe. Again, the first Mercury, who is said to have lusted after Proserpina, [4154] is son of Coelus, who is above all. Under the earth is the second, who boasts that he is Trophonius. The third was born of Maia, his mother, and the third Jove; [4155] the fourth is the offspring of the Nile, whose name the people of Egypt dread and fear to utter. The fifth is the slayer of Argus, a fugitive and exile, and the inventor of letters in Egypt. But there are five Minervas also, they say, just as there are five Suns and Mercuries; the first of whom is no virgin but the mother of Apollo by Vulcan; the second, the offspring of the Nile, who is asserted to be the Egyptian Sais; the third is descended from Saturn, and is the one who devised the use of arms; the fourth is sprung from Jove, and the Messenians name her Coryphasia; and the fifth is she who slew her lustful [4156] father, Pallas.

15 And lest it should seem tedious and prolix to wish to consider each person singly

And lest it should seem tedious and prolix to wish to consider each person singly, the same theologians say that there are four Vulcans and three Dianas, as many Æsculapii and five Dionysi, six Hercules and four Venuses, three sets of Castors and the same number of Muses, three winged Cupids, and four named Apollo; [4157] whose fathers they mention in like manner, in like manner their mothers, and the places where they were born, and point out the origin and family of each. But if it is true and certain, and is told in earnest as a well-known matter, either they are not all gods, inasmuch as there cannot be several under the same name, as we have been taught; or if there is one of them, he will not be known and recognised, because he is obscured by the confusion of very similar names. And thus it results from your own action, however unwilling you may be that it should be so, that religion is brought into difficulty and confusion, and has no fixed end to which it can turn itself, without being made the sport of equivocal illusions.

16 For suppose that it had occurred to us, moved either by suitable influence or violent

For suppose that it had occurred to us, moved either by suitable influence or violent fear of you, [4158] to worship Minerva, for example, with the rights you deem sacred, and the usual ceremony: if, when we prepare sacrifices, and approach to make the offerings appointed for her on the flaming altars, all the Minervas shall fly thither, and striving for the right to that name, each demand that the offerings prepared be given to herself; what drawn-out animal shall we place among them, or to whom shall we direct the sacred offices which are our duty? [4159] For the first one of whom we spoke will perhaps say: "The name Minerva is mine, mine [4160] the divine majesty, who bore Apollo and Diana, and by the fruit of my womb enriched heaven with deities, and multiplied the number of the gods." "Nay, Minerva," the fifth will say, "are you speaking, [4161] who, being a wife, and so often a mother, have lost the sanctity of spotless purity? Do you not see that in all temples [4162] the images of Minervas are those of virgins, and that all artists refrain from giving to them the figures of matrons? [4163] Cease, therefore, to appropriate to yourself a name not rightfully [4164] yours. For that I am Minerva, begotten of father Pallas, the whole band of poets bear witness, who call me Pallas, the surname being derived from my father." The second will cry on hearing this: "What say you? Do you, then, bear the name of Minerva, an impudent parricide, and one defiled by the pollution of lewd lust, who, decking yourself with rouge and a harlot's arts, roused upon yourself even your father's passions, full of maddening desires? Go further, then, seek for yourself another name; for this belongs to me, whom the Nile, greatest of rivers, begot from among his flowing waters, and brought to a maiden's estate from the condensing of moisture. [4165] But if you inquire into the credibility of the matter, I too will bring as witnesses the Egyptians, in whose language I am called Neith, as Plato's Timæus [4166] attests." What, then, do we suppose will be the result? Will she indeed cease to say that she is Minerva, who is named Coryphasia, either to mark her mother, or because she sprung forth from the top of Jove's head, bearing a shield, and girt with the terror of arms? Or are we to suppose that she who is third will quietly surrender the name? and not argue [4167] and resist the assumption of the first two with such words as these: "Do you thus dare to assume the honour of my name, O Sais, [4168] sprung from the mud and eddies of a stream, and formed in miry places? Or do you usurp [4169] another's rank, who falsely say that you were born a goddess from the head of Jupiter, and persuade very silly men that you are reason? Does he conceive and bring forth children from his head? That the arms you bear might be forged and formed, was there even in the hollow of his head a smith's workshop? were there anvils, hammers, furnaces, bellows, coals, and pincers? Or if, as you maintain, it is true that you are reason, cease to claim for yourself the name which is mine; for reason, of which you speak, is not a certain form of deity, but the understanding of difficult questions." If, then, as we have said, five Minervas should meet us when we essay to sacrifice, [4170] and contending as to whose this name is, each demand that either fumigations of incense be offered to her, or sacrificial wines poured out from golden cups; by what arbiter, by what judge, shall we dispose of so great a dispute? or what examiner will there be, what umpire of

so great boldness as to attempt, with such personages, either to give a just decision, or to declare their causes not founded on right? Will he not rather go home, and, keeping himself apart from such matters, think it safer to have nothing to do with them, lest he should either make enemies of the rest, by giving to one what belongs to all, or be charged with folly for yielding [4171] to all what should be the property of one?

17 We may say the very same things of the Mercuries

We may say the very same things of the Mercuries, the Suns, -- indeed of all the others whose numbers you increase and multiply. But it is sufficient to know from one case that the same principle applies to the rest; and, lest our prolixity should chance to weary our audience, we shall cease to deal with individuals, lest, while we accuse you of excess, we also should ourselves be exposed to the charge of excessive loquacity. What do you say, you who, by the fear of bodily tortures, urge us to worship the gods, and constrain us to undertake the service of your deities? We can be easily won, if only something befitting the conception of so great a race be shown to us. Show us Mercury, but only one; give us Bacchus, but only one; one Venus, and in like manner one Diana. For you will never make us believe that there are four Apollos, or three Jupiters, not even if you were to call Jove himself as witness, or make the Pythian god your authority.

18 But some one on the opposite side says, How do we know whether the theologians

But some one on the opposite side says, How do we know whether the theologians have written what is certain and well known, or set forth a wanton fiction, [4172] as they thought and judged? That has nothing to do with the matter; nor does the reasonableness of your argument depend upon this, -- whether the facts are as the writings of the theologians state, or are otherwise and markedly different. For to us it is enough to speak of things which come before the public; and we need not inquire what is true, but only confute and disprove that which lies open to all, and which men's thoughts have generally received. But if they are liars, declare yourselves what is the truth, and disclose the unassailable mystery. And how can it be done when the services of men of letters are set aside? For what is there which can be said about the immortal gods that has not reached men's thoughts from what has been written by men on these subjects? [4173] Or can you relate anything yourselves about their rights and ceremonies, which has not been recorded in books, and made known by what authors have written? Or if you think these of no importance, let all the books be destroyed which have been composed about the gods for you by theologians, pontiffs, and even some devoted to the study of philosophy; nay, let us rather suppose that from the foundation of the world no man ever wrote [4174] anything about the gods: we wish to find out, and desire to know, whether you can mutter or murmur in mentioning the gods, [4175] or conceive those in thought to whom no idea [4176] from any book gave shape in your minds. But when it is clear that you have been informed of their names and powers by the suggestions of books, [4177] it is unjust to deny the reliableness of these books by whose testimony and authority you establish what you say.

19 But perhaps these things will turn out to be false

But perhaps these things will turn out to be false, and what you say to be true. By what proof, by what evidence, will it be shown? For since both parties are men, both those who have said the one thing and those who have said the other, and on both sides the discussion was of doubtful matters, it is arrogant to say that that is true which seems so to you, but that that which offends your feelings manifests wantonness and falsehood. By the laws of the human race, and the associations of mortality itself, when you read and hear, That god was born of this father and of that mother, do you not feel in your mind [4178] that something is said which belongs to man, and relates to the meanness of our earthly race? Or, while you think that it is so, [4179] do you conceive no anxiety lest you should in something offend the gods themselves, whoever they are, because you believe that it is owing to filthy intercourse... [4180] that they have reached the light they knew not of, thanks to lewdness? For we, lest any one should chance to think that we are ignorant of, do not know, what befits the majesty of that name, assuredly [4181] think that the gods should not know birth; or if they are born at all, we hold and esteem that the Lord and Prince of the universe, by ways which He knew Himself, sent them forth spotless, most pure, undefiled, ignorant of sexual pollution, [4182] and brought to the full perfection of their natures as soon as they were begotten? [4183]

20 But you, on the contrary, forgetting how great their dignity and grandeur are

But you, on the contrary, forgetting how great [4184] their dignity and grandeur are, associate with them a birth, [4185] and impute to them a descent, [4186] which men of at all refined feelings regard as at once execrable and terrible. From Ops, you say, his mother, and from his father Saturn, Diespiter was born with his brothers. Do the gods, then, have wives; and, the matches having been previously planned, do they become subject to the bonds of marriage? Do they take upon themselves [4187] the engagements of the bridal couch by prescription, by the cake of spelt, and by a pretended sale? [4188] Have they their mistresses, [4189] their promised wives, their betrothed brides, on settled conditions? And what do we say about their marriages, too, when indeed you say that some celebrated their nuptials, and entertained joyous throngs, and that the goddesses sported at these; and that some threw all things into utter confusion with dissensions because they had no share in singing the Fescennine verses, and occasioned danger and destruction [4190] to the next generation of men? [4191]

21 But perhaps this foul pollution may be less apparent in the rest.

But perhaps this foul pollution may be less apparent in the rest. Did, then, the ruler of the heavens, the father of gods and men, who, by the motion of his eyebrow, and by his nod, shakes the whole heavens and makes them tremble, -- did he find his origin in man and woman? And unless both sexes abandoned themselves to degrading pleasures in sensual embraces, [4192] would there be no Jupiter, greatest of all; and even to this time would the divinities have no king, and heaven stand without its lord? And why do we marvel that you say Jove sprang from a woman's womb, seeing that your authors relate that he both had a nurse, and in the next place maintained the life given to him by nourishment drawn from a foreign [4193] breast? What say you, O men? Did, then, shall I repeat, the god who makes the thunder crash, lightens and hurls the thunderbolt, and draws together terrible clouds, drink in the streams of the breast, wail as an infant, creep about, and, that he might be persuaded to cease his crying most foolishly protracted, was he made silent by the noise of rattles, [4194] and put to sleep lying in a very soft cradle, and lulled with broken words? O devout assertion of the existence of gods, pointing out and declaring the venerable majesty of their awful grandeur! Is it thus in your opinion, I ask, that the exalted powers [4195] of heaven are produced? do your gods come forth to the light by modes of birth such as these, by which asses, pigs, dogs, by which the whole of this unclean herd [4196] of earthly beasts is conceived and begotten?

22 And, not content to have ascribed these carnal unions to the venerable Saturn

And, not content to have ascribed these carnal unions to the venerable Saturn, [4197] you affirm that the king of the world himself begot children even more shamefully than he was himself born and begotten. Of Hyperiona, [4198] as his mother, you say, and Jupiter, who wields the thunderbolt, was born the golden and blazing Sun; of Latona and the same, the Delian archer, and Diana, [4199] who rouses the woods; of Leda and the same, [4200] those named in Greek Dioscori; of Alcmena and the same, the Theban Hercules, whom his club and hide defended; of him and Semele, Liber, who is named Bromius, and was born a second time from his father's thigh; of him, again, and Maia, Mercury, eloquent in speech, and bearer of the harmless snakes. Can any greater insult be put upon your Jupiter, or is there anything else which will destroy and ruin the reputation of the chief of the gods, further than that you believe him to have been at times overcome by vicious pleasures, and to have glowed with the passion of a heart roused to lust after women? And what had the Saturnian king to do with strange nuptials? Did Juno not suffice him; and could he not stay the force of his desires on the queen of the deities, although so great excellence graced her, such beauty, majesty of countenance, and snowy and marble whiteness of arms? Or did he, not content with one wife, taking pleasure in concubines, mistresses, and courtezans, a lustful god, show [4201] his incontinence in all directions, as is the custom with dissolute [4202] youths; and in old age, after intercourse with numberless persons, did he renew his eagerness for pleasures now losing their zest? What say you, profane ones; or what vile thoughts do you fashion about your Jove? Do you not, then, observe, do you not see with what disgrace you brand him? of what wrong-doing you make him the author? or what stains of vice, how great infamy you heap upon him?

23 Men, though prone to lust, and inclined, through weakness of character

Men, though prone to lust, and inclined, through weakness of character, to yield to the allurements of sensual pleasures, still punish adultery by the laws, and visit with the penalty of death those whom they find to have possessed themselves of others rights by forcing the marriage-bed. The greatest of kings, however, you tell us, did not know how vile, how infamous the person of the seducer and adulterer was; and he who, as is said, examines our merits and demerits, did not, owing to the reasonings of his abandoned heart, see what was the fitting course for him to resolve on. But this misconduct might perhaps be endured, if you were to conjoin him with persons at least his equals, and if he were made by you the paramour of the immortal goddesses. But what beauty, what grace was there, I ask you, in human bodies, which could move, which could turn to it [4203] the eyes of Jupiter? Skin, entrails, phlegm, and all that filthy mass placed under the coverings of the intestines, which not Lynceus only with his searching gaze can shudder at, but any other also can be made to turn from even by merely thinking. O wonderful reward of guilt, O fitting and precious joy, for which Jupiter, the greatest, should become a swan, and a bull, and beget white eggs!

24 If you will open your minds' eyes, and see the real truth without gratifying any

If you will open your minds' eyes, and see the real [4204] truth without gratifying any private end, you will find that the causes of all the miseries by which, as you say, the human race has long been afflicted, flow from such beliefs which you held in former times about your gods; and which you have refused to amend, although the truth was placed before your eyes. For what about them, pray, have we indeed ever either imagined which was unbecoming, or put forth in shameful writings that the troubles which assail men and the loss of the blessings of life [4205] should be used to excite a prejudice against us? Do we say that certain gods were produced from eggs, [4206] like storks and pigeons? Do we say that the radiant Cytherean Venus grew up, having taken form from the sea's foam and the severed genitals of Coelus? that Saturn was thrown into chains for parricide, and relieved from their weight only on his own days? [4207] that Jupiter was saved from death [4208] by the services of the Curetes? that he drove his father from the seat of power, and by force and fraud possessed a sovereignty not his own? Do we say that his aged sire, when driven out, concealed himself in the territories of the Itali, and gave his name as a gift to Latium, [4209] because he had been there protected from his son? Do we say that Jupiter himself incestuously married his sister? or, instead of pork, breakfasted in ignorance upon the son of Lycaon, when invited to his table? that Vulcan, limping on one foot, wrought as a smith in the island of Lemnos? that Æsculapius was transfixed by a thunderbolt because of his greed and avarice, as the Boeotian Pindar [4210] sings? that Apollo, having become rich, by his ambiguous responses, deceived the very kings by whose treasures and gifts he had been enriched? Did we declare that Mercury was a thief? that Laverna is so also, and along with him presides over secret frauds? Is the writer Myrtilus one of us, who declares that the Muses were the handmaids of Megalcon, [4211] daughter of Macarus? [4212]

25 Did we say that Venus was a courtesan, deified by a Cyprian king named Cinyras?

Did we say [4213] that Venus was a courtesan, deified by a Cyprian king named Cinyras? Who reported that the palladium was formed from the remains of Pelops? Was it not you? Who that Mars was Spartanus? was it not your writer Epicharmus? Who that he was born within the confines of Thrace? was it not Sophocles the Athenian, with the assent of all his spectators? Who that he was born in Arcadia? was it not you? Who that he was kept a prisoner for thirteen months? [4214] was it not the son of the river Meles? Who said that dogs were sacrificed to him by the Carians, asses by the Scythians? was it not Apollodorus especially, along with the rest? Who that in wronging another's marriage couch, he was caught entangled in snares? was it not your writings, your tragedies? Did we ever write that the gods for hire endured slavery, as Hercules at Sardis [4215] for lust and wantonness; as the Delian Apollo, who served Admetus, as Jove's brother, who served the Trojan Laomedon, whom the Pythian also served, but with his uncle; as Minerva, who gives light, and trims the lamps to secret lovers? Is not he one of your poets, who represented Mars and Venus as wounded by men's hands? Is not Panyassis one of you, who relates that father Dis and queenly Juno were wounded by Hercules? Do not the writings of your Polemo say that Pallas [4216] was slain, [4217] covered with her own blood, overwhelmed by Ornytus? Does not Sosibius declare that Hercules himself was afflicted by the wound and pain he suffered at the hands of Hipocoon's children? Is it related at our instance that Jupiter was committed to the grave in the island of Crete? Do we say that the brothers, [4218] who were united in their cradle, were buried in the territories of Sparta and Lacedæmon? Is the author of our number, who is termed Patrocles the Thurian in the titles of his writings, who relates that the tomb and remains of Saturn are found [4219] in Sicily? Is Plutarch of Chæronea [4220] esteemed one of us, who said that Hercules was reduced to ashes on the top of Mount OËta, after his loss of strength through epilepsy?

26 But what shall I say of the desires with which it is written in your

But what shall I say of the desires with which it is written in your books, and contained in your writers, that the holy immortals lusted after women? For is it by us that the king of the sea is asserted in the heat of maddened passion to have robbed of their virgin purity Amphitrite, [4221] Hippothoe, Amymone, Menalippe, Alope? [4222] that the spotless Apollo, Latona's son, most chaste and pure, with the passions of a breast not governed by reason, desired Arsinoe, Æthusa, Hypsipyle, Marpessa, Zeuxippe, and Prothoe, Daphne, and Sterope? [4223] Is it shown in our poems that the aged Saturn, already long covered with grey hair, and now cooled by weight of years, being taken by his wife in adultery, put on the form of one of the lower animals, and neighing loudly, escaped in the shape of a beast? Do you not accuse Jupiter himself of having assumed countless forms, and concealed by mean deceptions the ardour of his wanton lust? Have we ever written that he obtained his desires by deceit, at one time changing into gold, at another into a sportive satyr; into a serpent, a bird, a bull; and, to pass beyond all limits of disgrace, into a little ant, that he might, forsooth, make Clitor's daughter the mother of Myrmidon, in Thessaly? Who represented him as having watched over Alcmena for nine nights without ceasing? was it not you? -- that he indolently abandoned himself to his lusts, forsaking his post in heaven? was it not you? And, indeed, you ascribe [4224] to him no mean favours; since, in your opinion, the god Hercules was born to exceed and surpass in such matters his father's powers. He in nine nights begot [4225] with difficulty one son; but Hercules, a holy god, in one night taught the fifty daughters of Thestius at once to lay aside their virginal title, and to bear a mother's burden. Moreover, not content to have ascribed to the gods love of women, do you also say that they lusted after men? Some one loves Hylas; another is engaged with Hyacinthus; that one burns with desire for Pelops; this one sighs more ardently for Chrysippus; Catamitus is carried off to be a favourite and cup-bearer; and Fabius, that he may be called Jove's darling, is branded on the soft parts, and marked in the hinder.

27 But among you, is it only the males who lust

But among you, is it only the males who lust; and has the female sex preserved its purity? [4226] Is it not proved in your books that Tithonus was loved by Aurora; that Luna lusted after Endymion; the Nereid after Æacus; Thetis after Achilles' father; Proserpina after Adonis; her mother, Ceres, after some rustic Jasion, and afterwards Vulcan, Phaeton, [4227] Mars; Venus herself, the mother of Æneas, and founder of the Roman power, to marry Anchises? While, therefore, you accuse, without making any exception, not one only by name, but the whole of the gods alike, in whose existence you believe, of such acts of extraordinary shamefulness and baseness, do you dare, without violation of modesty, to say either that we are impious, or that you are pious, although they receive from you much greater occasion for offence on account of all the shameful acts which you heap up to their reproach, than in connection with the service and duties required by their majesty, honour, and worship? For either all these things are false which you bring forward about them individually, lessening their credit and reputation; and it is in that case a matter quite deserving, that the gods should utterly destroy the race of men; or if they are true and certain, and perceived without any reasons for doubt, it comes to this issue, that, however unwilling you may be, we believe them to be not of heavenly, but of earthly birth.

28 For where there are weddings, marriages, births, nurses, arts

For where there are weddings, marriages, births, nurses, arts, [4228] and weaknesses; where there are liberty and slavery; where there are wounds, slaughter, and shedding of blood; where there are lusts, desires, sensual pleasures; where there is every mental passion arising from disgusting emotions, -- there must of necessity be nothing godlike there; nor can that cleave to a superior nature which belongs to a fleeting race, and to the frailty of earth. For who, if only he recognises and perceives what the nature of that power is, can believe either that a deity had the generative members, and was deprived of them by a very base operation; or that he at one time cut off the children sprung from himself, and was punished by suffering imprisonment; or that he, in a way, made civil war upon his father, and deprived him of the right of governing; or that he, filled with fear of one younger when overcome, turned to flight, and hid in remote solitudes, like a fugitive and exile? Who, I say, can believe that the deity reclined at men's tables, was troubled on account of his avarice, deceived his suppliants by an ambiguous reply, excelled in the tricks of thieves, committed adultery, acted as a slave, was wounded, and in love, and submitted to the seduction of impure desires in all the forms of lust? But yet you declare all these things both were, and are, in your gods; and you pass by no form of vice, wickedness, error, without bringing it forward, in the wantonness of your fancies, to the reproach of the gods. You must, therefore, either seek out other gods, to whom all these reproaches shall not apply, for they are a human and earthly race to whom they apply; or if there are only these whose names and character you have declared, by your beliefs you do away with them: for all the things of which you speak relate to men.

29 And here, indeed, we can show that all those whom you represent to us as

And here, indeed, we can show that all those whom you represent to us as and call gods, were but men, by quoting either Euhemerus of Acragas, [4229] whose books were translated by Ennius into Latin that all might be thoroughly acquainted with them; or Nicanor [4230] the Cyprian; or the Pellæan Leon; or Theodorus of Cyrene; or Hippo and Diagoras of Melos; or a thousand other writers, who have minutely, industriously, and carefully [4231] brought secret things to light with noble candour. We may, I repeat, at pleasure, declare both the acts of Jupiter, and the wars of Minerva and the virgin [4232] Diana; by what stratagems Liber strove to make himself master of the Indian empire; what was the condition, the duty, the gain [4233] of Venus; to whom the great mother was bound in marriage; what hope, what joy was aroused in her by the comely Attis; whence came the Egyptian Serapis and Isis, or for what reasons their very names [4234] were formed.

30 But in the discussion which we at present maintain

But in the discussion which we at present maintain, we do not undertake this trouble or service, to show and declare who all these were. But this is what we proposed to ourselves, that as you call us impious and irreligious, and, on the other hand, maintain that you are pious and serve the gods, we should prove and make manifest that by no men are they treated with less respect than by you. But if it is proved by the very insults that it is so, it must, as a consequence, be understood that it is you who rouse the gods to fierce and terrible rage, because you either listen to or believe, or yourselves invent about them, stories so degrading. For it is not he who is anxiously thinking of religious rites, [4235] and slays spotless victims, who gives piles of incense to be burned with fire, not he must be thought to worship the deities, or alone discharge the duties of religion. True worship is in the heart, and a belief worthy of the gods; nor does it at all avail to bring blood and gore, if you believe about them things which are not only far remote from and unlike their nature, but even to some extent stain and disgrace both their dignity and virtue.

31 We wish, then, to question you, and invite you to answer a short question

We wish, then, to question you, and invite you to answer a short question, Whether you think it a greater offence to sacrifice to them no victims, because you think that so great a being neither wishes nor desires these; or, with foul beliefs, to hold opinions about them so degrading, that they might rouse any one's spirit to a mad desire for revenge? If the relative importance of the matters be weighed, you will find no judge so prejudiced as not to believe it a greater crime to defame by manifest insults any one's reputation, than to treat it with silent neglect. For this, perhaps, may be held and believed from deference to reason; but the other course manifests an impious spirit, and a blindness despaired of in fiction. If in your ceremonies and rites neglected sacrifices and expiatory offerings may be demanded, guilt is said to have been contracted; if by a momentary forgetfulness [4236] any one has erred either in speaking or in pouring wine; [4237] or again, [4238] if at the solemn games and sacred races the dancer has halted, or the musician suddenly become silent, -- you all cry out immediately that something has been done contrary to the sacredness of the ceremonies; or if the boy termed patrimus let go the thong in ignorance, [4239] or could not hold to the earth: [4240] and yet do you dare to deny that the gods are ever being wronged by you in sins so grievous, while you confess yourselves that, in less matters, they are often angry, to the national ruin?

32 But all these things, they say, are the fictions of poets

But all these things, they say, are the fictions of poets, and games arranged for pleasure. It is not credible, indeed, that men by no means thoughtless, who sought to trace out the character of the remotest antiquity, either did not [4241] insert in their poems the fables which survived in men's minds [4242] and common conversation; [4243] or that they would have assumed to themselves so great licence as to foolishly feign what was almost sheer madness, and might give them reason to be afraid of the gods, and bring them into danger with men. But let us grant that the poets are, as you say, the inventors and authors of tales so disgraceful; you are not, however, even thus free from the guilt of dishonouring the gods, who either are remiss in punishing such offences, or have not, by passing laws, and by severity of punishments, opposed such indiscretion, and determined [4244] that no man should henceforth say that which tended to the dishonour, [4245] or was unworthy of the glory of the gods. [4246] For whoever allows the wrongdoer to sin, strengthens his audacity; and it is more insulting to brand and mark any one with false accusations, than to bring forward and upbraid their real offences. For to be called what you are, and what you feel yourself to be, is less offensive, because your resentment is checked by the evidence supplied against you on privately reviewing your life; [4247] but that wounds very keenly which brands the innocent, and defames a man's honourable name and reputation.

33 Your gods, it is recorded, dine on celestial couches

Your gods, it is recorded, dine on celestial couches, and in golden chambers, drink, and are at last soothed by the music of the lyre, and singing. You fit them with ears not easily wearied; [4248] and do not think it unseemly to assign to the gods the pleasures by which earthly bodies are supported, and which are sought after by ears enervated by the frivolity of an unmanly spirit. Some of them are brought forward in the character of lovers, destroyers of purity, to commit shameful and degrading deeds not only with women, but with men also. You take no care as to what is said about matters of so much importance, nor do you check, by any fear of chastisement at least, the recklessness of your wanton literature; others, through madness and frenzy, bereave themselves, and by the slaughter of their own relatives cover themselves with blood, just as though it were that of an enemy. You wonder at these loftily expressed impieties; and that which it was fitting should be subjected to all punishments, you extol with praise that spurs them on, so as to rouse their recklessness to greater vehemence. They mourn over the wounds of their bereavement, and with unseemly wailings accuse the cruel fates; you are astonished at the force of their eloquence, carefully study and commit to memory that which should have been wholly put away from human society, [4249] and are solicitous that it should not perish through any forgetfulness. They are spoken of as being wounded, maltreated, making war upon each other with hot and furious contests; you enjoy the description; and, to enable you to defend so great daring in the writers, pretend that these things are allegories, and contain the principles of natural science.

34 But why do I complain that you have disregarded the insults offered to the other

But why do I complain that you have disregarded the insults [4250] offered to the other deities? That very Jupiter, whose name you should not have spoken without fear and trembling over your whole body, is described as confessing his faults when overcome by lust [4251] of his wife, and, hardened in shamelessness, making known, as if he were mad and ignorant, [4252] the mistresses he preferred to his spouse, the concubines he preferred to his wife; you say that those who have uttered so marvellous things are chiefs and kings among poets endowed with godlike genius, that they are persons most holy; and so utterly have you lost sight of your duty in the matters of religion which you bring forward, that words are of more importance, in your opinion, than the profaned majesty of the immortals. So then, if only you felt any fear of the gods, or believed with confident and unhesitating assurance that they existed at all, should you not, by bills, by popular votes, by fear of the senate's decrees, have hindered, prevented, and forbidden any one to speak at random of the gods otherwise than in a pious manner? [4253] Nor have they obtained this honour even at your hands, that you should repel insults offered to them by the same laws by which you ward them off from yourselves. They are accused of treason among you who have whispered any evil about your kings. To degrade a magistrate, or use insulting language to a senator, you have made by decree a crime, followed by the severest punishment. To write a satirical poem, by which a slur is cast upon the reputation and character of another, you determined, by the decrees of the decemvirs, should not go unpunished; and that no one might assail your ears with too wanton abuse, you established formulæ [4254] for severe affronts. With you only the gods are unhonoured, contemptible, vile; against whom you allow any one liberty to say what he will, to accuse them of the deeds of baseness which his lust has invented and devised. And yet you do not blush to raise against us the charge of want of regard for deities so infamous, although it is much better to disbelieve the existence of the gods than to think they are such, and of such repute.

35 But is it only poets whom you have thought proper to allow to invent unseemly

But is it only poets whom you have thought proper [4255] to allow to invent unseemly tales about the gods, and to turn them shamefully into sport? What do your pantomimists, the actors, that crowd of mimics and adulterers? [4256] Do they [4257] not abuse your gods to make to themselves gain, and do not the others [4258] find enticing pleasures in [4259] the wrongs and insults offered to the gods? At the public games, too, the colleges of all the priests and magistrates take their places, the chief Pontiffs, and the chief priests of the *curiæ*; the *Quindecemviri* take their places, crowned with wreaths of laurel, and the *flamines diales* with their mitres; the *augurs* take their places, who disclose the divine mind and will; and the chaste maidens also, who cherish and guard the ever-burning fire; the whole people and the senate take their places; the fathers who have done service as consuls, princes next to the gods, and most worthy of reverence; and, shameful to say, Venus, the mother of the race of Mars, and parent of the imperial people, is represented by gestures as in love, [4260] and is delineated with shameless mimicry as raving like a Bacchanal, with all the passions of a vile harlot. [4261] The Great Mother, too, adorned with her sacred fillets, is represented by dancing; and that Pessinuntic Dindymene [4262] is, to the dishonour of her age, represented as with shameful desire using passionate gestures in the embrace of a herdsman; and also in the *Trachiniæ* of Sophocles, [4263] that son of Jupiter, Hercules, entangled in the toils of a death-fraught garment, is exhibited uttering piteous cries, overcome by his violent suffering, and at last wasting away and being consumed, as his intestines soften and are dissolved. [4264] But in these tales even the Supreme Ruler of the heavens Himself is brought forward, without any reverence for His name and majesty, as acting the part of an adulterer, and changing His countenance for purposes of seduction, in order that He might by guile rob of their chastity matrons, who were the wives of others, and putting on the appearance of their husbands, by assuming the form of another.

36 But this crime is not enough: the persons of the most sacred gods are mixed

But this crime is not enough: the persons of the most sacred gods are mixed up with farces also, and scurrilous plays. And that the idle onlookers may be excited to laughter and jollity, the deities are hit at in jocular quips, the spectators shout and rise up, the whole pit resounds with the clapping of hands and applause. And to the debauched scoffers [4265] at the gods gifts and presents are ordained, ease, freedom from public burdens, exemption and relief, together with triumphal garlands, -- a crime for which no amends can be made by any apologies. And after this do you dare to wonder whence these ills come with which the human race is deluged and overwhelmed without any interval, while you daily both repeat and learn by heart all these things, with which are mixed up libels upon the gods and slanderous sayings; and when [4266] you wish your inactive minds to be occupied with useless dreamings, demand that days be given to you, and exhibition made without any interval? But if you felt any real indignation on behalf of your religious beliefs, you should rather long ago have burned these writings, destroyed those books of yours, and overthrown these theatres, in which evil reports of your deities are daily made public in shameful tales. For why, indeed, have our writings deserved to be given to the flames? our meetings to be cruelly broken up, [4267] in which prayer is made to the Supreme God, peace and pardon are asked for all in authority, for soldiers, kings, friends, enemies, for those still in life, and those freed from the bondage of the flesh; [4268] in which all that is said is such as to make men humane, [4269] gentle, modest, virtuous, chaste, generous in dealing with their substance, and inseparably united to all embraced in our brotherhood? [4270]

37 But this is the state of the case, that as you are exceedingly strong in

But this is the state of the case, that as you are exceedingly strong in war and in military power, you think you excel in knowledge of the truth also, and are pious before the gods, [4271] whose might you have been the first to besmirch with foul imaginings. Here, if your fierceness allows, and madness suffers, we ask you to answer us this: Whether you think that anger finds a place in the divine nature, or that the divine blessedness is far removed from such passions? For if they are subject to passions so furious, [4272] and are excited by feelings of rage as your imaginings suggest, -- for you say that they have often shaken the earth with their roaring, [4273] and bringing woful misery on men, corrupted with pestilential contagion the character of the times, [4274] both because their games had been celebrated with too little care, and because their priests were not received with favour, and because some small spaces were desecrated, and because their rites were not duly performed, -- it must consequently be understood that they feel no little wrath on account of the opinions which have been mentioned. But if, as follows of necessity, it is admitted that all these miseries with which men have long been overwhelmed flow from such fictions, if the anger of the deities is excited by these causes, you are the occasion of so terrible misfortunes, because you never cease to jar upon the feelings of the gods, and excite them to a fierce desire for vengeance. But if, on the other hand, the gods are not subject to such passions, and do not know at all what it is to be enraged, then indeed there is no ground for saying that they who know not what anger is are angry with us, * and they are free from its presence, [4275] and the disorder [4276] it causes. For it cannot be, in the nature of things, that what is one should become two; and that unity, which is naturally uncompounded, should divide and go apart into separate things. [4277]

1 Admitting that all these things which do the immortal gods dishonour

Admitting that all these things which do the immortal gods dishonour, have been put forth by poets merely in sport, what of those found in grave, serious, and careful histories, and handed down by you in hidden mysteries? have they been invented by the licentious fancy of the poets? Now if they seemed [4278] to you stories of such absurdity, some of them you would neither retain in their constant use, nor celebrate as solemn festivals from year to year, nor would you maintain them among your sacred rites as shadows of real events. With strict moderation, I shall adduce only one of these stories which are so numerous; that in which Jupiter himself is brought on the stage as stupid and inconsiderate, being tricked by the ambiguity of words. In the second book of Antias -- lest any one should think, perchance, that we are fabricating charges calumniously -- the following story is written: -- The famous king Numa, not knowing how to avert evil portended by thunder, and being eager to learn, by advice of Egeria concealed beside a fountain twelve chaste youths provided with chains; so that when Faunus and Martius [4279] Picus came to this place [4280] to drink, -- for hither they were wont to come [4281] to draw water, -- they might rush on them, seize and bind them. But, that this might be done more speedily, the king filled many [4282] cups with wine and with mead, [4283] and placed them about the approaches to the fountain, where they would be seen -- a crafty snare for those who should come. They, as was their usual custom, when overcome by thirst, came to their well-known haunts. But when they had perceived cups with sweetly smelling liquors, they preferred the new to the old; rushed eagerly upon them; charmed with the sweetness of the draught, drank too much; and becoming drunk, fell fast asleep. Then the twelve youths threw themselves upon the sleepers, and cast chains round them, lying soaked with wine; and they, [4284] when roused, immediately taught the king by what methods and sacrifices Jupiter could be called down to earth. With this knowledge the king performed the sacred ceremony on the Aventine, drew down Jupiter to the earth, and asked from him the due form of expiation. Jupiter having long hesitated, said, "Thou shalt avert what is portended by thunder with a head." [4285] The king answered, "With an onion." [4286] Jupiter again, "With a man's." The king returned, "But with hair." [4287] The deity in turn, "With the life. [4288] With a fish," [4289] rejoined Pompilius. Then Jupiter, being ensnared by the ambiguous terms used, uttered these words: "Thou hast overreached me, Numa; for I had determined that evils portended by thunder should be averted with sacrifices of human heads, not [4290] with hair and an onion. Since, however, your craft has outwitted me, have the mode which you wished; and always undertake the expiation of thunder-portents with those things which you have bargained for."

2 What the mind should take up first, what last

What the mind should take up first, what last, or what it should pass by silently, it is not easy to say, nor is it made clear by any amount of reflection; for all have been so devised and fitted to be laughed at, that you should strive that they may be believed to be false -- even if they are true -- rather than pass current as true, and suggest as it were something extraordinary, and bring contempt upon deity itself. What, then, do you say, O you -- ? Are we to believe [4291] that that Faunus and Martius Picus -- if they are of the number of the gods, and of that everlasting and immortal substance -- were once parched with thirst, and sought the gushing fountains, that they might be able to cool with water their heated veins? Are we to believe that, ensnared by wine, and beguiled by the sweetness of mead, they dipped so long into the treacherous cups, that they even got into danger of becoming drunk? Are we to believe that, being fast asleep, and plunged in the forgetfulness of most profound slumbers, they gave to creatures of earth an opportunity to bind them? On what parts, then, were those bonds and chains flung? Did they have any solid substance, or had their hands been formed of hard bones, so that it might be possible to bind them with halters and hold them fast by tightly drawn knots? For I do not ask, I do not inquire whether they could have said anything when swaying to and fro in their drunken maunderings; or whether, while Jupiter was unwilling, or rather unwitting, any one could have made known the way to bring him down to earth. This only do I wish to hear, why, if Faunus and Picus are of divine origin and power, they did not rather themselves declare to Numa, as he questioned them, that which he desired to learn from Jove himself at a greater risk? Or [4292] did Jupiter alone have knowledge of this -- for from him the thunderbolts fall -- how training in some kind of knowledge should avert impending dangers? Or, while he himself hurls these fiery bolts, is it the business of others to know in what way it is fitting to allay his wrath and indignation? For truly it would be most absurd to suppose that he himself appoints [4293] the means by which may be averted that which he has determined should befall men through the hurling of his thunderbolts. For this is to say, By such ceremonies you will turn aside my wrath; and if I shall at any time have foreshown by flashes of lightning that some evil is close at hand, do this and that, so that [4294] what I have determined should be done may be done altogether in vain, and may pass away idly through the force [4295] of these rites.

3 But let us admit that, as is said, Jupiter has himself appointed against himself ways

But let us admit that, as is said, Jupiter has himself appointed against himself ways and means by which his own declared purposes might fittingly be opposed: are we also to believe that a deity of so great majesty was dragged down to earth, and, standing on a petty hillock with a mannikin, entered into a wrangling dispute? And what, I ask, was the charm which forced Jupiter to leave the all-important [4296] direction of the universe, and appear at the bidding of mortals? the sacrificial meal, incense, blood, the scent of burning laurel-boughs, [4297] and muttering of spells? And were all these more powerful than Jupiter, so that they compelled him to do unwillingly what was enjoined, or to give himself up of his own accord to their crafty tricks? What! will what follows be believed, that the son of Saturn had so little foresight, that he either proposed terms by the ambiguity of which he was himself ensnared, or did not know what was going to happen, how the craft and cunning of a mortal would overreach him? You shall make expiation, he says, with a head when thunderbolts have fallen. The phrase is still incomplete, and the meaning is not fully expressed and defined; for it was necessarily right to know whether Diespiter ordains that this expiation be effected with the head of a wether, a sow, an ox, or any other animal. Now, as he had not yet fixed this specifically, and his decision was still uncertain and not yet determined, how could Numa know that Jupiter would say the head of a man, so as to [4298] anticipate and prevent him, and turn his uncertain and ambiguous words [4299] into "an onion's head?"

4 But you will perhaps say that the king was a diviner.

But you will perhaps say that the king was a diviner. Could he be more so than Jupiter himself? But for a mortal's anticipating [4300] what Jupiter -- whom [4301] he overreached -- was going to say, could the god not know in what ways a man was preparing to overreach him? Is it not, then, clear and manifest that these are puerile and fanciful inventions, by which, while a lively wit is assigned [4302] to Numa, the greatest want of foresight is imputed to Jupiter? For what shows so little foresight as to confess that you have been ensnared by the subtlety of a man's intellect, and while you are vexed at being deceived, to give way to the wishes of him who has overcome you, and to lay aside the means which you had proposed? For if there was reason and some natural fitness that [4303] expiatory sacrifice for that which was struck with lightning should have been made with a man's head, I do not see why the proposal of an onion's was made by the king; but if it could be performed with an onion also, there was a greedy lust for human blood. And both parts are made to contradict themselves: so that, on the one hand, Numa is shown not to have wished to know what he did wish; and, on the other, Jupiter is shown to have been merciless, because he said that he wished expiation to be made with the heads of men, which could have been done by Numa with an onion's head

5 In Timotheus, who was no mean mythologist, and also in others equally well informed

In Timotheus, who was no mean mythologist, and also in others equally well informed, the birth of the Great Mother of the gods, and the origin of her rites, are thus detailed, being derived -- as he himself writes and suggests -- from learned books of antiquities, and from his acquaintance with the most secret mysteries: -- Within the confines of Phrygia, he says, there is a rock of unheard-of wildness in every respect, the name of which is Agdus, so named by the natives of that district. Stones taken from it, as Themis by her oracle [4304] had enjoined, Deucalion and Pyrrha threw upon the earth, at that time emptied of men; from which this Great Mother, too, as she is called, was fashioned along with the others, and animated by the deity. Her, given over to rest and sleep on the very summit of the rock, Jupiter assailed with lewdest [4305] desires. But when, after long strife, he could not accomplish what he had proposed to himself, he, baffled, spent his lust on the stone. This the rock received, and with many groanings Acdestis [4306] is born in the tenth month, being named from his mother rock. In him there had been resistless might, and a fierceness of disposition beyond control, a lust made furious, and derived from both sexes. [4307] He violently plundered and laid waste; he scattered destruction wherever the ferocity of his disposition had led him; he regarded not gods nor men, nor did he think anything more powerful than himself; he contemned earth, heaven, and the stars.

6 Now, when it had been often considered in the councils of the gods

Now, when it had been often considered in the councils of the gods, by what means it might be possible either to weaken or to curb his audacity, Liber, the rest hanging back, takes upon himself this task. With the strongest wine he drugs a spring much resorted to by Acdestis [4308] where he had been wont to assuage the heat and burning thirst [4309] roused in him by sport and hunting. Hither runs Acdestis to drink when he felt the need; [4310] he gulps down the draught too greedily into his gaping veins. Overcome by what he is quite unaccustomed to, he is in consequence sent fast asleep. Liber is near the snare which he had set; over his foot he throws one end of a halter [4311] formed of hairs, woven together very skilfully; with the other end he lays hold of his privy members. When the fumes of the wine passed off, Acdestis starts up furiously, and his foot dragging the noose, by his own strength he robs himself of his [4312] sex; with the tearing asunder of these parts there is an immense flow of blood; both [4313] are carried off and swallowed up by the earth; from them there suddenly springs up, covered with fruit, a pomegranate tree, seeing the beauty of which, with admiration, Nana, [4314] daughter of the king or river Sangarius, gathers and places in her bosom some of the fruit. By this she becomes pregnant; her father shuts her up, supposing that she had been [4315] debauched, and seeks to have her starved to death; she is kept alive by the mother of the gods with apples, and other food, [4316] and brings forth a child, but Sangarius [4317] orders it to be exposed. One Phorbas having found the child, takes it home, [4318] brings it up on goats' milk; and as handsome fellows are so named in Lydia, or because the Phrygians in their own way of speaking call their goats attagi, it happened in consequence that the boy obtained the name Attis. [4319] Him the mother of the gods loved exceedingly, because he was of most surpassing beauty; and Acdestis, who was his companion, as he grew up fondling him, and bound to him by wicked compliance with his lust in the only way now possible, leading him through the wooded glades, and presenting him with the spoils of many wild beasts, which the boy Attis at first said boastfully were won by his own toil and labour. Afterwards, under the influence of wine, he admits that he is both loved by Acdestis, and honoured by him with the gifts brought from the forest; whence it is unlawful for those polluted by drinking wine to enter into his sanctuary, because it discovered his secret. [4320]

7 Then Midas, king of Pessinus, wishing to withdraw the youth from so disgraceful an intimacy

Then Midas, king of Pessinus, wishing to withdraw the youth from so disgraceful an intimacy, resolves to give him his own daughter in marriage, and caused the gates of the town to be closed, that no one of evil omen might disturb their marriage joys. But the mother of the gods, knowing the fate of the youth, and that he would live among men in safety only so long as he was free from the ties of marriage, that no disaster might occur, enters the closed city, raising its walls with her head, which began to be crowned with towers in consequence. Acdestis, bursting with rage because of the boy's being torn from himself, and brought to seek a wife, fills all the guests with frenzied madness: [4321] the Phrygians shriek aloud, panic-stricken at the appearance of the gods; [4322] a daughter of adulterous [4323] Gallus cuts off her breasts; Attis snatches the pipe borne by him who was goading them to frenzy; and he, too, now filled with furious passion, raving frantically and tossed about, throws himself down at last, and under a pine tree mutilates himself, saying, "Take these, [4324] Acdestis, for which you have stirred up so great and terribly perilous commotions." [4325] With the streaming blood his life flies; but the Great Mother of the gods gathers the parts which had been cut off, and throws earth on them, having first covered them, and wrapped [4326] them in the garment of the dead. From the blood which had flowed springs a flower, the violet, and with [4327] this the tree [4328] is girt. Thence the custom began and arose, whereby you even now veil and wreath with flowers the sacred pine. The virgin who had been the bride, whose name, as Valerius [4329] the pontifex relates, was Ia, veils the breast of the lifeless youth with soft wool, sheds tears with Acdestis, and slays herself. After her death her blood is changed into purple violets. The mother of the gods sheds tears also, [4330] from which springs an almond tree, signifying the bitterness of death. [4331] Then she bears away to her cave the pine tree, beneath which Attis had unmanned himself; and Acdestis joining in her wailings, she beats and wounds her breast, pacing round the trunk of the tree now at rest. [4332] Jupiter is begged by Acdestis that Attis may be restored to life: he does not permit it. What, however, fate allowed, [4333] he readily grants, that his body should not decay, that his hairs should always grow, that the least of his fingers should live, and should be kept ever in motion; content with which favours, it is said that Acdestis consecrated the body in Pessinus, and honoured it with yearly rites and priestly services. [4334]

8 If some one, despising the deities, and furious with a savagely sacrilegious spirit

If some one, despising the deities, and furious with a savagely sacrilegious spirit, had set himself to blaspheme your gods, would he dare to say against them anything more severe than this tale relates, which you have reduced to form, as though it were some wonderful narrative, and have honoured without ceasing, [4335] lest the power of time and the remoteness [4336] of antiquity should cause it to be forgotten? For what is there asserted in it, or what written about the gods, which, if said with regard to a man brought up with bad habits and a pretty rough training, would not make you liable to be accused of wronging and insulting him, and expose you to hatred and dislike, accompanied by implacable resentment? From the stones, you say, which Deucalion and Pyrrha threw, was produced the mother of the gods. What do you say, O theologians? what, ye priests of the heavenly powers? Did the mother of the gods, then, not exist at all for the sake of the deluge? and would there be no cause or beginning of her birth, had not violent storms of rain swept away the whole race of men? It is through man, then, that she feels herself to exist, and she owes it to Pyrrha's kindness that she sees herself addressed as a real being; [4337] but if that is indeed true, this too will of necessity not be false, that she was human, not divine. For if it is certain that men are sprung originally from the casting of stones, it must be believed that she too was one of us, since she was produced by means of the same causes. For it cannot be, for nature would not suffer it, [4338] that from one kind of stones, and from the same mode of throwing them, some should be formed to rank among the immortals, others with the condition of men. Varro, that famous Roman, distinguished by the diversity of his learning, and unwearied in his researches into ancient times, in the first of four books which he has left in writing on the race of the Roman people, shows by careful calculations, that from the time of the deluge, which we mentioned before, down to the consulship of Hirtius and Pansa, [4339] there are not quite two thousand years; and if he is to be believed, the Great Mother, too, must be said to have her whole life bounded by the limits of this number. And thus the matter is brought to this issue, that she who is said to be parent of all the deities is not their mother, but their daughter; nay, rather a mere child, a little girl, since we admit that in the never-ending series of ages neither beginning nor end has been ascribed to the gods.

9 But why do we speak of your having bemired the Great Mother of the gods

But why do we speak of your having bemired the Great Mother of the gods with the filth of earth, when you have not been able for but a little time even to keep from speaking evil of Jupiter himself? While the mother of the gods was then sleeping on the highest peak of Agdus, her son, you say, tried stealthily to surprise her chastity while she slept. After robbing of their chastity virgins and matrons without number, did Jupiter hope to gratify his detestable passion upon his mother? and could he not be turned from his fierce desire by the horror which nature itself has excited not only in men, but in some other animals also, and by common [4340] feeling? Was he then regardless of piety [4341] and honour, who is chief in the temples? and could he neither reconsider nor perceive how wicked was his desire, his mind being madly agitated? But, as it is, forgetting his majesty and dignity, he crept forward to steal those vile pleasures, trembling and quaking with fear, holding his breath, walking in terror on tiptoe, and, between hope and fear, touched her secret parts, trying how soundly his mother slept, and what she would suffer. [4342] Oh, shameful representation! oh, disgraceful plight of Jupiter, prepared to attempt a filthy contest! Did the ruler of the world, then, turn to force, when, in his heedlessness and haste, he was prevented from stealing on by surprise; [4343] and when he was unable to snatch his pleasure by cunning craft, did he assail his mother with violence, and begin without any concealment to destroy the chastity which he should have revered? Then, having striven for a very long time when she is unwilling, did he go off conquered, vanquished, and overcome? and did his spent lust part him whom piety was unable to hold back from execrable lust after his mother?

10 But you will perhaps say the human race shuns and execrates such unions

But you will perhaps say the human race shuns and execrates such unions; [4344] among the gods there is no incest. And why, then, did his mother resist with the greatest vehemence her son when he offered her violence? Why did she flee from his embraces, as if she were avoiding unlawful approaches? For if there was nothing wrong in so doing, she should have gratified him without any reluctance, just as he eagerly wished to satisfy the cravings of his lust. And here, indeed, very thrifty men, and frugal even about shameful works, that that sacred seed may not seem to have been poured forth in vain -- the rock, one says, drank up Jupiter's foul incontinence. What followed next, I ask? Tell. In the very heart of the rock, and in that flinty hardness, a child was formed and quickened to be the offspring of great Jupiter. It is not easy to object to conceptions so unnatural and so wonderful. For as the human race is said by you to have sprung and proceeded from stones, it must be believed that the stones both had genital parts, and drank in the seed cast on them, and when their time was full were pregnant, [4345] and at last brought forth, travailing in distress as women do. That impels our curiosity to inquire, since you say that the birth occurred after ten months, in what womb of the rock was he enclosed at that time? with what food, with what juices, was he supplied? or what could he have drawn to support him from the hard stone, as unborn infants usually receive from their mothers! He had not yet reached the light, my informant says; and already bellowing and imitating his father's thunderings, he reproduced their sound. [4346] And after it was given him to see the sky and the light of day, attacking all things which lay in his way, he made havoc of them, and assured himself that he was able to thrust down from heaven the gods themselves. O cautious and foreseeing mother of the gods, who, that she might not undergo the ill-will of so [4347] arrogant a son, or that his bellowing while still unborn might not disturb her slumbers or break her repose, withdrew herself, and sent far from her that most hurtful seed, and gave it to the rough rock.

11 There was doubt in the councils of the gods how that unyielding and fierce violence

There was doubt in the councils of the gods how that unyielding and fierce violence was to be subdued; and when there was no other way, they had recourse to one means, that he should be soaked with much wine, and bereft of his members, by their being cut off. As if, indeed, those who have suffered the loss of these parts become less arrogant, and as if we do not daily see those who have cut them away from themselves become more wanton, and, neglecting all the restraints of chastity and modesty, throw themselves headlong into filthy vileness, making known abroad their shameful deeds. I should like, however, to see -- were it granted me to be born at those times -- father Liber, who overcame the fierceness of Acdestis, having glided down from the peaks of heaven after the very venerable meetings of the gods, cropping the tails of horses, [4348] plaiting pliant halters, drugging the waters harmless while pure with much strong wine, and after that drunkenness sprung from drinking, to have carefully introduced his hands, handled the members of the sleeper, and directed his care skilfully [4349] to the parts which were to perish, so that the hold of the nooses placed round them might surround them all.

12 Would any one say this about the gods who had even a very low opinion

Would any one say this about the gods who had even a very low opinion of them? or, if they were taken up with such affairs, considerations, cares, would any man of wisdom either believe that they are gods, or reckon them among men even? Was that Accestis, pray, the lopping off of whose lewd members was to give a sense of security to the immortals, was he one of the creatures of earth, or one of the gods, and possessed of [4350] immortality? For if he was thought to be of our lot and in the condition of men, why did he cause the deities so much terror? But if he was a god, how could he be deceived, or how could anything be cut off from a divine body? [4351] But we raise no issue on this point: he may have been of divine birth, or one of us, if you think it more correct to say so. Did a pomegranate tree, also, spring from the blood which flowed and from the parts which were cut off? or at the time when [4352] that member was concealed in the bosom of the earth, did it lay hold of the ground with a root, and spring up into a mighty tree, put forth branches loaded with blossoms, [4353] and in a moment bare mellow fruit perfectly and completely ripe? And because these sprang from red blood, is their colour therefore bright purple, with a dash of yellow? Say further that they are juicy also, that they have the taste of wine, because they spring from the blood of one filled with it, and you have finished your story consistently. O Abdera, Abdera, what occasions for mocking you would give [4354] to men, if such a tale had been devised by you! All fathers relate it, and haughty states peruse it; and you are considered foolish, and utterly dull and stupid. [4355]

13 Through her bosom, we are told, Nana conceived a son by an apple.

Through her bosom, we are told, [4356] Nana conceived a son by an apple. The opinion is self-consistent; for where rocks and hard stones bring forth, there apples must have their time of generating. [4357] The Berecyntian goddess fed the imprisoned maiden with nuts [4358] and figs, fitly and rightly; for it was right that she should live on apples who had been made a mother by an apple. After her offspring was born, it was ordered by Sangarius to be cast far away: that which he believed to be divinely conceived long before, he would not have [4359] called the offspring of his child. The infant was brought up on he-goats' milk. O story ever opposed and most inimical to the male sex, in which not only do men lay aside their virile powers, but beasts even which were males become mothers! [4360] He was famous for his beauty, and distinguished by his remarkable [4361] comeliness. It is wonderful enough that the noisome stench of goats did not cause him to be avoided and fled from. The Great Mother loved him -- if as a grandmother her grandson, there is nothing wrong; but if as the theatres tell, her love is infamous and disgraceful. Acdestis, too, loved him above all, enriching him with a hunter's gifts. There could be no danger to his purity from one emasculated, you say; but it is not easy to guess what Midas dreaded? The Mother entered bearing [4362] the very walls. Here we wondered, indeed, at the might and strength of the deity; but again [4363] we blame her carelessness, because when she remembered the decree of fate, [4364] she heedlessly laid open the city to its enemies. Acdestis cites to fury and madness those celebrating the nuptial vows. If King Midas had displeased him who was binding the youth to a wife, of what had Gallus been guilty, and his concubine's daughter, that he should rob himself of his manhood, she herself of her breasts? "Take and keep these," says he, [4365] "because of which you have excited such commotions to the overwhelming of our minds with fear." We should none of us yet know what the frenzied Acdestis had desired in his paramour's body, had not the boy thrown to him, to appease his wrath, [4366] the parts cut off.

14 What say you, O races and nations, given up to such beliefs?

When these things

What say you, O races and nations, given up to such beliefs? When these things are brought forward, are you not ashamed and confounded to say things so indecent? We wish to hear or learn from you something befitting the gods; but you, on the contrary, bring forward to us the cutting off of breasts, the lopping off of men's members, ragings, blood, frenzies, the self-destruction of maidens, and flowers and trees begotten from the blood of the dead. Say, again, did the mother of the gods, then, with careful diligence herself gather in her grief the scattered genitals with the shed blood? [4367] With her own sacred, her own divine [4368] hands, did she touch and lift up the instruments of a disgraceful and indecent office? Did she also commit them to the earth to be hid from sight; and lest in this case they should, being uncovered, be dispersed in the bosom of the earth, did she indeed wash and anoint them with fragrant gums before wrapping and covering them with his dress? For whence could the violet's sweet scent have come had not the addition of those ointments modified the putrefying smell of the member? Pray, when you read such tales, do you not seem to yourselves to hear either girls at the loom willing away their tedious working hours, or old women seeking diversions for credulous children, [4369] and to be declaring manifold fictions under the guise of truth? Acdestis appealed to [4370] Jupiter to restore life to his paramour: Jupiter would not consent, because he was hindered by the fates more powerful than himself; and that he might not be in every respect very hard-hearted, he granted one favour -- that the body should not decay through any corruption; that the hair should always grow; that the least of his fingers alone in his body should live, alone keep always in motion. Would any one grant this, or support it with an unhesitating assent, that hair grows on a dead body, -- that part [4371] perished, and that the rest of his mortal body, free from the law of corruption, remains even still?

15 We might long ago have urged you to ponder this

We might long ago have urged you to ponder this, were it not foolish to ask proofs of such things, as well as to say [4372] them. But this story is false, and is wholly untrue. It is no matter to us, indeed, because of whom you maintain that the gods have been driven from the earth, whether it is consistent and rests on a sure foundation, [4373] or is, on the contrary, framed and devised in utter falsehood. For to us it is enough -- who have proposed this day to make it plain -- that those deities whom you bring for ward, if they are anywhere on earth, and glow with the fires of anger, are not more excited to furious hatred by us than by you; and that that story, has been classed as an event and committed to writing by you, and is willingly read over by you every day, and handed down in order for the edifying of later times. Now, if this story is indeed true, we see that there is no reason in it why the celestial gods should be asserted to be angry with us, since we have neither declared things so much to their disgrace, nor committed them to writing at all, nor brought them publicly to light [4374] by the celebration of sacred rites; but if, as you think, it is untrue, and made up of delusive falsehoods, no man can doubt that you are the cause of offence, who have either allowed certain persons to write such stories, or have suffered them, when written, to abide in the memory of ages.

16 And yet how can you assert the falsehood of this story

And yet how can you assert the falsehood of this story, when the very rites which you celebrate throughout the year testify that you believe these things to be true, and consider them perfectly trustworthy? For what is the meaning of that pine [4375] which on fixed days you always bring into the sanctuary of the mother of the gods? Is it not in imitation of that tree, beneath which the raging and ill-fated youth laid hands upon himself, and which the parent of the gods consecrated to relieve her sorrow? [4376] What mean the fleeces of wool with which you bind and surround the trunk of the tree? Is it not to recall the wools with which Ia [4377] covered the dying youth, and thought that she could procure some warmth for his limbs fast stiffening with cold? What mean the branches of the tree girt round and decked with wreaths of violets? Do they not mark this, how the Mother adorned with early flowers the pine which indicates and bears witness to the sad mishap? What mean the Galli [4378] with dishevelled hair beating their breasts with their palms? Do they not recall to memory those lamentations with which the tower-bearing Mother, along with the weeping Acdestis, wailing aloud, [4379] followed the boy? What means the abstinence from eating bread which you have named castus? Is it not in imitation of the time when the goddess abstained from Ceres' fruit in her vehement sorrow?

17 Or if the things which we say are not so

Or if the things which we say are not so, declare, say yourselves -- those effeminate and delicate men whom we see among you in the sacred rites of this deity -- what business, what care, what concern have they there; and why do they like mourners wound their arms and [4380] breasts, and act as those dolefully circumstanced? What mean the wreaths, what the violets, what the swathings, the coverings of soft wools? Why, finally, is the very pine, but a little before swaying to and fro among the shrubs, an utterly inert log, set up in the temple of the Mother of the gods next, like some propitious and very venerable deity? For either this is the cause which we have found in your writings and treatises, and in that case it is clear that you do not celebrate divine rites, but give a representation of sad events; or if there is any other reason which the darkness of the mystery has withheld from us, even it also must be involved in the infamy of some shameful deed. For who would believe that there is any honour in that which the worthless Galli begin, effeminate debauchees complete?

18 The greatness of the subject, and our duty to those on their defence also

The greatness of the subject, and our duty to those on their defence also, [4381] demand that we should in like manner hunt up the other forms of baseness, whether those which the histories of antiquity record, or those contained in the sacred mysteries named *initia*, [4382] and not divulged [4383] openly to all, but to the silence of a few; but your innumerable sacred rites, and the loathsomeness of them all, [4384] will not allow us to go through them all bodily: nay, more, to tell the truth, we turn aside ourselves from some purposely and intentionally, lest, in striving to unfold all things, we should be defiled by contamination in the very exposition. Let us pass by *Fauna* [4385] *Fatua*, therefore, who is called *Bona Dea*, whom *Sextus Clodius*, in his sixth book in *Greek* on the gods, declares to have been scourged to death with rods of myrtle, because she drank a whole jar of wine without her husband's knowledge; and this is a proof, that when women show her divine honour a jar of wine is placed there, but covered from sight, and that it is not lawful to bring in twigs of myrtle, as *Butas* [4386] mentions in his *Causalia*. But let us pass by with similar neglect [4387] the *dii conserentes*, whom *Flaccus* and others relate to have buried themselves, changed in *humani penis similitudinem* in the cinders under a pot of *exta*. [4388] And when *Tanaquil*, skilled in the arts of *Etruria*, [4389] disturbed these, the gods erected themselves, and became rigid. She then commanded a captive woman from *Corniculum* to learn and understand what was the meaning of this: *Ocrisia*, a woman of the greatest wisdom *divos inseruisse genitali, explicuisse motus certos*. Then the holy and burning deities poured forth the power of *Lucilius*, [4390] and thus *Servius* king of Rome was born.

19 We shall pass by the wild Bacchanalia also, which are named in Greek Omophagia

We shall pass by the wild Bacchanalia also, which are named in Greek Omophagia, in which with seeming frenzy and the loss of your senses you twine snakes about you; and, to show yourselves full of the divinity and majesty of the god, tear in pieces with gory mouths the flesh of loudly-bleating goats. Those hidden mysteries of Cyprian Venus we pass by also, whose founder is said to have been King Cinyras, [4391] in which being initiated, they bring stated fees as to a harlot, and carry away phalli, given as signs of the propitious deity. Let the rites of the Corybantes also be consigned to oblivion, in which is revealed that sacred mystery, a brother slain by his brothers, parsley sprung from the blood of the murdered one, that vegetable forbidden to be placed on tables, lest the manes of the dead should be unappeasably offended. But those other Bacchanalia also we refuse to proclaim, in which there is revealed and taught to the initiated a secret not to be spoken; how Liber, when taken up with boyish sports, was torn asunder by the Titans; how he was cut up limb by limb by them also, and thrown into pots that he might be cooked; how Jupiter, allured by the sweet savour, rushed unbidden to the meal, and discovering what had been done, overwhelmed the revellers with his terrible thunder, and hurled them to the lowest part of Tartarus. As evidence and proof of which, the Thracian bard handed down in his poems the dice, mirror, tops, hoops, and smooth balls, and golden apples taken from the virgin Hesperides.

20 It was our purpose to leave unnoticed those mysteries also into which Phrygia is initiated

It was our purpose to leave unnoticed those mysteries also into which Phrygia is initiated, and all that [4392] race, were it not that the name of Jupiter, which has been introduced by them, would not suffer us to pass cursorily by the wrongs and insults offered to him; not that we feel any pleasure in discussing [4393] mysteries so filthy, but that it may be made clear to you again and again what wrong you heap upon those whose guardians, champions, worshippers, you profess to be. Once upon a time, they say, Diespiter, burning after his mother Ceres with evil passions and forbidden desires, for she is said by the natives of that district to be Jupiter's mother, and yet not daring to seek by open [4394] force that for which he had conceived a shameless longing, hits upon a clever trick by which to rob of her chastity his mother, who feared nothing of the sort. Instead of a god, he becomes a bull; and concealing his purpose and daring under the appearance of a beast lying in wait, [4395] he rushes madly with sudden violence upon her, thoughtless and unwitting, obtains his incestuous desires; and the fraud being disclosed by his lust, flies off known and discovered. His mother burns, foams, gasps, boils with fury and indignation; and being unable to repress the storm [4396] and tempest of her wrath, received the name Brimo [4397] thereafter from her ever-raging passion: nor has she any other wish than to punish as she may her son's audacity.

21 Jupiter is troubled enough, being overwhelmed with fear, and cannot find means to soothe the

Jupiter is troubled enough, being overwhelmed with fear, and cannot find means to soothe the rage of his violated mother. He pours forth prayers, and makes supplication; her ears are closed by grief. The whole order of the gods is sent to seek his pardon; no one has weight enough to win a hearing. At last, the son seeking how to make satisfaction, devises this means: *Arietem nobilem bene grandibus cum testiculis deligit, exsecat hos ipse et lanato exuit ex folliculi tegmine.* Approaching his mother sadly and with downcast looks, and as if by his own decision he had condemned himself, he casts and throws these [4398] into her bosom. When she saw what his pledge was, [4399] she is somewhat softened, and allows herself to be recalled to the care of the offspring which she had conceived. [4400] After the tenth month she bears a daughter, of beautiful form, whom later ages have called now *Libera*, now *Proserpine*; whom when Jupiter *Verveceus* [4401] saw to be strong, plump, and blooming, forgetting what evils and what wickedness, and how great recklessness, he had a little before fallen into, [4402] he returns to his former practices; and because it seemed too [4403] wicked that a father openly be joined as in marriage with his daughter, he passes into the terrible form of a dragon: he winds his huge coils round the terrified maiden, and under a fierce appearance sports and caresses her in softest embraces. She, too, is in consequence filled with the seed of the most powerful Jupiter, but not as her mother was, for she [4404] bore a daughter like herself; but from the maiden was born something like a bull, to testify to her seduction by Jupiter. If any one asks [4405] who narrates this, then we shall quote the well-known senarian verse of a Tarentine poet which antiquity sings, [4406] saying: "The bull begot a dragon, and the dragon a bull." Lastly, the sacred rites themselves, and the ceremony of initiation even, named *Sebadia*, [4407] might attest the truth; for in them a golden snake is let down into the bosom of the initiated, and taken away again from the lower parts.

22 I do not think it necessary here also with many words to go through each

I do not think it necessary here also with many words to go through each part, and show how many base and unseemly things there are in each particular. For what mortal is there, with but little sense even of what becomes a man, who does not himself see clearly the character of all these things, how wicked they are, how vile, and what disgrace is brought upon the gods by the very ceremonies of their mysteries, and by the unseemly origin of their rites? Jupiter, it is said, lusted after Ceres. Why, I ask, has Jupiter deserved so ill of you, that there is no kind of disgrace, no infamous adultery, which you do not heap upon his head, as if on some vile and worthless person? Leda was unfaithful to her nuptial vow; Jupiter is said to be the cause of the fault. Danae could not keep her virginity; the theft is said to have been Jupiter's. Europa hastened to the name of woman; he is again declared to have been the assailant of her chastity. Alcmena, Electra, Latona, Laodamia, a thousand other virgins, and a thousand matrons, and with them the boy Catamitus, were robbed of their honour and [4408] chastity. It is the same story everywhere -- Jupiter. Nor is there any kind of baseness in which you do not join and associate his name with passionate lusts; so that the wretched being seems to have been born for no other reason at all except that he might be a field fertile in [4409] crimes, an occasion of evil-speaking, a kind of open place into which should gather all filthiness from the impurities of the stage. [4410] And yet if you were to say that he had intercourse with strange women, it would indeed be impious, but the wrong done in slandering him might be bearable. Did he lust [4411] after his mother also, after his daughter too, with furious desires; and could no sacredness in his parent, no reverence for her, no shrinking even from the child which had sprung from himself, withhold him from conceiving so detestable a plan?

23 I should wish, therefore, to see Jupiter, the father of the gods

I should wish, therefore, to see Jupiter, the father of the gods, who ever controls the world and men, [4412] adorned with the horns of an ox, shaking his hairy ears, with his feet contracted into hoofs, chewing green grass, and having behind him [4413] a tail, hams, [4414] and ankles smeared over with soft excrement, [4415] and bedaubed with the filth cast forth. I should wish, I say, -- for it must be said over and over again, -- to see him who turns the stars in their courses, and who terrifies and overthrows nations pale with fear, pursuing the flocks of wethers, *insipientem testiculos aretinos*, snatching these away with that severe [4416] and divine hand with which he was wont to launch the gleaming lightnings and to hurl in his rage the thunderbolt. [4417] Then, indeed, I should like to see him ransacking their inmost parts with glowing knife; [4418] and all witnesses being removed, tearing away the membranes *circumjectas prolibus*, and bringing them to his mother, still hot with rage, as a kind of fillet [4419] to draw forth her pity, with downcast countenance, pale, wounded, [4420] pretending to be in agony; and to make this believed, defiled with the blood of the ram, and covering his pretended wound with bands of wool and linen. Is it possible that this can be heard and read in this world, [4421] and that those who discuss these things wish themselves to be thought pious, holy, and defenders of religion? Is there any greater sacrilege than this, or can any mind [4422] be found so imbued with impious ideas as to believe such stories, or receive them, or hand them down in the most secret mysteries of the sacred rites? If that Jupiter of whom you speak, whoever he is, really [4423] existed, or was affected by any sense of wrong, would it not be fitting that, [4424] roused to anger, he should remove the earth from under our feet, extinguish the light of the sun and moon; nay more, that he should throw all things into one mass, as of old? [4425]

24 But, my opponent says, these are not the rites of our state.

But, my opponent says, these are not the rites of our state. Who, pray, says this, or who repeats it? Is he Roman, Gaul, Spaniard, African, German, or Sicilian? And what does it avail your cause if these stories are not yours, while those who compose them are on your side? Or of what importance is it whether you approve of them or not, since what you yourselves say [4426] are found to be either just as foul, or of even greater baseness? For do you wish that we should consider the mysteries and those ceremonies which are named by the Greeks Thesmophoria, [4427] in which those holy vigils and solemn watchings were consecrated to the goddess by the Athenians? Do you wish us, I say, to see what beginnings they have, what causes, that we may prove that Athens itself also, distinguished in the arts and pursuits of civilization, says things as insulting to the gods as others, and that stories are there publicly related under the mask of religion just as disgraceful as are thrown in our way by the rest of you? Once, they say, when Proserpine, not yet a woman and still a maiden, was gathering purple flowers in the meadows of Sicily, and when her eagerness to gather them was leading her hither and thither in all directions, the king of the shades, springing forth through an opening of unknown depth, seizes and bears away with him the maiden, and conceals himself again in the bowels [4428] of the earth. Now when Ceres did not know what had happened, and had no idea where in the world her daughter was, she set herself to seek the lost one all over the [4429] world. She snatches up two torches lit at the fires of Ætna; [4430] and giving herself light by means of these, goes on her quest in all parts of the earth.

25 In her wanderings on that quest, she reaches the confines of Eleusis as well as

In her wanderings on that quest, she reaches the confines of Eleusis as well as other countries [4431] -- that is the name of a canton in Attica. At that time these parts were inhabited by aborigines [4432] named Baubo, Triptolemus, Eubuleus, Eumolpus, [4433] Dysaules: Triptolemus, who yoked oxen; Dysaules, a keeper of goats; Eubuleus, of swine; Eumolpus, of sheep, [4434] from whom also flows the race of Eumolpidæ, and from whom is derived that name famous among the Athenians, [4435] and those who afterwards flourished as caduceatores, [4436] hierophants, and criers. So, then, that Baubo who, we have said, dwelt in the canton of Eleusis, receives hospitably Ceres, worn out with ills of many kinds, hangs about her with pleasing attentions, beseeches her not to neglect to refresh her body, brings to quench her thirst wine thickened with spelt, [4437] which the Greeks term cyceon. The goddess in her sorrow turns away from the kindly offered services, [4438] and rejects them; nor does her misfortune suffer her to remember what the body always requires. [4439] Baubo, on the other hand, begs and exhorts her -- as is usual in such calamities -- not to despise her humanity; Ceres remains utterly immoveable, and tenaciously maintains an invincible austerity. But when this was done several times, and her fixed purpose could not be worn out by any attentions, Baubo changes her plans, and determines to make merry by strange jests her whom she could not win by earnestness. That part of the body by which women both bear children and obtain the name of mothers, [4440] this she frees from longer neglect: she makes it assume a purer appearance, and become smooth like a child, not yet hard and rough with hair. In this wise she returns [4441] to the sorrowing goddess; and while trying the common expedients by which it is usual to break the force of grief, and moderate it, she uncovers herself, and baring her groins, displays all the parts which decency hides; [4442] and then the goddess fixes her eyes upon these, [4443] and is pleased with the strange form of consolation. Then becoming more cheerful after laughing, she takes and drinks off the drought spurned before, and the indecency of a shameless action forced that which Baubo's modest conduct was long unable to win.

26 If any one perchance thinks that we are speaking wicked calumnies

If any one perchance thinks that we are speaking wicked calumnies, let him take the hooks of the Thracian soothsayer, [4444] which you speak of as of divine antiquity; and he will find that we are neither cunningly inventing anything, nor seeking means to bring the holiness of the gods into ridicule, and doing so: for we shall bring forward the very verses which the son of Calliope uttered in Greek, [4445] and published abroad in his songs to the human race throughout all ages: -- "With these words she at the same time drew up her garments from the lowest hem, And exposed to view *formatas inguinibus res*, Which Baubo grasping [4446] with hollow hand, for Their appearance was infantile, strikes, touches gently. Then the goddess, fixing her orbs of august light, Being softened, lays aside for a little the sadness of her mind; Thereafter she takes the cup in her hand, and laughing, Drinks off the whole draught of cyceon with gladness." [4447] What say you, O wise sons of Erectheus? [4448] what, you citizens of Minerva? [4449] The mind is eager to know with what words you will defend what it is so dangerous to maintain, or what arts you have by which to give safety to personages and causes wounded so mortally. This [4450] is no false mistrust, nor are you assailed with lying accusations: [4451] the infamy of your Eleusinia is declared both by their base beginnings and by the records of ancient literature, by the very signs, in fine, which you use when questioned in receiving the sacred things, -- "I have fasted, and drunk the draught; [4452] I have taken out of the mystic cist, [4453] and put into the wicker-basket; I have received again, and transferred to the little chest." [4454]

27 Are then your deities carried off by force, and do they seize by violence

Are then your deities carried off by force, and do they seize by violence, as their holy and hidden mysteries relate? do they enter into marriages sought stealthily and by fraud? [4455] is their honour snatched from virgins [4456] resisting and unwilling? have they no knowledge of impending injury, no acquaintance with what has happened to those carried off by force? Are they, when lost, sought for as men are? and do they traverse the earth's vast extent with lamps and torches when the sun is shining most brightly? Are they afflicted? are they troubled? do they assume the squalid garments of mourners, and the signs of misery? and that they may be able to turn their mind to victuals and the taking of food, is use made not of reason, not of the right time, not of some weighty words or pressing courtesy, but is a display made of the shameful and indecent parts of the body? and are those members exposed which the shame felt by all, and the natural law of modesty, bid us conceal, which it is not permissible to name among pure ears without permission, and saying, "by your leave?" [4457] What, I ask you, was there in such a sight, [4458] what in the privy parts of Baubo, to move to wonder and laughter a goddess of the same sex, and formed with similar parts? what was there such that, when presented to the divine eyes [4459] and sight, it should at the same time enable her to forget her miseries, and bring her with sudden cheerfulness to a happier state of mind? Oh, what have we had it in our power to bring forward with scoffing and jeering, were it not for respect for the reader, [4460] and the dignity of literature!

28 I confess that I have long been hesitating, looking on every side

I confess that I have long been hesitating, looking on every side, shuffling, doubling Tellene perplexities; [4461] while I am ashamed to mention those Alimontian [4462] mysteries in which Greece erects phalli in honour of father Bacchus, and the whole district is covered with images of men's fascina. The meaning of this is obscure perhaps, and it is asked why it is done. Whoever is ignorant of this, let him learn, and, wondering at what is so important, ever keep it with reverent care in a pure heart. [4463] While Liber, born at Nysa, [4464] and son of Semele, was still among men, the story goes, he wished to become acquainted with the shades below, and to inquire into what went on in Tartarus; but this wish was hindered by some difficulties, because, from ignorance of the route, he did not know by what way to go and proceed. One Prosumnus starts up, a base lover of the god, and a fellow too prone to wicked lusts, who promises to point out the gate of Dis, and the approaches to Acheron, if the god will gratify him, and suffer uxorias voluptates ex se carpi. The god, without reluctance, swears to put himself [4465] in his power and at his disposal, but only immediately on his return from the lower regions, having obtained his wish and desire. [4466] Prosumnus politely tells him the way, and sets him on the very threshold of the lower regions. In the meantime, while Liber is inspecting [4467] and examining carefully Styx, Cerberus, the Furies, and all other things, the informer passed from the number of the living, and was buried according to the manner of men. Evius [4468] comes up from the lower regions, and learns that his guide is dead. But that he might fulfil his promise, and free himself from the obligation of his oath, he goes to the place of the funeral, and -- "ficorum ex arbore ramum validissimum præsecans dolat, runcinat, levigat et humani speciem fabricatur in penis, figit super aggerem tumuli, et posticâ ex parte nudatus accedit, subsidit, insidit. Lascivia deinde surientis assumptâ, huc atque illuc clunes torquet et meditatur ab ligno pati quod jamdudum in veritate promiserat."

29 Now, to prevent any one from thinking that we have devised what is so impious

Now, to prevent any one from thinking that we have devised what is so impious, we do not call upon him to believe Heraclitus as a witness, nor to receive from his account what he felt about such mysteries. Let him [4469] ask the whole of Greece what is the meaning of these phalli which ancient custom erects and worships throughout the country, throughout the towns: he will find that the causes are those which we say; or if they are ashamed to declare the truth honestly, of what avail will it be to obscure, to conceal the cause and origin of the rite, while [4470] the accusation holds good against the very act of worship? What say you, O peoples? what, ye nations busied with the services of the temples, and given up to them? Is it to these rites you drive us by flames, banishment, slaughter, and any other kind of punishments, and by fear of cruel torture? Are these the gods whom you bring to us, whom you thrust and impose upon us, like whom you would neither wish yourselves to be, nor any one related to you by blood and friendship? [4471] Can you declare to your beardless sons, still wearing the dress of boys, the agreements which Liber formed with his lovers? Can you urge your daughters-in-law, nay, even your own wives, to show the modesty of Baubo, and enjoy the chaste pleasures of Ceres? Do you wish your young men to know, hear, and learn what even Jupiter showed himself to more matrons than one? Would you wish your grown-up maidens and still lusty fathers to learn how the same deity sported with his daughter? Do you wish full brothers, already hot with passion, and sisters sprung from the same parents, to hear that he again did not spurn the embraces, the couch of his sister? Should we not then flee far from such gods; and should not our ears be stopped altogether, that the filthiness of so impure a religion may not creep into the mind? For what man is there who has been reared with morals so pure, that the example of the gods does not excite him to similar madness? or who can keep back his desires from his kinsfolk, and those of whom he should stand in awe, when he sees that among the gods above nothing is held sacred in the confusion caused by [4472] their lusts? For when it is certain that the first and perfect nature has not been able to restrain its passion within right limits, why should not man give himself up to his desires without distinction, being both borne on headlong by his innate frailty, and aided by the teaching of the holy deities? [4473]

30 I confess that, in reflecting on such monstrous stories in my own mind

I confess that, in reflecting on such monstrous stories in my own mind, I have long been accustomed to wonder that you dare to speak of those as atheists, [4474] impious, sacrilegious, who either deny that there are any gods at all, or doubt their existence, or assert that they were men, and have been numbered among the gods for the sake of some power and good desert; since, if a true examination be made, it is fitting that none should be called by such names, more than yourselves, who, under the pretence of showing them reverence, heap up in so doing [4475] more abuse and accusation, than if you had conceived the idea of doing this openly with avowed abuse. He who doubts the existence of the gods, or denies it altogether, although he may seem to adopt monstrous opinions from the audacity of his conjectures, yet refuses to credit what is obscure without insulting any one; and he who asserts that they were mortals, although he brings them down from the exalted place of inhabitants of heaven, yet heaps upon them other [4476] honours, since he supposes that they have been raised to the rank of the gods [4477] for their services, and from admiration of their virtues

31 But you who assert that you are the defenders and propagators of their immortality

But you who assert that you are the defenders and propagators of their immortality, have you passed by, have you left untouched, any one of them, without assailing him [4478] with your abuse? or is there any kind of insult so damnable in the eyes of all, that you have been afraid to use it upon them, even though hindered [4479] by the dignity of their name? Who declared that the gods loved frail and mortal bodies? was it not you? Who that they perpetrated those most charming thefts on the couches of others? was it not you? Who that children had intercourse with their mothers; and on the other hand, fathers with their virgin daughters? was it not you? Who that pretty boys, and even grown-up men of very fine appearance, were wrongfully lusted after? was it not you? Who declared that they [4480] were mutilated, debauched, [4481] skilled in dissimulation, thieves, held in bonds and chains, finally assailed with thunderbolts, and wounded, that they died, and even found graves on earth? was it not you? While, then, so many and grievous charges have been raised by you to the injury of the gods, do you dare to assert that the gods have been displeased because of us, while it has long been clear that you are the guilty causes of such anger, and the occasion of the divine wrath?

32 But you err, says my opponent, and are mistaken

But you err, says my opponent, and are mistaken, and show, even in criticising these things, that you are rather ignorant, unlearned, and boorish. For all those stories which seem to you disgraceful, and tending to the discredit of the gods, contain in them holy mysteries, theories wonderful and profound, and not such as any one can easily become acquainted with by force of understanding. For that is not meant and said which has been written and placed on the surface of the story; but all these things are understood in allegorical senses, and by means of secret explanations privately supplied. [4482] Therefore he who says [4483] Jupiter lay with his mother, does not mean the incestuous or shameful embraces of Venus, but names Jupiter instead of rain, and Ceres instead of the earth. And he, again, who says that he [4484] dealt lasciviously with his daughter, speaks of no filthy pleasures, but puts Jupiter for the name of a shower, and by his daughter means [4485] the crop sown. So, too, he who says that Proserpina was carried off by father Dis, does not say, as you suppose, [4486] that the maiden was carried off to gratify the basest desires; but because we cover the seed with clods, he signifies that the goddess has sunk under the earth, and unites with Orcus to bring forth fruit. In like manner in the other stories also one thing indeed is said, but something else is understood; and under a commonplace openness of expression there lurks a secret doctrine, and a dark profundity of mystery.

33 These are all quirks, as is evident, and quibbles with which they are wont to

These are all quirks, as is evident, and quibbles with which they are wont to bolster up weak cases before a jury; nay, rather, to speak more truly, they are pretences, such as are used in [4487] sophisticated reasonings, by which not the truth is sought after, but always the image, and appearance, and shadow of the truth. For because it is shameful and unbecoming to receive as true the correct accounts, you have had recourse [4488] to this expedient, that one thing should be substituted for another, and that what was in itself shameful should, in being explained, be forced into the semblance of decency. But what is it to us whether other senses and other meanings underlie these vain stories? For we who assert that the gods are treated by you wickedly and impiously, need only [4489] receive what is written, what is said, [4490] and need not care as to what is kept secret, since the insult to the deities consists not in the idea hidden in its meanings, [4491] but in what is signified by the words as they stand out. And yet, that we may not seem unwilling to examine what you say, we ask this first of you, if only you will bear with us, from whom have you learned, or by whom has it been made known, either that these things were written allegorically, or that they should be understood in the same way? Did the writers summon you to take counsel with them? or did you lie hid in their bosoms at the time [4492] when they put one thing for another, without regard to truth? Then, if they chose, from religious awe [4493] and fear on any account, to wrap those mysteries in dark obscurity, what audacity it shows in you to wish to understand what they did not wish, to know yourselves and make all acquainted with that which they vainly attempted to conceal by words which did not suggest the truth!

34 But, agreeing with you that in all these stories stags are spoken of instead of

But, agreeing with you that in all these stories stags are spoken of instead of Iphigenias, yet, how are you sure, when you either explain or unfold these allegories, that you give the same explanations or have the same ideas which were entertained by the writers themselves in the silence of their thoughts, but expressed by words not adapted [4494] to what was meant, but to something else? You say that the falling of rain into the bosom of the earth was spoken of as the union of Jupiter and Ceres; another may both devise with greater subtlety, and conjecture with some probability, something else; a third, a fourth may do the same; and as the characteristics of the minds of the thinkers show themselves, so each thing may be explained in an infinite number of ways. For since all that allegory, as it is called, is taken from narratives expressly made obscure, [4495] and has no certain limit within which the meaning of the story, [4496] as it is called, should be firmly fixed and unchangeable, it is open to every one to put the meaning into it which he pleases, and to assert that that has been adopted [4497] to which his thoughts and surmises [4498] led him. But this being the case, how can you obtain certainty from what is doubtful, and attach one sense only to an expression which you see to be explained in innumerable different ways? [4499]

35 Finally, if you think it right, returning to our inquiry

Finally, if you think it right, returning to our inquiry, we ask this of you, whether you think that all stories about the gods, [4500] that is, without any exception, [4501] have been written throughout with a double meaning and sense, and in a way [4502] admitting of several interpretations; or that some parts of them are not ambiguous at all, while, on the contrary, others have many meanings, and are enveloped in the veil of allegory which has been thrown round them? For if the whole structure and arrangement of the narrative have been surrounded with a veil of allegory from beginning to end, explain to us, tell us, what we should put and substitute for each thing which every story says, and to what other things and meanings we should refer [4503] each. For as, to take an example, you wish Jupiter to be said instead of the rain, Ceres for the earth, and for Libera [4504] and father Dis the sinking and casting of seed into the earth, so you ought to say what we should understand for the bull, what for the wrath and anger of Ceres; what the word Brimo [4505] means; what the anxious prayer of Jupiter; what the gods sent to make intercession for him, but not listened to; what the castrated ram; what the parts [4506] of the castrated ram; what the satisfaction made with these; what the further dealings with his daughter, still more unseemly in their lustfulness; so, in the other story also, what the grove and flowers of Henna are; what the fire taken from Ætna, and the torches lit with it; what the travelling through the world with these; what the Attic country, the canton of Eleusin, the hut of Baubo, and her rustic hospitality; what the drought of cyceon [4507] means, the refusal of it, the shaving and disclosure of the privy parts, the shameful charm of the sight, and the forgetfulness of her bereavement produced by such means. Now, if you point out what should be put in the place of all these, changing the one for the other, [4508] we shall admit your assertion; but if you can neither present another supposition in each case, nor appeal to [4509] the context as a whole, why do you make that obscure, [4510] by means of fair-seeming allegories, which has been spoken plainly, and disclosed to the understanding of all?

36 But you will perhaps say that these allegories are not found in the whole body

But you will perhaps say that these allegories are not found in the whole body of the story, but that some parts are written so as to be understood by all, while others have a double meaning, and are veiled in ambiguity. That is refined subtlety, and can be seen through by the dullest. For because it is very difficult for you to transpose, reverse, and divert to other meanings all that has been said, you choose out some things which suit your purpose, and by means of these you strive to maintain that false and spurious versions were thrown about the truth which is under them. [4511] But yet, supposing that we should grant to you that it is just as you say, how do you know, or whence do you learn, which part of the story is written without any double meaning, [4512] which, on the other hand, has been covered with jarring and alien senses? For it may be that what you believe to be so [4513] is otherwise, that what you believe to be otherwise [4514] has been produced with different, and even opposite modes of expression. For where, in a consistent whole, one part is said to be written allegorically, the other in plain and trustworthy language, while there is no sign in the thing itself to point out the difference between what is said ambiguously and what is said simply, that which is simple may as well be thought to have a double meaning, as what has been written ambiguously be believed to be wrapt in obscurity. [4515] But, indeed, we confess that we do not understand at all by whom this [4516] is either done, or can be believed to be possible.

37 Let us examine, then, what is said in this way.

Let us examine, then, what is said in this way. In the grove of Henna, my opponent says, the maiden Proserpine was once gathering flowers: this is as yet uncorrupted, and has been told in a straightforward manner, for all know without any doubt what a grove and flowers are, what Proserpine is, and a maiden. Summanus sprung forth from the earth, borne along in a four-horse chariot: this, too, is just as simple, for a team of four horses, a chariot, and Summanus need no interpreter. Suddenly he carried off Proserpine, and bore her with himself under the earth: the burying of the seed, my opponent says, is meant by the rape of Proserpine. What has happened, pray, that the story should be suddenly turned to something else? that Proserpine should be called the seed? that she who was for a long time held to be a maiden gathering flowers, after that she was taken away and carried off by violence, should begin to signify the seed sown? Jupiter, my opponent says, having turned himself into a bull, longed to have intercourse with his mother Ceres: as was explained before, under these names the earth and falling rain are spoken of. I see the law of allegory expressed in the dark and ambiguous terms. Ceres was enraged and angry, and received the parts [4517] of a ram as the penalty demanded by [4518] vengeance: this again I see to be expressed in common language, for both anger and (testes and) satisfaction are spoken of in their usual circumstances. [4519] What, then, happened here, -- that from Jupiter, who was named for the rain, and Ceres, who was named for the earth, the story passed to the true Jove, and to a most straightforward account of events?

38 Either, then, they must all have been written and put forward allegorically

Either, then, they must all have been written and put forward allegorically, and the whole should be pointed out to us; or nothing has been so written, since what is supposed to be allegorical does not seem as if it were part of the narrative. [4520] These are all written allegorically, you say. This seems by no means certain. Do you ask for what reason, for what cause? Because, I answer, all that has taken place and has been set down distinctly in any book cannot be turned into an allegory, for neither can that be undone which has been done, nor can the character of an event change into one which is utterly different. Can the Trojan war be turned into the condemnation of Socrates? or the battle of Cannæ become the cruel proscription of Sulla? A proscription may indeed, as Tullius says [4521] in jest, be spoken of as a battle, and be called that of Cannæ; but what has already taken place, cannot be at the same time a battle and a proscription; for neither, as I have said, can that which has taken place be anything else than what has taken place; nor can that pass over into a substance foreign to it which has been fixed down firmly in its own nature and peculiar condition.

39 Whence, then, do we prove that all these narratives are records of events? From the

Whence, then, do we prove that all these narratives are records of events? From the solemn rites and mysteries of initiation, it is clear, whether those which are celebrated at fixed times and on set days, or those which are taught secretly by the heathen without allowing the observance of their usages to be interrupted. For it is not to be believed that these have no origin, are practised without reason or meaning, and have no causes connected with their first beginnings. That pine which is regularly born into the sanctuary of the Great Mother, [4522] is it not in imitation of that tree beneath which Attis mutilated and unmanned himself, which also, they relate, the goddess consecrated to relieve her grief? That erecting of phalli and fascina, which Greece worships and celebrates in rites every year, does it not recall the deed by which Liber [4523] paid his debt? Of what do those Eleusinian mysteries and secret rites contain a narrative? Is it not of that wandering in which Ceres, worn out in seeking for her daughter, when she came to the confines of Attica, brought wheat with her, graced with a hind's skin the family of the Nebridæ [4524] and laughed at that most wonderful sight in Baubo's groins? Or if there is another cause, that is nothing to us, so long as they are all produced by some cause. For it is not credible that these things were set on foot without being preceded by any causes, or the inhabitants of Attica must be considered mad to have received [4525] a religious ceremony got up without any reason. But if this is clear and certain, that is, if the causes and origins of the mysteries are traceable to past events, by no change can they be turned into the figures of allegory; for that which has been done, which has taken place, cannot, in the nature of things, be undone. [4526]

40 And yet, even if we grant you that this is the case

And yet, even if we grant you that this is the case, that is, even if the narratives give utterance to one thing in words, but mean [4527] something else, after the manner of raving seers, do you not observe in this case, do you not see how dishonouring, how insulting to the gods, this is which is said to be done? [4528] or can any greater wrong be devised than to term and call the earth and rain, or anything else, -- for it does not matter what change is made in the interpretation, -- the intercourse of Jupiter and Ceres? and to signify the descent of rain from the sky, and the moistening of the earth, by charges against the gods? Can anything be either thought or believed more impious than that the rape of Proserpine speaks of seeds buried in the earth, or anything else, -- for in like manner it is of no importance, -- and that it speaks of the pursuit of agriculture to [4529] the dishonour of father Dis? Is it not a thousand times more desirable to become mute and speechless, and to lose that flow of words and noisy and [4530] unseemly loquacity, than to call the basest things by the names of the gods; nay, more, to signify commonplace things by the base actions of the gods?

41 It was once usual, in speaking allegorically, to conceal under perfectly decent ideas

It was once usual, in speaking allegorically, to conceal under perfectly decent ideas, and clothe [4531] with the respectability of decency, what was base and horrible to speak of openly; but now venerable things are at your instance vilely spoken of, and what is quite pure [4532] is related [4533] in filthy language, so that that which vice [4534] formerly concealed from shame, is now meanly and basely spoken of, the mode of speech which was fitting [4535] being changed. In speaking of Mars and Venus as having been taken in adultery by Vulcan's art, we speak of lust, says my opponent, and anger, as restrained by the force and purpose of reason. What, then, hindered, what prevented you from expressing each thing by the words and terms proper to it? nay, more, what necessity was there, when you had resolved [4536] to declare something or other, by means of treatises and writings, to resolve that that should not be the meaning to which you point, and in one narrative to take up at the same time opposite positions -- the eagerness of one wishing to teach, the niggardliness of one reluctant to make public? [4537] Was there no risk in speaking of the gods as unchaste? The mention of lust and anger, my opponent says, was likely to defile the tongue and mouth with foul contagion. [4538] But, assuredly, if this were done, [4539] and the veil of allegorical obscurity were removed, the matter would be easily understood, and by the same the dignity of the gods would be maintained unimpaired. But now, indeed, when the restraining of vices is said to be signified by the binding of Mars and Venus, two most inconsistent [4540] things are done at the very same time; so that, on the one hand, a description of something vile suggests an honourable meaning, and on the other, the baseness occupies the mind before any regard for religion can do so.

42 But you will perhaps say, for this only is left which you may think can

But you will perhaps say, for this only is left which you may think [4541] can be brought forward by you, that the gods do not wish their mysteries to be known by men, and that the narratives were therefore written with allegorical ambiguity. And whence have you learned [4542] that the gods above do not wish their mysteries to be made public? whence have you become acquainted with these? or why are you anxious to unravel them by explaining them as allegories? Lastly, and finally, what do the gods mean, that while they do not wish honourable, they allow unseemly, even the basest things, to be said about them? When we name Attis, says my opponent, we mean and speak of the sun; but if Attis is the sun, as you reckon him and say, who will that Attis be whom your books record and declare to have been born in Phrygia, to have suffered certain things, to have done certain things also, whom all the theatres know in the scenic shows, to whom every year we see divine honours paid expressly by name amongst the other religious ceremonies? Whether was this name made to pass from the sun to a man, or from a man to the sun? For if that name is derived in the first instance from the sun, what, pray, has the golden sun done to you, that you should make that name to belong to him in common with an emasculated person? But if it is derived from a goat, and is Phrygian, of what has the sire of Phaethon, the father of this light and brightness, been guilty, that he should seem worthy to be named from a mutilated man, and should become more venerable when designated by the name of an emasculated body?

43 But what the meaning of this is, is already clear to all.

But what the meaning of this is, is already clear to all. For because you are ashamed of such writers and histories, and do not see that these things can be got rid of which have once been committed to writing in filthy language, you strive to make base things honourable, and by every kind of subtlety you pervert and corrupt the real senses [4543] of words for the sake of spurious interpretations; [4544] and, as oft times happens to the sick, whose senses and understanding have been put to flight by the distempered force of disease, you toss about confused and uncertain conjectures, and rave in empty fictions. Let it be granted that the irrigation of the earth was meant by the union of Jupiter and Ceres, the burying of the seed [4545] by the ravishing of Proserpine by father Dis, wines scattered over the earth by the limbs of Liber torn asunder by the Titans, that the restraining [4546] of lust and rashness has been spoken of as the binding of the adulterous Venus and Mars.

44 But if you come to the conclusion that these fables have been written allegorically

But if you come to the conclusion that these fables have been written allegorically, what is to be done with the rest, which we see cannot be forced into such changes of sense? For what are we to substitute for the wriggings [4547] into which the lustful heat [4548] of Semele's offspring forced him upon the sepulchral mound? and what for those Ganymedes who were carried off [4549] and set to preside over lustful practices? what for that conversion of an ant into which Jupiter, the greatest of the gods, contracted the outlines of his huge body? [4550] what for swans and satyrs? what for golden showers, which the same seductive god put on with perfidious guile, amusing himself by changes of form? And that we may not seem to speak of Jupiter only, what allegories can there be in the loves of the other deities? what in their circumstances as hired servants and slaves? what in their bonds, bereavements, lamentations? what in their agonies, wounds, sepulchres? Now, while in this you might be held guilty in one respect for writing in such wise about the gods, you have added to your guilt beyond measure [4551] in calling base things by the names of deities, and again in defaming the gods by giving to them the names of infamous things. But if you believed without any doubt [4552] that they were here close at hand, or anywhere at all, fear would check you in making mention of them, and your beliefs and unchanged thoughts should have been exactly [4553] as if they were listening to you and heard your words. For among men devoted to the services of religion, not only the gods themselves, but even the names of the gods should be revered, and there should be quite as much grandeur in their names as there is in those even who are thought of under these names.

45 Judge fairly, and you are deserving of censure in this

Judge fairly, and you are deserving of censure in this, [4554] that in your common conversation you name Mars when you mean [4555] fighting, Neptune when you mean the seas, Ceres when you mean bread, Minerva when you mean weaving, [4556] Venus when you mean filthy lusts. For what reason is there, that, when things can be classed under their own names, they should be called by the names of the gods, and that such an insult should be offered to the deities as not even we men endure, if any one applies and turns our names to trifling objects? But language, you say, is contemptible, if defiled with such words. [4557] O modesty, [4558] worthy of praise! you blush to name bread and wine, and are not afraid to speak of Venus instead of carnal intercourse!

1 Having shown briefly how impious and infamous are the opinions which you have formed about

Having shown briefly how impious and infamous are the opinions which you have formed about your gods, we have now to [4559] speak of their temples, their images also, and sacrifices, and of the other things which are [4560] united and closely related to them. For you are here in the habit of fastening upon us a very serious charge of impiety because we do not rear temples for the ceremonies of worship, do not set up statues and images [4561] of any god, do not build altars, [4562] do not offer the blood of creatures slain in sacrifices, incense, [4563] nor sacrificial meal, and finally, do not bring wine flowing in libations from sacred bowls; which, indeed, we neglect to build and do, not as though we cherish impious and wicked dispositions, or have conceived any madly desperate feeling of contempt for the gods, but because we think and believe that they [4564] -- if only they are true gods, and are called by this exalted name [4565] -- either scorn such honours, if they give way to scorn, or endure them with anger, if they are roused by feelings of rage.

2 For -- that you may learn what are our sentiments and opinions about that race

For -- that you may learn what are our sentiments and opinions about that race -- we think that they -- if only they are true gods, that the same things may be said again till you are wearied hearing them [4566] -- should have all the virtues in perfection, should be wise, upright, venerable, -- if only our heaping upon them human honours is not a crime, -- strong in excellences within themselves, and should not give themselves [4567] up to external props, because the completeness of their unbroken bliss is made perfect; should be free from all agitating and disturbing passions; should not burn with anger, should not be excited by any desires; should send misfortune to none, should not find a cruel pleasure in the ills of men; should not terrify by portents, should not show prodigies to cause fear; should not hold men responsible and liable to be punished for the vows which they owe, nor demand expiatory sacrifices by threatening omens; should not bring on pestilences and diseases by corrupting the air, should not burn up the fruits with droughts; should take no part in the slaughter of war and devastation of cities; should not wish ill to one party, and be favourable to the success of another; but, as becomes great minds, should weigh all in a just balance, and show kindness impartially to all. For it belongs to a mortal race and human weakness to act otherwise; [4568] and the maxims and declarations of wise men state distinctly, that those who are touched by passion live a life of suffering, [4569] and are weakened by grief, [4570] and that it cannot be but that those who have been given over to disquieting feelings, have been bound by the laws of mortality. Now, since this is the case, how can we be supposed to hold the gods in contempt, who we say are not gods, and cannot be connected with the powers of heaven, unless they are just and worthy of the admiration which great minds excite?

3 But, we are told, we rear no temples to them

But, we are told, we rear no temples to them, and do not worship their images; we do not slay victims in sacrifice, we do not offer incense [4571] and libations of wine. And what greater honour or dignity can we ascribe to them, than that we put them in the same position as the Head and Lord of the universe, to whom the gods owe it in common with us, [4572] that they are conscious that they exist, and have a living being? [4573] For do we honour Him with shrines, and by building temples? [4574] Do we even slay victims to Him? Do we give Him the other things, to take which and pour them forth in libation shows not a careful regard to reason, but heed to a practice maintained [4575] merely by usage? For it is perfect folly to measure greater powers by your necessities, and to give the things useful to yourself to the gods who give all things, and to think this an honour, not an insult. We ask, therefore, to do what service to the gods, or to meet what want, do you say that temples have been reared, [4576] and think that they should be again built? Do they feel the cold of [4577] winter, or are they scorched by summer suns? Do storms of rain flow over them, or whirlwinds shake them? Are they in danger of being exposed to the onset of enemies, or the furious attacks of wild beasts, so that it is right and becoming to shut them up in places of security, [4578] or guard them by throwing up a rampart of stones? For what are these temples? If you ask human weakness [4579] -- something vast and spacious; if you consider the power of the gods -- small caves, as it were, [4580] and even, to speak more truly, the narrowest kind of caverns formed and contrived with sorry judgment. [4581] Now, if you ask to be told who was their first founder [4582] and builder, either Phoroneus or the Egyptian Merops [4583] will be mentioned to you, or, as Varro relates in his treatise "de Admirandis," Æacus the offspring of Jupiter. Though these, then, should be built of heaps of marble, or shine resplendent with ceilings fretted with gold, though precious stones sparkle here, and gleam like stars set at varying intervals, all these things are made up of earth, and of the lowest dregs of even baser matter. For not even, if you value these more highly, is it to be believed that the gods take pleasure in them, or that they do not refuse and scorn to shut themselves up, and be confined within these barriers. This, my opponent says, is the temple of Mars, this that of Juno and of Venus, this that of Hercules, of Apollo, of Dis. What is this but to say this is the house of Mars, this of Juno and Venus, [4584] Apollo dwells here, in this abides Hercules, in that Summanus? Is it not, then, the very [4585] greatest affront to hold the gods kept fast [4586] in habitations, to give to them little huts, to build lockfast places and cells, and to think that the things are [4587] necessary to them which are needed by men, cats, emmets, and lizards, by quaking, timorous, and little mice?

4 But, says my opponent, it is not for this reason that we assign temples to

But, says my opponent, it is not for this reason that we assign temples to the gods as though we wished to ward off from them drenching storms of rain, winds, showers, or the rays of the sun; but in order that we may be able to see them in person and close at hand, to come near and address them, and impart to them, when in a measure present, the expressions of our reverent feelings. For if they are invoked under the open heaven, and the canopy of ether, they hear nothing, I suppose; and unless prayers are addressed to them near at hand, they will stand deaf and immoveable as if nothing were said. And yet we think that every god whatever -- if only he has the power of this name -- should hear what every one said from every part of the world, just as if he were present; nay, more, should foresee, without waiting to be told [4588] what every one conceived in his secret and silent [4589] thoughts. And as the stars, the sun, the moon, while they wander above the earth, are steadily and everywhere in sight of all those who gaze at them without any exception; so, too, [4590] it is fitting that the ears of the gods should be closed against no tongue, and should be ever within reach, although voices should flow together to them from widely separated regions. For this it is that belongs specially to the gods, -- to fill all things with their power, to be not partly at any place, but all everywhere, not to go to dine with the Æthiopians, and return after twelve days to their own dwellings. [4591]

5 Now, if this be not the case, all hope of help is taken away

Now, if this be not the case, all hope of help is taken away, and it will be doubtful whether you are heard [4592] by the gods or not, if ever you perform the sacred rites with due ceremonies. For, to make it clear, [4593] let us suppose that there is a temple of some deity in the Canary Islands, another of the same deity in remotest Thyle, also among the Seres, among the tawny Garamantes, and any others [4594] who are debarred from knowing each other by seas, mountains, forests, and the four quarters of the world. If they all at one time beg of the deity with sacrifices what their wants compel each one to think about, [4595] what hope, pray, will there be to all of obtaining the benefit, if the god does not hear the cry sent up to him everywhere, and if there shall be any distance to which the words of the suppliant for help cannot penetrate? For either he will be nowhere present, if he may at times not be anywhere, [4596] or he will be at one place only, since he cannot give his attention generally, and without making any distinction. And thus it is brought about, that either the god helps none at all, if being busy with something he has been unable to hasten to give ear to their cries, or one only goes away with his prayers heard, while the rest have effected nothing.

6 What can you say as to this, that it is attested by the writings of

What can you say as to this, that it is attested by the writings of authors, that many of these temples which have been raised with golden domes and lofty roofs cover bones and ashes, and are sepulchres of the dead? Is it not plain and manifest, either that you worship dead men for immortal gods, or that an inexpressible affront is cast upon the deities, whose shrines and temples have been built over the tombs of the dead? Antiochus, [4597] in the ninth book of his Histories, relates that Cecrops was buried in the temple of Minerva, [4598] at Athens; again, in the temple of the same goddess, which is in the citadel of Larissa, [4599] it is related and declared that Acrisius was laid, and in the sanctuary of Polias, [4600] Erichthonius; while the brothers Dairas and Immarnachus were buried in the enclosure of Eleusin, which lies near the city. What say you as to the virgin daughters of Celeus? are they not said to be buried [4601] in the temple of Ceres at Eleusin? and in the shrine of Diana, which was set up in the temple of the Delian Apollo, are not Hyperoche and Laodice buried, who are said to have been brought thither from the country of the Hyperboreans? In the Milesian Didymæon, [4602] Leandrius says that Cleochus had the last honours of burial paid to him. Zeno of Myndus openly relates that the monument of Leucophryne is in the sanctuary of Diana at Magnesia. Under the altar of Apollo, which is seen in the city of Telmessus, is it not invariably declared by writings that the prophet Telmessus lies buried? Ptolemæus, the son of Agesarchus, in the first book of the History of Philopator [4603] which he published, affirms, on the authority of literature, that Cinyras, king of Paphos, was interred in the temple of Venus with all his family, nay, more, with all his stock. It would be [4604] an endless and boundless task to describe in what sanctuaries they all are throughout the world; nor is anxious care required, although [4605] the Egyptians fixed a penalty for any one who should have revealed the places in which Apis lay hid, as to those Polyandria [4606] of Varro, [4607] by what temples they are covered, and what heavy masses they have laid upon them.

7 But why do I speak of these trifles? What man is there who is ignorant

But why do I speak of these trifles? What man is there who is ignorant that in the Capitol of the imperial people is the sepulchre of Tulus [4608] Vulcentanus? Who is there, I say, who does not know that from beneath [4609] its foundations there was rolled a man's head, buried for no very long time before, either by itself without the other parts of the body, -- for some relate this, -- or with all its members? Now, if you require this to be made clear by the testimonies of authors, Sammonicus, Granius, Valerianus, [4610] and Fabius will declare to you whose son Aulus [4611] was, of what race and nation, how [4612] he was bereft of life and light by the slave of his brother, of what crime he was guilty against his fellow-citizens, that he was denied burial in his father [4613] land. You will learn also -- although they pretend to be unwilling to make this public -- what was done with his head when cut off, or in what place it was shut up, and the whole affair carefully concealed, in order that the omen which the gods had attested might stand without interruption, [4614] unalterable, and sure. Now, while it was proper that this story should be suppressed, and concealed, and forgotten in the lapse of time, the composition of the name published it, and, by a testimony which could not be got rid of, caused it to remain in men's minds, together with its causes, so long as it endured itself; [4615] and the state which is greatest of all, and worships all deities, did not blush in giving a name to the temple, to name it from the head of Tulus [4616] Capitolium rather than from the name of Jupiter.

8 We have therefore -- as I suppose -- shown sufficiently

We have therefore -- as I suppose -- shown sufficiently, that to the immortal gods temples have been either reared in vain, or built in consequence of insulting opinions held to their dishonour and to the belittling [4617] of the power believed to be in their hands. We have next to say something about statues and images, which you form with much skill, and tend with religious care, -- wherein if there is any credibility, we can by no amount of consideration settle in our own minds whether you do this in earnest and with a serious purpose, or amuse yourselves in childish dreams by mocking at these very things. [4618] For if you are assured that the gods exist whom you suppose, and that they live in the highest regions of heaven, what cause, what reason, is there that those images should be fashioned by you, when you have true beings to whom you may pour forth prayers, and from whom you may ask help in trying circumstances? But if, on the contrary, you do not believe, or, to speak with moderation, are in doubt, in this case, also, what reason is there, pray, to fashion and set up images of doubtful beings, and to form [4619] with vain imitation what you do not believe to exist? Do you perchance say, that under these images of deities there is displayed to you their presence, as it were, and that, because it has not been given you to see the gods, they are worshipped in this fashion, [4620] and the duties owed to them paid? He who says and asserts this, does not believe that the gods exist; and he is proved not to put faith in his own religion, to whom it is necessary to see what he may hold, lest that which being obscure is not seen, may happen to be vain.

9 We worship the gods, you say, by means of images.

We worship the gods, you say, by means of images. [4621] What then? Without these, do the gods not know that they are worshipped, and will they not think that any honour is shown to them by you? Through bypaths, as it were, then, and by assignments to a third party, [4622] as they are called, they receive and accept your services; and before those to whom that service is owed experience it, you first sacrifice to images, and transmit, as it were, some remnants to them at the pleasure of others. [4623] And what greater wrong, disgrace, hardship, can be inflicted than to acknowledge one god, and yet make supplication to something else -- to hope for help from a deity, and pray to an image without feeling? Is not this, I pray you, that which is said in the common proverbs: "to cut down the smith when you strike at the fuller;" [4624] "and when you seek a man's advice, to require of asses and pigs their opinions as to what should be done?"

10 And whence, finally, do you know whether all these images which you form and put

And whence, finally, do you know whether all these images which you form and put in the place of [4625] the immortal gods reproduce and bear a resemblance to the gods? For it may happen that in heaven one has a beard who by you is represented [4626] with smooth cheeks; that another is rather advanced in years to whom you give the appearance of a youth; [4627] that here he is fair, with blue eyes, [4628] who really has grey ones; that he has distended nostrils whom you make and form with a high nose. For it is not right to call or name that an image which does not derive from the face of the original features like it; which [4629] can be recognised to be clear and certain from things which are manifest. For while all we men see that the sun is perfectly round by our eyesight, which cannot be doubted, you have given [4630] to him the features of a man, and of mortal bodies. The moon is always in motion, and in its restoration every month puts on thirty faces: [4631] with you, as leaders and designers, that is represented as a woman, and has one countenance, which passes through a thousand different states, changing each day. [4632] We understand that all the winds are only a flow of air driven and impelled in mundane ways: in your hands they take [4633] the forms of men filling with breath twisted trumpets by blasts from out their breasts. [4634] Among the representations of your gods we see that there is the very stern face of a lion [4635] smeared with pure vermilion, and that it is named Frugifer. If all these images are likenesses of the gods above, there must then be said to dwell in heaven also a god such as the image which has been made to represent his form and appearance; [4636] and, of course, as here that figure of yours, so there the deity himself [4637] is a mere mask and face, without the rest of the body, growling with fiercely gaping jaws, terrible, red as blood, [4638] holding an apple fast with his teeth, and at times, as dogs do when wearied, putting his tongue out of his gaping mouth. [4639] But if, [4640] indeed, this is not the case, as we all think that it is not, what, pray, is the meaning of so great audacity to fashion to yourself whatever form you please, and to say [4641] that it is an image of a god whom you cannot prove to exist at all?

11 You laugh because in ancient times the Persians worshipped rivers

You laugh because in ancient times the Persians worshipped rivers, as is told in the writings which hand down these things to memory; the Arabians an unshapen stone; [4642] the Scythian nations a sabre; the Thespians a branch instead of Cinxia; [4643] the Icarians [4644] an unhewn log instead of Diana; the people of Pessinus a flint instead of the mother of the gods; the Romans a spear instead of Mars, as the muses of Varro point out; and, before they were acquainted with the statuary's art, the Samians a plank [4645] instead of Juno, as Aëthlius [4646] relates: and you do not laugh when, instead of the immortal gods, you make supplication to little images of men and human forms -- nay, you even suppose that these very little images are gods, and besides these you do not believe that anything has divine power. What say you, O ye -- ! Do the gods of heaven have ears, then, and temples, an occiput, spine, loins, sides, hams, buttocks, houghs, [4647] ankles, and the rest of the other members with which we have been formed, which were also mentioned in the first part of this book [4648] a little more fully, and cited with greater copiousness of language? Would that it were possible [4649] to look into the sentiments and very recesses of your mind, in which you revolve various and enter into the most obscure considerations: we should find that you yourselves even feel as we do, and have no other opinions as to the form of the deities. But what can we do with obstinate prejudices? what with those who are menacing us with swords, and devising new punishments against us? In your rage [4650] you maintain a bad cause, and that although you are perfectly aware of it; and that which you have once done without reason, you defend lest you should seem to have ever been in ignorance; and you think it better not to be conquered, than to yield and bow to acknowledged truth.

12 From such causes as these this also has followed

From such causes as these this also has followed, with your connivance, that the wanton fancy of artists has found full scope in representing the bodies of the gods, and giving forms to them, at which even the sternest might laugh. And so Hammon is even now formed and represented with a ram's horns; Saturn with his crooked sickle, like some guardian of the fields, and pruner of too luxuriant branches; the son of Maia with a broad-brimmed travelling cap, as if he were preparing to take the road, and avoiding the sun's rays and the dust; Liber with tender limbs, and with a woman's perfectly free and easily flowing lines of body; [4651] Venus, naked and unclothed, just as if you said that she exposed publicly, and sold to all comers, [4652] the beauty of her prostituted body; Vulcan with his cap and hammer, but with his right hand free, and with his dress girt up as a workman prepares [4653] for his work; the Delian god with a plectrum and lyre, gesticulating like a player on the cithern and an actor about to sing; the king of the sea with his trident, just as if he had to fight in the gladiatorial contest: nor can any figure of any deity be found [4654] which does not have certain characteristics [4655] bestowed on it by the generosity of its makers. Lo, if some witty and cunning king were to remove the Sun from his place before the gate [4656] and transfer him to that of Mercury, and again were to carry off Mercury and make him migrate to the shrine of the Sun, -- for both are made beardless by you, and with smooth faces, -- and to give to this one rays of light to place a little cap [4657] on the Sun's head, how will you be able to distinguish between them, whether this is the Sun, or that Mercury, since dress, not the peculiar appearance of the face, usually points out the gods to you? Again, if, having transported them in like manner, he were to take away his horns from the unclad Jupiter, and fix them upon the temples of Mars, and to strip Mars of his arms, and, on the other hand, invest Hammon with them, what distinction can there be between them, since he who had been Jupiter can be also supposed to be Mars, and he who had been Mavors can assume the appearance of Jupiter Hammon? To such an extent is there wantonness in fashioning those images and consecrating names, as if they were peculiar to them; since, if you take away their dress, the means of recognising each is put an end to, god may be believed to be god, one may seem to be the other, nay, more, both may be considered both!

13 But why do I laugh at the sickles and tridents which have been given to

But why do I laugh at the sickles and tridents which have been given to the gods? why at the horns, hammers, and caps, when I know that certain images have [4658] the forms of certain men, and the features of notorious courtesans? For who is there that does not know that the Athenians formed the Hermæ in the likeness of Alcibiades? Who does not know -- if he read Posidippus over again -- that Praxiteles, putting forth his utmost skill, [4659] fashioned the face of the Cnidian Venus on the model of the courtesan Gratina, whom the unhappy man loved desperately? But is this the only Venus to whom there has been given beauty taken from a harlot's face? Phryne, [4660] the well-known native of Thespia -- as those who have written on Thespian affairs relate -- when she was at the height of her beauty, comeliness, and youthful vigour, is said to have been the model of all the Venuses which are held in esteem, whether throughout the cities of Greece or here, [4661] whither has flowed the longing and eager desire for such figures. All the artists, therefore, who lived at that time, and to whom truth gave the greatest ability to portray likenesses, vied in transferring with all painstaking and zeal the outline of a prostitute to the images of the Cytherean. The beautiful thoughts [4662] of the artists were full of fire; and they strove each to excel the other with emulous rivalry, not that Venus might become more august, but that Phryne [4663] might stand for Venus. And so it was brought to this, that sacred honours were offered to courtesans instead of the immortal gods, and an unhappy system of worship was led astray by the making of statues. [4664] That well-known and [4665] most distinguished statuary, Phidias, when he had raised the form of Olympian Jupiter with immense labour and exertion, [4666] inscribed on the finger of the god Pantarces [4667] is beautiful, -- this, moreover, was the name of a boy loved by him, and that with lewd desire, -- and was not moved by any fear or religious dread to call the god by the name of a prostitute; nay, rather, to consecrate the divinity and image of Jupiter to a debauchee. To such an extent is there wantonness and childish feeling in forming those little images, adoring them as gods, heaping upon them the divine virtues, when we see that the artists themselves find amusement in fashioning them, and set them up as monuments of their own lusts! For what reason is there, if you should inquire, why Phidias should hesitate to amuse himself, and be wanton when he knew that, but a little before, the very Jupiter which he had made was gold, stones, and ivory, [4668] formless, separated, confused, and that it was he himself who brought all these together and bound them fast, that their appearance [4669] had been given to them by himself in the imitation [4670] of limbs which he had carved; and, which is more than [4671] all, that it was his own free gift, that Jupiter had been produced and was adored among men? [4672]

14 We would here, as if all nations on the earth were present

We would here, as if all nations on the earth were present, make one speech, and pour into the ears of them all, words which should be heard in common: [4673] Why, pray, is this, O men! that of your own accord you cheat and deceive yourselves by voluntary blindness? Dispel the darkness now, and, returning to the light of the mind, look more closely and see what that is which is going on, if only you retain your right, [4674] and are not beyond the reach [4675] of the reason and prudence given to you. [4676] Those images which fill you with terror, and which you adore prostrate upon the ground [4677] in all the temples, are bones, stones, brass, silver, gold, clay, wood taken from a tree, or glue mixed with gypsum. Having been heaped together, it may be, from a harlot's gauds or from a woman's [4678] ornaments, from camels' bones or from the tooth of the Indian beast, [4679] from cooking-pots and little jars, from candlesticks and lamps, or from other less cleanly vessels, and having been melted down, they were cast into these shapes and came out into the forms which you see, baked in potters' furnaces, produced by anvils and hammers, scraped with the silversmith's, and filed down with ordinary files, cleft and hewn with saws, with augers, [4680] with axes, dug and hollowed out by the turning of borers, and smoothed with planes. Is not this, then, an error? Is it not, to speak accurately, folly to believe that a god which you yourself made with care, to kneel down trembling in supplication to that which has been formed by you, and while you know, and are assured that it is the product [4681] of the labour of your hands, [4682] -- to cast yourself down upon your face, beg aid suppliantly, and, in adversity and time of distress, ask it to succour [4683] you with gracious and divine favour?

15 Lo, if some one were to place before you copper in the lump

Lo, if some one were to place before you copper in the lump, and not formed [4684] into any works of art, masses of unwrought silver, and gold not fashioned into shape, wood, stones, and bones, with all the other materials of which statues and images of deities usually consist, -- nay, more, if some one were to place before you the faces of battered gods, images melted down [4685] and broken, and were also to bid you slay victims to the bits and fragments, and give sacred and divine honours to masses without form, -- we ask you to say to us, whether you would do this, or refuse to obey. Perhaps you will say, why? Because there is no man so stupidly blind that he will class among the gods silver, copper, gold, gypsum, ivory, potter's clay, and say that these very things have, and possess in themselves, divine power. What reason is there, then, that all these bodies should want the power of deity and the rank of celestials if they remain untouched and unwrought, but should forthwith become gods, and be classed and numbered among the inhabitants of heaven if they receive the forms of men, ears, noses, cheeks, lips, eyes, and eyebrows? Does the fashioning add any newness to these bodies, so that from this addition you are compelled [4686] to believe that something divine and majestic has been united to them? Does it change copper into gold, or compel worthless earthenware to become silver? Does it cause things which but a little before were without feeling, to live and breathe? [4687] If they had any natural properties previously, [4688] all these they retain [4689] when built up in the bodily forms of statues. What stupidity it is -- for I refuse to call it blindness -- to suppose that the natures of things are changed by the kind of form into which they are forced, and that that receives divinity from the appearance given to it, which in its original body has been inert, and unreasoning, and unmoved by feeling! [4690]

16 And so unmindful and forgetful of what the substance and origin of the images are

And so unmindful and forgetful of what the substance and origin of the images are, you, men, rational beings [4691] and endowed with the gift of wisdom and discretion, sink down before pieces of baked earthenware, adore plates of copper, beg from the teeth of elephants good health, magistracies, sovereignties, power, victories, acquisitions, gains, very good harvests, and very rich vintages; and while it is plain and clear that you are speaking to senseless things, you think that you are heard, and bring yourselves into disgrace of your own accord, by vainly and credulously deceiving yourselves. [4692] Oh, would that you might enter into some statue! rather, would that you might separate [4693] and break up into parts [4694] those Olympian and Capitoline Jupiters, and behold all those parts alone and by themselves which make up the whole of their bodies! You would at once see that these gods of yours, to whom the smoothness of their exterior gives a majestic appearance by its alluring [4695] brightness, are only a framework of flexible [4696] plates, particles without shape joined together; that they are kept from falling into ruin and fear of destruction, by dove-tails and clamps and brace-irons; and that lead is run into the midst of all the hollows and where the joints meet, and causes delay [4697] useful in preserving them. You would see, I say, at once that they have faces only without the rest of the head, [4698] imperfect hands without arms, bellies and sides in halves, incomplete feet, [4699] and, which is most ridiculous, that they have been put together without uniformity in the construction of their bodies, being in one part made of wood, but in the other of stone. Now, indeed, if these things could not be seen through the skill with which they were kept out of sight, [4700] even those at least which lie open to all should have taught and instructed you that you are effecting nothing, and giving your services in vain to dead things. For, in this case, [4701] do you not see that these images, which seem to breathe, [4702] whose feet and knees you touch and handle when praying, at times fall into ruins from the constant dropping of rain, at other times lose the firm union of their parts from their decaying and becoming rotten, [4703] -- how they grow black, being fumigated and discoloured by the steam of sacrifices, and by smoke, -- how with continued neglect they lose their position [4704] and appearance, and are eaten away with rust? In this case, I say, do you not see that newts, shrews, mice, and cockroaches, which shun the light, build their nests and live under the hollow parts of these statues? that they gather carefully into these all kinds of filth, and other things suited to their wants, hard and half-gnawed bread, bones dragged thither in view of probable scarcity, [4705] rags, down, and pieces of paper to make their nests soft, and keep their young warm? Do you not see sometimes over the face of an image cobwebs and treacherous nets spun by spiders, that they may be able to entangle in them buzzing and imprudent flies while on the wing? Do you not see, finally, that swallows full of filth, flying within the very domes of the temples, toss themselves about, and bedaub now the very faces, now the mouths of the deities, the beard, eyes, noses, and all the other parts on which their excrements [4706] fall? Blush, then, even though it is late, and accept true methods and views from dumb creatures, and let these teach you that there is nothing divine in images, into which they do not fear or scruple to cast unclean things in

obedience to the laws of their being, and led by their unerring instincts. [4707]

17 But you err, says my opponent, and are mistaken

But you err, says my opponent, and are mistaken, for we do not consider either copper, or gold and silver, or those other materials of which statues are made, to be in themselves gods and sacred deities; but in them we worship and venerate those whom their [4708] dedication as sacred introduces and causes to dwell in statues made by workmen. The reasoning is not vicious nor despicable by which any one -- the dull, and also the most intelligent -- can believe that the gods, forsaking their proper seats -- that is, heaven -- do not shrink back and avoid entering earthly habitations; nay, more, that impelled by the rite of dedication, they are joined to images! Do your gods, then, dwell in gypsum and in figures of earthenware? Nay, rather, are the gods the minds, spirits, and souls of figures of earthenware and of gypsum? and, that the meanest things may be able to become of greater importance, do they suffer themselves to be shut up and concealed and confined in [4709] an obscure abode? Here, then, in the first place, we wish and ask to be told this by you: do they do this against their will -- that is, do they enter the images as dwellings, dragged to them by the rite of dedication -- or are they ready and willing? and do you not summon them by any considerations of necessity? Do they do this unwillingly? [4710] and how can it be possible that they should be compelled to submit to any necessity without their dignity being impaired? With ready assent? [4711] And what do the gods seek for in figures of earthenware that they should prefer these prisons [4712] to their starry seats, -- that, having been all but fastened to them, they should ennoble [4713] earthenware and the other substances of which images are made?

18 What then? Do the gods remain always in such substances

What then? Do the gods remain always in such substances, and do they not go away to any place, even though summoned by the most momentous affairs? or do they have free passage, when they please to go any whither, and to leave their own seats and images? If they are under the necessity of remaining, what can be more wretched than they, what more unfortunate than if hooks and leaden bonds hold them fast in this wise on their pedestals? but if we allow that they prefer these images to heaven and the starry seats, they have lost their divine power. [4714] But if, on the contrary, when they choose, they fly forth, and are perfectly free to leave the statues empty, the images will then at some time cease to be gods, and it will be doubtful when sacrifices should be offered, -- when it is right and fitting to withhold them. Oftentimes we see that by artists these images are at one time made small, and reduced to the size of the hand, at another raised to an immense height, and built up to a wonderful size. In this way, then, it follows that we should understand that the gods contract themselves in [4715] little statuettes, and are compressed till they become like [4716] a strange body; or, again, that they stretch themselves out to a great length, and extend to immensity in images of vast bulk. So, then, if this is the case, in sitting statues also the gods should be said to be seated, and in standing ones to stand, to be running in those stretching forward to run, to be hurling javelins in those represented as casting them, to fit and fashion themselves to their countenances, and to make themselves like [4717] the other characteristics of the body formed by the artist.

19 The gods dwell in images -- each wholly in one

The gods dwell in images -- each wholly in one, or divided into parts, and into members? For neither is it possible that there can be at one time one god in several images, nor, again, divided into parts by his being cut up. [4718] For let us suppose that there are ten thousand images of Vulcan in the whole world: is it possible at all, as I said, that at one time one deity can be in all the ten thousand? I do not think so. Do you ask wherefore? Because things which are naturally single and unique, cannot become many while the integrity of their simplicity [4719] is maintained. And this they are further unable to become if the gods have the forms of men, as your belief declares; for either a hand separated from the head, or a foot divided from the body, cannot manifest the perfection of the whole, or it must be said that parts can be the same as the whole, while the whole cannot exist unless it has been made by gathering together its parts. Moreover, if the same deity shall be said to be in all the statues, all reasonableness and soundness is lost to the truth, if this is assumed that at one time one can remain in them all; or each of the gods must be said to divide himself from himself, so that he is both himself and another, not separated by any distinction, but himself the same as another. But as nature rejects and spurns and scorns this, it must either be said and confessed that there are Vulcans without number, if we decide that he exists and is in all the images; or he will be in none, because he is prevented by nature from being divided among several.

20 And yet, O you -- if it is plain and clear to you that the

And yet, O you -- if it is plain and clear to you that the gods live, and that the inhabitants of heaven dwell in the inner parts of the images, why do you guard, protect, and keep them shut up under the strongest keys, and under fastenings of immense size, under iron bars, bolts, [4720] and other such things, and defend them with a thousand men and a thousand women to keep guard, lest by chance some thief or nocturnal robber should creep in? Why do you feed dogs in the capitols? [4721] Why do you give food and nourishment to geese? Rather, if you are assured that the gods are there, and that they do not depart to any place from their figures and images, leave to them the care of themselves, let their shrines be always unlocked and open; and if anything is secretly carried off by any one with reckless fraud, let them show the might of divinity, and subject the sacrilegious robbers to fitting punishments at the moment [4722] of their theft and wicked deed. For it is unseemly, and subversive of their power and majesty, to entrust the guardianship of the highest deities to the care of dogs, and when you are seeking for some means of frightening thieves so as to keep them away, not to beg it from the gods themselves, but to set and place it in the cackling of geese.

21 They say that Antiochus of Cyzicum took from its shrine a statue of Jupiter made of Jupiter made

They say that Antiochus of Cyzicum took from its shrine a statue of Jupiter made of gold ten [4723] cubits high, and set up in its place one made of copper covered with thin plates of gold. If the gods are present, and dwell in their own images, with what business, with what cares, had Jupiter been entangled that he could not punish the wrong done to himself, and avenge his being substituted in baser metal? When the famous Dionysius -- but it was the younger [4724] -- despoiled Jupiter of his golden vestment, and put instead of it one of wool, and, when mocking him with pleasantries also, he said that that which he was taking away was cold in the frosts of winter, this warm, that that one was cumbrous in summer, that this, again, was airy in hot weather, -- where was the king of the world that he did not show his presence by some terrible deed, and recall the jocose buffoon to soberness by bitter torments? For why should I mention that the dignity of Æsculapius was mocked by him? For when Dionysius was spoiling him of his very ample beard, which was of great weight and philosophic thickness, [4725] he said that it was not right that a son sprung from Apollo, a father smooth and beardless, and very like a mere boy, [4726] should be formed with such a beard that it was left uncertain which of them was father, which son, or rather whether they were of the same [4727] race and family. Now, when all these things were being done, and the robber was speaking with impious mockery, if the deity was concealed in the statue consecrated to his name and majesty, why did he not punish with just and merited vengeance the affront of stripping his face of its beard and disfiguring his countenance, and show by this, both that he was himself present, and that he kept watch over his temples and images without ceasing?

22 But you will perhaps say that the gods do not trouble themselves about these losses

But you will perhaps say that the gods do not trouble themselves about these losses, and do not think that there is sufficient cause for them to come forth and inflict punishment upon the offenders for their impious sacrilege. [4728] Neither, then, if this is the case, do they wish to have these images, which they allow to be plucked up and torn away with impunity; nay, on the contrary, they tell us plainly that they despise these statues, in which they do not care to show that they were contemned, by taking any revenge. Philostephanus relates in his *Cypriaca*, that Pygmalion, king [4729] of Cyprus, loved as a woman an image of Venus, which was held by the Cyprians holy and venerable from ancient times, [4730] his mind, spirit, the light of his reason, and his judgment being darkened; and that he was wont in his madness, just as if he were dealing with his wife, having raised the deity to his couch, to be joined with it in embraces and face to face, and to do other vain things, carried away by a foolishly lustful imagination. [4731] Similarly, Posidippus, [4732] in the book which he mentions to have been written about Gnidus and about its affairs, [4733] relates that a young man, of noble birth, -- but he conceals his name, -- carried away with love of the Venus because of which Gnidus is famous, joined himself also in amorous lewdness to the image of the same deity, stretched on the genial couch, and enjoying [4734] the pleasures which ensue. To ask, again, in like manner: If the powers of the gods above lurk in copper and the other substances of which images have been formed, where in the world was the one Venus and the other to drive far away from them the lewd wantonness of the youths, and punish their impious touch with terrible suffering? [4735] Or, as the goddesses are gentle and of calmer dispositions, what would it have been for them to assuage the furious joys of [4736] the wretched men, and to bring back their insane minds again to their senses?

23 But perhaps, as you say, the goddesses took the greatest pleasure in these lewd and

But perhaps, as you say, the goddesses took the greatest pleasure in these lewd and lustful insults, and did not think that an action requiring vengeance to be taken, which soothed their minds, and which they knew was suggested to human desires by themselves. But if the goddesses, the Venuses, being endowed with rather calm dispositions, considered that favour should be shown to the misfortunes of the blinded youths; when the greedy flames so often consumed the Capitol, and had destroyed the Capitoline Jupiter himself with his wife and his daughter, [4737] where was the Thunderer at that time to avert that calamitous fire, and preserve from destruction his property, and himself, and all his family? Where was the queenly Juno when a violent fire destroyed her famous shrine, and her priestess [4738] Chrysis in Argos? Where the Egyptian Serapis, when by a similar disaster his temple fell, burned to ashes, with all the mysteries, and Isis? Where Liber Eleutherius, when his temple fell at Athens? Where Diana, when hers fell at Ephesus? Where Jupiter of Dodona, when his fell at Dodona? Where, finally, the prophetic Apollo, when by pirates and sea robbers he was both plundered and set on fire, [4739] so that out of so many pounds of gold, which ages without number had heaped up, he did not have one scruple even to show to the swallows which built under his eaves, [4740] as Varro says in his *Saturæ Menippeæ*? [4741] It would be an endless task to write down what shrines have been destroyed throughout the whole world by earth quakes and tempests -- what have been set on fire by enemies, and by kings and tyrants -- what have been stript bare by the overseers and priests themselves, even though they have turned suspicion away from them [4742] -- finally, what have been robbed by thieves and Canacheni, [4743] opening them up, though barred by unknown means; [4744] which, indeed, would remain safe and exposed to no mischances, if the gods were present to defend them, or had any care for their temples, as is said. But now because they are empty, and protected by no indwellers, Fortune has power over them, and they are exposed to all accidents just as much as are all other things which have not life. [4745]

24 Here also the advocates of images are wont to say this also

Here also the advocates of images are wont to say this also, that the ancients knew well that images have no divine nature, and that there is no sense in them, but that they formed them profitably and wisely, for the sake of the unmanageable and ignorant mob, which is the majority in nations and in states, in order that a kind of appearance, as it were, of deities being presented to them, from fear they might shake off their rude natures, and, supposing that they were acting in the presence of the gods, put [4746] away their impious deeds, and, changing their manners, learn to act as men; [4747] and that august forms of gold and silver were sought for them, for no other reason than that some power was believed to reside in their splendour, such as not only to dazzle the eyes, but even to strike terror into the mind itself at the majestic beaming lustre. Now this might perhaps seem to be said with some reason, if, after the temples of the gods were founded, and their images set up, there were no wicked man in the world, no villany at all, if justice, peace, good faith, possessed the hearts of men, and no one on earth were called guilty and guiltless, all being ignorant of wicked deeds. But now when, on the contrary, all things are full of wicked men, the name of innocence has almost perished, and every moment, every second, evil deeds, till now unheard of, spring to light in myriads from the wickedness of wrongdoers, how is it right to say that images have been set up for the purpose of striking terror into the mob, while, besides innumerable forms of crime and wickedness, [4748] we see that even the temples themselves are attacked by tyrants, by kings, by robbers, and by nocturnal thieves, and that these very gods whom antiquity fashioned and consecrated to cause terror, are carried away [4749] into the caves of robbers, in spite even of the terrible splendour of the gold? [4750]

25 For what grandeur -- if you look at the truth without any prejudice -- is

For what grandeur -- if you look at the truth without any prejudice [4751] -- is there in these images [4752] of which they speak, that the men of old should have had reason to hope and think that, by beholding them, the vices of men could be subdued, and their morals and wicked ways brought under restraint? [4753] The reaping-hook, for example, which was assigned to Saturn, [4754] was it to inspire mortals with fear, that they should be willing to live peacefully, and to abandon their malicious inclinations? Janus, with double face, or that spiked key by which he has been distinguished; Jupiter, cloaked and bearded, and holding in his right hand a piece of wood shaped like a thunderbolt; the cestus of Juno, [4755] or the maiden lurking under a soldier's helmet; the mother of the gods, with her timbrel; the Muses, with their pipes and psalteries; Mercury, the winged slayer of Argus; Æsculapius, with his staff; Ceres, with huge breasts, or the drinking cup swinging in Liber's right hand; Mulciber, with his workman's dress; or Fortune, with her horn full of apples, figs, or autumnal fruits; Diana, with half-covered thighs, or Venus naked, exciting to lustful desire; Anubis, with his dog's face; or Priapus, of less importance [4756] than his own genitals: were these expected to make men afraid?

26 O dreadful forms of terror and frightful bugbears on account of which the human race

O dreadful forms of terror and [4757] frightful bugbears [4758] on account of which the human race was to be benumbed for ever, to attempt nothing in its utter amazement, and to restrain itself from every wicked and shameful act -- little sickles, keys, caps, pieces of wood, winged sandals, staves, little timbrels, pipes, psalteries, breasts protruding and of great size, little drinking cups, pincers, and horns filled with fruit, the naked bodies of women, and huge veretra openly exposed! Would it not have been better to dance and to sing, than calling it gravity and pretending to be serious, to relate what is so insipid and so silly, that images [4759] were formed by the ancients to check wrongdoing, and to arouse the fears of the wicked and impious? Were the men of that age and time, in understanding, so void of reason and good sense, that they were kept back from wicked actions, just as if they were little boys, by the preternatural [4760] savageness of masks, by grimaces also, and bugbears? [4761] And how has this been so entirely changed, that though there are so many temples in your states filled with images of all the gods, the multitude of criminals cannot be resisted even with so many laws and so terrible punishments, and their audacity cannot be overcome [4762] by any means, and wicked deeds, repeated again and again, multiply the more it is striven by laws and severe judgments to lessen the number of cruel deeds, and to quell them by the check given by means of punishments? But if images caused any fear to men, the passing of laws would cease, nor would so many kinds of tortures be established against the daring of the guilty: now, however, because it has been proved and established that the supposed [4763] terror which is said to flow out from the images is in reality vain, recourse has been had to the ordinances of laws, by which there might be a dread of punishment which should be most certain fixed in men's minds also, and a condemnation settled; to which these very images also owe it that they yet stand safe, and secured by some respect being yielded to them.

1 Since it has been sufficiently shown, as far as there has been opportunity

Since it has been sufficiently shown, as far as there has been opportunity, how vain it is to form images, the course of our argument requires that we should next speak as briefly as possible, and without any periphrasis, about sacrifices, about the slaughter and immolation of victims, about pure wine, about incense, and about all the other things which are provided on such occasions. [4764] For with respect to this you have been in the habit of exciting against us the most violent ill-will, of calling us atheists, and inflicting upon us the punishment of death, even by savagely tearing us to pieces with wild beasts, on the ground that we pay very little respect [4765] to the gods; which, indeed, we admit that we do, not from contempt or scorn of the divine, [4766] but because we think that such powers require nothing of the kind, and are not possessed by desires for such things. [4767]What, then, [4768] some one will say, do you think that no sacrifices at all should be offered? To answer you not with our own, but with your Varro's opinion -- none. Why so? Because, he says, the true gods neither wish nor demand these; while those [4769] which are made of copper, earthenware, gypsum, or marble, care much less for these things, for they have no feeling; and you are not blamed [4770] if you do not offer them, nor do you win favour if you do. No sounder opinion can be found, none truer, and one which any one may adopt, although he may be stupid and very hard to convince. For who is so obtuse as either to slay victims in sacrifice to those who have no sense, or to think that they should be given to those who are removed far from them in their nature and blessed state?

2 Who are the TRUE gods? you say.

Who are the true gods? you say. To answer you in common and simple language, we do not know; [4771] for how can we know who those are whom we have never seen? We have been accustomed to hear from you that an infinite number [4772] are gods, and are reckoned among [4773] the deities; but if these exist [4774] anywhere, and are true gods, as Terentius [4775] believes, it follows as a consequence, that they correspond to their name; that is, that they are such as we all see that they should be, and that they are worthy to be called by this name; nay, more, -- to make an end without many words, -- that they are such as is the Lord of the universe, and the King omnipotent Himself, whom we have knowledge and understanding enough to speak of as the true God when we are led to mention His name. For one god differs from another in nothing as respects his divinity; [4776] nor can that which is one in kind be less or more in its parts while its own qualities remain unchanged. [4777] Now, as this is certain, it follows that they should never have been begotten, but should be immortal, seeking nothing from without, and not drawing any earthly pleasures from the resources of matter.

3 So, then, if these things are so, we desire to learn this

So, then, if these things are so, we desire to learn this, first, from you -- what is the cause, what the reason, that you offer them sacrifices; and then, what gain comes to the gods themselves from this, and remains to their advantage. For whatever is done should have a cause, and should not be disjoined from reason, so as to be lost [4778] among useless works, and tossed about among vain and idle uncertainties. [4779] Do the gods of heaven [4780] live on these sacrifices, and must materials be supplied to maintain the union of their parts? And what man is there so ignorant of what a god is, certainly, as to think that they are maintained by any kind of nourishment, and that it is the food given to them [4781] which causes them to live and endure throughout their endless immortality? For whatever is upheld by causes and things external to itself, must be mortal and on the way to destruction, when anything on which it lives begins to be wanting. Again, it is impossible to suppose that any one believes this, because we see that of these things which are brought to their altars, nothing is added to and reaches the substance of the deities; for either incense is given, and is lost melting on the coals, [4782] or the life only of the victim is offered to the gods, [4783] and its blood is licked up by dogs; or if any flesh is placed upon the altars, it is set on fire in like manner, and is destroyed, and falls into ashes, -- unless perchance the god seizes upon the souls of the victims, or snuffs up eagerly the fumes and smoke which rise from the blazing altars, and feeds upon the odours which the burning flesh gives forth, still wet with blood, and damp with its former juices. [4784] But if a god, as is said, has no body, and cannot be touched at all, how is it possible that that which has no body should be nourished by things pertaining to the body, -- that what is mortal should support what is immortal, and assist and give vitality to that which it cannot touch? This reason for sacrifices is not valid, therefore, as it seems; nor can it be said by any one that sacrifices are kept up for this reason, that the deities are nourished by them, and supported by feeding on them.

4 If perchance it is not this, are victims not slain in sacrifice to the gods

If perchance it is not this, [4785] are victims not slain in sacrifice to the gods, and cast upon their flaming altars to give them [4786] some pleasure and delight? And can any man persuade himself that the gods become mild as they are exhilarated by pleasures, that they long for sensual enjoyment, and, like some base creatures, are affected by agreeable sensations, and charmed and tickled for the moment by [4787] a pleasantness which soon passes away? For that which is overcome by pleasure must be harassed by its opposite, sorrow; nor can that be free from the anxiety of grief, which trembles with joy, and is elated capriciously with gladness. [4788] But the gods should be free from both passions, if we would have them to be everlasting, and freed from the weakness of mortals. Moreover, every pleasure is, as it were, a kind of flattery of the body, and is addressed to the five well-known senses; but if the gods above feel it, [4789] they must partake also of those bodies through which there is a way to the senses, and a door by which to receive pleasures. Lastly, what pleasure is it to take delight in the slaughter of harmless creatures, to have the ears ringing often with their piteous bellowings, to see rivers of blood, the life fleeing away with the blood, and the secret parts having been laid open, not only the intestines to protrude with the excrements, but also the heart still bounding with the life left in it, and the trembling, palpitating veins in the viscera? We half-savage men, nay rather, -- to say with more candour what it is truer and more candid to say, -- we savages, whom unhappy necessity and bad habit have trained to take these as food, are sometimes moved with pity for them; we ourselves accuse and condemn ourselves when the thing is seen and looked into thoroughly, because, neglecting the law which is binding on men, we have broken through the bonds which naturally united us at the beginning. [4790] Will [4791] any one believe that the gods, who are kind, beneficent, gentle, are delighted and filled with joy by the slaughter of cattle, if ever they fall and expire pitiably before their altars? [4792] And there is no cause, then, for pleasure in sacrifices, as we see, nor is there a reason why they should be offered, since there is no pleasure afforded by them; and if perchance there is some, [4793] it has been shown that it cannot in any way belong to the gods.

5 We have next to examine the argument which we hear continually coming from the lips

We have next to examine the argument which we hear continually coming from the lips of the common people, and find embedded in popular conviction, that sacrifices are offered to the gods of heaven for this purpose, that they may lay aside their anger and passions, and may be restored to a calm and placid tranquillity, the indignation of their fiery spirits being assuaged. And if we remember the definition which we should always bear steadily in mind, that all agitating feelings are unknown to the gods, the consequence is, a belief [4794] that the gods are never angry; nay, rather, that no passion is further from them than that which, approaching most nearly to the spirit of wild beasts and savage creatures, agitates those who suffer it with tempestuous feelings, and brings them into danger of destruction. For whatever is harassed by any kind of disturbance, [4795] is, it is clear, capable of suffering, and frail; that which has been subjected to suffering and frailty must be mortal; but anger harasses and destroys [4796] those who are subject to it: therefore that should be called mortal which has been made subject to the emotions of anger. But yet we know that the gods should be never-dying, and should possess an immortal nature; and if this is clear and certain, anger has been separated far from them and from their state. On no ground, then, is it fitting to wish to appease that in the gods above which you see cannot suit their blessed state.

6 But let us allow, as you wish, that the gods are accustomed to such disturbance

But let us allow, as you wish, that the gods are accustomed to such disturbance, and that sacrifices are offered and sacred solemnities performed to calm it, when, then, is it fitting that these offices should be made use of, or at what time should they be given? -- before they are angry and roused, or when they have been moved and displeased even? [4797] If we must meet them with sacrifices before their anger is roused, lest they become enraged, you are bringing forward wild beasts to us, not gods, to which it is customary to toss food, upon which they may rage madly, and turn their desire to do harm, lest, having been roused, they should rage and burst the barriers of their dens. But if these sacrifices are offered to satisfy [4798] the gods when already fired and burning with rage, I do not inquire, I do not consider, whether that happy [4799] and sublime greatness of spirit which belongs to the deities is disturbed by the offences of little men, and wounded if a creature, blind and ever treading among clouds of ignorance, has committed any blunder, -- said anything by which their dignity is impaired.

7 But neither do I demand that this should be said

But neither do I demand that this should be said, or that I should be told what causes the gods have for their anger against men, that having taken offence they must be soothed. I do ask, however, Did they ever ordain any laws for mortals? and was it ever settled by them what it was fitting for them to do, or what it was not? what they should pursue, what avoid; or even by what means they wished themselves to be worshipped, so that they might pursue with the vengeance of their wrath what was done otherwise than they had commanded, and might be disposed, if treated contemptuously, to avenge themselves on the presumptuous and transgressors? As I think, nothing was ever either settled or ordained by them, since neither have they been seen, nor has it been possible for it to be discerned very clearly whether there are any. [4800] What justice is there, then, in the gods of heaven being angry for any reason with those to whom they have neither deigned at any time to show that they existed, nor given nor imposed any laws which they wished to be honoured by them and perfectly observed? [4801]

8 But this, as I said, I do not mention

But this, as I said, I do not mention, but allow it to pass away in silence. This one thing I ask, above all, What reason is there if I kill a pig, that a god changes his state of mind, and lays aside his angry feelings and frenzy; that if I consume a pullet, a calf under his eyes and on his altars, he forgets the wrong which I did to him, and abandons completely all sense of displeasure? What passes from this act [4802] to modify his resentment? Or of what service [4803] is a goose, a goat, or a peacock, that from its blood relief is brought to the angry god? Do the gods, then, make insulting them a matter of payment? and as little boys, to induce them to give up their fits of passion [4804] and desist from their wailings, get little sparrows, dolls, ponies, puppets, [4805] with which they may be able to divert themselves, do the immortal gods in such wise receive these gifts from you, that for them they may lay aside their resentment, and be reconciled to those who offended them? And yet I thought that the gods -- if only it is right to believe that they are really moved by anger -- lay aside their anger and resentment, and forgive the sins of the guilty, without any price or reward. For this belongs specially to deities, to be generous in forgiving, and to seek no return for their gifts. [4806] But if this cannot be, it would be much wiser that they should continue obstinately offended, than that they should be softened by being corrupted with bribes. For the multitude increases of those who sin, when there is hope given of paying for their sin; and there is little hesitation to do wrong, when the favour of those who pardon offences may be bought.

9 So, if some ox, or any animal you please

So, if some ox, or any animal you please, which is slain to mitigate and appease the fury of the deities, were to take a man's voice and speak these [4807] words: "Is this, then, O Jupiter, or whatever god thou art, humane or right, or should it be considered at all just, that when another has sinned I should be killed, and that you should allow satisfaction to be made to you with my blood, although I never did you wrong, never wittingly or unwittingly did violence to your divinity and majesty, being, as thou knowest, a dumb creature, not departing from [4808] the simplicity of my nature, nor inclined to be fickle in my [4809] manners? Did I ever celebrate your games with too little reverence and care? did I drag forward a dancer so that thy deity was offended? did I swear falsely by thee? did I sacrilegiously steal your property and plunder your temples? did I uproot the most sacred groves, or pollute and profane some hallowed places by founding private houses? What, then, is the reason that the crime of another is atoned for with my blood, and that my life and innocence are made to pay for wickedness with which I have nothing to do? Is it because I am a base creature, and am not possessed of reason and wisdom, as these declare who call themselves men, and by their ferocity make themselves beasts? [4810] Did not the same nature both beget and form me from the same beginnings? Is it not one breath of life which sways both them and me? Do I not respire and see, and am I not affected by the other senses just as they are? They have livers, lungs, hearts, intestines, bellies; and do not I have as many members? They love their young, and come together to beget children; and do not I both take care to procure offspring, and delight in it when it has been begotten? But they have reason, and utter articulate sounds; and how do they know whether I do what I do for my own reasons, and whether that sound which I give forth is my kind of words, and is understood by us alone? Ask piety whether it is more just that I should be slain, that I should be killed, or that man should be pardoned and be safe from punishment for what he has done? Who formed iron into a sword? was it not man? Who brought disaster upon races; who imposed slavery upon nations? was it not man? Who mixed deadly draughts, and gave them to his parents, brothers, wives, friends? was it not man? Who found out or devised so many forms of wickedness, that they can hardly be related in ten thousand chronicles of years, or even of days? was it not man? Is not this, then, cruel, monstrous, and savage? Does it not seem to you, O Jupiter, unjust and barbarous that I should be killed, that I should be slain, that you may be soothed, and the guilty find impunity? " It has been established that sacrifices are offered in vain for this purpose then, viz., that the angry deities may be soothed; since reason has taught us that the gods are not angry at any time, and that they do not wish one thing to be destroyed, to be slain for another, or offences against themselves to be annulled by the blood of an innocent creature. [4811]

10 But perhaps some one will say, We give to the gods sacrifices and other gifts

But perhaps some one will say, We give to the gods sacrifices and other gifts, that, being made willing in a measure to grant our prayers, they may give us prosperity and avert from us evil, cause us to live always happily, drive away grief truly, and any evils which threaten us from accidental circumstances. This point demands great care; nor is it usual either to hear or to believe what is so easily said. For the whole company of the learned will straightway swoop upon us, who, asserting and proving that whatever happens, happens according to the decrees of fate, snatch out of our [4812] hands that opinion, and assert that we are putting our trust in vain beliefs. Whatever, they will say, has been done in the world, is being done, and shall be done, has been settled and fixed in time past, and has causes which cannot be moved, by means of which events have been linked together, and form an unassailable chain of unalterable necessity between the past and the future. If it has been determined and fixed what evil or good should befall each person, it is already certain; but if this is certain and fixed, there is no room for all the help given by the gods, their hatred, and favours. For they are just as unable to do for you that which cannot be done, as to prevent that from being done which must happen, except that they will be able, if they choose, to depreciate somewhat powerfully that belief which you entertain, so that they [4813] say that even the gods themselves are worshipped by you in vain, and that the supplications with which you address them are superfluous. For as they are unable to turn aside the course of events, and change what has been appointed by fate, what reason, what cause, is there to wish to weary and deafen the ears of those in whose help you cannot trust at your utmost need?

11 Lastly, if the gods drive away sorrow and grief

Lastly, if the gods drive away sorrow and grief, if they bestow joy and pleasure, how [4814] are there in the world so many [4815] and so wretched men, whence come so many unhappy ones, who lead a life of tears in the meanest condition? Why are not those free from calamity who every moment, every instant, load and heap up the altars with sacrifices? Do we not see that some of them, say the learned, are the seats of diseases, the light of their eyes quenched, and their ears stopped, that they cannot move with their feet, that they live mere trunks without the use of their hands, that they are swallowed up, overwhelmed, and destroyed by conflagrations, shipwrecks, and disasters; [4816] that, having been stripped of immense fortunes, they support themselves by labouring for hire, and beg for alms at last; that they are exiled, proscribed, always in the midst of sorrow, overcome by the loss of children, and harassed by other misfortunes, the kinds and forms of which no enumeration can comprehend? But assuredly this would not occur if the gods, who had been laid under obligation, were able to ward off, to turn aside, those evils from those who merited this favour. But now, because in these mishaps there is no room for the interference of the gods, but all things are brought about [4817] by inevitable necessity, the appointed course of events goes on and accomplishes that which has been once determined.

12 Or the gods of heaven should be said to be ungrateful if

Or the gods of heaven should be said to be ungrateful if, while they have power to prevent it, they suffer an unhappy race to be involved in so many hardships and disasters. But perhaps they may say something of importance in answer to this, and not such as should be received by deceitful, fickle, and scornful ears. This point, however, because it would require too tedious and prolix discussion, [4818] we hurry past unexplained and untouched, content to have stated this alone, that you give to your gods dishonourable reputations if you assert that on no other condition do they bestow blessings and turn away what is injurious, except they have been first bought over with the blood of she-goats and sheep, and with the other things which are put upon their altars. For it is not fitting, in the first place, that the power of the deities and the surpassing eminence of the celestials should be believed to keep their favours on sale, first to receive a price, and then to bestow them; and then, which is much more unseemly, that they aid no one unless they receive their demands, and that they suffer the most wretched to undergo whatever perils may befall them, [4819] while they could ward these off, and come to their aid. If of two who are sacrificing, one is a scoundrel, [4820] and rich, the other of small fortune, but worthy of praise for his integrity and goodness, -- if the former should slay a hundred oxen, and as many ewes with their lambkins, the poor man burn a little incense, and a small piece of some odorous substance, -- will it not follow that it should be believed that, if only the deities bestow nothing except when rewards are first offered, they will give their favour [4821] to the rich man, turn their eyes away from the poor, whose gifts were restricted not by his spirit, but by the scantiness of his means? [4822] For where the giver is venal and mercenary, there it must needs be that favour is granted according to the greatness of the gift by which it is purchased, and that a favourable decision is given to him from whom [4823] far the greater reward and bribe, though this be shameful, flows to him who gives it. [4824] What if two nations, on the other hand, arrayed against each other in war, enriched the altars of the gods with equal sacrifices, and were to demand that their power and help should be given to them, the one against the other: must it not, again, be believed that, if they are persuaded to be of service by rewards, they are at a loss between both sides, are struck motionless, and do not perceive what to do, since they understand that their favour has been pledged by the acceptance of the sacrifices? For either they will give assistance to this side and to that, which is impossible, for in that case they will fight themselves against themselves, strive against their own favour and wishes; or they will do nothing to aid either nation [4825] after the price of their aid has been paid and received, which is very wicked. All this infamy, therefore, should be removed far from the gods; nor should it be said at all that they are won over by rewards and payments to confer blessings, and remove what is disagreeable, if only they are true gods, and worthy to be ranked under this name. For either whatever happens, happens inevitably, and there is no place in the gods for ambition and favour; or if fate is excluded and got rid of, it does not belong to the celestial dignity to sell the boon of its services, [4826] and the conferring of its bounties.

13 We have shown sufficiently, as I suppose, that victims

We have shown sufficiently, as I suppose, that victims, and the things which go along with them, are offered in vain to the immortal gods, because they are neither nourished by them, nor feel any pleasure, nor lay aside their anger and resentment, so as either to give good fortune, or to drive away and avert the opposite. We have now to examine that point also which has been usually asserted by some, and applied to forms of ceremony. For they say that these sacred rites were instituted to do honour to the gods of heaven, and that these things which they do, they do to show them honour, and to magnify the powers of the deities by them. What if they were to say, in like manner, that they keep awake and sleep, walk about, stand still, write something, and read, to give honour to the gods, and make them more glorious in majesty? For what substance is there added to them from the blood of cattle, and from the other things which are prepared in sacrificing? what power is given and added to them? For all honour, which is said to be offered by any one, and to be yielded to reverence for a greater being, is of a kind having reference to the other; and consists of two parts, of the concession of the giver, and the increase of honour of the receiver. As, if any one, on seeing a man famed for his very great power [4827] and authority, were to make way for him, to stand up, to uncover his head, and leap down from his carriage, then, bending forward to salute him with slavish servility and [4828] trembling agitation, I see what is aimed at in showing such respect: by the bowing down of the one, very great honour is given to the other, and he is made to appear great whom the respect of an inferior exalts and places above his own rank. [4829]

14 But all this conceding and ascribing of honour about which we are speaking are met

But all this conceding and ascribing of honour about which we are speaking are met with among men alone, whom their natural weakness and love of standing above their fellows [4830] teach to delight in arrogance, and in being preferred above others. But, I ask, where is there room for honour among the gods, or what greater exaltation is found to be given [4831] to them by piling up [4832] sacrifices? Do they become more venerable, more powerful, when cattle are sacrificed to them? is there anything added to them from this? or do they begin to be more truly gods, their divinity being increased? And yet I consider it almost an insult, nay, an insult altogether, when it is said that a god is honoured by a man, and exalted by the offering of some gift. For if honour increases and augments the grandeur of him to whom it is given, it follows that a deity becomes greater by means of the man from whom he has received the gift, and the honour conferred on him; and thus the matter is brought to this issue, that the god who is exalted by human honours is the inferior, while, on the other hand, the man who increases the power of a deity is his superior. [4833]

15 What then! some one will say, do you think that no honour should be given

What then! some one will say, do you think that no honour should be given to the gods at all? If you propose to us gods such as they should be if they do exist, and such as [4834] we feel that we all mean when we mention [4835] that name, how can we but give them even the greatest honour, since we have been taught by the commands which have especial power over us, [4836] to pay honour to all men even, of whatever rank, of whatever condition they may be? What, pray, you ask, is this very great honour? One much more in accordance with duty than is paid by you, and directed to [4837] a more powerful race, we reply. Tell, us, you say, in the first place, what is an opinion worthy of the gods, right and honourable, and not blameworthy from its being made unseemly by something infamous? We reply, one such that you believe that they neither have any likeness to man, nor look for anything which is outside of them and comes from without; then -- and this has been said pretty frequently -- that they do not burn with the fires of anger, that they do not give themselves up passionately to sensual pleasure, that they are not bribed to be of service, that they are not tempted to injure our enemies, that they do not sell their kindness and favour, that they do not rejoice in having honour heaped on them, that they are not indignant and vexed if it is not given; but -- and this belongs to the divine -- that by their own power they know themselves, and that they do not rate themselves by the obsequiousness of others. And yet, that we may see the nature of what is said, what kind of honour is this, to bind a wether, a ram, a bull before the face of a god, and slay them in his sight? What kind of honour is it to invite a god to a banquet of blood, which you see him take and share in with dogs? What kind of honour is it, having set on fire piles of wood, to hide the heavens with smoke, and darken with gloomy blackness the images of the gods? But if it seems good to you that these actions should be considered in themselves, [4838] not judged of according to your prejudices, you will find that those altars of which you speak, and even those beautiful ones which you dedicate to the superior gods, [4839] are places for burning the unhappy race of animals, funeral pyres, and mounds built for a most unseemly office, and formed to be filled with corruption.

16 What say you, O you -- ! is that foul smell

What say you, O you -- ! is that foul smell, then, which is given forth and emitted by burning hides, by bones, by bristles, by the fleeces of lambs, and the feathers of fowls, -- is that a favour and an honour to the deity? and are the deities honoured by this, to whose temples, when you arrange to go, you come [4840] cleansed from all pollution, washed, and perfectly [4841] pure? And what can be more polluted than these, more unhappy, [4842] more debased, than if their senses are naturally such that they are fond of what is so cruel, and take delight in foul smells which, when inhaled with the breath, even those who sacrifice cannot bear, and certainly not a delicate [4843] nose? But if you think that the gods of heaven are honoured by the blood of living creatures being offered to them, why do you not [4844] sacrifice to them both mules, and elephants, and asses? why not dogs also, bears, and foxes, camels, and hyænas, and lions? And as birds also are counted victims by you, why do you not sacrifice vultures, eagles, storks, falcons, hawks, ravens, sparrow-hawks, owls, and, along with them, salamanders, water-snakes, vipers, tarantulæ? For indeed there is both blood in these, and they are in like manner moved by the breath of life. What is there more artistic in the former kind of sacrifices, or less ingenious in the latter, that these do not add to and increase the grandeur of the gods? Because, says my opponent, it is right to honour the gods of heaven with those things by which we are ourselves nourished and sustained, and live; which also they have, in their divine benevolence, deigned to give to us for food. But the same gods have given to you both cumin, cress, turnips, onions, parsley, esculent thistles, radishes, gourds, rue, mint, basil, flea-bane, and chives, and commanded them to be used by you as part of your food; why, then, do you not put these too upon the altars, and scatter wild-marjoram, with which oxen are fed, over them all, and mix amongst them onions with their pungent flavour?

17 Lo, if dogs -- for a case must be imagined

Lo, if dogs -- for a case must be imagined, in order that things may be seen more clearly -- if dogs, I say, and asses, and along with them water-wagtails, if the twittering swallows, and pigs also, having acquired some of the feelings of men, were to think and suppose that you were gods, and to propose to offer sacrifices in your honour, not of other things and substances, but of those with which they are wont to be nourished and supported, according to their natural inclination, -- we ask you to say whether you would consider this an honour, or rather a most outrageous affront, when the swallows slew and consecrated flies to you, the water-wagtails ants; when the asses put hay upon your altars, and poured out libations of chaff; when the dogs placed bones, and burned human excrements [4845] at your shrines; when, lastly, the pigs poured out before you a horrid mess, taken from their frightful hog-pools and filthy maws? Would you not in this case, then, be inflamed with rage that your greatness was treated with contumely, and account it an atrocious wrong that you were greeted with filth? But, you reply, you honour the gods with the carcasses of bulls, and by slaying [4846] other living creatures. And in what respect does this differ from that, since these sacrifices, also, if they are not yet, will nevertheless soon be, dung, and will become rotten after a very short time has passed? Finally, cease to place fire upon [4847] your altars, then indeed you will [4848] see that consecrated flesh of bulls, with which you magnify the honour of the gods, swelling and heaving with worms, tainting and corrupting the atmosphere, and infecting the neighbouring districts with unwholesome smells. Now, if the gods were to enjoin you to turn these things [4849] to your own account, to make your meals from them [4850] in the usual way; you would flee to a distance, and, execrating the smell, would beg pardon from the gods, and bind yourselves by oath never again to offer such sacrifices to them. Is not this conduct of yours mockery, then? is it not to confess, to make known that you do not know what a deity is, nor to what power the meaning and title of this name should be given and applied? Do you give new dignity to the gods by new kinds of food? do you honour them with savours and juices, and because those things which nourish you are pleasing and grateful to you? do you believe that the gods also flock up to enjoy their pleasant taste, and, just as barking dogs, lay aside their fierceness for mouthfuls, and pretty often fawn upon those who hold these out?

18 And as we are now speaking of the animals sacrificed

And as we are now speaking of the animals sacrificed, what cause, what reason is there, that while the immortal gods -- for, so far as we are concerned, they may all be gods who are believed to be so -- are of one mind, or should be of one nature, kind, and character, all are not appeased with all the victims, but certain deities with certain animals, according to the sacrificial laws? For what cause is there, to repeat the same question, that that deity should be honoured with bulls, another with kids or sheep, this one with sucking pigs, the other with unshorn lambs, this one with virgin heifers, that one with horned goats, this with barren cows, but that with teeming [4851] swine, this with white, that with dusky [4852] victims, one with female, the other, on the contrary, with male animals? For if victims are slain in sacrifice to the gods, to do them honour and show reverence for them, what does it matter, or what difference is there with the life of what animal this debt is paid, their anger and resentment put away? Or is the blood of one victim less grateful and pleasing to one god, while the other's fills him with pleasure and joy? or, as is usually done, does that deity abstain from the flesh of goats because of some reverential and religious scruple, another turn with disgust from pork, while to this mutton stinks? and does this one avoid tough ox-beef that he may not overtax his weak stomach, and choose tender [4853] sucklings that he may digest them more speedily? [4854]

19 But you err, says my opponent, and fall into mistakes

But you err, says my opponent, and fall into mistakes; for in sacrificing female victims to the female deities, males to the male deities, there is a hidden and very [4855] secret reason, and one beyond the reach of the mass. I do not inquire, I do not demand, what the sacrificial laws teach or contain; but if reason has demonstrated, [4856] and truth declared, that among the gods there is no difference of species, and that they are not distinguished by any sexes, must not all these reasonings be set at nought, and be proved, be found to have been believed under the most foolish hallucinations? I will not bring forward the opinions of wise men, who cannot restrain their laughter when they hear distinctions of sex attributed to the immortal gods: I ask of each man whether he himself believes in his own mind, and persuades himself that the race of the gods is so distinguished that they are male and female, and have been formed with members arranged suitably for the begetting of young? But if the laws of the sacrifices enjoin that like sexes should be sacrificed to like, that is, female victims to the female gods, male victims, on the contrary, to the male gods, what relation is there in the colours, so that it is right and fitting that to these white, to those dark, even the blackest victims are slain? Because, says my opponent, to the gods above, and those who have power to give favourable omens, [4857] the cheerful colour is acceptable and propitious from the pleasant appearance of pure white; while, on the contrary, to the sinister deities, and those who inhabit the infernal seats, a dusky colour is more pleasing, and one tinged with gloomy hues. But if, again, the reasoning holds good, that the infernal regions are an utterly vain and empty name, [4858] and that underneath the earth there are no Plutonian realms and abodes, this, too, must nullify your ideas about black cattle and gods under the ground. Because, if there are no infernal regions, of necessity there are no dii Manium also. For how is it possible that, while there are no regions, there should be said to be any who inhabit them?

20 But let us agree, as you wish, that there are both infernal regions and Manes

But let us agree, as you wish, that there are both infernal regions and Manes, and that some gods or other dwell in these by no means favourable to men, and presiding over misfortunes; and what cause, what reason is there, that black victims, even [4859] of the darkest hue, should be brought to their altars? Because dark things suit dark, and gloomy things are pleasing to similar beings. What then? Do you not see -- that we, too, may joke with you stupidly, and just as you do yourselves [4860] -- that the flesh of the victims is not black, [4861] nor their bones, teeth, fat, the bowels, with [4862] the brains, and the soft marrow in the bones? But the fleeces are jet-black, and the bristles of the creatures are jet-black. Do you, then, sacrifice to the gods only wool and little bristles torn from the victims? Do you leave the wretched creatures, despoiled it may be, and shorn, to draw the breath of heaven, and rest in perfect innocence upon their feeding-grounds? But if you think that those things are pleasing to the infernal gods which are black and of a gloomy colour, why do you not take care that all the other things which it is customary to place upon their sacrifices should be black, and smoked, and horrible in colour? Dye the incense if it is offered, the salted grits, and all the libations without exception. Into the milk, oil, blood, pour soot and ashes, that this may lose its purple hue, that the others may become ghastly. But if you have no scruple in introducing some things which are white and retain their brightness, you yourselves do away with your own religious scruples and reasonings, while you do not maintain any single and universal rule in performing the sacred rites.

21 But this, too, it is fitting that we should here learn from you

But this, too, it is fitting that we should here learn from you: If a goat be slain to Jupiter, which is usually sacrificed to father Liber and Mercury, [4863] or if the barren heifer be sacrificed to Unxia, which you give to Proserpine, by what usage and rule is it determined what crime there is in this, what wickedness or guilt has been contracted, since it makes no difference to the worship offered to the deity what animal it is with whose head the honour is paid which you owe? It is not lawful, says my opponent, that these things should be confounded, and it is no small crime to throw the ceremonies of the rites and the mode of expiation into confusion. Explain the reason, I beg. Because it is right to consecrate victims of a certain kind to certain deities, and that certain forms of supplication should be also adopted. And what, again, is the reason that it is right to consecrate victims of a certain kind to certain deities, and that certain forms of supplication should be also adopted, for this very rightfulness should have its own cause, and spring, be derived from certain reasons? Are you going to speak about antiquity and custom? If so, you relate to me merely the opinions of men, and the inventions of a blind creature: but I, when I request a reason to be brought forward to me, wish to hear either that something has fallen from heaven, or, which the subject rather requires, what relation Jupiter has to a bull's blood that it should be offered in sacrifice to him, not to Mercury or Liber. Or what are the natural properties of a goat, that they again should be suited to these gods, should not be adapted to the sacrifices of Jupiter? Has a partition of the animals been made amongst the gods? Has some contract been made and agreed to, so that [4864] it is fitting that this one should hold himself back from the victim which belongs to that, that the other should cease [4865] to claim as his own the blood which belongs to another? Or, as envious boys, are they unwilling to allow others to have a share in enjoying the cattle presented to them? or, as is reported to be done by races which differ greatly in manners, are the same things which by one party are considered fit for eating, rejected as food by others?

22 If, then, these things are vain, and are not supported by any reason

If, then, these things are vain, and are not supported by any reason, the very offering [4866] of sacrifices also is idle. For how can that which follows have a suitable cause, when that very first statement from which the second flows is found to be utterly idle and vain, and established on no solid basis? To mother Earth, they say, is sacrificed a teeming [4867] and pregnant sow; but to the virgin Minerva is slain a virgin calf, never forced [4868] by the goad to attempt any labour. But yet we think that neither should a virgin have been sacrificed to a virgin, that the virginity might not be violated in the brute, for which the goddess is especially esteemed; nor should gravid and pregnant victims have been sacrificed to the Earth from respect for its fruitfulness, which [4869] we all desire and wish to go on always in irrepressible fertility. [4870] For if because the Tritonian goddess is a virgin it is therefore fitting that virgin victims be sacrificed to her, and if because the Earth is a mother she is in like manner to be entertained with gravid swine, then also Apollo should be honoured by the sacrifice of musicians because he is a musician; Æsculapius, because he is a physician, by the sacrifice of physicians; and because he is an artificer, Vulcan by the sacrifice of artificers; and because Mercury is eloquent, sacrifice should be made to him with the eloquent and most fluent. But if it is madness to say this, or, to speak with moderation, nonsense, that shows much greater madness to slaughter pregnant swine to the Earth because she is even more prolific; pure and virgin heifers to Minerva because she is pure, of unviolated virginity.

23 For as to that which we hear said by you

For as to that which we hear said by you, that some of the gods are good, that others, on the contrary, are bad, and rather inclined to indulge in wanton mischief, [4871] and that the usual rites are paid to the one party that they may show favour, but to the others that they may not do you harm, -- with what reason this is said, we confess that we cannot understand. For to say that the gods are most benevolent, and have gentle dispositions, is not only pious and religious, but also true; but that they are evil and sinister, should by no means be listened to, inasmuch as that divine power has been far removed and separated from the disposition which does harm. [4872] But whatever can occasion calamity, it must first be seen what it is, and then it should be removed very far from the name of deity. Then, supposing that we should agree with you that the gods promote good fortune and calamity, not even in this case is there any reason why you should allure some of them to grant you prosperity, and, on the other hand, coax others with sacrifices and rewards not to do you harm. First, because the good gods cannot act badly, even if they have been worshipped with no honour, -- for whatever is mild and placid by nature, is separated widely from the practice and devising of mischief; while the bad knows not to restrain his ferocity, although he should be enticed to do so with a thousand flocks and a thousand altars. For neither can bitterness change itself into sweetness, dryness into moisture, the heat of fire into cold, or what is contrary to anything take and change into its own nature that which is its opposite. So that, if you should stroke a viper with your hand, or caress a poisonous scorpion, the former will attack you with its fangs, the latter, drawing itself together, will fix its sting in you; and your caressing will be of no avail, since both creatures are excited to do mischief, not by the stings of rage, but by a certain peculiarity of their nature. It is thus of no avail to wish to deserve well of the sinister deities by means of sacrifices, since, whether you do this, or on the contrary do not, they follow their own nature, and by inborn laws and a kind of necessity are led to those things, to do which [4873] they were made. Moreover, in this way [4874] both kinds of gods cease to possess their own powers, and to retain their own characters. For if the good are worshipped that they may be favourable, and supplication is made in the same way to the others, on the contrary, that they may not be injurious, it follows that it should be understood that the propitious deities will show no favour if they receive no gifts, and become bad instead of good; [4875] while, on the contrary, the bad, if they receive offerings, will lay aside their mischievous disposition, and become thereafter good: and thus it is brought to this issue, that neither are these propitious, nor are those sinister: or, which is impossible, both are propitious, and both again sinister.

24 Be it so; let it be conceded that these most unfortunate cattle are not sacrificed

Be it so; let it be conceded that these most unfortunate cattle are not sacrificed in the temples of the gods without some religious obligation, and that what has been done in accordance with usage and custom possesses some rational ground: but if it seems a great and grand thing to slay bulls to the gods, and to burn in sacrifice the flesh of animals whole and entire, what is the meaning of these relics connected with the arts of the Magi which the pontifical mysteries have restored to a place among the secret laws of the sacred rites, and have mixed up with religious affairs? What, I say, is the meaning of these things, *apexaones*, *hirciæ*, *silicernia*, *longavi*, which are names and kinds of sausages, [4876] some stuffed with goats' blood, [4877] others with minced liver? What is the meaning of *tædæ*, *uæniæ*, *offæ*, not those used by the common people, but those named and called *offæ penitæ*? -- of which the first [4878] is fat cut into very small pieces, as dainties [4879] are; that which has been placed second is the extension of the gut by which the excrements are given off after being drained of all their nourishing juices; while the *offa penita* is a beast's tail cut off with a morsel of flesh. What is the meaning of *polimina*, *omenta*, *palasea*, or, as some call it, *plasea*? -- of which that named *omentum* is a certain part enclosed by the reservoirs of the belly are kept within bounds; the *plasea* is an ox's tail [4880] besmeared with flour and blood; the *polimina*, again, are those parts which we with more decency call *proles*, -- by the vulgar, however, they are usually termed *testes*. What is the meaning of *fitilla*, *frumen*, *africia*, *gratilla*, *catumeum*, *cumspolium*, *cubula*? -- of which the first two are names of species of pottage, but differing in kind and quality; while the series of names which follows denotes consecrated cakes, for they are not shaped in one and the same way. For we do not choose to mention the *caro strebula* which is taken from the haunches of bulls, the roasted pieces of meat which are spitted, the intestines first heated, and baked on glowing coals, nor, finally, the pickles [4881] which are made by mixing four kinds of fruit. In like manner, we do not choose to mention the *fendicæ*, which also are the *hiræ*, [4882] which the language of the mob, when it speaks, usually terms *ilia*; [4883] nor, in the same way, the *ærumnæ*, [4884] which are the first part of the gullet, [4885] where ruminating animals are accustomed to send down their food and bring it back again; nor the *magmenta*, [4886] *augmina*, and thousand other kinds of sausages or pottages which you have given unintelligible names to, and have caused to be more revered by common people.

25 For if whatever is done by men, and especially in religion

For if whatever is done by men, and especially in religion, should have its causes, -- and nothing should be done without a reason in all that men do and perform, -- tell us and say what is the cause, what the reason, that these things also are given to the gods and burned upon their sacred altars? For here we delay, constrained most urgently to wait for this cause, we pause, we stand fast, desiring to learn what a god has to do with pottage, with cakes, with different kinds of stuffing prepared in manifold ways, and with different ingredients? Are the deities affected by splendid dinners or luncheons, so that it is fitting to devise for them feasts without number? Are they troubled by the loathings of their stomachs, and is variety of flavours sought for to get rid of their aversion, so that there is set before them meat at one time roasted, at another raw, and at another half cooked and half raw? But if the gods like to receive all these parts which you term *præsicciæ*, [4887] and if these gratify them with any sense of pleasure or delight, what prevents, what hinders you from laying all these upon their altars at once with the whole animals? What cause, what reason is there that the haunch-piece [4888] by itself, the gullet, the tail, and the tail-piece [4889] separately, the entrails only, and the membrane [4890] alone, should be brought to do them honour? Are the gods of heaven moved by various condiments? After stuffing themselves with sumptuous and ample dinners, do they, as is usually done, take these little bits as sweet dainties, not to appease their hunger, but to rouse their wearied palates, [4891] and excite in themselves a perfectly voracious appetite? O wonderful greatness of the gods, comprehended by no men, understood by no creatures! if indeed their favours are bought with the testicles and gullets of beasts, and if they do not lay aside their anger and resentment, unless they see the entrails [4892] prepared and *offæ* bought and burned upon their altars.

26 We have now to say a few words about incense and wine

We have now to say a few words about incense and wine, for these, too, are connected and mixed up with your ceremonies, [4893] and are used largely in your religious acts. And, first, with respect to that very incense which you use, we ask this of you particularly, whence or at what time you have been able to become acquainted with it, and to know it, so that you have just reason to think that it is either worthy to be given to the gods, or most agreeable to their desires. For it is almost a novelty; and there is no endless succession of years since it began to be known in these parts, and won its way into the shrines of the gods. For neither in the heroic ages, as it is believed and declared, was it known what incense was, as is proved by the ancient writers, in whose books is found no mention [4894] of it; nor was Etruria, the parent and mother of superstition, acquainted with its fame and renown, as the rites of the chapels prove; nor was it used by any one in offering sacrifice during the four hundred years in which Alba flourished; nor did even Romulus or Numa, who was skilful in devising new ceremonies, know either of its existence or growth, as the sacred writs [4895] show with which it was customary that the usual sacrifices should be performed. Whence, therefore, did its use begin to be adopted? or what desire of novelty assailed the old and ancient custom, so that that which was not needed for so many ages took the first place in the ceremonies? For if without incense the performance of a religious service is imperfect, and if a quantity of it is necessary to make the celestials gentle and propitious to men, the ancients fell into sin, nay rather, their whole life was full of guilt, for they carelessly neglected to offer that which was most fitted to give pleasure to the gods. But if in ancient times neither men nor gods sought for this incense, it is proved that to-day also that is offered uselessly and in vain which antiquity did not believe necessary, but modern times desired without any reason. [4896]

27 Finally, that we may always abide by the rule and definition by which it has

Finally, that we may always abide by the rule and definition by which it has been shown and determined that whatever is done by man must have its causes, we will hold it fast here also, so as to demand of you what is the cause, what the reason, that incense is put on the altars before the very images of the deities, and that, from its being burned, they are supposed to become friendly and gentle. What do they acquire from this being done, or what reaches their minds, so that we should be right in judging that these things are well expended, and are not consumed uselessly and in vain? For as you should show why you give incense to the gods, so, too, it follows that you should manifest that the gods have some reason for not rejecting it with disdain, nay more, for desiring it so fondly. We honour the gods with this, some one will perhaps say. But we are not inquiring what your feeling is, but the gods'; nor do we ask what is done by you, but how much they value what is done to purchase their favour. But yet, O piety, what or how great is this honour which is caused by the odour of a fire, and produced from the gum of a tree? For, lest you should happen not to know what this incense is, or what is its origin, it is a gum flowing from the bark of trees, just as from the almond-tree, the cherry-tree, solidifying as it exudes in drops. Does this, then, honour and magnify the celestial dignities? or, if their displeasure has been at any time excited, is it melted away before the smoke of incense, and lulled to sleep, their anger being moderated? Why, then, do you not burn indiscriminately the juice of any tree whatever, without making any distinction? For if the deities are honoured by this, and are not displeased that Panchæan gums are burned to them, what does it matter from what the smoke proceeds on your sacred altars, or from what kind of gum the clouds of fumigation arise?

28 Will any one say that incense is given to the celestials

Will any one say that incense is given to the celestials, for this reason, that it has a sweet smell, and imparts a pleasant sensation to the nose, while the rest are disagreeable, and have been set aside because of their offensiveness? Do the gods, then, have nostrils with which to breathe? do they inhale and respire currents of air so that the qualities of different smells can penetrate them? But if we allow that this is the case, we make them subject to the conditions of humanity, and shut them out from the limits of deity; for whatever breathes and draws in draughts of air, to be sent back in the same way, must be mortal, because it is sustained by feeding on the atmosphere. But whatever is sustained by feeding on the atmosphere, if you take away the means by which communication is kept up, [4897] its life must be crushed out, and its vital principle must be destroyed and lost. So then, if the gods also breathe and inhale odours enwrapt in the air that accompanies them, it is not untrue to say that they live upon what is received from others, [4898] and that they might perish if their air-holes were blocked up. And whence, lastly, do you know whether, if they are charmed by the sweetness of smells, the same things are pleasant to them which are pleasant to you, and charm and affect your different natures with a similar feeling? May it not be possible that the things which give pleasure to you, seem, on the contrary, harsh and disagreeable to them? For since the opinions of the gods are not the same, and their substance not one, by what methods can it be brought about that that which is unlike in quality should have the same feeling and perception as to that which touches it. [4899] Do we not every day see that, even among the creatures sprung from the earth, the same things are either bitter or sweet to different species, that to some things are fatal which are not pernicious to others, so that the same things which charm some with their delightful odours, give forth exhalations deadly to the bodies of others? But the cause of this is not in the things which cannot be at one and the same time deadly and wholesome, sweet and bitter; but just as each one has been formed to receive impressions from what is external, [4900] so he is affected: [4901] his condition is not caused by the influences of the things, but springs from the nature of his own senses, and connection with the external. But all this is set far from the gods, and is separated from them by no small interval. For if it is true, as is believed by the wise, that they are incorporeal, and not supported by any excellence of bodily strength, an odour is of no effect upon them, nor can reeking fumes move them by their senses, not even if you were to set on fire a thousand pounds of the finest incense, and the whole sky were clouded with the darkness of the abundant vapours. For that which does not have bodily strength and corporeal substance, cannot be touched by corporeal substance; but an odour is corporeal, as is shown by the nose when touched by one: therefore it cannot, according to reason, be felt by a deity, who has no body, and is without any feeling and thought. [4902]

29 Wine is used along with incense; and of this

Wine is used along with incense; and of this, in like manner, we ask an explanation why it is poured upon it when burning. For if a reason is not [4903] shown for doing this, and its cause is not [4904] set forth, this action of yours must not now be attributed to a ridiculous error, but, to speak more plainly, to madness, foolishness, blindness. For, as has been already said pretty frequently, everything which is done should have its cause manifest, and not involved in any dark obscurity. If, therefore, you have confidence in what is done, disclose, point out why that liquor is offered; that is, why wine is poured on the altars. For do the bodies of the deities feel parching thirst, and is it necessary that their dryness be tempered by some moisture? Are they accustomed, as men are, to combine eating and drinking? In like manner, also, after the solid [4905] food of cakes and pottages, and victims slain in honour of them, do they drench themselves, and make themselves merry with very frequent cups of wine, that their food may be more easily softened, and thoroughly digested? Give, I beg, to the immortal gods to drink; bring forth goblets, bowls, [4906] ladles, and cups; and as they stuff themselves with bulls, and luxurious feasts, and rich food, -- lest some piece of flesh hastily [4907] gulped down should stick in passing through the stomach, run up, hasten, give pure wine to Jupiter, the most excellent, the supreme, lest he be choked. He desires to break wind, and is unable; and unless that hindrance passes away and is dissolved, there is very great danger that his breathing will be stopped and [4908] interrupted, and heaven be left desolate without its rulers.

30 But, says my opponent, you are insulting us without reason

But, says my opponent, you are insulting us without reason, for we do not pour forth wine to the gods of heaven for these reasons, as if we supposed that they either thirsted, or drank, or were made glad by tasting its sweetness. It is given to them to do them honour; that their eminence may become more exalted, more illustrious, we pour libations on their altars, and with the half-extinguished embers we raise sweet smells, [4909] which show our reverence. And what greater insult can be inflicted upon the gods than if you believe that they become propitious on receiving wine, or, if you suppose that great honour is done to them, if you only throw and drop on the live coals a few drops of wine? We are not speaking to men void of reason, or not possessed of common understanding: in you, too, there is wisdom, there is perception, and in your hearts you know, by your own [4910] judgment, that we are speaking truly. But what can we do with those who are utterly unwilling to consider things as they are, to converse themselves with themselves? For you do what you see to be done, not that which you are assured should be done, inasmuch [4911] as with you a custom without reason prevails, more than a perception of the nature of circumstances based on a careful examination of the truth. For what has a god to do with wine? or what or how great is the power in it, that, on its being poured out, his eminence becomes greater, and his dignity is supposed to be honoured? What, I say, has a god to do with wine, which is most closely connected with the pursuits of Venus, which weakens the strength of all virtues, and is hostile to the decency of modesty and chastity, -- which has often excited men's minds, and urged them to madness and frenzy, and compelled the gods to destroy their own authority by raving and foul language? Is not this, then, impious, and perfectly sacrilegious, to give that as an honour which, if you take too eagerly, you know not what you are doing, you are ignorant of what you are saying, and at last are reviled, and become infamous as a drunkard, a luxurious and abandoned fellow?

31 It is worth while to bring forward the words themselves also

It is worth while to bring forward the words themselves also, which, when wine is offered, it is customary to use and make supplication with: "Let the deity be worshipped with this wine which we bring." [4912] The words "which we bring," says Trebatius, are added for this purpose, and put forth for this reason, that all the wine whatever which has been laid up in closets and storerooms, from which was taken that which is poured out, may not begin to be sacred, and be reft from the use of men. This word, then, being added, that alone will be sacred which is brought to the place, and the rest will not be consecrated. [4913] What kind of honour, then, is this, in which there is imposed on the deity a condition, [4914] as it were, not to ask more than has been given? or what is the greed of the god, who, if he were not verbally interdicted, would extend his desires too far, and rob his suppliant of his stores? "Let the deity be worshipped with this wine which we bring:" this is a wrong, not an honour. For what if the deity shall wish for more, and shall not be content with what is brought! Must he not be said to be signally wronged who is compelled to receive honour conditionally? For if all wine in cellars whatever must become consecrated were a limitation not added, it is manifest both that the god is insulted to whom a limit is prescribed against his wishes, and that in sacrificing you yourselves violate the obligations of the sacred rites, who do not give as much wine as you see the god wishes to be given to himself. "Let the deity be worshipped with this wine which we bring:" what is this but saying, "Be worshipped as much as I choose; receive as much dignity as I prescribe, as much honour as I decide and determine by a strict engagement [4915] that you should have?" O sublimity of the gods, excelling in power, which thou shouldst venerate and worship with all ceremonial observances, but on which the worshipper imposes conditions, which he adores with stipulations and contracts, which, through fear of one word, is kept from excessive desire of wine

32 But let there be, as you wish, honour in wine and in incense

But let there be, as you wish, honour in wine and in incense, let the anger and displeasure of the deities be appeased by the immolation and slaughter of victims: are the gods moved by garlands also, wreaths and flowers, by the jingling of brass also, and the shaking of cymbals, by timbrels also, and also by symphonious pipes? [4916] What effect has the clattering of castanets, that when the deities have heard them, they think that honour has been shown to them, and lay aside their fiery spirit of resentment in forgetfulness? Or, as little boys are frightened into giving over their silly wailings by hearing the sound of rattles, are the almighty deities also soothed in the same way by the whistling of pipes? and do they become mild, is their indignation softened, at the musical sound of cymbals? What is the meaning of those calls [4917] which you sing in the morning, joining your voices to the music of the pipe? Do the gods of heaven fall asleep, so that they should return to their posts? What is the meaning of those slumbers [4918] to which you commend them with auspicious salutations that they may be in good health? Are they awakened from sleep; and that they may be able to be overcome by it, must soothing lullabies be heard? The purification, says my opponent, of the mother of the gods is to-day. [4919] Do the gods, then, become dirty; and to get rid of the filth, do those who wash them need water, and even some cinders to rub them with? [4920] The feast of Jupiter is to-morrow. Jupiter, I suppose, dines, and must be satiated with great banquets, and long filled with eager cravings for food by fasting, and hungry after the usual [4921] interval. The vintage festival of Æsculapius is being celebrated. The gods, then, cultivate vineyards, and, having collected gatherers, press the wine for their own uses. [4922] The lectisternium of Ceres [4923] will be on the next Ides, for the gods have couches; and that they may be able to lie on softer cushions, the pillows are shaken up when they have been pressed down. [4924] It is the birthday of Tellus; [4925] for the gods are born, and have festal days on which it has been settled that they began to breathe

33 But the games which you celebrate, called Floralia and Megalensia

But the games which you celebrate, called Floralia and Megalensia, [4926] and all the rest which you wish to be sacred, and to be considered religious duties, what reason have they, what cause, that it was necessary that they should be instituted and founded and designated by the names [4927] of deities? The gods are honoured by these, says my opponent; and if they have any recollection of offences committed [4928] by men, they lay it aside, get rid of it, and show themselves gracious to us again, their friendship being renewed. And what is the cause, again, that they are made quite calm and gentle, if absurd things are done, and idle fellows sport before the eyes of the multitude? Does Jupiter lay aside his resentment if the Amphitryon of Plautus is acted and declaimed? or if Europa, Leda, Ganymede, or Danæ is represented by dancing does he restrain his passionate impulses? Is the Great Mother rendered more calm, more gentle, if she beholds the old story of Attis furbished up by the players? Will Venus forget her displeasure if she sees mimics act the part of Adonis also in a ballet? [4929] Does the anger of Alcides die away if the tragedy of Sophocles named Trachiniæ, or the Hercules of Euripides, is acted? or does Flora think [4930] that honour is shown to her if at her games she sees that shameful actions are done, and the stews abandoned for the theatres? Is not this, then, to lessen the dignity of the gods, to dedicate and consecrate to them the basest things which a rigidly virtuous mind will turn from with disgust, the performers of which your law has decided to be dishonoured and to be considered infamous? The gods, forsooth, delight in mimics; and that surpassing excellence which has not been comprehended by any human faculty, opens [4931] its ears most willingly to hear these plays, with most of which they know they are mixed up to be turned to derision; they are delighted, as it is, with the shaved heads of the fools, by the sound of flaps, and by the noise of applause, by shameful actions and words, by huge red fascina. But further, if they see men weakening themselves to the effeminacy of women, some vociferating uselessly, others running about without cause, [4932] others, while their friendship is unbroken, bruising and maiming each with the bloody cestus, these contending in speaking without drawing breath, [4933] swelling out their cheeks with wind, and shouting out noisily empty vows, do they lift up their hands to heaven in their admiration, start up moved by such wonders, burst into exclamations, again become gracious to men? If these things cause the gods to forget their resentment, if they derive the highest pleasure from comedies, Atellane farces, and pantomimes, why do you delay, why do you hesitate, to say that the gods themselves also play, act lasciviously, dance, compose obscene songs, and undulate with trembling haunches? For what difference is there, or what does it matter, whether they do these things themselves, or are pleased and delighted to see them done by others?

34 Whence, therefore, have these vicious opinions flowed, or from what causes have they sprung? From

Whence, therefore, have these vicious opinions flowed, or from what causes have they sprung? From this it is clear, in great measure, that men are unable to know what God is, what is His essence, nature, substance, quality; whether He has a form, or is limited by no bodily outline, does anything or not, is ever watchful, or is at times sunk in slumbers, runs, sits, walks, or is free from such motions and inactivity. Being, as I have said, unable to know all these things, or to discern them by any power of reason, they fell into these fanciful beliefs, so that they fashioned gods after themselves, and gave to these such a nature as they have themselves, in actions, circumstances, and desires. But if they were to perceive that they are worthless creatures, [4934] and that there is no great difference between themselves and a little ant, they would cease, indeed, to think that they have anything in common with the gods of heaven, and would confine their unassuming insignificance [4935] within its proper limits. But now, because they see that they themselves have faces, eyes, heads, cheeks, ears, noses, and all the other parts of our limbs and muscles, they think that the gods also have been formed in the same way, that the divine nature is embodied in a human frame; [4936] and because they perceive that they themselves rejoice and are glad, and again are made sad by what is too disagreeable, they think that the deities also on joyous occasions are glad, and on less pleasant ones become dejected. They see that they are affected by the games, and think that the minds of the celestials are soothed by enjoying games; and because they have pleasure in refreshing themselves with warm baths, they think that the cleanness produced by [4937] bathing is pleasing to the gods above. We men gather our vintages, and they think and believe that the gods gather and bring in their grapes; we have birthdays, and they affirm that the powers of heaven have birthdays. [4938] But if they could ascribe to the gods ill-health, sickness, and bodily disease, they would not hesitate to say that they were splenetic, blear-eyed, and ruptured, because they are themselves both splenetic, and often blear-eyed, and weighed down by huge herniæ.

35 Come now: as the discussion has been prolonged and led to these points

Come now: as the discussion has been prolonged and led to these points, let us, bringing forward what each has to say, [4939] decide by a brief comparison whether your ideas of the gods above are the better, or our thoughts preferable, and much more honourable and just, and such as to give and assign its own dignity to the divine nature. And, first, you declare that the gods, whom you either think or believe to exist, of whom you have set up images and statues in all the temples, were born and produced from the germs of males and females, under the necessary condition of sexual embraces. But we, on the contrary, if they are indeed true gods, and have the authority, power, dignity of this name, consider that they must either be unbegotten, for it is pious to believe this, or, if they have a beginning in [4940] birth, it belongs to the supreme God to know by what methods He made them, or how many ages there are since He granted to them to enter upon the eternal being of His own divine nature. You consider that the deities have sexes, and that some of them are male, others female; we utterly deny that the powers of heaven have been distinguished by sexes, since this distinction has been given to the creatures of earth which the Author of the universe willed should embrace and generate, to provide, by their carnal desires, one generation of offspring after another. You think that they are like men, and have been fashioned with the countenances of mortals; we think that the images of them are wide of the mark, [4941] as form belongs to a mortal body; and if they have any, we swear with the utmost earnestness and confidence that no man can comprehend it. By you they are said to have each his trade, like artisans; we laugh when we hear you say such things, as we hold and think that professions are not necessary to gods, and it is certain and evident that these have been provided to assist poverty.

36 You say that some of them cause dissensions

[4942] You say that some of them cause dissensions, that there are others who inflict pestilences, others who excite love and madness, others, even, who preside over wars, and are delighted by the shedding of blood; but we, indeed, on the contrary, judge that these things are remote [4943] from the dispositions of the deities; or if there are any who inflict and bring these ills on miserable mortals, we maintain that they are far from the nature of the gods, and should not be spoken of under this name. You judge that the deities are angry and perturbed, and given over and subject to the other mental affections; we think that such emotions are alien from them, for these suit savage beings, and those who die as mortals. [4944] You think that they rejoice, are made glad, and are reconciled to men, their offended feelings being soothed by the blood of beasts and the slaughter of victims; we hold that there is in the celestials no love of blood, and that they are not so stern as to lay aside their resentment only when glutted with the slaughter of animals. You think that, by wine and incense, honour is given to the gods, and their dignity increased; we judge it marvellous and monstrous that any man thinks that the deity either becomes more venerable by reason of smoke, [4945] or thinks himself supplicated by men with sufficient awe and respect when they offer [4946] a few drops of wine. You are persuaded that, by the crash of cymbals and the sound of pipes, by horse-races and theatrical plays, the gods are both delighted and affected, and that their resentful feelings conceived before [4947] are mollified by the satisfaction which these things give; we hold it to be out of place, nay more, we judge it incredible, that those who have surpassed by a thousand degrees every kind of excellence in the height of their perfection, should be pleased and delighted with those things which a wise man laughs at, and which do not seem to have any charm except to little children, coarsely and vulgarly educated.

37 Since these things are so, and since there is so great difference between our opinions

Since these things are so, and since there is so great difference between [4948] our opinions and yours, where are we, on the one hand, impious, or you pious, since the decision as to [4949] piety and impiety must be founded on the opinions of the two parties? For he who makes himself an image which he may worship for a god, or slaughters an innocent beast, and burns it on consecrated altars, must not be held to be devoted to religion. [4950] Opinion constitutes religion, and a right way of thinking about the gods, so that you do not think that they desire anything contrary to what becomes their exalted position, which is manifest. [4951] For since we see all the things which are offered to them consumed here under our eyes, what else can be said to reach them from us than opinions worthy of the gods, and most appropriate to their name? These are the surest gifts, these true sacrifices; for gruel, incense, and flesh feed the devouring flames, and agree very well with the parentalia [4952] of the dead.

38 If the immortal gods cannot be angry, says my opponent

[4953] If the immortal gods cannot be angry, says my opponent, and their nature is not agitated or troubled by any passions, what do the histories, the annals mean, in which we find it written [4954] that the gods, moved by some annoyances, occasioned pestilences, sterility, [4955] failure of crops, and other dangers, to states and nations; and that they again, being appeased and satisfied by means of [4956] sacrifices, laid aside their burning anger, and changed the state of the atmosphere and times into a happier one? What is the meaning of the earth's roarings, the earthquakes, which we have been told occurred because the games had been celebrated carelessly, and their nature and circumstances had not been attended to, and yet, on their being celebrated afresh, and repeated with assiduous care, the terrors of the gods were stilled, and they were recalled to care and friendship for men? How often, after that -- in obedience to the commands of the seers and the responses of the diviners -- sacrifice has been offered, and certain gods have been summoned from nations dwelling beyond the sea, and shrines erected to them, and certain images and statues set on loftier pillars, have fears of impending dangers been diverted, and the most troublesome enemies beaten, and the republic extended both by repeated joyous victories, and by gaining possession of several provinces! Now, certainly this would not happen if the gods despised sacrifices, games, and other acts of worship, and did not consider themselves honoured by expiatory offerings. If, then, all the rage and indignation of the deities are cooled when these things are offered, and if those things become favourable which seemed fraught with terrors, it is clear that all these things are not done without the gods wishing them, and that it is vain, and shows utter ignorance, to blame us for giving them.

39 We have come, then, in speaking, to the very point of the case

[4957] We have come, then, in speaking, to the very point of the case, to that on which the question hinges, to the real and most intimate part of the discussion, which it is fitting that, laying aside superstitious dread, and putting away partiality, we should examine whether these are gods whom you assert to be furious when offended, and to be rendered mild by sacrifices; or whether they are something far different, and should be separated from the notion of this name and power. For we do not deny that all these things are to be found in the writings of the annalists which have been brought forward by you in opposition; for we ourselves also, according to the measure and capacity of our abilities, have read, and know, that it has been recorded that once at the ludi circenses, celebrated in honour of Jupiter the supreme, a master dragged across the middle of the arena, and afterwards, according to custom, punished with the cross, a very worthless slave whom he had beaten with rods. Then, when the games were ended, and the races not long finished, a pestilence began to distress the state; and when each day brought fresh ill worse than what was before, [4958] and the people were perishing in crowds, in a dream Jupiter said to a certain rustic, obscure from the lowliness of his lot, that he should go [4959] to the consuls, point out that the dancer [4960] had displeased him, that it might be better for the state if the respect due to the games were paid to them, and they were again celebrated afresh with assiduous care. And when he had utterly neglected to do this, either because he supposed it was an empty dream, and would find no credence with those to whom he should tell it, or because, remembering his natural insignificance, he avoided and dreaded approaching those who were so powerful, [4961] Jupiter was rendered hostile to the lingerer, and imposed as punishment on him the death of his sons. Afterwards, when he [4962] threatened the man himself with death unless he went to announce his disapproval of the dancer, -- overcome by fear of dying, since he was already himself also burning with the fever of the plague, having been infected, he was carried to the senate-house, as his neighbours wished, and, when his vision had been declared, the contagious fever passed away. The repetition of the games being then decreed, great care was, on the one hand, given to the shows, and its former good health was restored to the people.

40 But neither shall we deny that we know this as well

[4963] But neither shall we deny that we know this as well, that once on a time, when the state and republic were in difficulties, caused either by [4964] a terrible plague continually infecting the people and carrying them off, or by enemies powerful, and at that time almost threatening to rob it of its liberty [4965] because of their success in battle, -- by order and advice of the seers, certain gods [4966] were summoned from among nations dwelling beyond the sea, and honoured with magnificent temples; and that the violence of the plague abated, and very frequent triumphs were gained, the power of the enemy being broken, and the territory of the empire was increased, and provinces without number fell under your sway. But neither does this escape our knowledge, that we have seen it asserted that, when the Capitol was struck by a thunderbolt, and many other things in it, the image of Jupiter also, which stood on a lofty pillar, was hurled from its place. Thereafter a response was given by the soothsayers, that cruel and very sad mischances were portended from fire and slaughter, from the destruction of the laws, and the overthrow of justice, especially, however, from enemies themselves belonging to the nation, and from an impious band of conspirators; but that these things could not be averted, nay, that the accursed designs could not be revealed, unless Jupiter were again set up firmly on a higher pillar, turned towards the east, and facing the rays of the rising sun. Their words were trustworthy, for, when the pillar was raised, and the statue turned towards the sun, the secrets were revealed, and the offences made known were punished.

41 All these things which have been mentioned, have indeed a miraculous appearance

[4967] All these things which have been mentioned, have indeed a miraculous appearance, -- rather, they are believed to have it, -- if they come to men's ears just as they have been brought forward; and we do not deny that there is in them something which, being placed in the fore front, as the saying is, may stun the ears, and deceive by its resemblance to truth. But if you will look closely at what was done, the personages and their pleasures, [4968] you will find that there is nothing worthy of the gods, and, as has already been said often, nothing worthy to be referred to the splendour and majesty of this race. For, first, who is there who will believe that he was a god who was pleased with horses running to no purpose, [4969] and considered it most delightful that he should be summoned [4970] by such sports? Rather, who is there who will agree that that was Jupiter -- whom you call the supreme god, and the creator of all things which are -- who set out from heaven to behold geldings vieing with each other in speed, and running [4971] the seven rounds of the course; and that, although he had himself determined that they should not be equally nimble, he nevertheless rejoiced to see them pass each other, and be passed, some in their haste falling forward upon their heads, and overturned upon their backs along with their chariots, others dragged along and lamed, their legs being broken; and that he considered as the highest pleasures fooleries mixed with trifles and cruelties, which any man, even though fond of pleasure, and not trained to strive after seriousness and dignity, would consider childish, and spurn as ridiculous? Who is there, I say, who will believe -- to repeat this word assiduously -- that he was divine who, being irritated because a slave was led across the circus, about to suffer and be punished as he deserved, was inflamed with anger, and prepared himself to take vengeance? For if the slave was guilty, and deserved to be punished with that chastisement, why should Jupiter have been moved with any indignation when nothing was being done unjustly, nay, when a guilty fellow was being punished, as was right? But if he was free from guilt, and not worthy of punishment at all, Jupiter himself was the cause of the dancer's vitiating the games, [4972] for when he might have helped him, he did him no service -- nay, sought both to allow what he disapproved, and to exact from others the penalty for what he had permitted. And why, then, did he complain and declare that he was wronged in the case of that dancer because he was led through the midst of the circus to suffer the cross, with his back torn by rods and scourges?

42 And what pollution or abomination could have flowed from this

[4973] And what pollution or abomination could have flowed from this, either to make the circus less pure, or to defile Jupiter, seeing that in a few moments, in a few seconds, he beheld so many thousands throughout the world perish by different kinds of death, and with various forms of torture? He was led across, says my opponent, before the games began to be celebrated. If from a sacrilegious spirit and contempt [4974] for religion, we have reason to excuse Jupiter for being indignant that he was contemned, and that more anxious care was not given to his games. But if from mistake or accident that secret fault was not observed and known, would it not have been right and befitting Jupiter to pardon human failings, and grant forgiveness to the blindness of ignorance? But it was necessary that it should be punished. And after this, will any one believe that he was a god who avenged and punished neglect of a childish show by the destruction of a state? that he had any seriousness and dignity, or any steady constancy, who, that he might speedily enjoy pleasure afresh, turned the air men breathed [4975] into a baneful poison, and ordered the destruction of mortals by plague and pestilence? If the magistrate who presided over the games was too careless in learning who on that day had been led across the circus, and blame was therefore contracted, what had the unhappy people done that they should in their own persons suffer the penalty of another's offences, and should be forced to hurry out of life by contagious pestilences? Nay, what had the women, whose weakness did not allow them to take part in public business, the grown-up [4976] maidens, the little boys, finally the young children, yet dependent for food on their nurses, -- what had these done that they should be assailed with equal, with the same severity, and that before they tasted the joy of life [4977] they should feel the bitterness of death?

43 If Jupiter sought to have his games celebrated

[4978] If Jupiter sought to have his games celebrated, and that afresh, [4979] with greater care; if he honestly sought to restore [4980] the people to health, and that the evil which he had caused should go no further and not be increased, would it not have been better that he should come to the consul himself, to some one of the public priests, the pontifex maximus, or to his own flamen Dialis, and in a vision reveal to him the defect in the games occasioned by the dancer, and the cause of the sadness of the times? What reason had there been that he should choose to announce his wishes and procure the satisfaction desired, a man accustomed to live in the country, unknown from the obscurity of his name, not acquainted with city matters, and perhaps not knowing what a dancer is? And if he indeed knew, as he must have known if he was a diviner, [4981] that this fellow would refuse to obey, would it not have been more natural and befitting a god, to change the man's mind, and constrain him to be willing to obey, than to try more cruel methods, and vent his rage indiscriminately, without any reason, as robbers do? For if the old rustic, not being quick in entering upon anything, delayed in doing what was commanded, being kept back by stronger motives, of what had his unhappy children been guilty, that Jupiter's anger and indignation should be turned upon them, and that they should pay for another's offences by being robbed of their lives? And can any man believe that he is a god who is so unjust, so impious, and who does not observe even the laws of men, among whom it would be held a great crime to punish one for another, and to avenge one man's offences upon others? [4982] But, I am told, he caused the man himself to be seized by the cruel pestilence. Would it not then have been better, nay rather, juster, if it seemed that this should be done, that dread of punishment should be first excited by the father, who [4983] had been the cause of such passion by [4984] his disobedient delay, than to do violence to the children, and to consume and destroy innocent persons to make him sorrowful? [4985] What, pray, was the meaning of this fierceness, this cruelty, which was so great that, his offspring being dead, it afterwards terrified the father by his own danger! But if he had chosen to do this long before, that is, in the first place, not only would not the innocent brothers have been cut off, but the indignant purpose of the deity also would have been known. But certainly, it will be said, when he had done his duty by announcing the vision, the disease immediately left him, and the man was forthwith restored to health. And what is there to admire in this if he removed [4986] the evil which he had himself breathed into the man, and vaunted himself with false pretence? But if you weigh the circumstances thoroughly, there was greater cruelty than kindness in his deliverance, for Jupiter did not preserve him to the joys of life who was miserable and wishing to perish after his children, but to learn his solitariness and the agonies of bereavement.

44 In like manner we might go through the other narratives

[4987] In like manner we might go through the other narratives, and show that in these also, and in expositions of these, something far different from what the gods should be is said and declared about them, as in this very story which I shall next relate, one or two only being added to it, that disgust may not be produced by excess. [4988] After certain gods were brought from among nations dwelling beyond the sea, you say, and after temples were built to them, after their altars were heaped with sacrifices, the plague-stricken people grew strong and recovered, and the pestilence fled before the soundness of health which arose. What gods, say, I beseech? Æsculapius, you say, the god of health, from Epidaurus, and now settled in the island in the middle of the Tiber. If we were disposed to be very scrupulous in dealing with your assertions, we might prove by your own authority that he was by no means divine who had been conceived and born from a woman's womb, who had by yearly stages reached that term of life at which, as is related in your books, a thunderbolt drove him at once from life and light. But we leave this question: let the son of Coronis be, as you wish, one of the immortals, and possessed of the everlasting blessedness [4989] of heaven. From Epidaurus, however, what was brought except an enormous serpent? If we trust the annals, and ascribe to them well-ascertained truth, nothing else, as it has been recorded. What shall we say then? That Æsculapius, whom you extol, an excellent, a venerable god, the giver of health, the averter, preventer, destroyer of sickness, is contained within the form and outline of a serpent, crawling along the earth as worms are wont to do, which spring from mud; he rubs the ground with his chin and breast, dragging himself in sinuous coils; and that he may be able to go forward, he draws on the last part of his body by the efforts of the first.

45 And as we read that he used food also

[4990] And as we read that he used food also, by which bodily existence is kept up, he has a large gullet, that he may gulp down the food sought for with gaping mouth; he has a belly to receive it, and [4991] a place where he may digest the flesh which he has eaten and devoured, that blood may be given to his body, and his strength recruited; [4992] he has also a draught, by which the filth is got rid of, freeing his body from a disagreeable burden. Whenever he changes his place, and prepares to pass from one region to another, he does not as a god fly secretly through the stars of heaven, and stand in a moment where something requires his presence, but, just as a dull animal of earth, he seeks a conveyance on which he may be borne; he avoids the waves of the sea; and that he may be safe and sound, he goes on board ship along with men; and that god of the common safety trusts himself to weak planks and to sheets of wood joined together. We do not think that you can prove and show that that serpent was Æsculapius, unless you choose to bring forward this pretext, that you should say that the god changed himself into a snake, in order that he might be able [4993] to deceive men as to himself, who he was, or to see what men were. But if you say this, the inconsistency of your own statements will show how weak and feeble such a defence is. [4994] For if the god shunned being seen by men, he should not have chosen to be seen in the form of a serpent, since in any form whatever he was not to be other than himself, but always himself. But if, on the other hand, he had been intent on allowing himself to be seen -- he should not have refused to allow men's eyes to look on him [4995] -- why did he not show himself such as he knew that he was in his own divine power? [4996] For this was preferable, and much better, and more befitting his august majesty, than to become a beast, and be changed into the likeness of a terrible animal, and afford room for objections, which cannot be decided, [4997] as to whether he was a true god, or something different and far removed from the exalted nature of deity.

46 But, says my opponent, if he was not a god

[4998] But, says my opponent, if he was not a god, why, after he left the ship, and crawled to the island in the Tiber, did he immediately become invisible, and cease to be seen as before? Can we indeed know whether there was anything in the way under cover of which he hid himself, or any opening in the earth? Do you declare, say yourselves, what that was, or to what race of beings it should be referred, if your service of certain personages is in itself certain. [4999] Since the case is thus, and the discussion deals with your deity, and your religion also, it is your part to teach, and yours to show what that was, rather than to wish to hear our opinions and to await our decisions. For we, indeed, what else can we say than that which took place and was seen, which has been handed down in all the narratives, and has been observed by means of the eyes? This, however, undoubtedly we say was a colubra [5000] of very powerful frame and immense length, or, if the name is despicable, we say it was a snake, [5001] we call it a serpent, [5002] or any other name which usage has afforded to us, or the development of language devised. For if it crawled as a serpent, not supporting itself and walking on feet, [5003] but resting upon its belly and breast; if, being made of fleshly substance, it lay stretched out in [5004] slippery length; if it had a head and tail, a back covered with scales, diversified by spots of various colours; if it had a mouth bristling with fangs, and ready to bite, what else can we say than that it was of earthly origin, although of immense and excessive size, although it exceeded in length of body and greatness of might that which was slain by Regulus by the assault of his army? But if we think otherwise, we subvert [5005] and overthrow the truth. It is yours, then, to explain what that was, or what was its origin, its name, and nature. For how could it have been a god, seeing that it had those things which we have mentioned, which gods should not have if they intend to be gods, and to possess this exalted title? After it crawled to the island in the Tiber, forthwith it was nowhere to be seen, by which it is shown that it was a deity. Can we, then, know whether there was there anything in the way under cover of which it hid itself, [5006] or some opening in the earth, or some caverns and vaults, caused by huge masses being heaped up irregularly, into which it hurried, evading the gaze of the beholders? For what if it leaped across the river? what if it swam across it? what if it hid itself in the dense forests? It is weak reasoning from this, [5007] to suppose that that serpent was a god because with all speed it withdrew itself from the eyes of the beholders, since, by the same reasoning, it can be proved, on the other hand, that it was not a god.

47 But if that snake was not a present deity

[5008] But if that snake was not a present deity, says my opponent, why, after its arrival, was the violence of the plague overcome, and health restored to the Roman people? We, too, on the other hand, bring forward the question, If, according to the books of the fates and the responses of the seers, the god Æsculapius was ordered to be invited to the city, that he might cause it to be safe and sound from the contagion of the plague and of pestilential diseases, and came without spurning the proposal contemptuously, as you say, changed into the form of serpents, -- why has the Roman state been so often afflicted with such disasters, so often at one time and another torn, harassed, and diminished by thousands, through the destruction of its citizens times without number? For since the god is said to have been summoned for this purpose, that he might drive away utterly all the causes by which pestilence was excited, it followed that the state should be safe, and should be always maintained free from pestilential blasts, and unharmed. But yet we see, as was said before, that it has over and over again had seasons made mournful by these diseases, and that the manly vigour of its people has been shattered and weakened by no slight losses. Where, then, was Æsculapius? where that deliverer promised by venerable oracles? Why, after temples were built, and shrines reared to him, did he allow a state deserving his favour to be any longer plague-stricken, when he had been summoned for this purpose, that he should cure the diseases which were raging, and not allow anything of the sort which might be dreaded to steal on them afterwards?

48 But some one will perhaps say that the care of such a god has

[5009] But some one will perhaps say that the care of such a god has been denied [5010] to later and following ages, because the ways in which men now live are impious and objectionable; that it brought help to our ancestors, on the contrary, because they were blameless and guiltless. Now this might perhaps have been listened to, and said with some reasonableness, either if in ancient times all were good without exception, or if later times produced [5011] only wicked people, and no others. [5012] But since this is the case that in great peoples, in nations, nay, in all cities even, men have been of mixed [5013] natures, wishes, manners, and the good and bad have been able to exist at the same time in former ages, as well as in modern times, it is rather stupid to say that mortals of a later day have not obtained the aid of the deities on account of their wickedness. For if on account of the wicked of later generations the good men of modern times have not been protected, on account of the ancient evil-doers also the good of former times should in like manner not have gained the favour of the deities. But if on account of the good of ancient times the wicked of ancient times were preserved also, the following age, too, should have been protected, although it was faulty, on account of the good of later times. So, then, either that snake gained the reputation of being a deliverer while he had been of no service at all, through his being brought to the city when the violence of the disease [5014] was already weakened and impaired, or the hymns of the fates must be said to have been far from giving [5015] true indications, since the remedy given by them is found to have been useful, not to all in succession, but to one age only.

49 But the Great Mother, also, says my opponent

[5016] But the Great Mother, also, says my opponent, being summoned from Phrygian Pessinus in precisely the same way by command of the seers, was a cause of safety and great joy to the people. For, on the one hand, a long-powerful enemy was thrust out from the position he had gained in [5017] Italy; and, on the other, its ancient glory was restored to the city by glorious and illustrious victories, and the boundaries of the empire were extended far and wide, and their rights as freemen were torn from races, states, peoples without number, and the yoke of slavery imposed on them, and many other things accomplished at home and abroad established the renown and dignity of the race with irresistible power. If the histories tell the truth, and do not insert what is false in their accounts of events, nothing else truly [5018] is said to have been brought from Phrygia, sent by King Attalus, than a stone, not large, which could be carried in a man's hand without any pressure -- of a dusky and black colour -- not smooth, but having little corners standing out, and which to-day we all see put in that image instead of a face, rough and unhewn, giving to the figure a countenance by no means lifelike. [5019]

50 What shall we say then? Was Hannibal, that famous Carthaginian

[5020] What shall we say then? Was Hannibal, that famous Carthaginian, an enemy strong and powerful, before whom the fortunes of Rome trembled in doubt and uncertainty, and its greatness shook -- was he driven from Italy by a stone? [5021] was he subdued by a stone? was he made fearful, and timid, and unlike himself by a stone? And with regard to Rome's again springing to the height of power and royal supremacy, was nothing done by wisdom, nothing by the strength of men; and, in returning to its former eminence, was no assistance given by so many and so great leaders by their military skill, or by their acquaintance with affairs? Did the stone give strength to some, feebleness to others? Did it hurl these down from success, raise the fortunes of others which seemed hopelessly overthrown? And what man will believe that a stone taken from the earth, having [5022] no feeling, of sooty colour and dark [5023] body, was the mother of the gods? or who, again, would listen to this, -- for this is the only alternative, -- that the power [5024] of any deity dwelt in pieces of flint, within [5025] its mass, [5026] and hidden in its veins? And how was the victory procured if there was no deity in the Pessinuntine stone? We may say, by the zeal and valour of the soldiers, by practice, time, wisdom, reason; we may say, by fate also, and the alternating fickleness of fortune. But if the state of affairs was improved, and success and victory were regained, by the stone's assistance, where was the Phrygian mother at the time when the commonwealth was bowed down by the slaughter of so many and so great armies, and was in danger of utter ruin? Why did she not thrust herself before the threatening, the strong enemy? Why did she not crush and repel assaults [5027] so terrible before these awful blows fell, by which all the blood was shed, and the life even failed, the vitals being almost exhausted? She had not been brought yet, says my opponent, nor asked to show favour. Be it so; [5028] but a kind helper never requires to be asked, always offering assistance of his own accord. She was not able, you say, to expel the enemy and put him to flight, while still separated from Italy [5029] by much sea and land. But to a deity, if really one, [5030] nothing whatever is remote, to whom the earth is a point, and by whose nod all things have been established.

51 But suppose that the deity was present in that very stone

[5031] But suppose that the deity was present in that very stone, as you demand should be believed: and what mortal is there, although he may be credulous and very ready to listen to any fictions you please, who would consider that she either was a goddess at that time, or should be now so spoken of and named, who at one time desires these things, at another requires those, abandons and despises her worshippers, leaves the humbler provinces, and allies herself with more powerful and richer peoples, truly [5032] loves warfare, and wishes to be in the midst of battles, slaughter, death, and blood? If it is characteristic of the gods -- if only they are true gods, and those who it is fitting should be named according to the meaning of this word and the power of divinity -- to do [5033] nothing wickedly, nothing unjustly, to show [5034] themselves equally gracious to all men without any partiality, would any man believe that she was of divine origin, or showed [5035] kindness worthy of the gods, who, mixing herself up with the dissensions of men, destroyed the power of some, gave and showed favour to others, bereft some of their liberty, raised others to the height of power, -- who, that one state might be pre-eminent, having been born to be the bane of the human race, subjugated the guiltless world?

Appendix.

We do not deny that all these things which have been brought forward by you in opposition are contained in the writings of the annalists. For we have ourselves also, according to the measure and capacity of our powers, read these same things, and know that they have been alleged; but the whole discussion hinges upon this: whether these are gods who you assert are furious when displeased, and are soothed by games and sacrifices, or are something far different, and should be separated from the notion even of this, and from its power. For who, in the first place, thinks or believes that those are gods who are lost in joyful pleasure at theatrical shows [5037] and ballets, at horses running to no purpose; who set out from heaven to behold silly and insipid acting, and grieve that they are injured, and that the honours due to them are withheld if the pantomimist halts for a little, or the player, being wearied, rests a little; who declare that the dancer has displeased them if some guilty fellow passes through the middle of the circus to suffer the penalty and punishment of his deeds? All which things, if they be sifted thoroughly and without any partiality, will be found to be alien not only to the gods, but to any man of refinement, even if he has not been trained to the utmost gravity and self-control. [5038] For, in the first place, who is there who would suppose that those had been, or believe that they are, gods, who have a nature which tends to [5039] mischief and fury, and lay these [5040] aside again, being moved by a cup of blood and fumigation with incense; who spend days of festivity, and find the liveliest pleasure in theatrical shows [5041] and ballets; who set out from heaven to see geldings running in vain, and without any reason, and rejoice that some of them pass the rest, that others are passed, [5042] rush on, leaning forward, and, with their heads towards the ground, are overturned on their backs with the chariots to which they are yoked, are dragged along crippled, and limp with broken legs; who declare that the dancer has displeased them if some wicked fellow passes through the middle of the circus to suffer the punishment and penalty of his deeds; who grieve that they are injured, and that the honours due to them are withheld if the pantomimist halts for a little, the player, being wearied, rests a little, that puer matrimus happens to fall, stumbling through some [5043] unsteadiness? Now, if all these things are considered thoroughly and without any partiality, they are found to be perfectly [5044] alien not only to the character of the gods, but to that of any man of common sense, even although he has not been trained to zealous pursuit of truth by becoming acquainted with what is rational. [5045]

Elucidations.

I. (Note 9, p.459.) This is a most extraordinary note. The author uses "so to say" ("as it were") merely to qualify the figure, which a pagan might think extravagant. "This is, as it were, the door of life:" the expression qualifies the rhetoric, not the Scripture, as such. On the contrary, I should adduce this very passage as an instance of our author's familiarity alike with the spirit and the letter of two most important texts of the Gospel, which he expounds and enforces with an earnest intelligence, and with a spirit truly evangelical.

II. (Covered with garments, note 7, p.469.) A heathen might have retorted, had he known the Scriptures, by asking about the "white robes" of angels, and the raiment of the risen Redeemer; e.g., Rev. i.13. "Curious and unlearned questions" concerning these matters have been stirred by a certain class of Christians. (See Stier [5046] and Olshausen. [5047]) But let us not reason from things terrestrial as regards things celestial: our coarse material fabrics are "shadows of the true." The robes of light are realities, and are conformed to spiritual bodies, as even here a mist may envelop a tree. Because of men's stupid and carnally gross ideas, let it be said of "harps" and "psalms," and all like phraseology as to things heavenly, once for all, "it doth not yet appear" what it means; but they intimate realities unknown to sense, and "full of glory."

III. (The eyes of Jupiter, p.483.) Arnobius with remorseless vigour smites Jove himself, -- the Optimus Maximus of polytheism, -- and, as I have said, with the assurance of one who feels that the Church's triumph over "lords many and gods many" is not far distant. The scholar will recall the language of Terence, [5048] where the youth, gazing on the obscene picture of Jupiter and Danæ, exclaims, -- "What! he who shakes high heaven with his thunder Act thus, and I, a mannikin, not do the same? Yes, do I, and right merrily, forsooth!" On which the great African Father [5049] remarks pithily, "Omnes enim cultores talium deorum, mox ut eos libido perpulerit, magis intuentur quid Jupiter fecerit, quam quid docuerit Plato, vel censuerit Cato." And here is not only the secret of the impotence of heathen ethics, but the vindication of the Divine Wisdom in sending the God-Man. Men will resemble that which they worship: law itself is incapable of supplying a sufficient motive. Hence, [5050] "what the law could not do, in that it was weak, ... God sending His own Son," etc. Thus "the foolishness of God is wiser than men," and "the love of Christ constraineth us." "Talk they of morals? O Thou bleeding Lamb! The grand morality is love of Thee." The world may sneer at faith, but only they who believe can love; and who ever loved Christ without copying into his life the Sermon on the Mount, and, in some blest degree, the holy example of his Master? IV. (For those freed from the bondage of the flesh, p.488 and note 11.) The early Christians prayed for the departed, that they might have their consummation in body and spirit at the last day. Thus, these prayers for the faithful dead supply the strongest argument against the purgatorial system, which supposes the dead in Christ (1) not to be in repose at first, but (2) capable of being delivered out of "purgatory" into heaven, sooner or later, by masses, etc. Thus, their situation in the intermediate state is not that of Scripture (Rev. xiv.13), nor do they wait for glory, according to Scripture, until that day (2 Tim. iv.8). Archbishop Usher, therefore, bases a powerful argument against the Romish dogma, on these primitive prayers for the departed. Compare vol. iii. p.706, and vol. v. p.222, this series. He divides it into five heads, as follows: [5051] -- "(1) Of the persons for whom, after death, prayers were offered;" (2) Of the primary intention of

these prayers;"(3) Of the place and condition of souls departed;"(4) Of the opinion of Aerius, the heretic, touching these prayers; and"(5) Of the profit, to the persons prayed for, of these prayers."And his conclusion is, after a rich collation of testimonies, that "the commemoration and prayers for the dead used by the ancient Church had not any relation with purgatory, and therefore, whatsoever they were, Popish prayers we are sure they were not."V.(The pine...sanctuary of the Great Mother, p.504.)I recall with interest the pine-cone of Dante's comparison (*Inferno*, canto xxxi.59) as I saw it in the gardens of the Vatican. Valuable notes may be found in Longfellow's translation, vol. i. p.328. It is eleven feet high, and once adorned the summit of Hadrian's mausoleum, so they say; but that was open, and had no apex on which it could be placed. It is made of bronze, and, I think, belonged to the mysteries satirized by our author. It is less pardonable to find the vilest relics of mythology on the very doors of St. Peter's, where I have seen them with astonishment. They were put there, according to M. Valery, [5052] under Paul V.; "and among the small mythological groups," he adds, "may be distinguished Jupiter and Leda, the Rape of Ganymede, some nymphs and satyrs, with other very singular devices for the entrance of the most imposing of Christian temples." It is painful to think of it; but the heathenism to which the age of Leo X. had reduced the court of Rome must be contrasted with the ideas of a Clement, an Athenagoras, and even of an Arnobius, in order to give us a due sense of the crisis which, after so many appeals for a reformation "in the head and the members" of the Latin communion, brought on the irrepressible revolt of Northern Europe against the papacy.VI.(Sacrifices, p.519.)It must be felt that Arnobius here lays himself open to a severe retort. The God of Christians is the author of sacrifice, and accepts the unspeakable sufferings of the innocent Lamb for the sins of the whole world.The answer, indeed, suggests itself, that the sacrifices of the heathen had no apparent relation whatever to faith in this Atoning Lamb; none in the mysterious will of God that this faith should be nurtured before the Advent by an institution in which He had no pleasure, but which was profoundly harmonious with human thought and the self-consciousness of human guilt.Arnobius would have written better had he been a better-instructed Christian. He demolishes pagan rites, but he should have called up the Gentile mind to the truths covered under its corruptions and superstitions. On this subject the reader will do well to consult the work of a modern Arnobius, the eccentric Soame Jenyns, who called out such a controversy in the last century about the truths and errors of his *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, [5053] to which he had become a convert from previous scepticism. This essay attracted the attention of the Count. (Joseph) de Maistre, who read it in the French translations of MM. le Tourneur and de Feller both, reflected it in his *Considerations sur la France*, [5054] and reproduced some of its admirable thoughts in the *Soirées de St Pétersbourg*. [5055] From these two striking writers, the one an Anglican and the other a rabid Ultramontane, I must permit myself to condense an outline of their views of sacrifice. So long as we know nothing of the origin of evil, we are not competent judges of what is or is not a suitable remedy. Nobody can assure us that the sufferings of one may not be in some way necessary to the good of the many. A tax may thus be laid upon innocence in behalf of the guilty, and a voluntary sacrifice may be accepted from the Innocent (the Holy One) for the payment of the debts of others. In spite of something illogical which seems to cling to this idea, the fact of its universal adoption in all ages among men must be accounted for, -- the fact that all nations have always accepted this principle of expiatory sacrifice, innocent men and innocent beasts suffering for the unjust. Never could this principle have been thus universalized by human wisdom, for it seems to contradict reason; nor by

human stupidity, for ignorance never could have proposed such a paradox; nor could priestcraft and kingcraft have obtained for it, among divers races and forms of society, with barbarians and philosophers, freemen and slaves, alike, a common acceptance. It must therefore proceed (1) from a natural instinct of humanity, or (2) from a divine revelation: both alike must be recognised as the work of our Creator. Now, Christianity unveils the secret, presenting the Son of God, made man, a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. If it be a mystery, still we do not wonder at the idea when we see one man paying the debts of another, and so ransoming the debtor. [5056] Christianity states this as God's plan for the ransom of sinners. Such is the fact: as to the why, it says nothing. [5057] As to the philosophy of these mysteries, we reason in vain; and, happily, the Gospel does not require us to reason. The Nicene Creed formulates the truth: "For us men and for our salvation He came down," etc. But we are called to profess no more than "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." De Maistre responds as follows: This dogma is universal, and as old as creation; viz., the reversibility of the sufferings of innocence for the benefit of the guilty. As to the fall of man, "earth felt the wound;" [5058] "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth [5059] in pain together." In this condition of things the human heart and mind have universally acquiesced in the idea of expiation. [5060] ...And as well the Gentile sacrifices (corrupted from Noah's pure original) as those which were perpetuated in their purity by the Hebrews on one spot, and looking to their only explanation in the coming of one Redeemer, bear witness to the Wisdom which framed the human mind and adapted its ordinances thereto with profound and divine comprehension of all human wants and all human capabilities. When the infinite Victim exclaimed upon the cross, "It is finished," the veil was rent, the grand secret was unfolded. For this event, God had prepared all mankind by the system of sacrifice which, even in its corruption, had made preparation for the true elucidation. In a word, then, Arnobius should have said this, as the Church was always saying it in the perpetual commemoration of Calvary, in her Holy Eucharist, and in her annual Paschal celebration. It was all summed up by the prophet a thousand years before "the Lamb of God" was slain. By the prophet, the Lamb Himself expounds it all: [5061] -- "Sacrifice and meat-offering Thou wouldest not, but mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt-offerings and sacrifice for sin hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within my heart." The expiatory sacrifice, the voluntary Victim, the profound design of God the Father, are all here. But the infinite value of the sacrifice was unfolded when the Son of man was identified by the poor Gentile centurion: "Truly this was the Son of God."

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