

To Autolycus

Modern English version · SermonIndex

Theophilus of Antioch · c. AD 180

Three books written about AD 180 to a pagan friend named Autolycus by the bishop of Antioch. Book 1 explains who God is and what the name “Christian” means. Book 2 sets the Greek poets and philosophers against the prophets. Book 3 argues from chronology that Moses is older than the Greek writers.

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Book 1

1.1 A glib mouth and a pleasing style give delight, and the praise that feeds empty glory, to wretched people whose minds are corrupted. But the lover of truth pays no attention to polluted speeches. He examines the substance behind the speech: what it is and what kind of thing it is. So, my friend, you have overawed me with empty words, boasting of your gods of stone and wood, hammered, cast, molded and painted. They neither see nor hear, for they are idols, the work of human hands. You also call me a Christian, as if I bore a bad name. For my part, I admit that I am a Christian. I bear this name, which God loves, hoping to be useful to God. The name of God is not harsh, as you suppose. Perhaps you think this about God because you are still useless to Him yourself.

Translator’s note. There is a wordplay here. “Useful” (euchrēstos) and “useless” (achrēstos) sound close to “Christian” (Christianos).

1.2a But if you say, “Show me your God,” I would answer, “Show me yourself, and I will show you my God.” Show me that the eyes of your soul can see and the ears of your heart can hear. People who see with the eyes of the body take in the affairs of this life and of the earth. At the same time they judge the differences between things: light or darkness, white or black, ugly or beautiful, well-proportioned and shapely or ill-proportioned and shapeless, oversized or stunted. It is the same with what falls under hearing: sounds that are shrill, deep or sweet. So it is also with the ears of

the heart and the eyes of the soul: by them one can behold God.

Translator's note. The older translation runs on into the next section here ("For God is seen by those ... the light of the sun"). Following the Greek, that material belongs to 1.2b.

1.2b God is seen by those who are able to see Him, when the eyes of their soul are open. All people have eyes, but in some they are clouded over, and these do not see the light of the sun. Yet it does not follow that the sunlight is not shining just because the blind cannot see. The blind must blame themselves and their own eyes. In the same way, you, my friend, have the eyes of your soul clouded by your sins and evil deeds. A person ought to have a pure soul, like a polished mirror. When there is rust on a mirror, a person's face cannot be seen in it. So also, when sin is in a person, such a person cannot see God.

1.2c So show me yourself. Show me that you are not an adulterer, or a fornicator, or a thief, or a robber, or a defrauder. Show me that you are not a man who has sex with males, or insolent, or abusive, or quick-tempered, or envious, or boastful, or arrogant, or violent, or greedy for money, or disobedient to your parents, and that you do not sell your children. For God does not reveal Himself to people who do these things, unless they first cleanse themselves from every defilement. All these things cast a darkness over you, just as a discharge of matter on the eyes keeps them from gazing at the light of the sun. In the same way, my friend, your ungodly deeds cast a darkness over you, so that you cannot see God.

Translator's note. The list echoes Paul's lists of sins, especially [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) and [Romans 1:29-30](#). "Cleanse themselves from every defilement" echoes the Greek of [2 Corinthians 7:1](#).

Scripture: [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#); [Romans 1:30](#); [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)

1.3 You will say to me, "You who can see, describe to me the appearance of God." Listen, my friend. The appearance of God is beyond speech and description, and cannot be seen with eyes of flesh. In glory He cannot be contained, in greatness He cannot be grasped, in height He cannot be conceived, in strength He has no equal, in wisdom He has no match, in goodness He cannot be imitated, and in His good works He cannot be described. If I call Him Light, I am speaking of something He made. If I call Him Word, I am speaking of His beginning. If I call Him Mind, I am speaking of His understanding. If I call Him Spirit, I am speaking of His breath. If I call Him Wisdom, I am speaking of what He begot. If I call Him Strength, I am speaking of His might. If I call Him Power, I am speaking of His working. If I call Him Providence, I am speaking of His goodness. If I call Him Kingdom, I am speaking of His glory. If I call Him Lord, I am calling Him judge. If I call Him Judge, I am calling Him just. If I call Him Father, I am calling Him everything. If I call Him Fire, I am speaking of His anger. You will ask me, "Is God angry?" Certainly. He is angry with those who do evil. But He is

good, kind and compassionate toward those who love and fear Him. For He is the instructor of the godly and the father of the righteous, but the judge and punisher of the ungodly.

Translator's note. "I am calling Him everything" is the literal Greek, which is very terse. The older translation takes it to mean that all things come from Him. That is a possible reading, but the Greek does not say it outright.

1.4a God has no beginning, because he was never begotten. He does not change, because he is immortal. He is called God (Theos) because he has set (tetheikenai) all things on his own firm foundation, and because of the word theein. Theein means to run, to move, to be active, to nourish, to watch over, to steer, and to give life to all things. He is Lord because he rules over the whole universe. He is Father because he exists before all things. He is Craftsman and Maker because he is the Creator and Maker of the universe. He is the Most High because he is above all things. He is Almighty because he himself holds and encloses all things. For the heights of heaven, the depths of the abysses, and the ends of the world are in his hand, and there is no place that can be his resting place.

Translator's note. "In his hand are ... the ends of the earth" echoes [Psalm 95:4](#) (94:4 in the Greek Old Testament, which reads "ends of the earth" where English Bibles have "depths"). "There is no place of his rest" echoes [Isaiah 66:1](#) ("What is the place of my rest?"). The point is that no place can contain God, not that God never rests.

Scripture: [Isaiah 66:1](#)

1.4b For the heavens are his work, the earth is his creation, and the sea is what he made. Man is his molded work and his image. The sun, moon and stars are his elements, made as signs and for seasons, days and years, to serve mankind and to be their servants. God brought all things into being out of what did not exist, so that through his works his greatness might be known and understood.

Translator's note. "Out of what did not exist" is literally "out of things that are not." The wording is close to 2 Maccabees 7:28. Theophilus is one of the earliest Christian writers to state plainly that God created out of nothing. The idea that God's greatness is known through his works may be compared with [Romans 1:20](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:14](#)

1.5a The soul in a person cannot be seen, because it is invisible to human beings, yet it is recognized through the movement of the body. In the same way, God cannot be seen by human eyes, but he is seen and understood through his providence and his works. Suppose someone sees a ship at sea, fully fitted out, under way and coming into harbor. He will obviously conclude that it has a pilot steering it. So we must understand that God is the pilot of the whole universe, even though he cannot be seen with eyes of flesh, because he cannot be contained. If a man cannot look at the sun,

which is a very small heavenly body, because of its overwhelming heat and power, how much less can a mortal man look directly at the glory of God, which is beyond words?

Translator's note. "Cannot be contained" renders *achōrētos*, which means "that which no space can hold." The older translation's "incomprehensible" is less exact.

1.5b A pomegranate has a rind around it, and inside it has many chambers and compartments divided by membranes, and many seeds living in it. In the same way, the whole creation is enclosed by the spirit of God, and the enclosing spirit, together with the creation, is held in the hand of God. The seed inside the pomegranate cannot see what lies outside the rind, because it is itself inside. In the same way a human being, enclosed with all creation in the hand of God, cannot see God. Again, people believe that an earthly king exists, even though not everyone sees him. He is known through his laws, his decrees, his authorities, his forces and his images. Do you refuse to let God be known through his works and his powers?

Translator's note. The Greek *pneuma* means both "spirit" and "breath." Here Theophilus may be thinking of God's life-giving breath that fills creation rather than specifically of the Holy Spirit, so "spirit" is left lowercase.

1.6a Consider his works, O man: the changing of the seasons in their times, the changes in the weather, the well-ordered course of the elements, and the orderly progress of days, nights, months and years. Consider the varied beauty of seeds, plants and fruits, and the many kinds of offspring among four-footed animals, birds, reptiles, and swimming creatures, both of rivers and of the sea. Consider the understanding given to the animals themselves for bearing and raising their young, not for their own use but so that man may have them. Consider the providence by which God prepares food for all flesh, and the subjection by which he has decreed that all things be placed under humankind. Consider the flow of sweet springs and ever-running rivers, and the supply of dews, showers and rains that comes in its seasons. Consider the many-sided movement of the heavenly bodies: the morning star rising and announcing the coming of the perfect light-bearer; the bond of the Pleiades and Orion; Arcturus; and the course of the remaining stars as they move around the circle of the heavens. The richly varied wisdom of God has given each of them its own name.

Translator's note. "The bond of the Pleiades and Orion" and the star names recall [Job 38:31-32](#) and 9:9. That God names the stars echoes [Psalm 147:4](#). "The richly varied wisdom of God" is the same Greek phrase as [Ephesians 3:10](#). The "perfect light-bearer" is the sun, which the morning star announces.

Scripture: [Job 38:31](#); [Ephesians 3:10](#)

1.6b He alone is God, who made light out of darkness. He brought out light from his treasures. He brought out the storerooms of the

south wind, the treasures of the deep, the boundaries of the seas, and the treasures of snow and hail. He gathers the waters into the treasures of the deep, and gathers the darkness into his treasures. He brings out the light, sweet, longed-for and delightful, from his treasures. He lifts up clouds from the farthest edge of the earth, and multiplies lightning for the rain. He sends thunder to bring fear, and warns beforehand by the lightning that the crash of thunder is coming, so that no one, suddenly shaken, may faint away. He also measures out just enough of the lightning that comes down from heaven, so that it does not burn up the earth. For if the lightning received its full power, it would burn up the earth. And if the thunder did, it would overturn everything on the earth.

Translator's note. The language draws on Scripture: the "storerooms of the south" ([Job 9:9](#)), the "treasures of snow and hail" ([Job 38:22](#)), and the waters gathered into storehouses ([Psalm 33:7](#)). The line about clouds and lightning closely follows [Psalm 135:7](#) (also [Jeremiah 10:13](#)), except that where the Bible says God "makes" lightnings for the rain, Theophilus says he "multiplies" them.

Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:6](#); [Job 38:22](#)

1.7a This is my God, the Lord of all, who alone stretched out the heaven and fixed the breadth of the earth beneath it. He stirs up the depths of the sea and makes its waves roar. He rules its power and calms the surging of its waves. He founded the earth upon the waters and gave a spirit to nourish it. His breath gives life to everything, and if he holds back that breath for himself, everything will fail. It is he, O man, that you speak of, and his breath that you breathe, and yet you do not know him. This has happened to you because your soul is blind and your heart is hardened. But if you are willing, you can be healed. Put yourself in the hands of the Physician, and he will operate on the eyes of your soul and heart.

Translator's note. The Greek says God's breath "gives life" to everything, and "you speak of him" renders the Greek "you speak him." The Greek word behind "operate" means to pierce, and it was used of the eye operation for cataracts.

Scripture: [Job 9:8](#); [Isaiah 51:15](#); [Ephesians 4:18](#)

1.7b Who is the Physician? God, who heals and gives life through his Word and Wisdom. God made all things through his Word and Wisdom. For by his Word the heavens were made firm, and by his Spirit all their power. His wisdom is most mighty. By wisdom God laid the foundation of the earth. He prepared the heavens with understanding. By knowledge the depths were broken open, and the clouds poured down dew. If you grasp these things, O man, and live purely, devoutly and justly, you can see God. But above all, let faith and the fear of God go before you in your heart, and then you will understand these things. When you put off what is mortal and put on incorruption, then you will see God as he deserves to be seen. For God will raise your flesh immortal together with your soul. Then, having become immortal, you will see the Immortal One,

if you believe in him now. And then you will recognize that you spoke against him unjustly.

Translator's note. The lines from "By wisdom God laid the foundation of the earth" to "dew" quote [Proverbs 3:19-20](#). "Put off what is mortal and put on incorruption" echoes [1 Corinthians 15:53-54](#).

Scripture: [Proverbs 3:19-20](#); [1 Corinthians 15:53](#)

1.8a But you do not believe that the dead are raised. When it happens, then you will believe, whether you want to or not. And your faith will be counted as unbelief if you do not believe now. Why do you refuse to believe? Do you not know that faith comes first in everything? What farmer can reap unless he first entrusts the seed to the earth? Who can cross the sea unless he first entrusts himself to the ship and the captain? What sick person can be healed unless he first entrusts himself to the doctor? What skill or branch of knowledge can anyone learn unless he first gives himself over to a teacher and trusts him? If, then, the farmer trusts the earth, the traveler by sea trusts the ship, and the sick man trusts the doctor, will you not trust yourself to God, when you have so many pledges from him?

Translator's note. Throughout this passage Theophilus uses a single Greek verb that means both "believe" and "entrust." The argument depends on this double meaning, which English cannot fully keep.

1.8b First, he made you out of nothing and brought you into being. For if your father did not exist, and your mother did not, then much more you yourself did not exist at one time. He formed you from a small amount of moist substance, from the tiniest drop, which itself also once did not exist. And God brought you forward into this present life. Yet you believe that statues made by men are gods and work mighty deeds. But when it comes to the God who made you, do you doubt that he is able to make you again afterward as well?

Translator's note. The Greek word translated "afterward" usually means "in between." In later Greek, however, it can also mean "next" or "afterward" (compare [Acts 13:42](#), "the next Sabbath"). That fits the point here: the God who made you once can make you again in the resurrection.

1.9a The names of the gods you say you worship are the names of dead men. And what sort of men were they? Is Kronos not found to be a devourer of children, consuming his own offspring? If you name his son Zeus, then learn his deeds and his way of life as well. First, he was nursed by a goat on Mount Ida, and then, according to the myths, he killed it, skinned it, and made himself a garment from the hide. As for his other deeds, his incest with his sister, his adulteries and his corruption of boys, Homer and the other poets tell them better than I can. Why should I go on listing his sons? Herakles burned himself to death. Dionysos was drunk and raving. Apollo feared Achilles and ran from him, was in love with Daphne, and did not know the fate of Hyacinthus. Aphrodite was wounded. Ares was a destroyer of men. And the so-called gods even have

ichor flowing from them.

Translator's note. "Ichor" is the fluid that Homer says flows in the veins of the gods in place of blood; Theophilus uses the Greek names of the gods (Kronos, Zeus, and so on).

1.9b Yet these are the milder things to say, since there is a god called Osiris who is found torn limb from limb. Every year his rites are performed as if he were being lost, found again, and searched for piece by piece. For no one can make out whether he is lost, and no one shows whether he is found. Why should I mention Attis being castrated? Or Adonis roaming the woods, hunting, and being wounded by a boar? Or Asklepios struck by lightning? Or Serapis, a fugitive from Sinope who ended up in Alexandria? Or the Scythian Artemis, who was herself a fugitive and a killer of men, a huntress, and in love with Endymion? We are not the ones saying these things. Your own writers and poets proclaim them.

Translator's note. Ancient writers such as Tacitus and Plutarch tell how the statue of Serapis was brought to Alexandria from Sinope on the Black Sea. The "Scythian Artemis" is the Artemis of the Taurians, whose cult was linked with human sacrifice and whose image, in the legend told by Euripides, was carried off by Orestes and Iphigenia.

1.10a Why should I go on listing the many animals the Egyptians worship: reptiles, cattle, wild beasts, birds, and swimming creatures of the water? They even worship foot-basins and shameful noises. As for the Greeks and the other nations, they worship stones, wood and other material, which, as we have already said, are likenesses of dead men. Pheidias, for example, is found making the Olympian Zeus at Pisa for the people of Elis, and the Athena on the Acropolis for the Athenians. I would also ask you, my friend, how many Zeuses there are. First of all there is Zeus Olympios, then Zeus Latiarios, Zeus Kasios, Zeus Keraunios, Zeus Propator, Zeus Pannychios, Zeus Poliouchos, and Zeus Kapitolios. The Zeus who was the son of Kronos and became king of the Cretans has a tomb in Crete. The rest, perhaps, were not even thought worthy of burial.

Translator's note. The claim that Zeus had a tomb in Crete was well known in antiquity. The poet Callimachus mocks the Cretans as liars for building one.

1.10b If you mention the mother of the so-called gods, may I never bring myself to say her deeds aloud. It is forbidden for us even to name such things. The same goes for the deeds of her attendants, by whom she is served, and for the taxes and contributions that she and her sons bring in to the king. For these are not gods but idols, as we said before, works of human hands and unclean demons. May those who make them become just like them, and those who put their hope in them as well.

Translator's note. The Greek word for "king" was the usual Greek term for the Roman emperor, and that is probably who is meant here.

1.11 So I will honor the king instead, though not by bowing down to him in worship but by praying for him. But I worship God, the One who is really and truly God, because I know that the king was made by Him. You will ask me, “Why do you not worship the king?” Because he was not made to be worshipped but to be honored with lawful honor. He is not a god but a man, appointed by God, not to be worshipped but to judge justly. In a certain way he has been entrusted by God with a stewardship. Just as the king himself does not want those he has placed under him to be called kings (for “king” is his title, and no one else may use it), so no one may be worshipped except God alone. So you are wrong in every way, my friend. Honor the king: be well disposed toward him, be subject to him, and pray for him. By doing this you do the will of God. For the law of God says, “My son, honor God and the king, and do not be disobedient to either of them, for suddenly they will punish their enemies.”

Translator’s note. Theophilus calls this “the law of God.” It closely matches the Greek (Septuagint) of [Proverbs 24:21-22](#), which says “fear God and the king,” where Theophilus’s text has “honor.”

Scripture: [Proverbs 24:21-22](#); [1 Peter 2:17](#); [Romans 13:1](#)

1.12 As for your laughing at me and calling me a Christian, you do not know what you are saying. First, what is “anointed” is pleasant and useful, and nothing to laugh at. What ship can be useful and stay afloat unless it is first anointed? What tower or house is handsome and useful when it has not been anointed? What man, when he comes into this life or enters the games, is not anointed with oil? What work or ornament can have beauty unless it is anointed and polished? Then the air, and everything under heaven, is in a certain way anointed with light and spirit. And are you unwilling to be anointed with the oil of God? This, then, is why we are called Christians: we are anointed with the oil of God.

Translator’s note. The Greek “pneuma” can mean “spirit” or “breath, wind.”

1.13a You also deny that the dead are raised. You say, “Show me even one person raised from the dead, so that I may see and believe.” First, what is so great about believing when you have seen the thing happen? Next, you believe that Heracles burned himself up and lives, and that Asclepius was struck by lightning and raised. Yet you do not believe what God tells you. Perhaps I might even show you a dead man raised and alive, and you would disbelieve that too. God, however, gives you many proofs so that you may believe Him. If you wish, consider how seasons, days and nights come to an end, how they too die and rise again. And is there not also a resurrection of seeds and fruits, and that for the use of men? Take a grain of wheat or of any other seed. When it is thrown into the ground, it first dies and breaks down, then it is raised and becomes an ear of grain.

Translator's note. The picture of a grain that dies and then rises echoes [John 12:24](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:36-37](#), though Theophilus does not quote either passage.

Scripture: [John 12:24](#); [1 Corinthians 15:36-37](#)

1.13b As for the nature of trees and fruit trees, do they not, at God's command, bring out their fruits at the proper seasons from what is hidden and unseen? Sometimes, too, a sparrow or another bird swallows the seed of an apple, a fig, or something else. It goes to a rocky hill or a tomb and leaves the seed there in its droppings. The seed takes hold and a tree grows up, though it was once swallowed and passed through so much heat. The wisdom of God works all these things to show, even through them, that God is able to bring about the general resurrection of all men. And if you want to see an even more wonderful sight as proof of resurrection, one that concerns not only earthly things but those in heaven, consider the monthly resurrection of the moon: how it wastes away, dies, and rises again.

1.13c Hear further, O man, that a work of resurrection is happening in you yourself, even if you do not know it. Perhaps at some time you fell ill and lost your flesh, your strength and your appearance. Then you received mercy and healing from God, and you got back your body, your appearance and your strength. You did not know where your flesh went when it disappeared, and in the same way you do not know where it came from, or from where it came back. But you will say, "From food and juices turned into blood." Very well. But this too is the work of God, who made things this way, and of no one else.

1.14a So do not disbelieve, but believe. I myself once did not believe this would happen. But now that I have considered these things, I believe. I also came upon the sacred writings of the holy prophets. By the Spirit of God they foretold things that had already happened, just as they happened, things now taking place, as they are taking place, and things to come, in the order in which they will be fulfilled. Since I have received proof from events that happen as they were foretold, I do not disbelieve. I believe, and I obey God. If you wish, submit to Him as well and believe Him. Otherwise you may disbelieve now and be convinced later, when you are suffering in eternal punishments. The prophets foretold these punishments, and the poets and philosophers, who came later, stole them from the holy Scriptures to make their own teachings credible. Even so, they too foretold the punishments that are to come on the ungodly and unbelieving. So this stands as a testimony to everyone, and no one can say, "We did not hear, and we did not know."

1.14b But if you are willing, read the prophetic Scriptures with eager care. They will guide you more plainly toward escaping the eternal punishments and receiving the eternal good things of God. For the one who gave the mouth for speaking, formed the ear for hearing, and made the eyes for seeing will examine everything and

judge what is right, paying each person the reward he deserves. To those who seek incorruption by patience in good works, he will give eternal life, joy, peace, rest, and a fullness of good things, which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and which have never entered the heart of man. But for those who have no faith, who are scornful and refuse to obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, who wallow in adulteries, fornications, homosexual acts, greed, and unlawful idol-worship, there will be anger and wrath, distress and anguish. In the end eternal fire will take hold of such people. You added, my friend, "Show me your God." This is my God, and I advise you to fear him and trust him.

Translator's note. The words about God who gave the mouth, formed the ear and made the eye recall [Exodus 4:11](#) and [Psalm 94:9](#).

Scripture: [Romans 2:6-9](#); [1 Corinthians 2:9](#)

Book 2

2.1 Some days ago we had a conversation, my excellent Autolycus. You asked who my God is, and for a short while you gave me your attention while I explained my religion to you. Then we said a warm goodbye to each other and each went home, even though at first you had been harsh toward me. You know and remember that you took our teaching to be foolishness. Afterward you urged me to write, and although I am untrained in the art of speaking, I now want to use this treatise to show you more exactly the futile labor and empty religion in which you are held. I also want to make the truth plain to you from a few of the histories of your own people which you read, but perhaps do not yet understand.

2.2 It seems to me ridiculous that stonecutters, sculptors, painters, and metal-casters should shape, paint, carve, and cast, and so manufacture gods. Once the craftsmen have made these gods, no one thinks anything of them. But when someone buys them and sets them up in a so-called temple or in some house, then not only do the buyers sacrifice to them, but the very men who made and sold them come with great eagerness and a display of sacrifices and drink offerings to worship them. They count them as gods, not realizing that these things are just what they were when they made them: stone, bronze, wood, paint, or some other material. The same thing has happened to you who read the histories and genealogies of the so-called gods. When you read of their births, you understand them to be men. Later you call them gods and worship them. You do not stop to consider or understand that they were exactly the kind of beings you read about at their birth.

2.3a If those gods were really born, then in their time there was plenty of divine begetting. But where is the birth of a god shown now? If they begot and were begotten then, it is clear that begotten gods ought to keep appearing down to this day. If not, this will be taken as a sign of weakness. Either they have grown old, and so no

longer beget, or they have died, and no longer exist. For if gods were born, they ought to be born even now, just as men are. In fact there ought to be more gods than men, as the Sibyl says: "If gods beget, and yet remain immortal, the gods that were born would be more numerous than men, and there would never have been room for mortals to stand." Children are still born to men, who are mortal and short-lived. People have not stopped being born, and so cities and villages are crowded and the countryside is inhabited. How much more ought the gods, who according to the poets do not die, to beget and be begotten, if, as you say, the birth of the gods really took place?

Translator's note. The Sibyl was a legendary pagan prophetess. Verses under her name, the Sibylline Oracles, were widely used by Jews and Christians. These particular lines are known mainly because Theophilus preserved them.

2.3b Why was the mountain called Olympus once inhabited by the gods, but now stands empty? Or why did Zeus once live on Ida, and was known to live there according to Homer and the other poets, but is now unknown? And why was he not everywhere, but found in only one part of the earth? Either he neglected the rest, or he was unable to be everywhere and to care for everything. For if he was, say, in an eastern place, he was not in a western one; and if he was in the west, he was not in the east. But it belongs to God, the Most High, the Almighty, the God who truly is God, not only to be everywhere, but also to watch over all things and hear all things. Nor can he be contained in a place. Otherwise the place that contained him would turn out to be greater than he is, for what contains is greater than what is contained. God is not contained; he himself is the place of all things. And why did Zeus leave Ida?

2.3c Did he die, or did that mountain no longer please him? And where did he go? To the heavens? No. Perhaps you will say, to Crete? Yes, for his tomb is shown there to this day. Or again you will say, to Pisa, where he still brings glory to the hands of Phidias. Let us turn, then, to the writings of the philosophers and poets.

Translator's note. Pisa was the district around Olympia, where Phidias made the famous statue of Zeus. The jab is that Zeus now survives only as a statue that brings fame to its sculptor. The Cretans were known in antiquity for claiming to show the tomb of Zeus.

2.4a Some of the Stoics deny altogether that there is a God. Or, if there is one, they say that God cares for nothing except himself. The folly of Epicurus and Chrysippus has declared these things outright. Others say that everything happens by chance, that the world was never created, and that nature is eternal. They have dared to say that there is no providence of God at all, and that God is only each person's conscience. Others again teach that the spirit that pervades everything is God. Plato and his school acknowledge that God is uncreated, the Father and Maker of all things. But then they assume that matter, as well as God, is uncreated, and they say

that matter is as old as God. Yet if God is uncreated and matter is uncreated, then by the Platonists' own account God is no longer the Maker of all things. And as far as their view goes, the sole rule of God is not shown either.

Translator's note. Theophilus groups these views loosely. Epicurus was not a Stoic; he taught that gods exist but take no interest in the world. Chrysippus, a leading Stoic, actually defended divine providence. So the views here should not be read as an exact report of what each man taught.

2.4b Furthermore, just as God, being uncreated, is also unchangeable, so if matter were uncreated it too would be unchangeable and equal to God. For what is created is changeable and alterable, but what is uncreated is unchangeable and unalterable. And what is so great about God making the world out of matter that was already there? A human craftsman, too, when he receives material from someone, makes from it whatever he wishes. But God's power is shown in this: out of things that do not exist he makes whatever he wishes. In the same way, giving life and movement belongs to no one but God alone. A man makes an image, but he cannot give reason, breath or sensation to what he has made. God has this power beyond man's: he makes a being that is rational, breathing and able to sense. So just as God is more powerful than man in all these things, so he is in this too: out of things that do not exist he makes, and has made, the things that exist, whatever he wishes and as he wishes.

Translator's note. Theophilus is one of the earliest Christian writers to argue plainly that God created out of nothing. Compare [Romans 4:17](#), where God "calls into being things that do not exist," and 2 Maccabees 7:28.

2.5a So the philosophers and writers do not agree with one another. While they have made these statements, the poet Homer is found explaining the origin not only of the world but also of the gods on a different basis. For he says somewhere: "Oceanus, the origin of the gods, and mother Tethys, from whom come all rivers and every sea." In saying this he does not establish God at all. For who does not know that the ocean is water? And if it is water, it is not God. And if God is the maker of all things, as he is, then he is also the creator of the water and the seas. Hesiod also declared the origin not only of the gods but of the world itself. And though he said the world was created, he was too weak to say by whom it was made.

Translator's note. The quotation joins two separate lines of Homer: Iliad 14.201 ("Oceanus, the origin of the gods, and mother Tethys") and Iliad 21.196 ("from whom come all rivers and every sea").

2.5b Hesiod also called Cronus a god, and Cronus's son Zeus, and Poseidon and Pluto. Yet we find that these came after the world. He also records that Cronus was warred against by his own child Zeus. He says: "Having conquered his father Cronus by might, he

arranged each matter well among the immortals alike, and declared their honors." Then he goes on to speak of the daughters of Zeus, whom he calls Muses. He appears as their suppliant, wanting to learn from them how all things came to be. He says: "Hail, children of Zeus, and give me lovely song. Celebrate the holy race of the immortals who live forever, who were born of Earth and starry Heaven, and of dusky Night, and whom the salt sea nourished. Tell how in the beginning the gods and the earth came to be, and the rivers, and the boundless sea raging with its swell, and the shining stars, and the wide heaven above. Tell also of the gods who were born from these, the givers of good things, and how they shared out their wealth and divided their honors."

Translator's note. The quotations come from Hesiod's Theogony: the lines about Zeus and Cronus are 73-74, and the hymn to the Muses is 104-115 (continued in the next section).

2.5c "And how at the first they came to hold many-folded Olympus. Tell me these things, Muses who have your homes on Olympus, from the beginning, and say which of them came first." But how did the Muses know these things, when they came after the world? Or how could they tell them to Hesiod, when their father had not yet been born?

Translator's note. The Muses' father is Zeus.

2.6a In a certain way Hesiod does assume matter and a making of the world, when he says: "First of all Chaos came to be, and then broad-breasted Earth, the safe seat forever of all the immortals who hold the peak of snowy Olympus, and misty Tartarus in the recess of the wide-wayed earth, and Eros, the fairest among the immortal gods, who loosens the limbs and overpowers the mind and wise counsel in the breasts of all gods and all men. From Chaos came Erebus and black Night. And from Night again came Aether and Day, whom she bore after conceiving, mingling in love with Erebus. Earth first bore starry Heaven, equal to herself, to cover her on every side, so that he might be a safe seat forever for the blessed gods. She bore tall mountains, the pleasant haunts of the goddesses, the Nymphs who live in the wooded mountains. She also bore the barren sea, raging with its swell, Pontus, without any sweet union of love. Then, having lain with Heaven, she bore deep-swirling Ocean."

Translator's note. The quotation is from Hesiod's Theogony, lines 116-133.

2.6b Even after saying all this, Hesiod still has not shown by whom these things came to be. Suppose Chaos was among the first things, and some unbegotten matter already lay there beforehand. Who, then, was the one who reworked it, rearranged it and reshaped it? Did matter reshape itself and put itself in order? (It could not have been Zeus. He was born a long time afterward, after matter, and also after the world and a multitude of people, and so was his father

Cronus.) Or rather, was there some ruling power that made it? I mean God, who also set it in order. Besides, Hesiod is found talking nonsense in every way, and contradicting himself. He names earth, heaven and sea, and wants the gods to have come from them. From these he then announces certain most fearsome men, kin to the gods: the race of the Titans and Cyclopes, and a multitude of giants, and of the demons of Egypt, or vain men. Apollonides, also called Horapius, records these things in the book entitled *Semenouthi* and in his other histories. These deal with the religion of the Egyptians, their kings, and their futile pursuits.

2.7a Why should I go over the Greek myths? Pluto is said to rule over darkness. Poseidon is said to go down beneath the sea, embrace Melanippe, and father a man-eating son. Then there is everything the writers have dramatized about the children of Zeus. These writers themselves list the family lines of these figures, which shows they were born men and not gods. The comic poet Aristophanes, in the play called *The Birds*, took up the making of the world. He said that at the beginning the world's structure was an egg, in these words: "First of all, black-winged Night bore a wind-egg." Satyrus also wrote a history of the districts of Alexandria. He begins with Philopator, who was also called Ptolemy, and shows that Dionysus was the founder of his line. For this reason Ptolemy first set up the Dionysian tribe. Satyrus writes as follows. From Dionysus and Althaea, the daughter of Thestius, was born Deianeira. From her and Heracles, the son of Zeus, came Hyllus, I suppose. From him came Cleodemus, and from him Aristomachus, then Temenus, Ceisus, Maron, Thestius, Acous, Aristomidas, Caranus, Coenus, Tyrimmas, Perdicas, Philip, Aeropus, Alcetas, Amyntas, Bocrus, and Meleager, and from him Arsinoe. From her and Lagus came Ptolemy Soter. From him and Berenice came Ptolemy Philadelphus. From him and Arsinoe came Ptolemy Euergetes. From him and Berenice, the daughter of Magas who was king in Cyrene, came Ptolemy Philopator.

Translator's note. The Aristophanes line is from *The Birds*, line 695. A "wind-egg" is an egg produced without mating.

2.7b This, then, is how the kings who reigned in Alexandria were related to Dionysus. For this reason the Dionysian tribe also has districts assigned to it. There is Althais, from the woman who became Dionysus's wife, Althaea, the daughter of Thestius. There is Deianeiris, from the daughter of Dionysus and Althaea, who became the wife of Heracles. The districts under them take their names from the same source. Ariadnis is named for Ariadne, the daughter of Minos and wife of Dionysus, a child devoted to her father, who lay with Dionysus in a certain form. Thestis is named for Thestius, the father of Althaea. Thoantis is named for Thoas, a son of Dionysus. Staphylis is named for Staphylus, a son of Dionysus. Euainis is named for Eunoos, a son of Dionysus. Maronis is named for Maron, a son of Ariadne and Dionysus. All of these were sons of Dionysus. Many other names have also arisen and remain to this

day. The Heraclidae are named from Heracles, the Apollonidae and Apollonii from Apollo, and the Poseidonii from Poseidon. From Zeus come the Dii and the Diogenai.

Translator's note. The Greek word describing the form in which Ariadne lay with Dionysus (πρύμνιδι) is obscure and probably corrupt, so its meaning is uncertain.

2.8a Why should I go on listing the great number of such names and genealogies? In every way, all these writers, poets, and so-called philosophers are made fools of, and so are those who pay attention to them. For what they composed about their own gods was myths and foolishness rather than anything else. They did not show them to be gods at all, but men, some of them drunkards, others fornicators and murderers. They also said contradictory and worthless things about the origin of the world. First, some declared that the world was uncreated, as we showed earlier. Those who said it was uncreated and of eternal nature spoke in ways that do not fit with those who taught that it was created. For they said these things by guesswork and human reasoning, not according to the truth. Others, in turn, said that there is providence, and they overturned the teachings of the first group.

2.8b Aratus, for example, says: "Let us begin with Zeus, whom we men never leave unspoken. All the streets are full of Zeus, and all the marketplaces of men. The sea is full of him, and the harbors. Everywhere we all have need of Zeus, for we are also his offspring. And he, kindly to men, gives favorable signs. He rouses the people to work, reminding them of their livelihood. He tells when the soil is best for oxen and mattocks. He tells when the seasons are right for digging around the plants and for sowing every kind of seed." So whom shall we believe? This Aratus, or Sophocles, who says: "Providence is clear to no one; it is best to live at random, as best one can"? Homer, in turn, does not agree with Sophocles, for he says: "Zeus increases and diminishes the excellence of men." And Simonides says: "No one has gained excellence without the gods, neither city nor mortal. God is all-wise."

Translator's note. The Sophocles line is from Oedipus the King (lines 977–979, spoken by Jocasta), the Homer line is Iliad 20.242, and both Homer and Simonides use the same Greek word (aretē), here translated "excellence," which in Homer means mainly prowess or valor.

2.8c Simonides goes on: "Among mortals nothing is free from harm." Euripides says the same: "Apart from God, men have nothing." Menander says: "Then no one cares for us, except God alone." Euripides again: "For when it seems good to God to save, he gives many occasions for rescue." And Thestius: "If God wills it, you are saved even if you sail on a reed mat." They said countless things like this, and they contradicted themselves. Sophocles, for one, denies providence in one place, but in another he says: "No mortal can leap over the blow of God." Besides, they brought in a multitude of gods, or else spoke of a single rule. And when they said

there is providence, they said the opposite of those who say there is no providence. So Euripides admits: "We toil hard, driven by hopes, laboring in vain, knowing nothing." Even against their will they confess that they do not know the truth. They were inspired by demons and puffed up by them, and whatever they said, they said through the demons.

Translator's note. "Reed mat" renders ῥινόζ, a mat or raft of woven reeds or wicker.

2.8d For the poets, Homer and Hesiod, who were inspired by the Muses, as they say, spoke from illusion and error, and not by a pure spirit but a deceiving one. This is clearly shown by the fact that even to this day people possessed by demons are sometimes exorcised in the name of the God who truly is. These deceiving spirits themselves confess that they are demons, the same ones who worked in those poets back then. Yet sometimes some of the poets became sober in soul and free of these spirits, and they said things in agreement with the prophets. This was to serve as a witness both to themselves and to all people, about the single rule of God, the judgment, and the other things they spoke of.

2.9 But the men of God were bearers of the Holy Spirit. They became prophets, inspired and made wise by God himself, and so they became taught by God, holy and righteous. For this reason they were counted worthy to receive this reward: they became instruments of God and received the wisdom that comes from him. Through this wisdom they spoke about the creation of the world and everything else. They also foretold plagues, famines and wars. And there was not just one or two of them, but many, at different times and seasons among the Hebrews. Among the Greeks, too, there was the Sibyl. All of them spoke in friendly agreement with one another about what had happened before their time, what happened in their own time, and what is now being fulfilled in our time. So we are convinced that the things still to come will happen too, just as the earlier things have been completed.

Translator's note. The Sibyl was a legendary Greek prophetess. Theophilus treats her as a genuine prophet in agreement with the Hebrew prophets, and he quotes at length from the Sibylline Oracles (2.3, 2.36). These were verses circulating under her name, much of them composed by Jews.

Scripture: [2 Peter 1:21](#)

2.10a First, they taught us in agreement that God made all things out of nothing. For nothing existed alongside God. He is his own place and needs nothing, and he existed before the ages. He willed to make man, so that he might be known by him, and for man he prepared the world. For whatever is created also has needs, but the one who is uncreated needs nothing. So God had his own Word, internal within his own inward being. Before all things he begat him, bringing him forth along with his own wisdom. God used this Word as his servant in what he made, and through him he made all

things. He is called “Beginning” because he rules and is lord over everything made through him. So this Word is the Spirit of God, and Beginning, and Wisdom, and Power of the Most High. He came down upon the prophets, and through them he spoke about the making of the world and everything else.

Translator’s note. Here Theophilus calls the Word “Spirit of God” and “Wisdom,” yet just before he says the Word was brought forth “with” God’s wisdom. In 2.15 he speaks of God, his Word, and his Wisdom as a “triad,” the earliest surviving Christian use of that word for God. His terms are not yet as fixed as in later creeds.

Scripture: [John 1:3](#); [Luke 1:35](#)

2.10b For the prophets did not exist when the world came into being. What existed was the wisdom of God that is in him, and his holy Word, who is always present with him. That is why he speaks this way through the prophet Solomon: “When he prepared the heaven, I was present with him, and when he made the foundations of the earth strong, I was beside him, fitting things together.” Moses, who lived many years before Solomon (or rather the Word of God speaking through Moses as through an instrument), says: “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.” First he named the “beginning” and the “making,” and only then did he bring in God. For one should not name God idly or for no reason. The divine wisdom knew in advance that some people would talk nonsense and name a multitude of gods who do not exist.

Translator’s note. The quotation from Solomon is [Proverbs 8:27-30](#), abridged, following the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), which has “fitting together” (ἀρμόζουσα). The Hebrew word in verse 30 is uncertain and is rendered variously, e.g. “master workman” or “one brought up with him.”

Scripture: [Proverbs 8:27-30](#); [Genesis 1:1](#)

2.10c So that the God who truly is might be understood through his works, and so that people might know that God made heaven and earth and everything in them by his Word, Moses said: “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.” Then, after speaking of their making, he explains to us: “But the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the deep, and the Spirit of God was borne along above the water.” Divine Scripture teaches these things first of all: in some sense there was a created matter, brought into being by God, from which God made and fashioned the world.

Translator’s note. Theophilus insists that the matter the world was made from was itself created by God. Earlier in Book 2 he criticizes Plato and his followers for treating matter as uncreated.

Scripture: [Genesis 1:1-2](#)

2.11a The beginning of creation is light, because light makes visible the things that are put in order. So Scripture says: “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the

light was good,” plainly meaning that it was made good for man. “And he separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the middle of the water, and let it separate water from water. And it was so. And God made the firmament. And God separated the water that was beneath the firmament from the water that was above the firmament.”

Translator’s note. Both the Greek and the Hebrew of [Genesis 1:5](#) say “one day,” not “the first day.”

Scripture: [Genesis 1:3-7](#)

2.11b “And God called the firmament Heaven. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. And God said, Let the water under heaven be gathered into one gathering, and let the dry land appear. And it was so. And the water under heaven was gathered into its gatherings, and the dry land appeared. And God called the dry land Earth, and the collections of waters he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, grass bearing seed according to its kind and likeness, and fruit trees producing fruit, whose seed is in it, according to its kind, on the earth.”

Scripture: [Genesis 1:8-11](#)

2.11c “And it was so. And the earth brought forth vegetation, grass bearing seed according to its kind and likeness, and fruit trees producing fruit, whose seed is in it, according to its kind, on the earth. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth, to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years. And let them be lights in the firmament of heaven, to shine upon the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars.”

Translator’s note. The Greek phrase *eis archas* uses *archē*, which can mean “beginning” or “rule”; here it means rule, as the Hebrew of [Genesis 1:16](#) and the verb “to rule” in [Genesis 1:18](#) show.

Scripture: [Genesis 1:11-16](#)

2.11d “And God set them in the firmament of heaven, to shine upon the earth, and to rule the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. And God said, Let the waters bring forth moving creatures with living souls, and birds flying over the earth across the firmament of heaven. And it was so. And God made the great sea creatures, and every living soul of creeping animals which the waters brought forth according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God

saw that they were good. And God blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea. And let the birds multiply on the earth.”

| Scripture: [Genesis 1:17-22](#)

2.11e And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. And God said, “Let the earth bring forth a living creature according to its kind: four-footed animals, creeping things, and wild beasts of the earth according to their kind.” And it was so. God made the wild beasts of the earth according to their kind, the livestock according to their kind, and all the creeping things according to their kind. And God saw that they were good. And God said, “Let us make man in our image and likeness. Let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth.” And God made man. In the image of God he made him; male and female he made them.

| Scripture: [Genesis 1:23-27](#)

2.11f And God blessed them, saying, “Increase and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, all the livestock, all the earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth.” And God said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant that is on the whole earth, and every tree that has in it fruit with seed for sowing. These will be food for you. And to all the wild animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, which has in it the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw all the things that he had made, and look, they were very good.

| *Translator’s note.* The Greek has “they were very good” (plural, kala lian), referring to all the things God had made.

| Scripture: [Genesis 1:28-31](#)

2.11g And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. And heaven and earth were completed, and all their order. On the sixth day God completed his works that he had made, and on the seventh day he rested from all his works that he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all his works that God had begun to make.

| *Translator’s note.* “On the sixth day God completed his works” follows the Septuagint. The Hebrew text of [Genesis 2:2](#) says “seventh day.”

| Scripture: [Genesis 1:31](#); [Genesis 2:1-3](#)

2.12a No human being could explain the Six Days and set out the whole of God’s ordering of them as they deserve, not even with ten thousand mouths and ten thousand tongues. Nor, if someone lived ten thousand years as a visitor in this life, would he even then be able to say anything worthy of these things. This is because of the surpassing greatness and riches of God’s wisdom, which is found in

the six-day work written above. Many writers have imitated it and wanted to give an account of these matters. They took their starting points from here, whether about the creation of the world or the nature of man, yet they did not utter even a chance spark worthy of the truth. What the philosophers, writers, and poets say seems trustworthy, because it is dressed up in fine language.

Translator's note. "Six Days" translates the Greek Hexaemeron ("six days"), a name for the six days of creation.

Scripture: [Romans 11:33](#)

2.12b But their discourse is shown to be foolish and empty, because the mass of their nonsense is great and not even a chance bit of truth is found in them. Even if something true seems to have been spoken through them, it is mixed with error. A poisonous drug mixed with honey, wine, or something else makes the whole mixture harmful and useless. In the same way, their long-windedness turns out to be wasted effort, and rather a harm to those who trust it. Then there is the seventh day. All people name it, but most do not know that what the Hebrews call "sabbath" is translated in Greek as "hebdomas" (a group of seven, that is, a week). Every race of mankind uses this name, but they do not know why they call it that.

2.12c Hesiod the poet says that Erebus came from Chaos, and also Earth and Love, who rules over the gods and men of his poem. This statement is shown to be vain and cold, and foreign to all truth. For God must not be overcome by pleasure. Even self-controlled men keep away from every shameful pleasure and evil desire.

Translator's note. Theophilus is summarizing Hesiod's account of the first beings in the Theogony. "Love" here is Eros, the personified power of desire.

2.13a Hesiod's idea is also merely human, lowly and very weak when measured against God, because he begins his account of how things were made from the earthly things down below. A man, being down below, starts building from the ground. He cannot properly put on the roof unless he has first laid a foundation. God's power, however, is shown in this: first he makes the things that come to be out of things that did not exist, and then he makes them as he wishes. For what is impossible with men is possible with God. That is why the prophet said that the heaven was made first, serving as a kind of roof. He says, "In the beginning God made the heaven." That is, the heaven came to be through the beginning, as we have already shown.

Translator's note. The Greek has "In the beginning" and the singular "heaven"; earlier (2.10) Theophilus explained that the Word is called "Beginning" (archē) because he rules over all things made through him, so "through the beginning" means through the Word.

Scripture: [Genesis 1:1](#); [Luke 18:27](#)

2.13b By “earth” he means, in effect, the ground and foundation. By “abyss” he means the great mass of waters. “Darkness” is mentioned because the heaven that God made covered the waters and the earth like a lid. The “Spirit borne above the water” is the one God gave to bring the creation to life, as he gave a soul to man. He blended what is fine with what is fine, for spirit is fine and water is fine. He did this so that the spirit might nourish the water, and the water, penetrating everywhere with the spirit, might nourish the creation. The one Spirit, holding the place of light, stood between the water and the heaven. Its purpose was that the darkness should in no way share in the heaven, which is nearer to God, before God said, “Let there be light.”

Translator’s note. “Spirit” (pneuma) can also mean breath or wind. The quoted phrases come from [Genesis 1:2-3](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:2](#); [Genesis 1:3](#)

2.13c So the heaven, being like a vaulted roof, enclosed the raw matter, which was like a clod of earth. Another prophet, Isaiah by name, also speaks about the heaven. He says, “This is God who made the heaven like a vault, and stretched it out like a tent to be lived in.” So God’s command, that is, his Word, shone like a lamp in an enclosed room. It lit up the region under heaven, having made the light separate from the world. God called the light Day and the darkness Night. Otherwise man would not have known how to call the light day or the darkness night. Nor would he have known the names of the other things, unless he had received the naming from God, who made them. So at the very beginning of the history and of the creation of the world, the holy Scripture is speaking not about this firmament we see, but about another heaven that is invisible to us. After that heaven, this visible heaven was called “firmament.” Half of the water was taken up onto it, so that it might serve humanity as rains, showers and dews.

Translator’s note. In the Greek, half the water is taken up “upon” the firmament, that is, the visible heaven, echoing the waters “above the firmament” in [Genesis 1:7](#).

Scripture: [Isaiah 40:22](#); [Genesis 1:5](#)

2.13d The other half of the water was left on the earth for rivers, springs and seas. The water was still covering the earth, especially its hollow places. So God, through his Word, had the water gathered into one gathering and made the dry land visible, which before had been invisible. But the earth, though now visible, was still unfurnished. So God furnished and adorned it with all kinds of grasses, seeds and plants.

Translator’s note. “Invisible” and “unfurnished” (akataskeuastos) echo the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) of [Genesis 1:2](#), where the earth is “invisible and unfurnished.” “Gathered into one gathering” follows the Septuagint of [Genesis 1:9](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:9](#); [Genesis 1:11](#)

2.14a Now consider the variety, the differing beauty and the abundance in these things. Through them the resurrection is shown, as a sample of the resurrection of all people that is to come. For who that thinks about it will not marvel that a fig tree grows from a tiny fig seed, or that the other very small seeds produce enormous trees? We say that the world is like the sea. The sea would have dried up long ago because of its saltiness if rivers and springs did not flow into it and keep supplying it. In the same way, the world would already have failed because of the wickedness and sin that abound in it, if it did not have God's law and the prophets. These flow and well up with sweetness, compassion and righteousness, and with the teaching of God's holy commandments.

2.14b In the sea there are islands. Some are inhabited, well watered and fruitful, with anchorages and harbors where storm-tossed sailors can find refuge. In the same way God has given to the world, which is tossed and battered by sins, the assemblies, which we call holy churches. In these, as in sheltered island harbors, the teachings of the truth are found. Those who want to be saved run to them: lovers of the truth who wish to escape the wrath and judgment of God. But there are other islands, rocky, dry, barren, full of wild beasts and uninhabited. They harm those who sail and are caught in storms, so that ships are broken up on them and those who land there perish. In the same way there are teachings of error. I mean the heresies, which destroy those who come near them. For they are not guided by the word of truth. Pirates, when they have filled ships, drive them onto the places I have mentioned in order to destroy them. In the same way, those who wander from the truth are destroyed by error.

Translator's note. The printed Greek is accented as *peiratai*, "he tries" (πειράται), which makes no sense here; translators read it as *peiratai*, "pirates" (πειραταί), as the older English translation also does.

2.15a On the fourth day the lights were made. God knows all things beforehand, and so he knew the empty talk of vain philosophers. They were going to say that the things growing on the earth come from the heavenly bodies, as a way of setting God aside. So that the truth might be shown, the plants and seeds came into being before the heavenly bodies. For what comes later cannot produce what came before it. These things also hold a sign and pattern of a great mystery. The sun is a type of God, and the moon a type of man. As the sun differs greatly from the moon in power and glory, so God differs greatly from humanity. As the sun always remains full and never grows smaller, so God always remains perfect, full of all power, understanding, wisdom, immortality and every good thing.

Translator's note. "Heavenly bodies" translates the Greek *stoicheia*, usually "elements." In later Greek the word could mean the heavenly bodies, and the context here shows that is what Theophilus means.

Scripture: [Genesis 1:14-19](#)

2.15b The moon wanes each month and in a sense dies, being a type of man. Then it is born again and grows, as a sign of the resurrection that is to come. In the same way the three days that came before the lights are types of the Trinity: of God, his Word, and his Wisdom. The fourth type is man, who needs light. So there are God, the Word, Wisdom, and man. This is why the lights were made on the fourth day. The placement of the stars also has an order and arrangement that stands for the righteous, the godly, and those who keep the law and commandments of God. The conspicuous, bright stars are in imitation of the prophets. This is why they stay fixed and do not move from place to place. Those that hold a second rank of brightness are types of the people of the righteous. But those that move and flee from place to place, which are also called “wanderers” (planets), are themselves a type of people who fall away from God and abandon his law and commands.

Translator’s note. “Trinity” (Greek trias, “triad”) is generally regarded as the earliest surviving Christian use of the word for God. Here the three are God, his Word, and his Wisdom. Elsewhere Theophilus seems to connect Wisdom with the Holy Spirit.

2.16 On the fifth day the living creatures came from the waters. Here too the many-sided wisdom of God is shown. Who could count the multitude of them and their wonderfully varied offspring? Further, the creatures that came from the waters were blessed by God. This too was to be a sign that people would receive repentance and forgiveness of sins through water and the washing of new birth. This is for all who come to the truth, are born again, and receive a blessing from God. But the great sea creatures and the flesh-eating birds are a likeness of the greedy and of lawbreakers. Water creatures and birds are of one nature, yet some stay within their nature. They do not harm those weaker than themselves, but keep God’s law and eat the seeds of the earth. Others of them break God’s law by eating flesh and wronging those weaker than themselves. In the same way the righteous, who keep God’s law, bite and harm no one, living holy and just lives. But robbers, murderers and the godless are like the sea monsters, the wild beasts and the flesh-eating birds. For by force they swallow up those weaker than themselves. The offspring of the water creatures and of the creeping things shared in God’s blessing, but they have nothing very distinctive of their own.

Translator’s note. “Creeping things” here are creatures of the water. The Greek Old Testament of [Genesis 1:20](#) speaks of the waters bringing forth “creeping things.”

Scripture: [Ephesians 3:10](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [Genesis 1:22](#)

2.17a On the sixth day God made the four-footed animals, the wild beasts and the reptiles of the land. He says nothing about blessing them, because he was keeping his blessing for the man whom he was about to make on that sixth day. At the same time, the four-

footed animals and wild beasts were made as a type of certain people who do not know God and are ungodly, who set their minds on earthly things and do not repent. But those who turn away from their lawless deeds and live righteously fly up in their souls like birds. They set their minds on things above and are pleasing to God's will. Those who do not know God and are ungodly are like birds that have wings but cannot fly up, and cannot run to the heights of the divine. In the same way such people are called human beings, but they set their minds on low, ground-bound and earthly things, weighed down by their sins.

Translator's note. [Genesis 1:24-25](#) indeed records no blessing on the land animals. "Set their minds on things above" echoes [Colossians 3:2](#), and "set their minds on earthly things" echoes [Philippians 3:19](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:24-25](#); [Colossians 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:19](#)

2.17b The animals are called "wild beasts" (thēria) from being hunted (thēreuesthai). They were not made evil or venomous from the beginning. Nothing evil was made by God. Everything was good, and very good. It was man's sin that made them evil. When man transgressed, they transgressed along with him. Think of the master of a house. If he himself does well, his household servants of necessity live in good order. But if the master sins, the servants sin along with him. In the same way, since man, who is lord, sinned, the creatures that were his servants sinned with him. So when man turns back again to what is natural to him and no longer does evil, those creatures too will be restored to their original gentleness.

Translator's note. "Very good" echoes [Genesis 1:31](#). For the hope of peace among the animals, compare [Isaiah 11:6-9](#) and [Romans 8:19-21](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:31](#)

2.18 As for the making of man, man cannot put into words how he was created, even though the divine Scripture gives a short statement about it. When God says, "Let us make man in our image and according to our likeness," he first shows the dignity of man. God made everything else by his word and counted it all as secondary work. He counts the making of man alone as the work of his own hands. Then again, God is found speaking as though he needed help, when he says, "Let us make man in our image and according to our likeness." But he said "Let us make" to no one else than his own Word and his own Wisdom. When he had made man and blessed him to increase and fill the earth, he put everything under man's control and in his service. He also directed that from the beginning man should live on the fruits of the earth, on seeds, green plants and the fruit of trees. At the same time he ordered that the animals should share man's diet, so that they too would eat from all the seeds of the earth.

Translator's note. Earlier in Book 2 (2.15), Theophilus names "God, his Word, and his Wisdom" as a triad. In his usage "Wisdom" often seems to refer to the Holy Spirit, though in some places he uses Word and Wisdom

| almost interchangeably.

| Scripture: [Genesis 1:26](#); [Genesis 1:28](#); [Genesis 1:29-30](#)

2.19a In this way God finished the heaven, the earth, the sea and everything in them on the sixth day, and on the seventh day he rested from all his works that he had made. Then Holy Scripture sums up, saying, “This is the book of the origin of heaven and earth, when it came about, on the day when God made heaven and earth, and every green plant of the field before it came to be, and every herb of the field before it sprang up. For God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no man to work the ground.” By this he showed us that at that time the whole earth was watered by a divine spring and did not need man to work it. Instead the earth sent up everything of itself, at God’s command, so that man would not have to toil in working it.

| *Translator’s note.* Theophilus is paraphrasing [Genesis 2:1-2](#) and quoting [Genesis 2:4-5](#). His text has “God made” where the older translation (following the English Bible) has “the Lord made.” The usual Greek Old Testament reads “the Lord God.” I have translated the wording as Theophilus gives it.

| Scripture: [Genesis 2:1-2](#); [Genesis 2:4-5](#)

2.19b Now, so that the forming of man might also be shown, and so that it should not seem a problem men could never solve (since God had said, “Let us make man,” and the making of him had not yet been revealed), Scripture teaches us, saying: “A spring was going up out of the earth and watering the whole face of the earth. And God formed man, dust from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” For this reason most people have also called the soul immortal. After forming man, God chose for him a place in the regions of the east. It was outstanding for its light, bright with clearer air, and full of very beautiful plants. In it he placed man.

| *Translator’s note.* The quotation is [Genesis 2:6-7](#). Theophilus reports that “most people” call the soul immortal, but he does not say here that Scripture teaches it. Later (2.27) he says man was made neither mortal nor immortal by nature, but capable of either.

| Scripture: [Genesis 2:6-7](#)

2.20a Scripture gives the words of the sacred history this way: “And God planted Paradise in Eden toward the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And God made every tree grow out of the ground, pleasant to look at and good to eat. The tree of life was in the middle of Paradise, and so was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows out of Eden to water Paradise, and from there it divides into four heads. The name of the first is Pison. This is the one that goes around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good, and there are also the carbuncle and the green stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon.

Translator's note. The older translation gives "bdellium and the onyx stone," following the English Bible. The Greek has "the carbuncle (a red stone) and the green stone," as in the Greek Old Testament.

Scripture: [Genesis 2:8-13](#)

2.20b "This is the one that goes around the whole land of Ethiopia. The third river is the Tigris. This is the one that flows opposite the Syrians. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man whom he had formed and put him in Paradise to work it and keep it. And God commanded Adam, 'You may eat food from every tree in Paradise. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. On the day you eat from it, you will surely die.' And the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. Let us make him a helper like himself.' And God also formed from the earth all the wild animals of the field and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to Adam.

Translator's note. Theophilus follows the Greek Old Testament's "Let us make him a helper" ([Genesis 2:18](#)). The Hebrew has "I will make."

2.20c "And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. And Adam gave names to all the livestock, and to all the birds of the sky, and to all the wild animals of the field. But for Adam no helper like him was found. So God cast a trance over Adam, and he fell asleep. God took one of his ribs and filled up the place with flesh. And the Lord God built the rib he had taken from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam. And Adam said, 'This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called Woman, because she was taken from man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' And the two of them were naked, Adam and his wife, and they were not ashamed."

2.21a "Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals on the earth that the Lord God had made. And the serpent said to the woman, 'Why is it that God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of Paradise"? And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat from every tree of Paradise. But of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of Paradise, God said, "You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, or you will die."' And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes to look at, and beautiful to contemplate.

Translator's note. The older translation ends this section at "knowing good and evil" and puts the woman's seeing at the start of the next section. There it reads "a tree to be desired to make one wise," which follows the familiar English Bible. The Greek here, as in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), reads "beautiful to contemplate."

Scripture: [Genesis 3:1-6](#)

2.21b “And she took some of its fruit and ate, and gave some to her husband with her, and they ate. And the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise toward evening. And Adam and his wife hid from the face of God among the trees of Paradise. And the Lord God called Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said to him, ‘I heard your voice in Paradise, and I was afraid, because I am naked, and I hid.’ And he said to him, ‘Who told you that you are naked, unless you have eaten from the one tree I commanded you not to eat from?’

Translator’s note. The Greek literally says they hid “in the middle of the tree of Paradise,” with “tree” in the singular. The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) has the same wording, and the singular is almost certainly collective, so “among the trees” gives the sense.

Scripture: [Genesis 3:6-11](#)

2.21c Adam said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.” God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are cursed above all the wild animals on the earth. You will go on your chest and your belly, and you will eat earth all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will watch for your head, and you will watch for his heel.” And to the woman he said, “I will greatly multiply your pains and your groaning.”

Translator’s note. The older translation has “it shall bruise thy head... thou shalt bruise his heel,” following the familiar English Bible. The Greek here, like the Septuagint, has “watch (or guard, lie in wait for)” (tērēsei, tērēseis). The older translation also adds the words about childbirth and the husband’s rule, which in this Greek belong to the next section.

Scripture: [Genesis 3:12-16](#)

2.21d “In pain you will bear children, and your turning will be toward your husband, and he will rule over you.” To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife’s voice and ate from the tree, the only one I commanded you not to eat from, cursed is the ground in your labors. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you will eat your bread, until you return to the earth from which you were taken. For you are earth, and to earth you will go back.”

Scripture: [Genesis 3:16-19](#)

2.22a You will say to me, then, “You claim that God cannot be contained in a place. How can you now say that he walked in Paradise?” Listen to what I say. God, the Father of all, cannot be contained and is not found in any place, for there is no place of his rest. But his Word, through whom he made all things, who is his

power and his wisdom, took on the person of the Father and Lord of all. This Word came into Paradise in the person of God and spoke with Adam. For the divine Scripture itself teaches us that Adam said he heard the voice. And what else is this voice but the Word of God, who is also his Son?

Translator's note. The objection refers to God walking in the garden ([Genesis 3:8](#)), and Adam's words "I heard your voice" ([Genesis 3:10](#)). "No place of his rest" echoes [Isaiah 66:1](#). "His power and his wisdom" echoes [1 Corinthians 1:24](#).

Scripture: [Isaiah 66:1](#); [John 1:3](#); [1 Corinthians 1:24](#); [Genesis 3:10](#)

2.22b This is not like the poets and writers of myths, who tell of sons of gods born from sexual union. Rather, as the truth explains, the Word always exists, held within the heart of God. Before anything came into being, God had him as his counselor, since he was God's own mind and thought. But when God wished to make what he had planned, he begot this Word as an uttered Word, the firstborn of all creation. God himself was not emptied of his Word. Having begotten the Word, he is always in conversation with his Word. This is why the holy Scriptures teach us, and all the Spirit-bearing men, one of whom is John. He says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." He shows that at first God was alone, and the Word was in him. Then he says, "And the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing came into being." So the Word is God and is by nature born from God. Whenever the Father of all wills, he sends him to some place. Sent by the Father, the Word comes, is heard and seen, and is found in that place.

Translator's note. "Firstborn of all creation" is from [Colossians 1:15](#). The quotation is [John 1:1-3](#).

Scripture: [John 1:1-3](#); [Colossians 1:15](#)

2.23 God made man, then, on the sixth day, but he made known his forming of him after the seventh day, when he also made Paradise, so that man would be in a better place, a region set apart. The facts themselves show that this is true. For can we fail to see how women suffer the pains of childbirth and afterward forget the labor? This happens so that the word of God may be fulfilled, that the human race should grow and multiply. And can we fail to see the condemnation of the serpent, how loathsome it is, crawling on its belly and eating earth? This too is a proof for us of what was said earlier.

Translator's note. Theophilus means that man's creation is reported on the sixth day ([Genesis 1:26-31](#)), but the account of his forming from the dust comes after the seventh day ([Genesis 2:7-8](#)). The allusions are to [Genesis 1:28](#) ("increase and multiply"), [Genesis 3:16](#) (pain in childbirth) and [Genesis 3:14](#) (the serpent on its belly, eating earth). On forgetting the pain of labor, compare [John 16:21](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:28](#); [Genesis 3:14](#); [Genesis 3:16](#); [John 16:21](#)

2.24a God then made to spring up further from the earth every tree that was beautiful to look at and good to eat. At first there were only the things made on the third day: plants, seeds and grasses. But the things in Paradise were made with a special loveliness and beauty. It is even called a “planting,” planted by God. The world also has plants like the rest of them. But the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, exist in no other land, only in Paradise. Scripture says that Paradise is earth and was planted on the earth: “And God planted a paradise in Eden toward the east, and put the man there. And God made to spring up further from the earth every tree beautiful to look at and good to eat.”

| *Translator’s note.* The quotation is [Genesis 2:8-9](#).

| *Scripture:* [Genesis 2:8-9](#)

2.24b By the words “further from the earth” and “toward the east,” the divine Scripture clearly teaches us that Paradise is under this heaven, the same heaven under which the east and the earth lie. The Hebrew word Eden means “delight.” Scripture also indicates that a river flows out of Eden to water Paradise, and from there divides into four heads. Two of these, called Pison and Gihon, water the eastern parts. Gihon especially circles the whole land of Ethiopia, and they say it appears again in Egypt as the river called the Nile. The other two rivers are plainly known among us, the Tigris and the Euphrates, for they run close to our own regions. God put the man in Paradise, as we have said, to work it and guard it. He commanded him to eat from all the fruits, evidently including the tree of life. Only from the tree of knowledge did he command him not to taste. God moved him from the earth, out of which he had been made, into Paradise. He gave him an opportunity to advance, so that by growing and becoming perfect, and even being declared a god, he might then ascend into heaven. (For man had been made in a middle state, neither wholly mortal nor wholly immortal, but able to receive either.

| *Translator’s note.* “Declared a god” means sharing in God’s immortality, not becoming a second God; Theophilus explains this in 2.27.

| *Scripture:* [Genesis 2:10-14](#); [Genesis 2:15-17](#)

2.24c In the same way the place called Paradise was made, in its beauty, midway between the world and heaven. So man was to go up to heaven possessing eternity. When God said “work,” He meant no other work than keeping God’s commandment, so that man would not disobey and destroy himself, as he did destroy himself through sin.

| *Translator’s note.* [Genesis 2:15](#) says man was put in the garden “to work it and keep it.” Theophilus reads the “work” as keeping God’s commandment.

| *Scripture:* [Genesis 2:15](#)

2.25a The tree of knowledge was itself good, and its fruit was good.

It was not the tree that held death, as some suppose, but the disobedience. There was nothing in the fruit except knowledge, and knowledge is good when someone uses it properly. But Adam, at his age then, was still an infant, and so he could not yet take in knowledge as it deserves. Even now, when a child is born, it cannot at once eat bread. It is first raised on milk, and then, as it grows older, it comes to solid food. It would have been the same with Adam. So God did not forbid him to eat from the tree of knowledge out of jealousy, as some suppose.

| Scripture: [Hebrews 5:12-14](#)

2.25b God also wanted to test him, to see whether he would obey His commandment. At the same time He wanted the man to stay simple and innocent a good while longer, while still an infant. This is right not only before God but also among people: to be subject to one's parents in simplicity and without malice. If children ought to be subject to their parents, how much more to God, the Father of all? Besides, it is unseemly for infant children to think beyond their age. As a person grows in age step by step, so he also grows in understanding. So when a law commands people to keep away from something and someone does not obey, plainly it is not the law that brings the punishment but the refusal to obey and the disobedience.

2.25c Take a father, for example. He sometimes orders his own child to keep away from certain things. If the child does not obey the father's command, he is beaten and punished for his disobedience. It is not the things themselves that bring the blows. It is the disobedience that brings disgrace on the one who refuses to listen. In the same way, disobedience brought about the expulsion of the first-formed man from Paradise. It was not that the tree of knowledge had anything bad in it. But through disobedience man had to drain to the dregs toil, pain and grief, and in the end he fell under death.

| *Translator's note.* The verb (ἐξαντλέω), literally to draw or bail out completely, here means to endure something to the end; the older English "draw, as from a fountain" keeps the literal image.

| Scripture: [Genesis 3:23-24](#)

2.26 In this too God gave man a great kindness: He did not let him stay in sin forever. In a way, He cast him out of Paradise as a kind of banishment. This was so that man would pay for his sin by this punishment over a set time, be disciplined, and afterward be called back. This is why, when man was formed in this world, Genesis says in a mystery that he was put into Paradise twice. The first was fulfilled when he was put there. The second will be fulfilled after the resurrection and the judgment. Think of a vessel that is flawed after it has been shaped. It is melted down or reshaped so that it becomes new and whole. The same happens to man through death. He is broken, in a sense, so that in the resurrection he may be found sound. I mean spotless, righteous and immortal. When God

called out and said, "Where are you, Adam?", He did not do it because He did not know. He is patient, and He was giving Adam an opportunity for repentance and confession.

Translator's note. "Where are you, Adam?" is from [Genesis 3:9](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 2:8](#); [Genesis 2:15](#); [Genesis 3:9](#)

2.27a Someone will say to us, "Was man made mortal by nature?" Not at all. "Then was he immortal?" We do not say that either. "Then was he nothing?" Not that either. In my view, man was made neither mortal nor immortal by nature. If God had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him a god. If He had made him mortal, God would seem to be the cause of his death. So He made him neither immortal nor mortal. As we said above, He made him able to receive either. If he leaned toward the things of immortality by keeping God's commandment, he would receive immortality from God as his reward and become a god. If instead he turned to the things of death by disobeying God, he would be the cause of his own death.

Translator's note. "A god" renders θεός, which the older English gives as "God." In this passage Theophilus ties being a god to having immortality. He means that man would share in God's immortality as a reward. He does not mean that man would become the one God.

2.27b For God made man free and in control of himself. What man brought on himself through neglect and disobedience, God now gives him as a gift, out of His own love for mankind and His mercy, when man obeys Him. By disobeying, man drew death on himself. In the same way, anyone who wishes can obey the will of God and gain eternal life for himself. For God has given us a law and holy commandments. Everyone who does them can be saved, and by attaining the resurrection can inherit incorruption.

Translator's note. "Love for mankind" renders φιλανθρωπία, which the older English leaves as "philanthropy."

2.28a After Adam was cast out of Paradise, he knew Eve his wife, whom God had made for him as a wife from his rib. God did this not because He was unable to form Adam's wife separately. He knew beforehand that people would name a multitude of gods. He foresaw that error would use the serpent to name a multitude of gods that do not exist. There is only one God, yet even then error was working to sow a multitude of gods, saying, "You will be like gods." So that no one would suspect that one god made the man and another the woman, God Himself made them both. This was not only so that the mystery of God's sole rule would be shown through it. God made Adam's wife in this way also so that there would be greater goodwill between them.

Translator's note. The Greek says "the mystery of the monarchy (μοναρχία) of God," meaning that God alone rules. The older English has "sole government."

Scripture: [Genesis 4:1](#); [Genesis 2:22](#); [Genesis 3:5](#)

2.28b So Adam said to Eve, “This now is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh.” He also prophesied, saying, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” We see this fulfilled in our own lives. For who that marries lawfully does not think less of mother, father, all his relatives and his whole household, and join himself to his wife and become one with her, devoted to her more than to them? That is why some people often face even death because of their wives. The wicked demon, who is also called Satan, spoke to Eve through the serpent at that time. He is still at work to this day in people who are inspired by him into frenzy. Because Eve was deceived by the serpent in the beginning and became the originator of sin, he calls out “Eve” through them. He is called “demon” and “dragon” because he ran away from God, for at first he was an angel. There is much to say about him, so for now I will pass over the story. I have already spoken about him elsewhere.

Translator’s note. The Greek phrase translated “at first” (ἐν πρώτοις) could also mean “among the foremost.”

Scripture: [Genesis 2:23](#); [Genesis 2:24](#)

2.29a When Adam knew his wife Eve, she conceived and bore a son named Cain. She said, “I have acquired a man through God.” She went on to bear a second son named Abel, who became a shepherd of sheep, while Cain worked the ground. Their story is told in fuller detail, and it also calls for careful explanation. Those who love learning can be taught the history more exactly by the book itself, which is titled “Genesis of the World.” Now Satan saw that Adam and his wife were not only alive but had also had children, and that he had not been able to put them to death. He was swept along by envy. When he saw that Abel pleased God, he worked on Abel’s brother, called Cain, and caused him to kill his brother Abel.

Scripture: [Genesis 4:1-2](#); [Genesis 4:8](#)

2.29b In this way death began in this world, and it has gone on its way to this day through the whole human race. But God is merciful, and he wanted to give Cain, as he had given Adam, a chance for repentance and confession. So he said, “Where is Abel your brother?” Cain answered God defiantly: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” Then God was angry with him and said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the earth, which opened wide to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. You will be groaning and trembling on the earth.” From that time the earth has been afraid and no longer takes in human blood, or the blood of any living creature. It is clear, then, that the earth is not to blame, but the man who transgressed.

Translator’s note. “Groaning and trembling” follows the Greek Septuagint of [Genesis 4:12](#). Translations from the Hebrew read “a fugitive and a wanderer.”

| Scripture: [Genesis 4:9-12](#)

2.30a Cain also had a son, whose name was Enoch. He built a city and named it Enoch after his son. From then on cities began to be built, and this was before the flood. Homer is therefore wrong when he says, “For not yet was a city of mortal men built.” To Enoch a son was born named Gaidad, who fathered the man called Meel. Meel fathered Mathusala, and Mathusala fathered Lamech. Lamech took two wives for himself, named Ada and Sela. From that time polygamy began, and music as well. Lamech had three sons: Obel, Jubal and Thobel. Obel became a man who kept livestock in tents. Jubal is the one who introduced the psaltery and the lyre.

| *Translator’s note.* The names largely follow the Greek Septuagint of [Genesis 4](#). In modern Bibles translated from the Hebrew they appear as Irad, Mehujael, Methushael (not Methuselah), Adah, Zillah, Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain.

| Scripture: [Genesis 4:17-21](#)

2.30b Tubal became a hammerer, a smith working in bronze and iron. The descendants of Cain are listed up to this point. After this, his line of descent passed into oblivion, because he murdered his brother. In Abel’s place God allowed Eve to conceive and bear a son, who was named Seth. From him the rest of the human race has descended down to the present day. For those who love learning and want to know, it is easy to show all the generations from the holy Scriptures. In fact, as I said above, I have already given part of this account in another work: the order of the genealogy is set out in the first book of my work on histories. The Holy Spirit, who spoke through Moses and the other prophets, teaches us all these things. So the writings that belong to us who worship God turn out to be older, and are also shown to be truer, than all the writers and poets.

| *Translator’s note.* The earlier work on histories that Theophilus mentions has not survived.

| Scripture: [Genesis 4:22](#); [Genesis 4:25](#)

2.30c Yet some have also talked nonsense about music, saying that Apollo invented it. Others say that Orpheus discovered music from the sweet singing of birds. Their story is shown to be empty and vain, for these men lived many years after the flood. The account of Noah, whom some call Deucalion, I have given in the book mentioned above. If you wish, you can read it there yourself.

2.31a After the flood there was again a beginning of cities and kings, in this way. The first city was Babylon, along with Erech, Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Their king was named Nimrod. From these came a man named Asshur, from whom the Assyrians get their name. Nimrod built the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen, which lies between Nineveh and Calah. Nineveh became one of the first great cities. Another son of

Shem, the son of Noah, named Mizraim, fathered the Ludim, the people called Anamim, the Lehabim, the Naphtuhim, the Pathrusim, and the Casluhim, from whom came the Philistines. As for the three sons of Noah, their end and their genealogy, I gave a brief listing in the book I mentioned.

Translator's note. The Greek calls Mizraim "another son of Shem," but in [Genesis 10:6](#) he is a son of Ham. This may be a slip by Theophilus or by an early copyist.

Scripture: [Genesis 10:10-12](#); [Genesis 10:13-14](#)

2.31b Now I will also mention what I left out about cities and kings, and about what happened when there was one speech and one language. The cities written about above existed before the languages were divided. But when the people were about to be scattered, they made a plan by their own judgment, and not through God, to build a city and a tower whose top would reach heaven, so that they might make a glorious name for themselves. They dared to attempt a massive work against God's purpose. So God threw down their city and leveled the tower. From then on he changed the languages of men, giving each a different dialect. In the same way the Sibyl pointed to this, announcing that wrath was going to come on the world. This is what she said: "But when the threats of the great God are fulfilled, which he once threatened against mortals, when they built a tower in the land of Assyria."

Translator's note. "The Sibyl" refers to the Sibylline Oracles. These are Greek verses written in the name of an ancient prophetess, and much of them was composed by Jews and Christians. Theophilus treats them as a pagan witness. A similar tower passage appears in Book 3 of the surviving Oracles.

Scripture: [Genesis 11:1](#); [Genesis 11:4](#); [Genesis 11:7-9](#)

2.31c "They all spoke the same language and wanted to go up to starry heaven. At once the Immortal laid a great compulsion on the winds. Then the winds threw down the great tower from on high and stirred up strife among mortals against one another. And when the tower fell, and the languages of men were divided into many dialects of mortals, the earth was filled with mortals under divided kings." And so on. These things, then, happened in the land of the Chaldeans. In the land of Canaan there was a city named Haran. In those times the first king of Egypt was Pharaoh, who was also called Nechaoth by the Egyptians, and the kings after him followed in order. In the land of Shinar, among the people called Chaldeans, the first king was Arioch. After him came another, Ellasar. After him came Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and after him Tidal, king of the nations called Assyrians.

Translator's note. The kings come from [Genesis 14:1](#), where Arioch is "king of Ellasar" and Tidal is "king of nations." Theophilus treats Ellasar as a separate king and adds that Tidal's nations were the Assyrians. Genesis does not say this.

Scripture: [Genesis 14:1](#)

2.31d There were also five other cities in the territory of Ham, the son of Noah. The first was called Sodom. Then came Gomorrah, Adama, Seboim, and the one called Segor. These are the names of their kings: Ballas, king of Sodom; Barsas, king of Gomorrah; Senaar, king of Adama; Hymor, king of Seboim; and Balach, king of Segor, which was also called Kephalak. These kings served Chodollagomor, king of the Assyrians, for twelve years. In the thirteenth year they revolted from Chodollagomor. So it came about that the four kings of the Assyrians went to war against the five kings. This was the very first beginning of wars on the earth. They cut down the giants of Karanaein, and the strong nations with them in the city. They also cut down the Chorraeans in the mountains called Seir, as far as the place called the terebinth of Pharan, which is in the wilderness.

Translator's note. The "Chorraeans" are the Horites of [Genesis 14:6](#). "Giants" follows the Septuagint, which uses this word for the Hebrew "Rephaim," and "terebinth (a tree) of Pharan" is also the Septuagint wording, where Hebrew has "El-paran."

Scripture: [Genesis 14:2](#); [Genesis 14:4](#); [Genesis 14:5-6](#)

2.31e At the same time there was a righteous king named Melchisedek in the city of Salem, which is now Jerusalem. He was the first priest of all the priests of God Most High. From him the city mentioned above, Hierosolyma, was named Jerusalem. From him also priests came to be found over all the earth. After him Abimelech reigned in Gerara, and after him another Abimelech. Then Ephron reigned, who was also called the Hittite. These, then, are the names the records give for these earlier kings. As for the Assyrians, the other kings of the many years in between have been passed over without record, since all the writers record only the latest times, those near our own. The kings of the Assyrians were Theglaphasar, then Selamanasar, then Sennacherim. Adramelech the Ethiopian, who also reigned over Egypt, became his "triarch." Yet all these events are very recent compared with our writings.

Translator's note. "Triarch" (Greek triarchos) is a title for a person, perhaps "one of three chief officers." Its exact sense here is uncertain. In the Bible, Adrammelech is a son of Sennacherib who murdered him ([2 Kings 19:37](#); [Isaiah 37:38](#)), not an Ethiopian ruler of Egypt. Theophilus's account may be confused with Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia ([2 Kings 19:9](#)).

Scripture: [Genesis 14:18](#)

2.32a Heading: How the Human Race Was Dispersed. From this, then, lovers of learning and lovers of antiquity can examine the histories and see whether what we say through the holy prophets is in any way recent. At first the people of that time were few, living in the land of Arabia and Chaldea. After their languages were divided, they gradually began to become many and to multiply over the whole earth. Some turned to settle in the east. Others went to the regions of the great mainland, and to the north, so that they

reached as far as the Britons in the Arctic regions. Others settled in the land of Canaan, Judea, and the country called Phoenicia, and in the regions of Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya, and the country called the Scorched Zone, and stretched out to the lands of the west. The rest settled the coastlands, Pamphylia, Asia, Greece, Macedonia, and then Italy, and the lands called Gaul, Spain, and Germany. So now the whole earth is filled with those who live in it.

2.32b So at the beginning the settlement of the earth by human beings was in three parts: east, south, and west. Then the remaining parts of the earth were settled as the population grew large. The writers do not know these things, and so they want to say that the world is a sphere, and they compare it to a cube. But how can they claim to speak the truth about this, when they know neither how the world was made nor how it came to be inhabited? As people gradually grew in number and multiplied on the earth, as we have said, so the islands of the sea and the other regions were settled.

Translator's note. The Greek literally says they compare the world "as if to a cube." What Theophilus means by this is unclear, and the passage may not have come down to us exactly as he wrote it.

2.33 Heading: Profane History Gives No Account of These Matters. Which of the so-called wise men, poets, or historians was able to tell the truth about these things? They were born much later. And they brought in a multitude of gods who were themselves born so many years after the cities, and came later even than the kings, nations, and wars. They ought to have remembered everything, even what happened before the flood: the creation of the world, the making of man, and the events that followed. The prophets of the Egyptians or the Chaldeans, and the other writers, ought to have told these things accurately, if they really spoke by a divine and pure spirit and what was spoken through them was true. And they ought to have foretold not only what had already happened or was now happening, but also what was coming upon the world. This shows that all the rest have gone astray, and that Christians alone have grasped the truth. We are taught by the Holy Spirit, who spoke in the holy prophets and foretold all things.

2.34 From now on, be willing to search out the things of God with a friendly mind. I mean the things spoken through the prophets. Compare what we say with what the others say, and you will be able to find the truth. We have already shown, from the very histories they wrote, that the names of the so-called gods are found among them as names of men, as we explained above. Their images are made day after day, even to this present time. They are idols, the works of human hands. The crowd of empty-minded people serve these, and they reject the maker and creator of all things, the one who nourishes everything that breathes. They put their trust in worthless teachings, led astray by the error of a senseless opinion handed down from their fathers. Yet God, the Father and Creator of

all things, did not abandon humanity. He gave a law and sent holy prophets to proclaim and teach the human race, so that each one of us might come to our senses and recognize that there is one God. These prophets also taught us to keep away from forbidden idolatry, adultery, murder, sexual immorality, theft, love of money, false oaths, anger, and every kind of indecency and impurity. They also taught that whatever a person would not want done to himself, he must not do to another. In this way, the one who does what is right will escape the eternal punishments and be counted worthy of eternal life from God.

Translator's note. The "golden rule" is given here in its negative form, as in Tobit 4:15 ("What you hate, do not do to anyone") and the Didache (1.2). Compare the positive form in [Matthew 7:12](#).

2.35a The divine law forbids not only bowing down to idols, but also to the elements: the sun, the moon, or the other stars. We must not offer worship to heaven, earth, sea, springs or rivers. We must serve only the one who truly is God, the maker of all things, in holiness of heart and sincerity of mind. So the holy law says: "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife." The prophets say the same. Solomon teaches us not to sin even by a nod of the eye, saying: "Let your eyes look straight ahead, and let your eyelids nod toward what is right." Moses, who was also a prophet, speaks about the single rule of God: "This is your God, who makes firm the heaven and creates the earth. His hands displayed all the host of heaven, and he did not show them to you so that you would go after them."

Translator's note. The Solomon quotation is [Proverbs 4:25](#) in its Greek form. The words credited to Moses are not found in this form in the books of Moses. They appear to combine the warning of [Deuteronomy 4:19](#) against worshipping the host of heaven with language like [Isaiah 45:12](#) and [Amos 4:13](#).

Scripture: [Exodus 20:13-17](#); [Proverbs 4:25](#); [Deuteronomy 4:19](#)

2.35b Isaiah also says: "Thus says the Lord God, who made the heaven firm and laid the foundations of the earth and everything in it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk on it: this is the Lord your God." And again through him he says: "I made the earth, and man upon it. I made the heaven firm with my hand." And in another passage: "This is your God, who fashioned the ends of the earth. He will not hunger or grow weary, and there is no finding out his understanding." Jeremiah likewise says: "He made the earth by his strength, set the inhabited world upright by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heaven, and a multitude of water in the heaven. He brought up clouds from the end of the earth, made lightnings for the rain, and brought out winds from his treasures."

Translator's note. The quotations are from [Isaiah 42:5](#); 45:12; 40:28; and [Jeremiah 10:12-13](#) (repeated in [Jeremiah 51:15-16](#)), in the Greek form

| Theophilus knew.

| Scripture: [Isaiah 42:5](#); [Isaiah 45:12](#); [Isaiah 40:28](#); [Jeremiah 10:12-13](#)

2.35c You can see how all the prophets spoke in friendly harmony, speaking out by one and the same Spirit about the single rule of God, the origin of the world, and the making of man. They also were in anguish, like a woman in labor, mourning over the godless race of men. And they put to shame those who seemed to be wise, because of the error in them and the hardness of their hearts. Jeremiah said: "Every man has become foolish and fallen away from his knowledge. Every goldsmith is put to shame by his carved images. The silversmith works silver in vain. There is no breath in them. In the day of their visitation they will perish." David says the same: "They were corrupted and became abominable in their pursuits. There is no one who does good, not even one. All have turned aside, together they have become useless."

| *Translator's note.* The quotations are from [Jeremiah 10:14-15](#) (the silversmith line resembles the Greek of [Jeremiah 6:29](#)) and [Psalm 14:1-3](#) ([Psalm 13](#) in the Greek numbering; compare [Psalm 53](#) and [Romans 3:12](#)).

| Scripture: [Jeremiah 10:14-15](#)

2.35d Habakkuk says the same: "What good does a carved image do a man, that he carved it into a false appearance? Woe to him who says to the stone, 'Wake up,' and to the wood, 'Rise.'" The other prophets of the truth spoke in the same way. Why should I list all the prophets? There are many of them, and they said countless things in friendly agreement. Anyone who wishes can read what they said and know the truth accurately, and not be led astray by mere opinion and futile labor. These prophets whom we have mentioned were, among the Hebrews, unlettered men, shepherds, and ordinary people.

| *Translator's note.* "Ordinary people" translates ἰδιῶται, meaning private, unlearned people without office. Compare Amos, who calls himself a herdsman ([Amos 7:14](#); see also 1:1).

| Scripture: [Habakkuk 2:18-19](#)

2.36a The Sibyl, who was a prophetess among the Greeks and the other nations, reproaches the human race at the beginning of her prophecy. She says: "Mortal men of flesh, who are nothing, why are you so quickly puffed up, never looking to the end of life? Do you not tremble or fear God, your overseer, the Most High, who knows and sees everything, the witness of all, the nourisher of all, the Creator, who placed a sweet breath in all things and made it the guide of all mortal men? There is one God, who alone rules, exceedingly great, unbegotten, almighty, invisible. He alone sees everything, yet he himself is not seen by any mortal flesh. For what flesh can see with its eyes the heavenly and true God, the immortal, who dwells in the heavens? Men cannot even stand facing the rays of the sun, since they are born mortal, mere men of veins and flesh on bones. Worship him who alone truly is, the ruler of the world,

who alone was born for ever and from everlasting, self-begotten, unbegotten, ruling all things always, and who has placed the power of judgment in all mortals, in a light common to all.”

Translator’s note. These verses, of which Theophilus is a main source, are known today as fragments of the “Sibylline Oracles.” Scholars generally think they were written by Jews or Christians imitating the pagan Sibyl, not by an ancient pagan prophetess.

2.36b “You will receive the reward your bad counsel deserves, because you stopped glorifying the true and everlasting God and offering him holy sacrifices. Instead you made your sacrifices to the demons in Hades. You walk in pride and madness. You left the straight, upright path and went off along one through thorns and sharp stakes. Why do you wander? Stop, foolish mortals! Leave the darkness of night and take hold of the light. See, he is plain to all and never goes astray. Come, and do not keep chasing darkness and gloom. Look, the sweet-shining light of the sun shines out brilliantly. Learn this and store this wisdom in your hearts: there is one God, who sends rains, winds, earthquakes, lightning, famines, plagues and miserable sorrows, and snow and ice. Why do I list them one by one? He rules heaven and holds the earth; he himself is.” Then, against those who are called “born” gods, she said: “If what is born also perishes, then God cannot have been shaped from a man’s loins and a womb.”

Translator’s note. “He is plain to all” translates the masculine οὔτως, which cannot agree with the neuter φῶς (“light”) and so most naturally refers to God.

2.36c “But there is one God alone, supreme over all, who made heaven, the sun, the stars and the moon, the fruit-bearing earth, the swelling waves of the sea, the lofty mountains and the ever-flowing springs. He also brings forth the countless multitude of water creatures. He nourishes the creeping things that move on the earth, and the many kinds of birds, shrill-voiced and chattering, tawny and clear-voiced, that beat the air with their wings. In the glens of the mountains he set the wild race of beasts. He made all the cattle subject to us mortals, and he appointed man, made by God, as ruler of all, and put under man all the varied things we cannot grasp. For what mortal flesh can know all this? He alone knows, who made these things from the beginning: the incorruptible, the Creator, the eternal, who lives in the upper air. To the good he gives good, a far greater reward. But against the wicked and unjust he stirs up anger and wrath, and war, and plague, and tearful pains.”

Translator’s note. Man’s rule over the animals echoes [Genesis 1:26–28](#) and [Psalm 8:6–8](#).

2.36d “Why, men, are you puffed up in vain and torn up by the roots? Be ashamed, you who make gods of weasels and beasts. Is it not madness and raving of the mind, and empty folly, if gods steal dishes and rob cooking pots? Instead of living in a rich golden heaven, your gods look moth-eaten and are covered with thick

cobwebs. You foolish people bow down to snakes, dogs and cats. You worship birds, the creeping beasts of the earth, stone images, hand-made statues, and heaps of stones along the roads. You worship these and many other empty things, which it is shameful even to name. These gods are deceivers of senseless men, and deadly poison pours from their mouths. But bow your neck to him alone, in whom is life and undying, everlasting light, and from whom flows a joy for men sweeter than sweet honey. And turn your path toward ages of godliness.”

2.36e “You have left all this behind. In foolish, raving frenzy you have all drained a cup full of judgment, very strong, heavy and wholly undiluted. You refuse to sober up, to come to a sound mind, and to know God the King, who watches over everything. So the blaze of burning fire is coming upon you. You will be burned by flames for ever, all day long, put to shame for your lies and your useless idols. But those who honor the true and ever-living God inherit life for all eternity. They dwell in the flourishing garden of paradise and feast on sweet bread from the starry heaven.” It is clear, then, that these things are true, beneficial, just, and dear to all people. It is also clear that those who have done evil must necessarily be punished according to what their deeds deserve.

Translator’s note. The undiluted cup of judgment echoes the biblical cup of God’s wrath ([Psalm 75:8](#); [Jeremiah 25:15](#); [Revelation 14:10](#)).

2.37a Some of the poets have already spoken as if giving oracles, both against themselves and as a witness against those who do unjust things, saying that they will be punished. Aeschylus said: “For the one who has done a deed, suffering in turn is owed.” Pindar likewise said: “Since it is fitting that one who does something should also suffer.” In the same way Euripides said: “Endure your suffering, for you took pleasure in doing. It is the rule to do harm to an enemy wherever you catch him.” And again the same poet said: “To do harm to an enemy I count part of a man’s duty.” Archilochus likewise said: “One great thing I know: how to repay with terrible evils the one who does harm.” Dionysius also spoke about the fact that God sees everything and nothing escapes him, and that in his patience he holds back until the time he is to judge: “The eye of Justice, looking on as if with a calm face, always sees all things alike.”

Translator’s note. The older translation begins with a clause not found in this Greek (“that evil-doers must necessarily be punished in proportion to their deeds”) and renders the verse quotations loosely. This version follows the Greek.

2.37b Aeschylus also showed that God’s judgment is coming, and that evils will suddenly overtake the wicked. He said: “Evil comes swift-footed upon mortals, and so does his offense upon the one who oversteps Right. You see Justice, silent and unseen, whether a man is asleep, walking, or sitting. She presses on after him, now from the side, now later. Night does not hide a man who has done

wrong. Whatever terrible thing you do, think that someone sees you." And what of Simonides? "No evil is unlooked for among men, and in a short time God overturns everything." Euripides again: "The good fortune of a wicked man, and a proud prosperity, we must never suppose to be secure, nor the offspring of the unjust. For time, which was born of no one, shows up the wickedness of men." Euripides once more: "For the divine is not without understanding, but is able to take note of oaths that were wrongly made and forced out of people."

Translator's note. The older translation renders the Aeschylus lines as a loose rhymed poem and the other quotations as freer verse. This version follows the Greek wording. The Aeschylus text is difficult in places.

2.37c And Sophocles said: "If you have done terrible things, you must also suffer terrible things." So whether it concerns a false oath or some other offense, the poets themselves have more or less foretold that God will call people to account. And about the burning up of the world they said things that agree with the prophets, whether they meant to or not. They lived much later than the prophets, and they stole these things from the law and the prophets.

Translator's note. The older translation adds a closing sentence, "The poets corroborate the testimony of the prophets." It is not in the Greek of this section.

2.38a But what does it matter whether they came last or first? At any rate, they too said things that agree with the prophets. About the burning up of the world, the prophet Malachi had already spoken: "Look, a day of the Lord is coming, like a burning oven, and it will set all the ungodly on fire." And Isaiah said: "For the wrath of God will come like hail driven down with force, and like water sweeping along in a ravine." So the Sibyl and the other prophets, and indeed the poets and philosophers too, have spoken plainly about righteousness, judgment, and punishment. They have also spoken about providence: God cares not only for us while we live, but also for the dead. They said this against their will, for they were being convicted by the truth. Among the prophets, Solomon said this about the dead: "There will be healing for the flesh, and care for the bones."

Translator's note. Theophilus counts the Sibyl among the prophets. The saying he attributes to Solomon resembles [Proverbs 3:8](#), which speaks of the living; he applies it to the dead.

Scripture: [Malachi 4:1](#); [Isaiah 30:28-30](#); [Proverbs 3:8](#)

2.38b David said the same: "The humbled bones will rejoice." Timocles spoke in agreement with these words when he said: "A kindly god has mercy on the dead." So the writers who spoke of a multitude of gods came around in the end to the rule of one God. Those who spoke against providence spoke of providence after all. Those who said there is no judgment admitted that there will be

one. And those who denied that there is any awareness after death admitted that there is. Homer, for example, says in one place: “The soul flew off like a dream and fluttered away.” But in another he says: “The soul flew from his limbs and went down to Hades.” And again: “Bury me as quickly as possible, so that I may pass through the gates of Hades.”

Translator’s note. The Timocles line is compressed in Greek. It can also be read “For the dead, pity is a kindly god.” Theophilus takes it as saying that God cares for the dead.

2.38c For one of the prophets I mentioned earlier, named Hosea, said: “Who is wise, and will understand these things? Who is discerning, and will know them? For the ways of the Lord are straight, and the righteous will enter into them, but the ungodly will falter in them.” So the person who loves learning must keep on learning. Try, then, to meet with me more often, so that by hearing a living voice you may learn the truth accurately.

Translator’s note. The older translation has “the transgressors shall fall therein.” The Greek says the ungodly “will grow weak” or “falter” in the Lord’s ways. The quotation closely matches the last verse of Hosea (14:9; 14:10 in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles).

Scripture: [Hosea 14:9](#)

Book 3

3.1 Theophilus to Autolykus, greetings. Writers like to produce huge numbers of books for empty glory. Some write about gods, wars or dates, and some about useless myths and other wasted labor. You yourself have practiced this kind of effort until now, and you do not hesitate to put up with that toil. But although you have talked with me, you still think the word of truth is nonsense, and you suppose that our writings are recent and modern. For this reason I will not hesitate, with God’s help, to sum up for you the antiquity of our writings. I will write you a brief account, so that you will not shrink from reading it, and so that you may recognize the foolish talk of the others.

3.2a Those who write ought to have been eyewitnesses of what they affirm, or to have learned it accurately from people who saw it. People who write about things they do not know for certain are, in a way, beating the air. What good did it do Homer to write about the Trojan War and deceive many people? What good did it do Hesiod to compile a catalogue of the births of those he calls gods? What good did it do Orpheus to write of three hundred and sixty-five gods? He himself rejected them at the end of his life, saying in his Testaments that there is one God. What good did his description of the sphere of the heavens do Aratus, or those who said similar things? It brought them only human reputation, and they did not even receive that as they deserved. And what true thing did they say? Or what good did their tragedies do Euripides and Sophocles,

or the other writers of tragedy?

Translator's note. Aratus wrote the "Phaenomena," a poem describing the constellations. Paul quotes a line from its opening in [Acts 17:28](#).

Scripture: [1 Corinthians 9:26](#)

3.2b What good did their comedies do Menander and Aristophanes and the other comic writers? Or their histories do Herodotus and Thucydides? Or the sacred inner shrines and the pillars of Heracles do Pythagoras? Or Cynic philosophy do Diogenes? What good did it do Epicurus to teach that there is no providence? Or Empedocles to teach godlessness? Or Socrates to swear by the dog, the goose, the plane tree, and Asclepius who was struck by lightning, and by the demons he used to call on? Why did he even die willingly? What reward, and of what kind, did he hope to receive after death? What good did his kind of education do Plato? Or their doctrines do the other philosophers? I will not list them all, for they are many. We say these things to show how useless and godless their thinking is.

Translator's note. In Plato's dialogues Socrates swears "by the dog" and, in the Phaedrus, "by this plane tree." Myth said Zeus killed Asclepius with a thunderbolt. "Demons" renders daimonia. Socrates spoke of a divine sign or "daimonion" that guided him, and Theophilus treats this as demonic.

3.3a All of these men were in love with empty and worthless glory. They neither knew the truth themselves nor urged others toward it. Their own statements prove them wrong, since they said things that do not agree, and most of them tore down their own doctrines. They not only overturned one another; some even made their own teachings void. So their glory ended in dishonor and folly, for sensible people condemn them. Either they spoke about gods and afterward taught that there are no gods, or they spoke about the origin of the world and ended by saying that everything came about by chance. Even when they spoke about providence, they went on to teach that the world has no providence. And what of this? When they tried to write about decency, they taught that licentiousness, fornication and adultery should be practiced, and they even introduced detestable and unspeakable practices.

Translator's note. "Unspeakable practices" renders a Greek word meaning literally "doing unspeakable things," a euphemism for shameful sexual acts.

3.3b They proclaim that their own gods were the first to engage in unspeakable unions and in lawless meals. For who does not sing of Kronos eating his children? Or of Zeus, his son, swallowing Metis and preparing foul feasts for the gods, where they say a lame blacksmith, Hephaestus, waited on them? They say that Zeus not only married his own sister Hera, but also did unspeakable things with an impure mouth. As for the rest of his deeds, all that the poets sing, you probably know them. Why should I go on to list the stories about Poseidon, Apollo, Dionysus and Heracles, about

bosom-loving Athena and shameless Aphrodite? We have given a more careful account of them elsewhere.

Translator's note. "Bosom-loving" (philokolpos) is an unusual, mocking epithet for Athena, and its exact point is unclear.

3.4 There would have been no need for me to refute these things, except that I see you still hesitating about the word of truth. You are a sensible man, yet you put up gladly with fools. Otherwise you would never have let senseless men lead you away with empty words, or believed a rumor that had already taken hold. Godless mouths falsely slander us, who worship God and are called Christians. They say that our wives are shared among us all and that we have promiscuous intercourse. They say that we even sleep with our own sisters. And, the most godless and savage charge of all, they say that we eat human flesh. They also say that our teaching has appeared only recently, that we have nothing to offer as proof that what we teach is true, and that our message is foolishness. I am especially surprised at you. In other matters you are diligent and look into everything, yet you listen to us rather carelessly. When you could, you did not hesitate to spend even the night in the libraries.

Translator's note. The older English renders the last clause as a conditional ("you would not grudge"). The Greek has no ἄν, so it can also be read as a statement of Autolycus's habit: "when it was possible, you did not shrink from spending even nights in the libraries."

Scripture: [2 Corinthians 11:19](#)

3.5 Since you have read so much, what do you think of the writings of Zeno, Diogenes and Cleanthes? Their books teach cannibalism. They say fathers should be boiled and eaten by their own children. They say that if anyone is unwilling, or throws away any part of this foul food, he who did not eat should himself be eaten. Even more godless is the saying of Diogenes, who teaches that children should bring their own parents to sacrifice and eat them. Does not the historian Herodotus also tell the story of Cambyses, who slaughtered the children of Harpagus, boiled them, and set them before their father as food? He also tells the story that among the Indians fathers are eaten by their own children. What godless teaching from those who wrote down such things, or rather taught them! What impiety and godlessness! What a mind they had, those who philosophized so precisely and who profess philosophy! For those who laid down such doctrines filled the world with impiety.

Translator's note. In Herodotus (Histories 1.119) it is Astyages, king of the Medes, not Cambyses, who has Harpagus's son killed and served to him. Theophilus seems to have confused the names. Herodotus does mention an Indian people who ate their dead fathers (Histories 3.38).

3.6a Indeed, nearly all who have wandered astray in the chorus of philosophy agree with one another about lawless conduct. Plato comes first, the one who seems to have philosophized most

respectably among them. In the first book of his work called the *Republic* he plainly lays down, in a certain way, that the wives of all men should be held in common. He uses as his example the son of Zeus who was lawgiver of the Cretans. His pretext is that many children would be born from such unions, and that those who are grieving should supposedly be comforted by such relations. Epicurus, besides teaching atheism, also advises men to have intercourse with their mothers and sisters, going beyond the laws that forbid it. For Solon clearly legislated about this, so that children would be born lawfully of the man who married their mother and not of adultery. Then no one would honor as father one who is not his father, or dishonor the man who really is his father because he does not know that he is.

Translator's note. Where the older English has "from the best persons," the Greek says only "from such" unions. Where it has "worn with toil," the Greek word means "grieving."

3.6b The other laws of the Romans and Greeks also forbid such things to be done. Why, then, do Epicurus and the Stoics teach that intercourse with sisters and sex between men should be practiced? They have filled libraries with these teachings, so that from boyhood people learn this lawless union. And why should I go on wasting time over them, when they have proclaimed the same sort of things even about the gods they speak of?

3.7a They said that there are gods, and then again they made them count for nothing. Some said the gods are made up of atoms. Others said that they dissolve into atoms and that the gods can do no more than men. Plato says there are gods, but wants to make them out of matter. Pythagoras toiled so much over the gods and went up and down on his journeys. In the end he settled on nature as the explanation of everything. He says that all things happen by chance, and that the gods take no thought for men. There is also all that Clitomachus the Academic introduced in favor of atheism. And what of Critias, and Protagoras of Abdera, who said, "Whether there are gods I cannot say, nor can I make clear what they are like. For there are many things that prevent me"? As for Euhemerus, the most godless of all, it is pointless for me even to speak of him.

Translator's note. This picture of Pythagoras denying providence is Theophilus's own. Other ancient sources do not usually describe Pythagoras this way.

3.7b Euhemerus ventured to say many things about the gods, and in the end he wants there to be no gods at all, and all things to be governed by chance. As for Plato, he said so much about the single rule of God and about the human soul, claiming that the soul is immortal. Yet is he not later found contradicting himself, saying that some souls pass into other human beings, and that some go even into irrational animals? Will his teaching not seem terrible and unlawful to anyone with sense, that one who was once a man will

again be a wolf, or a dog, or a donkey, or some other irrational beast? Pythagoras is found talking the same nonsense, and on top of that he cuts away providence. Which of them, then, shall we believe? Shall we believe the comic poet Philemon, who says: "Those who worship God have good hopes of salvation"?

3.7c Or shall we believe those we mentioned earlier, Euhemerus, Epicurus and Pythagoras, and the rest who deny that there is any reverence for God and who do away with providence? About God and providence, Ariston said: "Take heart. God is accustomed to help all who are worthy, and especially such people. If there is no place of honor set aside for those who live as they ought, what is the gain in being godly? Suppose that is so. But I see very often that those who have chosen to live devoutly fare badly, while those who care for nothing but profit and their own interest are held in higher esteem than we are, for the present. But we must look far ahead and wait for the final outcome of everything. For it is not as some have come to think, with a wicked opinion that does no good for life, that there is some automatic drift, which settles everything as chance would have it."

Translator's note. The lines seem to come from a comedy. The poet named Ariston is otherwise little known.

3.7d "For the wicked judge that these ideas give them a ready support for their own way of life. But there is an honored place for those who live in holiness, and for the wicked a fitting penalty. For nothing at all happens without providence." Others too, indeed most of them, have said many things about God and providence, and you can see how inconsistent they are with one another. Some did away with God and providence altogether. Others affirmed God and agreed that all things are governed by providence. So the sensible hearer and reader must pay close attention to what is said. Simylus put it this way: "It is the custom to give the common name of poets both to those who are exceptional by nature and to those who are good. But one ought to judge between them." Philemon likewise said: "A senseless listener sitting there is a hard thing, for in his folly he does not blame himself." So one must pay attention and understand what is said, examining critically what the philosophers and the other poets have declared.

3.8 For while they deny that there are gods, they turn around and admit it, and say that these gods commit lawless acts. First of all, the poets sing the wicked deeds of Zeus in rather pleasing verse. And Chrysippus, who talked so much nonsense, is he not found suggesting that Hera did a foul thing with her mouth in her relations with Zeus? Why should I list the debaucheries of the one called the mother of the gods? Or of Zeus Latiaris, thirsty for human blood? Or of Attis, who was castrated? Or tell how the Zeus called "the Tragedian," who, as they say, drenched his own hand, is now honored as a god among the Romans? I say nothing of the shrines of Antinous and of the others who are called gods. When

these things are told to sensible people, they only bring laughter. So those who teach such philosophy are convicted by their own teachings, either of atheism or of promiscuity and lawless intercourse. Moreover, cannibalism is also found among them, in the writings they composed, and they record that the very gods they honored were the first to do these things.

Translator's note. Antinous was the young favorite of the emperor Hadrian. After he drowned in the Nile, he was declared a god.

3.9a We also confess God, but one God, the Creator, Maker and Fashioner of this whole universe. We know that all things are governed by providence, but by Him alone. We have also learned a holy law, but the lawgiver we have is the One who truly is God. He teaches us to act justly, to be godly, and to do good. About godliness He says: "You shall have no other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or a likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I am the Lord your God." About doing good He said: "Honor your father and your mother, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may live long on the land that I, the Lord God, give you."

Translator's note. Theophilus is quoting the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:3-5](#), 12; compare [Deuteronomy 5](#)) somewhat freely from the Greek Old Testament. This is translated from his Greek, not from an English Bible.

Scripture: [Exodus 20:3-5](#); [Exodus 20:12](#)

3.9b Again, concerning righteousness: "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not covet his house, or his field, or his servant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his beast of burden, or any of his cattle, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. You shall not pervert the judgment of the poor man in his case. You shall keep yourself away from every unjust word. You shall not kill the innocent and righteous. You shall not acquit the ungodly. And you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of those who see and ruin just words." Moses, who was also God's servant, became the minister of this divine law. He served the whole world, but above all the Hebrews, who are also called Jews. Long ago a king of Egypt had enslaved them. They were the righteous offspring of godly and holy men: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God remembered these men and worked wonders and extraordinary signs through Moses. He rescued their descendants and brought them out of Egypt, leading them through the place called the desert. He brought them back to the land of Canaan, which was afterward named Judea. He set a law before them and taught them these things. This law is great and wonderful for promoting all righteousness, and its ten main points are the ones we have stated above.

Translator's note. Moses is called God's "servant" (therapon) in [Numbers 12:7](#), and [Hebrews 3:5](#) echoes this. The Greek calls the Ten

| Commandments “ten heads” (kephalaia), meaning chief points.

| Scripture: [Exodus 20:13-17](#); [Exodus 23:6-8](#); [Deuteronomy 5:17-21](#)

3.10 Now they had become foreigners living in the land of Egypt, since they were Hebrews by race, from the land of the Chaldeans. At that time a famine came, and they were forced to move to Egypt because grain was being sold there. They stayed there for a time as foreign residents. All this happened to them according to what God had foretold. So after they had lived in Egypt for 430 years, when Moses was about to lead them out into the desert, God taught them through the law, saying: “You shall not oppress a foreigner, for you know the soul of a foreigner. You yourselves were foreigners in the land of Egypt.”

| *Translator’s note.* God’s prediction is in [Genesis 15:13](#). The 430 years come from [Exodus 12:40](#), though the Greek Old Testament there counts the stay “in Egypt and in the land of Canaan.” The law quoted is [Exodus 23:9](#).

| Scripture: [Exodus 23:9](#); [Exodus 12:40](#)

3.11a When the people broke the law that God had given them, God, who is good and compassionate, did not want to destroy them. Besides giving the law, he later sent prophets to them from among their own brothers, to teach them, to remind them of what the law said, and to turn them back to repentance so that they would sin no more. But he warned beforehand that if they kept on in their evil practices, they would be handed over into the power of all the kingdoms of the earth. It is plain that this has already happened to them. Concerning repentance, the prophet Isaiah speaks to all people in general, but in particular to the people of Israel: “Seek the Lord, and call on him when you find him. And when he draws near to you, let the ungodly forsake his ways, and the lawless man his plans. Let him turn back to the Lord his God, and he will be shown mercy, because he will forgive your sins abundantly.”

| *Translator’s note.* The quotation is [Isaiah 55:6-7](#), given in Theophilus’s Greek wording.

| Scripture: [Isaiah 55:6-7](#)

3.11b Another prophet, Ezekiel, says: “If the lawless man turns away from all the lawless acts he has done, and keeps my commandments and does my righteous requirements, he shall surely live and shall not die. None of the wrongs he has done will be remembered. He will live by the righteousness he has done. For I do not desire the death of the lawless man, says the Lord, but that he turn from his evil way and live.” Isaiah again: “Turn back, you who plan deep and lawless schemes, so that you may be saved.” And another prophet, Jeremiah: “Turn back to the Lord your God, like a grape-gatherer to his basket, and you will be shown mercy.” There are many sayings in the holy Scriptures about repentance, or rather, they are countless, since God always wants the human race to turn away from all its sins.

Translator's note. The "grape-gatherer to his basket" image comes from [Jeremiah 6:9](#), which Hebrew-based English Bibles also have ("as a grapegatherer into the baskets"). Theophilus seems to have joined it to a call to "turn to the Lord your God."

Scripture: [Ezekiel 18:21-23](#); [Isaiah 31:6](#); [Jeremiah 6:9](#)

3.12a Again, concerning the righteousness that the law spoke of, the writings of the prophets and of the Gospels are found to agree with it, because all of them were carriers of the Spirit and spoke by the one Spirit of God. Isaiah, for example, said: "Remove the evils from your souls. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Rescue the one who is wronged. Give judgment for the orphan, and do justice for the widow." The same prophet also says: "Undo every bond of injustice. Loosen the knots of violent contracts. Send the broken away in freedom, and tear up every unjust written agreement. Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house. If you see someone naked, clothe him, and do not neglect your own relatives, your own family line. Then your light will break forth early, your healing will quickly spring up, and your righteousness will go before you."

Translator's note. The quotations are [Isaiah 1:16-17](#) and 58:6-8. The older translation has "hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Theophilus's Greek says "do not overlook (or neglect) those of your own seed," that is, your own kin. The older version also adds "of your doings" in the first quotation, which the Greek lacks.

Scripture: [Isaiah 1:16-17](#); [Isaiah 58:6-8](#)

3.12b Jeremiah likewise says: "Stand at the roads and look, and ask which is the good way of the Lord our God, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. Judge with just judgment, for in these things is the will of the Lord your God." In the same way Hosea says: "Keep justice, and draw near to the Lord your God, who made the heaven firm and created the earth." Another prophet, Joel, said things that agree with these: "Gather the people, make the assembly holy, receive the elders, gather the infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom come out of his bedroom and the bride from her bridal chamber. Pray earnestly to the Lord your God, that he may have mercy on you, and he will wipe out your sins."

Translator's note. The older translation has "assemble the elders"; the Greek says "receive" or "welcome" them.

Scripture: [Jeremiah 6:16](#); [Hosea 12:6](#); [Joel 2:16-17](#)

3.12c Zechariah likewise says: "Thus says the Lord Almighty: Judge with true judgment, and let each of you show mercy and compassion to his neighbor. Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, or the foreigner who has joined Israel. And let none of you hold a grudge in your hearts against his brother, says the Lord Almighty."

Translator's note. "Foreigner who has joined Israel" translates "proselyte." The older translation has "stranger" and "imagine evil"; the Greek verb means to hold a grudge or remember a wrong. The Greek has

“neighbor” where the older English has “brother” in the first clause.

Scripture: [Zechariah 7:9-10](#)

3.13 Concerning purity, the holy word teaches us not only to avoid sin in deed but even in thought. We must not think anything evil in the heart, and we must not look with our eyes at another man’s wife and lust after her. Solomon, who was both a king and a prophet, said: “Let your eyes look straight ahead, and let your eyelids look at what is right. Make straight tracks for your feet.” The voice of the Gospel teaches about purity even more forcefully, saying:

“Everyone who looks at another man’s wife so as to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” It also says: “He who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery, and whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery.” For Solomon says: “Can anyone tie fire up in his garment and not burn his clothes? Or can anyone walk on burning coals and not scorch his feet? So it is with the man who goes in to a married woman: he will not go unpunished.”

Translator’s note. The Greek says “tie up fire in a garment,” while the Septuagint of [Proverbs 6:27](#) has “in his bosom.”

Scripture: [Proverbs 4:25-26](#); [Matthew 5:28](#); [Matthew 5:32](#); [Proverbs 6:27-29](#)

3.14 Some people suppose that we are kind only to our own people. But the prophet Isaiah said: “Say to those who hate you and those who detest you, ‘You are our brothers,’ so that the name of the Lord may be glorified and be seen in their joy.” The Gospel says: “Love your enemies, and pray for those who mistreat you. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even robbers and tax collectors do this.” It teaches those who do good not to boast, so that they will not be people-pleasers. For it says: “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” The divine word also commands us to submit to rulers and authorities and to pray for them, so that we may lead a calm and quiet life. It teaches us to give everyone what is due: to the one owed honor, honor; to the one owed respect, respect; to the one owed tribute, tribute. We are to owe nothing to anyone, except to love everyone.

Translator’s note. “Rulers and authorities” echoes [Titus 3:1](#), and “a calm and quiet life” is from [1 Timothy 2:2](#). The last sentences follow [Romans 13:7-8](#). “Respect” translates the Greek “fear,” as in Romans. Paul writes “love one another,” while Theophilus has “love everyone.”

Scripture: [Isaiah 66:5](#); [Matthew 5:44-46](#); [Matthew 6:3](#); [Romans 13:7-8](#)

3.15a Consider, then, whether people who learn such things could live carelessly, mix themselves up in unlawful sexual unions, or do what is most godless of all and eat human flesh. We are not even allowed to watch gladiator shows, so that we do not become sharers in murders or witnesses to them. Nor may we attend the other spectacles, so that our eyes and ears are not defiled by sharing in

the words sung there. If someone speaks of cannibalism, there the children of Thyestes and Tereus are eaten. If he speaks of adultery, that too is acted out in their tragedies. It is not only the adultery of humans but also that of gods, which they proclaim in fine voices to win honors and prizes. Far be it from Christians even to think of doing anything like that. Among us self-control is present, restraint is practiced, one marriage is kept, purity is guarded, injustice is torn down, sin is rooted out, righteousness is cultivated, law governs our life, reverence for God is put into practice, God is confessed, truth rules, grace preserves, peace shelters, the holy word guides, wisdom teaches, life presides, and God reigns.

Translator's note. The Greek "logos" here can mean God's word, that is, his teaching, or the divine Word himself. It is not certain which Theophilus intends.

3.15b We have much more to say about our way of life and about the righteous requirements of God, the Creator of all things. For now, though, we think we have said enough to make you stop and consider, especially in light of what you have been reading up to now. You have been a lover of learning, and we want you to go on being one.

Translator's note. The Greek says "from what you have read up to this point." This may refer to what Autolycus has read so far in these books, or to the Scriptures that Theophilus urged him to read.

3.16a With God's help, I now want to show you more exactly the matter of the dates. Then you will see that our teaching is neither recent nor a made-up story. It is older and truer than all the poets and historians who wrote on uncertain ground. Some of them said the world was never created, and so they wandered off into the endless. Others said it was created, and claimed that 153,075 years have already passed. That is what Apollonius the Egyptian reports. As for Plato, who is thought to have been the wisest of the Greeks, what nonsense he fell into! In his work entitled the *Republics* we find him saying, in so many words: "For how could anything new ever have been discovered, if these things had stayed the same for all time, arranged as they are now? For ten thousand times ten thousand years these things evidently remained unknown to the people of those times. And it is a thousand years, or twice that, since some things became clear to Daedalus, some to Orpheus, and some to Palamedes."

Translator's note. The older translation says "The Republic," but Theophilus gives the title in the plural (*Politeiai*). The words he quotes are in fact from Plato's *Laws* (book 3, 677c-d), not the *Republic*.

3.16b By saying these things happened, Plato shows that ten thousand times ten thousand years passed from the flood to Daedalus. He says a great deal about cities around the world, and about settlements and nations, but he admits that he said these things by guessing. For he says: "If then, stranger, some god were to promise us that, if we undertook a second time the examination

of legislation, [we would hear words no worse than] the things now said..." Plainly he spoke by guesswork. And if it was guesswork, then what he said is not true.

Translator's note. Theophilus's quotation breaks off. The sentence comes from Plato's *Laws* 3.683e, where it continues, roughly, "we would hear arguments no worse or fewer than those now spoken." I have put that sense in brackets so the broken sentence can be read.

3.17 So one ought rather to become a student of God's legislation. Plato himself admitted that there is no other way to learn exactly, unless God teaches through the law. And did not the poets Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus say that they had learned from divine providence? The historians also tell us that there were seers and foretellers, and they say that those who learned from them wrote accurately. How much more, then, shall we know the truth, we who learn from the holy prophets, who received the Holy Spirit of God! This is why all the prophets spoke in harmony and agreement with one another, and announced to the whole world beforehand what was going to happen. For those who love learning, or rather who love truth, the actual outcome of things foretold and now completed can teach them that the prophets' announcements really are true. These concern the times and seasons before the flood, and from the creation of the world until now, as the years add up. That will expose the emptiness of the historians' falsehood, and show that what they said is not true.

3.18 As I said earlier, Plato stated that a flood had happened. But he said it covered not the whole earth, only the plains, and that those who escaped to the highest mountains were saved. Others say there were Deucalion and Pyrrha, and that they were saved in a chest. They say that after Deucalion came out of the chest he threw stones behind him, and that people grew from the stones. This, they say, is why a multitude of people is called *laoi*. Others again say that Clymenus lived at the time of a second flood. From what I have already said, it is plain that those who wrote such things and philosophized to no purpose are wretched, utterly godless and foolish. But our prophet Moses, the servant of God, in his account of the creation of the world, told how the flood came upon the earth and how it all took place. He tells no myth of Pyrrha, Deucalion or Clymenus. He does not say that only the plains were flooded, or that only those who escaped to the mountains were saved.

Translator's note. Theophilus calls Deucalion's chest a *larnax*, a different word from the one he uses for Noah's ark (*kibotos*).

3.19a Moses also does not say that there was a second flood. On the contrary, he said there would never again be a flood of water on the world. And indeed no such flood has happened again, nor will it. He says that eight human souls were saved in the ark. The ark was built at God's command, not by Deucalion but by Noah. "Noah" is a Hebrew name, which in Greek means "rest." As I showed in another work, Noah announced to the people of his day that a flood was

coming. He prophesied to them, saying, "Come! God is calling you to repentance." That is why he was fittingly called Deucalion. This Noah had three sons, as I also showed in the second book. Their names were Shem, Ham and Japheth. They had three wives, one for each of them, and there was Noah himself with his wife.

Translator's note. The Greek of the last clause is brief and a little unclear. It is taken here to mean Noah and his wife, which makes eight.

Scripture: [1 Peter 3:20](#); [Genesis 9:11](#); [Genesis 7:13](#)

3.19b Some have called this man "Eunuch." So eight human souls in all, those found in the ark, were saved. Moses made clear that the flood lasted forty days and forty nights. The floodgates of heaven poured out, and the springs of the deep burst forth. The water rose fifteen cubits above every high mountain. In this way the whole race of people living then was destroyed. Only those kept safe in the ark, the eight I mentioned, were saved. The remains of this ark are pointed out to this day in the Arabian mountains. That, in summary, is the history of the flood.

Translator's note. See [Genesis 7:11-12](#) and 7:20. [Genesis 8:4](#) puts the ark's landing in the mountains of Ararat, but Theophilus here says "the Arabian mountains."

Scripture: [Genesis 7:11-12](#); [Genesis 7:20](#); [Genesis 7:23](#); [1 Peter 3:20](#)

3.20a Now Moses led the Jews. As I have already said, they had been driven out of the land of Egypt by King Pharaoh, whose name was Tethmosis. They say he reigned twenty-five years and four months after the people were expelled, as Manetho gives it. After him Chebron reigned thirteen years. After him Amenophis reigned twenty years and seven months. After him his sister Amessa reigned twenty-one years and one month. After her Mephres reigned twelve years and nine months. After him Methramuthosis reigned twenty years and ten months. After him Tythmoses reigned nine years and eight months. After him Damphenophis reigned thirty years and ten months. After him Orus reigned thirty-five years and five months. His daughter reigned ten years and three months. After her Mercheres reigned twelve years and three months.

Translator's note. This king list closely follows the one Josephus quotes from Manetho (Against Apion 1.15), with variations in names and numbers. It is not a reliable record of Egypt's kings.

3.20b His son Armais reigned thirty years and one month. After him Messes, son of Miammus, reigned six years and two months. After him Rameses reigned one year and four months. After him Amenophis reigned nineteen years and six months. Then his sons Thoessus and Rameses reigned ten years. They are said to have had a large cavalry force and a naval fleet in their time. At that time the Hebrews were living as foreigners in Egypt. They were enslaved by the king, Tethmosis, as I said before, and they built him fortified cities: Peitho, Rameses, and On, which is Heliopolis. So the

Hebrews, who are also our forefathers, are shown to be older than the cities then famous among the Egyptians. From them we have the sacred books, which are older than all other writers, as I said before. The country was called Egypt after King Sethos, for they say Sethos is called Egyptus. Sethos had a brother named Armais. He is the one called Danaus, who went from Egypt to Argos. The other writers mention him as a man of very ancient times.

Translator's note. Josephus, quoting Manetho, also says that Sethos was called Aegyptus and that his brother Armais was Danaus (Against Apion 1.15).

Scripture: [Exodus 1:11](#)

3.21a Manetho, the Egyptian writer, talked a great deal of nonsense. He even spoke blasphemies against Moses and the Hebrews with him, claiming that they were driven out of Egypt because of leprosy. Yet he could not give an accurate account of the dates. He called them shepherds and enemies of the Egyptians. In calling them shepherds he spoke the truth against his will, because the truth refuted him. Our forefathers who lived as foreigners in Egypt really were shepherds, but they were not lepers. They came to the land called Jerusalem, and later they settled there. It is clear how their priests, by God's command, served constantly at the temple and in those days healed every disease. They even cured lepers and every kind of defect. King Solomon of Judea built the temple. That Manetho was wrong about the dates is plain from what he himself said. (This is also true of the king who expelled them, whose name was Pharaoh.

Translator's note. "Pharaoh" was the title of the kings of Egypt, not a personal name.

3.21b For he no longer ruled over them. He pursued the Hebrews with his army and was drowned in the Red Sea. Manetho also lies when he says that the shepherds made war on the Egyptians.) The Hebrews left Egypt 313 years before Danaus came to Argos, and from then on they lived in the country still called Judea. It is clear that most people consider Danaus older than any other figure in Greek history. So Manetho, against his will, has shown us two points of the truth in his own writings. First, he admitted that they were shepherds. Second, he said that they left the land of Egypt. So even from these records Moses and those with him are shown to be earlier than the Trojan War, by 900 or even 1,000 years.

Translator's note. In Greek legend, Danaus came from Egypt and settled at Argos in southern Greece.

Scripture: [Exodus 15:4](#)

3.22a Now consider the building of the temple in Judea, which King Solomon built 566 years after the Jews left Egypt. Among the Tyrians there is a written account of how the temple was built, and the documents are kept in their archives. In these records the

temple is found to have been built 143 years and 8 months before the Tyrians founded Carthage. (The record was made by Hiram, the king of the Tyrians and son of Abimalus. He made it because he had become Solomon's friend through a friendship inherited from their fathers, and also because of Solomon's extraordinary wisdom. The two of them were always testing each other with hard questions. As evidence of this, they say that copies of their letters are still kept among the Tyrians to this day.

Translator's note. Scripture says that Hiram had always been a friend of David, Solomon's father ([1 Kings 5:1](#)).

3.22b They also sent letters to one another.) Menander of Ephesus recalls this when he records the history of the Tyrian kingdom. He writes as follows: "When Abimalus, king of the Tyrians, died, his son Hiram succeeded to the kingdom. He lived 53 years. Bazorus succeeded him. He lived 43 years and reigned 17. After him came Methuastartus, who lived 54 years and reigned 12. After him came his brother Atharymus, who lived 58 years and reigned 9. His brother, whose name was Helles, killed him. Helles lived 50 years and reigned 8 months. Juthobalus, a priest of Astarte, killed Helles. Juthobalus lived 40 years and reigned 12. His son Bazorus succeeded him. Bazorus lived 45 years and reigned 7. His son Metten followed, who lived 32 years and reigned 29.

Translator's note. Josephus quotes a longer form of this list from Menander in *Against Apion*, book 1. Theophilus probably took it from there. His copy gives no length for Hiram's reign, and some names and figures differ from Josephus. As printed here, the reigns do not add up to the total given in the next section.

3.22c Pygmalion, son of Pygmalius, succeeded him. He lived 56 years and reigned 7. In the seventh year of his reign his sister fled to Libya and built the city that is still called Carthage. So the whole time from the reign of Hiram to the founding of Carthage adds up to 155 years and 8 months. The temple in Jerusalem was built in the twelfth year of Hiram's reign. So the whole time from the building of the temple to the founding of Carthage was 143 years and 8 months."

Translator's note. Josephus does not name Pygmalion's sister; other sources (e.g. Timaeus, Justin) call her Elissa, and Latin writers such as Virgil know her as Dido.

3.23a That is enough, then, on the testimony of the Phoenicians and Egyptians. Manetho the Egyptian and Menander the Ephesian have written about the dates of our history. So has Josephus, who wrote the account of the war the Romans waged against the Jews. These ancient writers show that the writings of all the other authors are later than the books given to us through Moses, and later also than the prophets who came in between. For the last of the prophets, named Zechariah, flourished in the reign of Darius. The lawgivers, too, are all found to have made their laws in that in-between period. Take Solon the Athenian. He lived in the time of

the kings Cyrus and Darius, the time of the prophet Zechariah I just mentioned, who came in between, a great many years after Moses. Or take the lawgivers Lycurgus, Draco, and Minos. Josephus says in his writings that the sacred books are older than they are. Indeed, the writings of the divine law given to us through Moses are shown to be older even than the reign of Zeus over the Cretans, and older than the Trojan War.

Translator's note. Theophilus treats Zeus as a human king of Crete who was later worshipped as a god, a view he also argues elsewhere in this work.

3.23b With God's help, I want to make my proof of the times and dates more exact. So I will now cover not only the events after the flood but also those before it, so that I can give the total number of all the years, as far as that is possible. I will go back to the very beginning of the creation of the world, which Moses, the servant of God, recorded through the Holy Spirit. For Moses first spoke of the creation and origin of the world, of the first-formed man, and of what happened next. In doing so he also indicated the years that passed before the flood. I ask the only God for the grace to tell the whole truth accurately, according to his will, so that you and everyone who reads this may be guided by his truth and grace. I will begin with the recorded genealogies, starting from the first-formed man.

3.24a Adam lived 230 years until he fathered a son. His son Seth lived 205 years until he fathered a son. His son Enos, 190. His son Cainan, 170. His son Mahaleel, 165. His son Jared, 162. His son Enoch, 165. His son Methuselah, 167. His son Lamech, 188. To Lamech was born the Noah I mentioned earlier. He fathered Shem when he was 500 years old. The flood came in his time, when he was 600 years old. So the total number of years up to the flood was 2,242. Right after the flood, Shem, who was 100 years old, fathered Arphaxad. Arphaxad was 135 when he fathered Salah. Salah was 130 when he fathered a son.

Scripture: [Genesis 7:6](#); [Genesis 11:10-12](#)

3.24b His son Eber was 134 when he fathered a son. The Hebrews take the name of their race from him. His son Phaleg was 130 when he fathered a son. His son Reu was 132. His son Serug was 130. His son Nahor was 75. His son Terah was 70. His son was Abraham, our patriarch, who fathered Isaac when he was 100. So the total up to Abraham is 3,278 years. The Isaac I just mentioned was 60 when he fathered Jacob. Jacob was 130 when the family moved to Egypt, which I described above. The Hebrews' stay in Egypt lasted 430 years. After they left the land of Egypt, they spent 40 years in the place called the wilderness.

Scripture: [Genesis 21:5](#); [Genesis 47:9](#); [Exodus 12:40](#)

3.24c The total, then, is 3,938 years. At that time Moses died, and

Jesus the son of Nun succeeded him as ruler and led them for 27 years. After Jesus, the people turned aside from God's commandments, and they were subject to a king of Mesopotamia named Chusarathon for eight years. Then the people repented, and they had judges: Gothonoel for 40 years, Eglon for 18 years, and Aoth for 8 years. Next, because they stumbled, foreigners held power over them for 20 years. Then Deborah judged them for 40 years. Next the Midianites held power over them for 7 years. Then Gideon judged them for 40 years, Abimelech for 3 years, Thola for 22 years, and Jair for 22 years. Next the Philistines and the Ammonites held power over them for 18 years. Then Jephthah judged them for 6 years, Esbon for 7 years, Ailon for 10 years, and Abdon for 8 years. Next foreigners held power over them for 40 years. Then Samson judged them for 20 years. After that there was peace among them for 40 years. Then Samera judged them for one year, Eli for 20 years, and Samuel for 12 years.

3.25a After the judges they had kings. The first was named Saul, who reigned 20 years. Then came David, our forefather, who reigned 40 years. So the total number of years up to the reign of David is 496. After these kings Solomon reigned for 40 years. By God's counsel he was also the first to build the temple in Jerusalem. After him came Rehoboam for 17 years, then Abias for 7 years, then Asa for 41 years, then Jehoshaphat for 25 years, then Joram for 8 years, then Ahaziah for 1 year, then Athaliah for 6 years. After her came Josiah for 40 years, then Amaziah for 39 years, then Uzziah for 52 years.

Translator's note. The king who reigned 40 years after Athaliah is Joash (Jehoash) in the Bible ([2 Kings 12:1](#)). Theophilus, or his copyists, calls him "Josiah." Abias is the king usually called Abijah.

3.25b After him came Jotham for 16 years, then Ahaz for 17 years, then Hezekiah for 29 years, then Manasseh for 55 years, then Amon for 2 years, then Josiah for 31 years. After him Ochas reigned 3 months, then Jehoiakim for 11 years. Then another Jehoiakim reigned 3 months and 10 days. After him came Zedekiah for 11 years. After these kings the people stayed in their sins and did not repent. So, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the king of Babylon, named Nebuchadnezzar, came up into Judea. He carried the people of the Jews off to Babylon and destroyed the temple that Solomon had built. In the exile in Babylon the people spent 70 years.

Translator's note. "Ochas," who reigned three months, is the king called Jehoahaz in the Bible ([2 Kings 23:31](#)). The Greek also spells Amon as "Amos."

Scripture: [Jeremiah 25:11](#)

3.25c So the total, including the exile in the land of Babylon, comes to 4,954 years, 6 months and 10 days. God had foretold through the prophet Jeremiah that the people would be taken captive to

Babylon. In the same way he also announced beforehand that they would return to their own land after 70 years. When the 70 years were being completed, Cyrus became king of the Persians. In the second year of his reign, in keeping with Jeremiah's prophecy, he made a proclamation. He ordered in writing that all the Jews in his kingdom should go back to their own country and rebuild for God the temple that the king of Babylon mentioned above had torn down. Besides this, Cyrus acted at God's command. He ordered his own bodyguards, Sabassar and Mithridates, to bring back the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Judea and to put them back in the temple. So in the second year of Cyrus the 70 years foretold by Jeremiah were fulfilled.

Translator's note. For the seventy years, see [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#) and [29:10](#). [Ezra 1:1](#) dates Cyrus's decree to his first year, not his second. In [Ezra 1:8](#) Mithredath is Cyrus's treasurer, who hands the vessels over to Sheshbazzar (Theophilus's "Sabassar"). Ezra does not call them bodyguards.

Scripture: [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#); [Jeremiah 29:10](#)

3.26a From this one can see how our sacred writings are shown to be older and truer than the writings of the Greeks and Egyptians, or of any other historians. Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and the other historians, most of them, began their records at about the reign of Cyrus and Darius. They were not able to speak accurately about the older and earlier times. For what great thing did they tell if they wrote about Darius and Cyrus, kings among the barbarians? Or, in Greek history, about Zopyrus and Hippas, or the wars of the Athenians and Spartans, or the deeds of Xerxes? Or about Pausanias, who was in danger of starving to death in the sacred precinct of Athena? Or about Themistocles and the Peloponnesian war, or Alcibiades and Thrasybulus?

Translator's note. Zopyrus was not a Greek but a Persian noble. Herodotus tells how he helped Darius take Babylon.

3.26b My purpose here is not to give material for long talk. It is to show the number of years from the foundation of the world, and to expose the wasted effort and nonsense of these writers. There have not been twenty thousand myriads of years, as Plato said, when he taught that this many years had passed from the flood down to his own time. Nor have there been 150,375 years, as I said earlier that Apollonius the Egyptian reports. Nor is the world uncreated, with everything coming about by itself, as Pythagoras and the others have babbled. The world was made, and it is governed by the providence of God, who made all things. The whole span of time and the years are made clear to those who are willing to be persuaded by the truth. I do not want it to seem that I have set out the dates only as far as Cyrus and neglected the times since then, as if I could not show them. So, with God's help, I will try as far as I can to set out the order of the following times as well.

Translator's note. "Twenty thousand myriads" means 200 million; a

myriad is 10,000. The older translation's "15 times 10, 375" is clumsy. The Greek means 15 myriads and 375, that is 150,375.

3.27a Cyrus reigned twenty-nine years and was killed by Tomyris in the land of the Massagetae. This was in the sixty-second Olympiad. From that time the Romans grew great, for God was strengthening them. Rome had been founded by Romulus, said to be the son of Ares and Ilia, in the seventh Olympiad, on the eleventh day before the Kalends of May, when the year was still counted as ten months. Cyrus died, as we have said, in the sixty-second Olympiad, and that date falls 220 years after the founding of Rome. At that time a man named Tarquinius Superbus ruled the Romans. He was the first to send certain Romans into exile. He corrupted boys and made some of the native citizens eunuchs. He also corrupted virgins and then gave them in marriage. So he was fittingly called Superbus in the Roman language, which means "proud." For he was the first to decree that when people greeted him, another person should return the greeting for him.

Translator's note. The "eleventh day before the Kalends of May" is 21 April by Roman reckoning. "Olympiad" means a four-year period between Olympic Games, used by Greek writers for dating.

3.27b He reigned twenty-five years. After him came annual consuls, tribunes or aediles, who ruled for 453 years. We think it long and needless to list their names. Anyone who wants to learn them will find them in the records written by Chryserus the nomenclator, a freedman of Aurelius Verus. From the founding of Rome to the death of his own patron, the emperor Verus, he recorded everything clearly, both the names and the dates. So the annual magistrates, as we say, held power over the Romans for 453 years. After that came those called emperors, in this order. First was Gaius Julius, who reigned 3 years, 4 months and 6 days. Then Augustus reigned 56 years, 4 months and 1 day. Tiberius reigned 22 years. Then another Gaius reigned 3 years, 8 months and 7 days. Claudius reigned 23 years, 8 months and 24 days.

Translator's note. The "Verus" here is almost certainly Marcus Aurelius, who died in AD 180. The reign Theophilus gives him, 19 years and 10 days, matches Marcus's reign from March 161 to March 180. So this book was written shortly after 180.

3.27c Nero reigned 13 years, 6 months and 28 days. Galba, 2 years, 7 months and 6 days. Otho, 3 months and 5 days. Vitellius, 6 months and 22 days. Vespasian, 9 years, 11 months and 22 days. Titus, 2 years and 22 days. Domitian, 15 years, 5 months and 6 days. Nerva, 1 year, 4 months and 10 days. Trajan, 19 years, 6 months and 16 days. Hadrian, 20 years, 10 months and 28 days. Antoninus, 22 years, 7 months and 6 days. Verus, 19 years and 10 days. So the time of the Caesars, down to the death of the emperor Verus, comes to 237 years and 5 days. From the death of Cyrus, which is also the start of Tarquinius Superbus's rule over the Romans, to the death of the emperor Verus whom we mentioned

earlier, the whole time adds up to 744 years.

Translator's note. Some figures in this list differ from the known lengths of reign; for example, Galba ruled about 7 months (AD 68–69), not 2 years and 7 months. Theophilus's totals are built on his own figures.

3.28 From the foundation of the world, the whole time can be summed up briefly like this. From the creation of the world to the flood, 2,242 years. From the flood to the birth of a child to Abraham, our forefather, 1,036 years. From Isaac, Abraham's son, to the time when the people were living in the desert with Moses, 660 years. From the death of Moses and the leadership of Joshua son of Nun, to the death of the patriarch David, 498 years. From the death of David and the reign of Solomon to the people's exile in the land of Babylon, 518 years, 6 months and 10 days. From the rule of Cyrus to the death of the emperor Aurelius Verus, 744 years. Altogether, from the creation of the world, the total comes to 5,698 years, plus the extra months and days.

Translator's note. The 2,242 years from creation to the flood follow the ages given in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint). The Hebrew text gives 1,656 years.

3.29a With all these dates and the facts I have mentioned now gathered together, one can see how ancient the writings of the prophets are and how divine our teaching is. Our teaching is not recent, and our beliefs are not myths and falsehoods, as some think. On the contrary, they are older and truer. For Thallus mentions Belus, king of the Assyrians, and Cronus the Titan. He says that Belus, together with the Titans, fought against Zeus and those who are called the gods with him. There, he says, Gyges too was defeated and fled to Tartessus. . . . At that time the country was called Acte, but it is now called Attica, and Ogyges was then its ruler. We do not think it necessary to list the other countries and cities and the people they were named after, especially to you, since you know history.

Translator's note. Thallus was a historian whose work is now lost. He is known only from quotations in later writers.

3.29b It is clear that Moses is shown to be older than all the historians, and not only he but most of the prophets who came after him. He is also older than Cronus, Belus and the Trojan War. For according to the history of Thallus, Belus is found to have lived 322 years before the Trojan War. I have shown above that Moses lived about ... or even 1000 years before the capture of Troy. Cronus and Belus flourished at the same time, and most people do not know who Cronus is or who Belus is. Some worship Cronus and call him Bel and Baal, especially those who live in the eastern regions. They do not know who Cronus is, nor who Belus is.

Translator's note. The number of years is lost or corrupt in the Greek, which says Moses lived "about ... or even 1000" years before the fall of Troy. Any figure supplied for the gap is a conjecture.

3.29c Among the Romans he is called Saturn. For they themselves do not know which of the two he is, Cronus or Belus. As for the Olympiads, they say that the observance began with Iphitus, but according to some it began with Linus, who was also called Ilius. I have shown above the number of the years and Olympiads and how they are ordered. So I think I have now said, as accurately as I can, what needed saying about the godlessness of your practices and about the whole count of the years. Even if some time has escaped us, say 50 or 100 or even 200 years, it is still not thousands or tens of thousands of years, as Plato and Apollonius and the rest have said, writing falsely. Perhaps we do not know the exact total of all the years because the extra months and days are not recorded in the sacred books.

Translator's note. The sentence beginning "Even if" is incomplete in the Greek. The words "it is still" have been supplied to complete the sense.

3.29d Berosus also agrees with the dates I have given. He was a philosopher among the Chaldeans and made the Chaldean writings known to the Greeks. In his history he says some things in agreement with Moses about the flood and many other matters. He also partly agrees with the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel. He mentions what happened to the Jews at the hands of the king of the Babylonians, whom he calls Abobassar and the Hebrews call Nebuchadnezzar. He also speaks of the temple in Jerusalem, saying it was laid waste by the king of the Chaldeans. He says that the foundations of the temple were laid in the second year of the reign of Cyrus, and that the temple was finished in the second year of the reign of Darius.

Translator's note. Scripture dates the temple's completion to the sixth year of Darius ([Ezra 6:15](#)). The second year of Darius is when the rebuilding resumed ([Ezra 4:24](#); [Haggai 1:1](#)).

3.30 The Greeks do not mention the histories that tell the truth. The first reason is that they themselves only recently came to share in the knowledge of writing. They admit this themselves, saying that letters were invented by the Chaldeans, or by the Egyptians, or, according to others, by the Phoenicians. The second reason is that they stumbled, and still stumble, by making no mention of God, but only of vain and useless things. They speak fondly of Homer and Hesiod and the other poets. But the glory of the only incorruptible God they have not only forgotten but spoken against. They have also persecuted those who worship him, and they persecute them every day. They even set prizes and honors for those who insult God in fine-sounding words. But those who press on toward virtue and practice a holy life they have stoned or put to death, and up to now they subject them to savage torments. So it follows that such people have lost the wisdom of God and have not found the truth. If you are willing, then, read these writings carefully, so that you may have a token and pledge of the truth.

Translator's note. "Token and pledge" translates two Greek words; the

second, arrabon, means a first payment that guarantees the rest, and Paul uses it of the Holy Spirit ([2 Corinthians 1:22](#); [Ephesians 1:14](#)).

Scripture: [Romans 1:23](#)

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