The City of God

AUGUSTINE

AD 354–430

The City of God

De civitate Dei

Translated from the Latin with AI (Claude) and edited



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INTRODUCTION

In AD 410 the Goths captured and sacked Rome, a city that had not fallen to a foreign enemy in eight hundred years. Pagans blamed the disaster on the Christians, who had abandoned the old gods. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, began *The City of God* in answer, and worked on it for some thirteen years, until about AD 426.

The first ten books take apart the claim that the gods protected Rome and could give happiness in this life or the next, engaging Roman history, Varro's theology and the Platonist philosophers along the way. The last twelve tell a larger story: two cities, formed by two loves—"love of self, even to contempt of God" and "love of God, even to contempt of self"—mingled together in history from the fall of the angels to the Last Judgment.

It is one of the founding books of Western thought about history, politics, war, peace and the purpose of human life. Each of the twenty-two books is on its own page, and each chapter carries an English version of the title printed in the Latin edition.

Book I

The sack of Rome
Augustine answers pagans who blame Christianity for the Gothic sack of Rome in 410, and discusses suffering, rape and suicide.

PREFACE: THE PLAN AND SUBJECT OF THE WORK

Augustine dedicates the work to Marcellinus and sets out to defend the city of God against the proud.

1.pr My dearest son Marcellinus, in this work, which I have undertaken for you and owe you by my promise, I have set out to defend the most glorious city of God against those who prefer their own gods to its founder. I defend it both as it is in this present course of time, when it lives by faith as a pilgrim among the ungodly, and as it will be in the security of that eternal home. It now awaits that home with patience, "until justice is turned into judgment," and will afterward attain it through its excellence, in final victory and perfect peace. It is a great and arduous task, but God is our helper. For I know what strength is needed to convince the proud how great the virtue of humility is. By humility, a height that is not seized by human arrogance but given by divine grace rises above all the earthly summits that totter with the instability of time.[1] For the King and Founder of this city we have set out to discuss has revealed, in the Scripture of his people, a pronouncement of divine law:

1 Flavius Marcellinus, an imperial official in Africa and Augustine's friend, urged him to write this work; he was executed in AD 413. "Until justice is turned into judgment" is Psalm 93:15 (94:15 in most English Bibles).

"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." Yet this, which belongs to God, the swollen spirit of a proud soul also claims for itself, and it loves to hear in its own praise: "To spare the conquered and to war down the proud." So I must not pass over in silence the earthly city either. When it seeks to dominate, it is itself dominated by its lust for domination, even though nations serve it. I will say about it whatever the plan of the work I have undertaken requires and my ability allows.[2]

THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST'S NAME, WHOM THE INVADERS SPARED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE WHEN THE CITY WAS SACKED

Pagans who escaped the sack by sheltering in Christian churches now blame Christ for Rome's disaster.

1.1 For it is from this earthly city that the enemies arise against whom the city of God must be defended. Many of them, however, correct their ungodly error and become quite worthy citizens of it. But many others burn against it with such fires of hatred, and are so ungrateful for the plain benefits of its Redeemer, that they would not be wagging their tongues against it today had they not found in its sacred places, as they fled the enemy's sword, the very life they are now so proud of. Are not even those Romans hostile to the name of Christ whom the invaders spared for Christ's sake? The shrines of the martyrs and the basilicas of the apostles bear witness to this. In that devastation of the City they took in all who fled to them, their own people and outsiders alike. Up to that point the bloodthirsty enemy raged; there the killer's fury met its limit. To those places the enemy, moved by pity, led even those they had spared outside them, so that they would not fall into the hands of others who had no such mercy.[3] These same men, ferocious elsewhere and raging as enemies do, came to those places where what the law of war would have allowed elsewhere was forbidden; and

2 James 4:6 (also 1 Peter 5:5). The line of verse is Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.853, where Anchises describes Rome's mission.

3 The sack of Rome by the Goths under Alaric in August AD 410.

there all their savagery in striking was reined in, and their craving to take captives was broken. In this way many escaped who now disparage these Christian times and blame Christ for the evils that city endured. But the good they received, when their lives were spared out of respect for Christ, they credit not to our Christ but to their own fate. If they had any sense, they ought rather to attribute the harsh and cruel things they suffered at the enemy's hands to divine providence. Providence habitually corrects and crushes the corrupt morals of human beings by wars; it likewise tests the righteous and praiseworthy lives of mortals by such afflictions, and once they are proved, either carries them over to better things or keeps them still on this earth for other purposes. As for the fact that the savage invaders, contrary to the custom of war, spared them—whether anywhere at all for the sake of Christ's name, or in the places most devoted to Christ's name, the largest ones, chosen to hold a multitude so that mercy might reach more widely—this they ought to attribute to Christian times. For this they ought to thank God; for this they ought to run sincerely to his name, so as to escape the punishment of eternal fire. Many of them falsely took that name upon themselves to escape the punishment of immediate destruction. For among those you see insolently and shamelessly insulting the servants of Christ, there are very many who would not have escaped that slaughter and disaster had they not pretended to be servants of Christ. And now, with ungrateful pride and the most ungodly madness, they resist his name with perverse hearts, to be punished with everlasting darkness—the very name to which they fled, if only with deceitful lips, so as to enjoy the light of this passing life.

THAT NO WAR WAS EVER FOUGHT IN WHICH THE VICTORS SPARED THE VANQUISHED FOR THE SAKE OF THE GODS OF THOSE THEY CONQUERED

No ancient war, at Troy or elsewhere, saw victors spare the defeated for the sake of the defeated's gods.

1.2 So many wars have been recorded, whether before Rome was founded or since its rise and rule. Let them read, and let them produce, a single case of a city captured by foreigners in which the enemy who took it spared those they found had fled to the temples of their gods; or in which some foreign commander ordered that, once the town was stormed, no one found in this or that temple should be struck. Did Aeneas not see Priam "at the altars, defiling with his blood the fires he himself had consecrated"? Did not Diomedes and Ulysses, "having slain the guards of the high citadel, seize the sacred image, and with bloody hands dare to touch the virgin goddess's sacred ribbons"? Yet what follows is not true: "From that moment the hopes of the Greeks began to ebb and, slipping, to fall back." For afterward they won; afterward they destroyed Troy with sword and fire; afterward they cut Priam down as he fled to the altar.[4] Nor did Troy perish because it lost Minerva. For what had Minerva herself lost first, that she should perish? Her guards, perhaps? That is certainly true: once they were killed, she could be carried off. For it was not the men who were protected by the image, but the image by the men. How, then, was she worshiped to guard the homeland and its citizens, when she could not guard her own guards?

4 Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.501–502 and 2.166–170. Diomedes and Ulysses stole the Palladium, the image of Minerva on which Troy's safety was believed to depend.

HOW FOOLISH THE ROMANS WERE TO BELIEVE THAT THE HOUSEHOLD GODS WHO COULD NOT PROTECT TROY WOULD BENEFIT THEM

Troy's conquered household gods could not protect Troy, so the Romans were foolish to trust them.

1.3 Look at the kind of gods to whom the Romans rejoiced to have entrusted the protection of the City! What a pitiable error! And they are angry with us when we say such things about their gods. Yet they are not angry with their own authors, whom they paid to learn by heart, and whose teachers they thought fully deserving of a public salary and honors besides. Take Virgil. Little children read him precisely so that this great poet, the most famous and the best of all, drunk in by tender minds, cannot easily be erased by forgetfulness—as Horace says: "The jar will long keep the scent of what it was steeped in when new." In this same Virgil, then, Juno is portrayed as hostile to the Trojans, and as she stirs up Aeolus, king of the winds, against them, she says: "A race hostile to me sails the Tyrrhenian sea, carrying Ilium and its conquered household gods into Italy." Should sensible men really have entrusted Rome to these conquered household gods, to keep it from being conquered?[5] But Juno said this like an angry woman, not knowing what she was saying. What about Aeneas himself, so often called "dutiful"? Does he not tell the story like this: "Panthus, son of Othrys, priest of the citadel and of Phoebus, himself drags along the sacred objects, the conquered gods and his little grandson, and runs frantically to my door"? Does he not declare that these very gods, whom he does not hesitate to call conquered, were entrusted to him, rather than he to them, when he is told: "Troy entrusts to you its sacred objects and its household gods"? If, then, Virgil says that such gods were conquered, and that they were entrusted to a

5 Horace, *Epistles* 1.2.69–70; Juno's words are *Aeneid* 1.67–68. The household gods (penates) were Troy's ancestral gods, which Aeneas was said to have carried to Italy.

man so that, though conquered, they might somehow escape, what madness it is to think that Rome was wisely committed to these guardians, and that it could not have been sacked unless it had lost them! Indeed, to worship conquered gods as protectors and defenders—what is that but to hold on not to good divinities but to bad omens?[6] How much wiser it is to believe, not that Rome would never have come to this disaster unless those gods had perished first, but rather that they would long ago have perished had Rome not preserved them as best it could! For who, once he stops to think, does not see how empty the assumption was that Rome could not be conquered under conquered defenders, and that it perished because it lost its guardian gods? The only cause of its perishing could well have been its wish to have guardians that were doomed to perish. So when these things were written and sung about the conquered gods, it was not that the poets enjoyed lying; rather, the truth compelled men of sense to admit it. But these matters are better treated carefully and at length elsewhere. For now I shall briefly, as best I can, finish what I had begun to say about ungrateful people. They blasphemously blame Christ for the evils they deservedly suffer for the perversity of their morals; but the fact that, even such as they are, they are spared for Christ's sake, they do not deign to notice. With the madness of sacrilegious perversity they ply their tongues against his name—the same tongues with which they falsely claimed that name in order to live, or which they held in check out of fear in places sacred to him. So, safe and protected there, where for his sake they were unharmed by the enemy, they burst out from there to attack him with an enemy's curses.

6 The Latin plays on *numina* (divinities) and *nomina* (names, here names of ill omen).

THE ASYLUM OF JUNO AT TROY, WHICH FREED NO ONE FROM THE GREEKS, AND THE BASILICAS OF THE APOSTLES, WHICH PROTECTED FROM THE INVADERS ALL WHO FLED TO THEM

Juno's sanctuary at Troy held captives for the Greeks; the apostles' basilicas sheltered refugees from the invaders.

1.4 Troy itself, as I said, the mother of the Roman people, could not protect its citizens in the sacred places of its gods from the fire and sword of the Greeks, though the Greeks worshiped those very same gods. On the contrary: "In Juno's sanctuary, chosen guards, Phoenix and dread Ulysses, kept watch over the plunder. Here Trojan treasure from every side, snatched from the burning shrines—the tables of the gods, bowls of solid gold and captured garments—was heaped up. Children and trembling mothers stand around in a long line." Clearly, a place consecrated to so great a goddess was chosen not as a place from which captives could not be taken, but as one in which captives might be locked up. Now compare that sanctuary—the sanctuary not of some common god from the rank and file, but of Jupiter's own sister and wife, the queen of all the gods—with the memorial shrines of our apostles. To that place were carried the spoils snatched from burning temples and from the gods, not to be given back to the conquered but to be divided among the conquerors. To these shrines, by contrast, even what was found elsewhere to belong to them was brought back with honor and the most devout respect. There freedom was lost, here it was preserved; there captivity was locked in, here it was forbidden; there people were penned in by domineering enemies to become their property, here they were led by compassionate enemies to be set free. In short, that temple of Juno was chosen by the greed and pride of the fickle Greeks; these basilicas of Christ by the mercy and humility of the invaders, savage as they were. Unless perhaps the Greeks, in that victory of theirs, really did spare the temples of the gods they shared, and did not dare to strike or capture the wretched, conquered Trojans who fled

there, and Virgil, as poets do, made it all up? No—he described the custom of enemies who overthrow cities.

WHAT CATO THOUGHT OF THE GENERAL CUSTOM OF ENEMIES WHO DESTROY CONQUERED CITIES

Sallust's Cato describes the usual horrors of a captured city, temples included.

1.5 Cato too, as Sallust, a historian renowned for his truthfulness, records, does not fail to mention this custom in the speech he delivered in the senate about the conspirators: virgins and boys are seized, children torn from their parents' embrace, mothers of families made to suffer whatever the victors please, shrines and houses plundered, slaughter and burning everywhere; in short, everything is filled with weapons, corpses, blood and mourning. Had he said nothing about the shrines, we might think that enemies usually spare the dwellings of the gods. And Roman temples feared these things not from foreign enemies but from Catiline and his associates, senators of the highest nobility and Roman citizens. But these, of course, were desperate men, murderers of their own country.[7]

THAT NOT EVEN THE ROMANS, WHEN THEY CAPTURED CITIES, SPARED THE VANQUISHED IN THEIR TEMPLES

Even Marcellus and Fabius, praised for restraint, never spared anyone who fled to a temple.

1.6 Why, then, should our discussion range over the many nations that waged war on one another and nowhere spared the conquered in the dwellings of their gods? Let us look at the Romans themselves; let us, I say, recall and consider the Romans themselves, of whom it was said, as their special glory, "To spare the conquered and to war down the proud," and that when wronged they preferred to forgive rather than to take

7 Sallust (86–c. 35 BC), *The War with Catiline* 51.9, on the conspiracy of 63 BC; in Sallust these words actually belong to Caesar's speech, not Cato's.

revenge. When they stormed, captured and overthrew so many great cities in order to extend their rule far and wide, let someone read to us which temples they used to exempt, so that whoever fled to them would be set free. Or did they do this, and the historians of those very deeds kept silent about it? Really? Would men who searched above all for things to praise pass over these, which by their own standards are the most glorious proofs of piety? Marcus Marcellus, a distinguished bearer of the Roman name, who captured the splendid city of Syracuse, is said to have wept over it before it fell, and to have shed his own tears for it before its blood was shed.[8] He also took care to preserve chastity, even in the enemy. For before he, as victor, ordered the town to be entered, he decreed by edict that no one should violate the body of a free person. Yet the city was overthrown in the usual way of war, and nowhere do we read that so chaste and merciful a commander ordered that anyone who fled to this or that temple should be left unharmed. That would certainly not have been passed over, since neither his weeping nor his edict for the protection of chastity could go unmentioned. Fabius, who destroyed the city of Tarentum, is praised for refraining from plundering its images. When his secretary asked him what he wanted done with the statues of the gods, a great many of which had been captured, he seasoned his restraint with a joke. He asked what they were like, and when he was told that many were not only large but armed, he said: "Let us leave the Tarentines their angry gods."[9] Since, then, the historians of Roman affairs could not keep silent about the one man's weeping or the other's laughter, the one's chaste mercy or the other's witty restraint, would they ever have passed it over if the Romans had spared some people in honor of one of their gods, by forbidding slaughter or captivity in some temple?

8 Marcus Claudius Marcellus took Syracuse in 212 BC, during the Second Punic War. The words about forgiving wrongs come from Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 9.5.

9 Quintus Fabius Maximus recaptured Tarentum (modern Taranto) from Hannibal's allies in 209 BC.

THAT THE HARSH THINGS DONE IN THE SACK OF THE CITY CAME FROM THE CUSTOM OF WAR, BUT THE MERCIFUL ONES FROM THE POWER OF CHRIST'S NAME

The slaughter in Rome came from the custom of war; the mercy came from Christ's name.

1.7 So whatever devastation, slaughter, plunder, burning and suffering took place in this most recent disaster at Rome was the work of the custom of war. But something was done in a new way. In an unheard-of turn of events, the invaders' savagery showed itself so gentle that the largest basilicas were chosen and set apart to be filled with people who would be spared: places where no one would be struck, from which no one would be dragged away, to which many were led by compassionate enemies to be set free, and from which none were taken off into captivity even by cruel enemies. This must be credited to the name of Christ, to this Christian age. Whoever does not see this is blind; whoever sees it and does not praise it is ungrateful; whoever opposes the one who praises it is mad. Far be it from any sensible person to attribute this to the ferocity of the invaders. Those most savage and cruel minds were terrified, reined in and wonderfully tempered by him who said through the prophet so long before: "I will punish their iniquities with the rod and their sins with lashes; but I will not take my mercy away from them."[10]

THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES THAT ARE USUALLY COMMON TO THE GOOD AND THE WICKED

God gives temporal goods and evils to good and bad alike, but each uses them differently.

1.8 Someone will say: "Why, then, did this divine mercy reach even the ungodly and ungrateful?" Why should we think, if not because it was shown by him who every day "makes his sun rise

10 Psalm 88:33–34 (89:32–33 in most English Bibles).

on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust"? For some of them, reflecting on this, repent and turn away from their ungodliness. Others, as the apostle says, "despising the riches of God's goodness and forbearance, by their hardness and impenitent heart store up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath and of the revelation of the just judgment of God, who will repay each one according to his works." Still, God's patience invites the wicked to repentance, just as God's scourge trains the good in patience; and likewise God's mercy embraces the good to cherish them, just as God's severity seizes the wicked to punish them.[11] For it has pleased divine providence to prepare for the future good things for the just, which the unjust will not enjoy, and evil things for the ungodly, by which the good will not be tormented. But these temporal goods and evils it willed to be common to both, so that good things would not be sought too greedily, since the wicked are seen to have them too, and evil things would not be shamefully shunned, since the good too are often afflicted by them.

But it makes a very great difference how one uses both what are called prosperous things and what are called adverse. For the good person is neither lifted up by temporal goods nor broken by temporal evils; the wicked person, on the other hand, is punished by this kind of unhappiness precisely because he is corrupted by happiness. Yet God often shows his working more clearly even in distributing these things. For if he now punished every sin with a visible penalty, nothing would be thought to be kept for the last judgment; and again, if the divinity punished no sin openly now, people would believe there was no divine providence. Likewise with prosperity: if God did not grant it with the plainest generosity to some who ask for it, we would say these things were not his concern; and again, if he gave it to everyone who asks, we would think he should be served only for such rewards, and such service would make us not devout but rather grasping and greedy. This being so, when good and bad alike have been afflicted, they are not themselves indistinguish-

11 Matthew 5:45; Romans 2:4–6.

able just because what they both suffered is indistinguishable. For the difference between the sufferers remains even within the likeness of their sufferings, and though they are under the same torment, virtue and vice are not the same thing. Under one and the same fire gold glows and chaff smokes; under the same threshing sledge the straw is crushed and the grain is cleaned; and the dregs are not mixed with the oil just because both are pressed out by the same weight of the press. In the same way, one and the same force, falling upon them, tests, purifies and refines the good, and condemns, ruins and destroys the wicked. So in the same affliction the wicked curse and blaspheme God, while the good pray and give praise. What matters most, then, is not what kind of things one suffers, but what kind of person suffers them. For stirred by the same motion, filth gives off a horrible stench and perfume a sweet fragrance.

THE REASONS FOR THE CHASTISEMENTS BY WHICH THE GOOD AND THE WICKED ARE SCOURGED ALIKE

Good people suffer with the wicked because they love this life and fail to rebuke sin.

1.9 What, then, did the Christians suffer in that devastation that would not rather serve their progress, if they considered these things faithfully? First, they reflect humbly on the very sins that angered God, so that he filled the world with such great calamities. And though they are far removed from criminals, the depraved and the ungodly, they still do not regard themselves as so free of wrongdoing that they deserve to suffer no temporal evils for those sins. For everyone, however praiseworthy his life, gives way in some things to fleshly desire. He may not give way to monstrous crimes, a whirlpool of depravity and the abomination of ungodliness, but he does give way to some sins, either rare ones or ones that are more frequent the smaller they are. Leaving this aside, then, who is easily found who treats as they should be treated those very people whose horrible pride, luxury and greed, and accursed iniquities and impieties, are the reason God crushes the earth, as he foretold in his threats? Who

lives with them as one ought to live with such people? For very often we wrongly hold back from teaching and warning them, and sometimes also from rebuking and reproving them. Sometimes the effort irks us. Sometimes we shrink from offending them to their face. Sometimes we avoid their enmity, for fear they may hinder and harm us in these temporal things, whether those that our craving still seeks to obtain or those that our weakness fears to lose. So the good are displeased by the life of the wicked, and therefore do not fall with them into the damnation prepared for such people after this life. Yet they spare the damnable sins of the wicked because they fear them where their own sins are concerned, light and pardonable though these may be. For this reason they are rightly scourged with them in time, though they are by no means punished for eternity. And when God afflicts them along with the wicked, they rightly find this life bitter, since out of love for its sweetness they refused to be bitter to the wicked when they sinned.

Someone may refrain from rebuking and reproving wrongdoers because he is looking for a more suitable time. Or he may fear for those very people, that they will be made worse by it. Or he may fear that they will hinder others who are weak and need to be taught a good and godly life, that they will oppress them and turn them away from the faith. In such cases this seems to be not an occasion for craving but a counsel of love. What is blameworthy is this. There are people who live differently and shrink from the deeds of the wicked, yet they spare other people's sins, which they ought to teach them to abandon or ought to rebuke. They do so while guarding against giving offense, so that they may not be harmed in those things that the good use lawfully and innocently. But they use them more greedily than befits those who are pilgrims in this world and openly bear the hope of a heavenly homeland. This is true not only of the weaker ones. These lead married lives, have children or seek to have them, and possess houses and households. The apostle addresses them in the churches, teaching and warning them how they ought to live (wives with husbands and hus-

bands with wives, children with parents and parents with children, slaves with masters and masters with slaves). Such people gladly acquire many temporal and many earthly things and are distressed to lose them, and for the sake of these they do not dare to offend people whose utterly polluted and wicked lives displease them;[12] it is also true of those who hold a higher rank of life. They are not entangled in the bonds of marriage and make do with little food and clothing. Yet very often they refrain from reproaching the wicked, because they fear their plots and attacks against their own reputation and safety. They do not fear them so much that they would yield to any of their threats and outrages and commit similar deeds. Still, they are often unwilling to reprove the very things they refuse to commit along with them, when perhaps they could correct some of them by reproving them. They hold back for fear that, if they should fail, their own safety and reputation would be brought into danger and ruin. Nor do they hold back because they see that their reputation and safety are necessary for the benefit of those who need instruction. Rather they hold back from that weakness which delights in a flattering tongue and in human approval, and which dreads the judgment of the crowd and the torment or death of the flesh. That is, they hold back because of certain chains of craving, not because of the duties of love.

So it does not seem to me a small reason why the good are scourged along with the wicked, when it pleases God to punish depraved morals even by inflicting temporal penalties. For they are scourged together not because they lead an evil life together, but because together they love the temporal life. They do not love it equally, indeed, but still together. Yet the good ought to despise it, so that the others, once reproved and corrected, might attain eternal life. And if the wicked would not be their companions in attaining it, they should still be endured and loved as enemies, since as long as they live it is always uncertain whether they will change their will for the better. In this matter some have a cause that is not equal but far graver. These are the

12 See Ephesians 5:22–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1.

people to whom it is said through the prophet: "He shall indeed die in his sin, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand." For watchmen, that is, those set over the people, are appointed in the churches precisely so that they will not refrain from rebuking sins.[13] Yet a person is not entirely free of this kind of fault either, even if he is not set over others. In those to whom the necessities of this life bind him, he may know of many things that call for warning or reproof, and still neglect them. He avoids giving them offense for the sake of things that he does not use wrongly in this life, but in which he takes more delight than he should. Then the good have another reason for being afflicted with temporal evils, the reason Job had. Through it the human mind is tested and comes to know itself, learning with how much godly virtue it loves God for nothing.[14]

THAT THE SAINTS LOSE NOTHING WHEN THEY LOSE TEMPORAL THINGS

Faithful Christians lost nothing that mattered; those who stored treasure in heaven kept it.

1.10 When these things have been rightly considered and examined, ask yourself whether anything evil has befallen the faithful and godly that was not turned to their good. Or perhaps we should think that the apostle's statement is empty, where he says: "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good." They lost everything they had. Did they lose their faith? Their godliness? The goods of the inner self, which is rich before God? These are the riches of Christians, and the apostle was wealthy in them when he said: "Godliness with sufficiency is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of it either. Having food and clothing, we are content with these. For those who want to become rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and

13 Ezekiel 33:6.

14 In Job 1:9 Satan asks whether Job fears God "for nothing," and Job's sufferings put the question to the test.

harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction.[15] For the root of all evils is greed, and some who have craved it have wandered from the faith and thrust themselves into many sorrows."

Some lost their earthly riches in that devastation. If they had held those riches as they had heard from this man, poor outwardly and rich within, that is, if they used the world as though not using it, then they could say what was said by that man who was grievously tempted and by no means overcome: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, naked I shall return to the earth. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; as it pleased the Lord, so it has been done; blessed be the name of the Lord." In this way, like a good servant, he would count the very will of his Lord as his great wealth, and by attending closely on that will he would grow rich in mind. Nor would he grieve that, while still alive, he had been left by the things he would soon have left at his death. But the weaker ones clung to these earthly goods with some small craving, though they did not prefer them to Christ. By losing those goods they discovered how much they had sinned by loving them. For they grieved exactly as much as they had thrust themselves into sorrows, as I recalled above that the apostle said.[16] For it was fitting that those who had so long neglected the teaching of words should also receive the teaching of experience. When the apostle said, "Those who want to become rich fall into temptation," and so on, he was clearly condemning the craving in riches, not the means themselves. For elsewhere he gave this instruction: "Instruct the rich of this world not to be haughty, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on the living God, who provides us everything abundantly to enjoy. Let them do good, be rich in good works, give readily, share, and store up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may lay hold of true life." Those who did this with their riches were consoled for light losses by great gains.

15 Romans 8:28; 1 Timothy 6:6–10.

16 "Used the world as though not using it" echoes 1 Corinthians 7:31; Job's words are Job 1:21.

They rejoiced more over what they kept more safely by giving it readily than they grieved over what they lost more easily by timidly holding on to it. For what could perish on earth was what they had been reluctant to transfer from it.[17] Some accepted the counsel of their Lord when he said: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves dig through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth corrupts; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In the time of trouble they proved how wisely they had judged in not despising that most truthful teacher, the most faithful and invincible guardian of their treasure. For many rejoiced that they had kept their riches in a place the enemy happened not to reach. How much more surely and securely, then, could those rejoice who, at the warning of their God, had moved their riches to a place the enemy could not reach at all![18]

PAULINUS OF NOLA AND THE TRUE TREASURE

Paulinus of Nola, held by the invaders, prayed knowing his treasure was safe with God.

Hence our friend Paulinus, bishop of Nola, was once a man of the greatest wealth and became by his own choice utterly poor and most richly holy. When the invaders laid waste to Nola itself and he was held captive by them, he prayed in his heart, as we later learned from him: "Lord, let me not be tortured for gold and silver; for you know where all that I have is." For he kept all that he had where he had been shown to store and treasure it by the one who had foretold that these evils would come upon the world. And so those who had obeyed their Lord when he warned them where and how they ought to store up treasure did not lose even their earthly riches when the invaders overran them. But those who regretted not having obeyed learned what should be

17 1 Timothy 6:17–19.
18 Matthew 6:19–21.

done with such things. If wisdom did not teach them beforehand, experience at least taught them afterward.[19]

But, it is objected, some good people, even Christians, were tortured to make them hand over their goods to the enemy. Those people, however, could neither hand over nor lose the good by which they themselves were good. If, on the other hand, they preferred being tortured to handing over the mammon of iniquity, they were not good. But those who suffered so much for gold needed to be warned how much they ought to endure for Christ. Then they might learn to love him instead, who enriches with eternal happiness those who suffer for him. They should not love gold and silver, for which it was utterly wretched to suffer, whether the gold was hidden by lying or handed over by telling the truth. For under torture no one lost Christ by confessing him, and no one kept his gold except by denying it. So perhaps the tortures, which taught them to love the incorruptible good, were more useful than those goods, which brought their owners no useful return and tortured them through their love of them.[20]

But some who had nothing to hand over were tortured because they were not believed. Perhaps these too longed to have wealth and were not poor by holy choice. To them it had to be shown that it is not possessions but cravings themselves that deserve such torments. Others had no hidden gold and silver because they had resolved to lead a better life. I do not know whether any such person actually happened to be tortured because he was believed to have it. Yet even if it happened, surely whoever confessed holy poverty amid those tortures was confessing Christ. Therefore, even if he did not succeed in being believed by the enemy, a confessor of holy poverty could not be tortured without a heavenly reward.

"Many Christians too," they say, "were wasted away by prolonged famine." This too the good and faithful turned to their

19 Paulinus of Nola (c. AD 354–431), a wealthy Roman senator who gave away his fortune and became bishop of Nola in Campania. Alaric's Goths sacked Nola in AD 410.

own benefit by bearing it devoutly. Those whom famine killed, it snatched from the evils of this life, as a bodily illness does. Those whom it did not kill, it taught to live more sparingly and taught to fast for longer.

THE END OF TEMPORAL LIFE, WHETHER LONGER OR SHORTER

Death comes to everyone; what matters is not how one dies but where one goes.

1.11 But, it is objected, many Christians were also killed, and many were destroyed by a hideous variety of many kinds of death. If this is hard to bear, it is certainly common to all who have been brought into this life. This I know: no one has died who was not going to die at some time. And the end of life makes a long life and a short one the same. For one is not better and another worse, or one greater and another shorter, when both alike no longer exist. What difference does it make by what kind of death this life is ended, when the one whose life is ended is not forced to die again? Countless deaths in a sense threaten every mortal amid the daily hazards of this life, and it is uncertain which of them will come. So I ask whether it is better to suffer one by dying or to fear them all by living. I am well aware how much more readily people choose to live long under the fear of so many deaths than to die once and fear none thereafter. But the senses of the flesh, weak and timid, recoil from one thing, and the reason of the mind, carefully worked out, proves another. A death that a good life has preceded should not be thought bad. For nothing makes death bad except what follows death. Those who must die in any case need not care much about what happens to make them die. They should care where they will be forced to go by dying. Christians know that the death of the godly poor man among the licking tongues of the dogs was far better than that of the ungodly rich man in purple

20 "Mammon of iniquity" comes from Luke 16:9.

and fine linen. What harm, then, did those horrible kinds of death do to the dead who had lived well?[21]

THE BURIAL OF HUMAN BODIES: BEING DENIED IT TAKES NOTHING FROM CHRISTIANS

Lack of burial cannot harm the dead, whose bodies God will raise.

1.12 But, it is objected, there was such a slaughter, with corpses everywhere, that the dead could not even be buried. Godly faith does not greatly dread this either. It holds to the promise that not even the beasts that devour them will harm bodies that are to rise again, bodies of which not a hair of the head shall perish. The Truth would in no way say, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul," if anything that enemies chose to do with the bodies of the slain could harm the life to come. Perhaps someone is so absurd as to argue the following: that those who kill the body should not be feared before death, lest they kill the body, but should be feared after death, lest they refuse to let the slain body be buried. If so, what he says would be false: "Those who kill the body, and afterward have nothing more they can do." That would be false if they have so much they can do to corpses. Far be it that what the Truth has said should be false.[22] For it is said that they do something when they kill, because while they are killing there is feeling in the body. Afterward they have nothing they can do, because there is no feeling in a slain body. So the earth did not cover many Christian bodies. But no one separated any of them from heaven and earth. These he fills entirely with his presence, and he knows from where to raise again what he created. It is said, indeed, in a psalm: "They have given the dead bodies of your servants as food to the birds of the sky, the flesh of your saints to the beasts of the earth; they have poured out their blood like water around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them." But this was said rather to magnify the cruelty of those who did these things, not to show the

21 The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19–31.
22 Luke 21:18; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4. "The Truth" is Christ.

misfortune of those who suffered them. For although these things seem harsh and dreadful in the sight of human beings, still "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."[23] Therefore all these things are more a consolation for the living than a help to the dead: the care of the funeral, the manner of burial and the pomp of the procession. If a costly burial does the ungodly any good, then a cheap one or none at all will harm the godly. A crowd of servants provided a splendid funeral in the sight of human beings for that rich man dressed in purple. But the ministry of angels provided a far more glorious one in the sight of the Lord for that poor man covered with sores. They did not carry him out to a marble tomb, but bore him up into Abraham's bosom.

Those against whom we have undertaken to defend the city of God laugh at these things. Yet even their own philosophers have scorned concern for burial. And often whole armies, while dying for their earthly fatherland, did not care where they would lie afterward or what beasts they would become food for. Poets have been free to say on this subject, to applause: "He who has no urn is covered by the sky." How much less, then, ought they to mock Christians over unburied bodies! Christians are promised that their very flesh and all their limbs will be restored and made whole again in an instant. This will happen not only from the earth but also from the most hidden recesses of the other elements, into which decaying corpses have withdrawn.[24]

THE REASON FOR BURYING THE BODIES OF THE SAINTS

Bodies of the righteous still deserve care, as Scripture's examples of burial show.

1.13 This does not mean, however, that the bodies of the dead are to be scorned and cast aside, least of all the bodies of the right-

23 Psalm 78:2–3 (79:2–3 in most English Bibles); Psalm 115:15 (116:15 in most English Bibles).
24 Lucan, *Civil War* 7.819.

eous and faithful, which the Spirit used in holiness as instruments and vessels for every good work. A father's clothes and ring, or anything of that kind, are dearer to his descendants the greater their affection for their parents. If so, then the bodies themselves are by no means to be spurned, since we wear them far more intimately and closely than any clothing. For bodies are not an ornament or an aid applied from outside. They belong to human nature itself. That is why, in ancient times, the funerals of the righteous were attended to with dutiful devotion, their funeral rites were celebrated and their burial was provided for. While they were still alive, they themselves gave their sons instructions about burying their bodies, or even about moving them. And Tobit is commended, on the testimony of an angel, for having won God's favor by burying the dead.[25] The Lord himself, too, who was to rise on the third day, proclaims the good work of a devout woman and directs that it be proclaimed, because she poured precious ointment over his limbs and did this for his burial. And the Gospel mentions with praise those who took his body down from the cross and saw to it that it was carefully and honorably wrapped and buried. These authorities, however, do not teach that corpses have any feeling. Rather, they show that the bodies of the dead also fall within the providence of God, who is pleased even by such acts of devotion, and they do so to support faith in the resurrection. Here we also learn a wholesome lesson: how great the reward can be for the alms we give to those who are alive and can feel, if even what we render in duty and care to the lifeless limbs of human beings is not lost in God's sight.[26] There are also other things that the holy patriarchs said about the burial or removal of their bodies, which they wanted to be understood as spoken by the prophetic spirit. But this is not the place to treat them at length, since what we have said is enough. Consider this, though. When the things

25 Jacob and Joseph gave such instructions about their bodies (Genesis 47:29–30; 50:25). Tobit, called Tobias in Augustine's Latin Bible, is praised by the angel Raphael in Tobit 12:12–13.

26 The woman's anointing is told in Matthew 26:6–13 and Mark 14:3–9. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Jesus (John 19:38–42).

needed to sustain the living, such as food and clothing, are lacking, even with severe hardship, they do not break the virtue of endurance and patience in good people, nor do they root devotion out of their souls. Instead, they exercise it and make it more fruitful. How much less, then, when the things customarily provided for funerals and for burying the bodies of the dead are lacking, do they make wretched those who are already at rest in the hidden dwellings of the godly! And so, when these things were lacking for the corpses of Christians in the devastation of that great city, or of other towns as well, it is neither the fault of the living, who could not provide them, nor a punishment for the dead, who cannot feel them.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE SAINTS, WHO NEVER LACKED DIVINE CONSOLATION

Captives, like Daniel and Jonah, were never without God's comfort.

1.14 "But many Christians," they say, "were even led away as captives." That would indeed be the most wretched thing of all, if they could have been led anywhere where they did not find their God. The holy Scriptures offer great consolations for this disaster too. The three young men were in captivity, Daniel was in captivity, other prophets were in captivity, and God did not fail them as a comforter. So he who did not abandon his prophet even in the belly of a sea monster did not abandon his faithful under the rule of a people that was foreign, yes, but still human. These things, too, the people we are arguing with prefer to mock rather than believe. Yet they believe their own literature when it says that Arion of Methymna, a most renowned lyre player, was thrown overboard from a ship, caught on a dolphin's back and carried to land. Granted, our story about the prophet Jonah is more incredible. Plainly more incredible, because more wonderful; and more wonderful, because it shows greater power.[27]

27 The three young men are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3). Arion of Methymna, on Lesbos, was a legendary singer whose rescue by a dolphin is told by Herodotus (1.23–24).

REGULUS, AN EXAMPLE OF CAPTIVITY ENDURED EVEN WILLINGLY FOR RELIGION, WHICH STILL COULD NOT PROFIT HIM BECAUSE HE WORSHIPED THE GODS

Regulus kept his oath to the gods and was tortured to death, so the gods give no earthly safety.

1.15 Yet these people have, among their own illustrious men, a most famous example of captivity endured for religion's sake, and endured voluntarily. Marcus Regulus, a general of the Roman people, was a captive among the Carthaginians. The Carthaginians preferred to have their own men returned by the Romans rather than to keep Roman captives. To obtain this, they sent Regulus in particular to Rome with their envoys, having first bound him by oath to return to Carthage if he failed to accomplish what they wanted. He went, and in the senate he argued for the opposite, since he did not think an exchange of prisoners was in the interest of the Roman commonwealth. After he had won his case, his own people did not force him to return to the enemy; but because he had sworn, he did so of his own accord. And the Carthaginians put him to death with elaborately devised and horrifying tortures.[28] They shut him in a narrow wooden box where he was forced to stand, studded on every side with very sharp nails, so that he could not lean against any part of it without the most excruciating pain. They killed him by keeping him from sleep as well. The pagans are certainly right to praise a virtue that was greater than such great misfortune. And he had sworn by the gods—the very gods whose worship, now forbidden, is in these people's view the reason why these disasters are being inflicted on the human race. These gods were worshiped precisely so that they would make this life prosperous. So if they either willed or allowed these punishments to be inflicted on a man who kept his oath, what worse

28 Marcus Atilius Regulus, a Roman consul, was captured by the Carthaginians in 255 BC during the First Punic War. His return to Carthage was a celebrated example of Roman good faith.

could they have done in their anger to a perjurer? But why should I not rather frame my argument so that it covers both alternatives? He certainly worshiped the gods in such a way that, to keep faith with his oath, he would neither remain in his homeland nor go from there anywhere else he liked, but did not hesitate in the least to return to his bitterest enemies. If he thought this was of benefit for this present life, he was undoubtedly mistaken, since the end of that life he earned was so horrifying. For he taught by his own example that the gods are of no use to their worshipers for this temporal happiness. Devoted as he was to their worship, he was defeated and carried off as a captive. And because he refused to act otherwise than as he had sworn by them, he was tortured to death by a new, previously unheard-of and utterly horrifying kind of punishment. But if the worship of the gods bestows happiness after this life as a kind of reward, why do they slander Christian times? Why do they say that this calamity befell the City because it stopped worshiping its gods, when even if it had worshiped them most diligently it could have become as unhappy as Regulus was? Unless perhaps someone is so insane, so remarkably blind, as to struggle against the clearest truth and dare to argue that a whole city that worships the gods cannot be unhappy, while a single man can—on the grounds, no doubt, that the power of their gods is better suited to preserving many people than individuals, even though a multitude is made up of individuals.

But suppose they say that Marcus Regulus, even in that captivity and in those bodily torments, could have been happy through the virtue of his soul. Then let us rather look for true virtue, the kind by which a city, too, can be happy. For a city does not become happy from one source and a human being from another, since a city is nothing other than a harmonious multitude of human beings. For the present, then, I am not yet discussing what kind of virtue Regulus had. It is enough for now that this most famous example forces them to admit that the gods are not to be worshiped for the sake of bodily goods, or of the things that happen to a person from outside, since he pre-

ferred to go without all of them rather than offend the gods by whom he had sworn. But what are we to do with people who boast of having had such a citizen, yet fear having such a city? And if they do not fear it, let them admit that something like what happened to Regulus could also have happened to a city that worshiped the gods as diligently as he did, and let them stop slandering Christian times. But since the question arose about those Christians who were also taken captive, let those who shamelessly and senselessly mock the most saving religion on this account look at this example and be silent. Their most devoted worshiper, while keeping faith with his oath to the gods, lost his homeland, having no other, and as a captive among the enemy was put to death slowly, by a punishment of novel cruelty. If that brought no disgrace on their gods, then far less should the Christian name be accused because of the captivity of those consecrated to it. For they await their homeland on high with true faith, and know that even in their own homes they are pilgrims.

WHETHER THE RAPES THAT CAPTIVITY MAY HAVE INFLICTED, EVEN ON CONSECRATED VIRGINS, COULD DEFILE THE VIRTUE OF THE MIND WITHOUT THE WILL'S CONSENT

Rape of Christian women, even consecrated virgins, cannot defile a mind that does not consent.

1.16 They certainly think they are leveling a serious charge against Christians when, exaggerating their captivity, they add that rapes were committed too—not only against other men's wives and girls about to be married, but even against some women consecrated to God. Here it is not faith, not devotion, not the virtue called chastity itself that is hemmed in; rather, it is our discussion that is squeezed into a narrow space between modesty and reason. And here our concern is not so much to give an answer to outsiders as to give consolation to our own. Let this, then, be laid down and established first of all: the virtue by which we live rightly commands the members of the body

from its seat in the soul, and the body is made holy by being used by a holy will. As long as that will remains unshaken and steadfast, whatever someone else does with the body or in the body, if it cannot be avoided without sin on one's own part, involves no guilt on the part of the one who suffers it. But not only acts that cause pain but also acts of lust can be perpetrated on another person's body. So when something of this kind is done, it may not drive out chastity, held fast by a most constant mind, but it does drive in shame—shame that people may believe that what perhaps could not happen without some pleasure of the flesh was also done with the consent of the mind.

SUICIDE OUT OF FEAR OF PUNISHMENT OR DISGRACE

Suicide to escape rape or disgrace is murder, since no one may kill an innocent person.

1.17 And so, as for the women who killed themselves to avoid suffering anything of this kind, what human feeling would refuse to forgive them? And as for those who refused to kill themselves, so as not to escape another's wicked deed by a crime of their own, whoever counts this as a crime will not escape the crime of foolishness himself. For certainly, if it is not lawful to kill a human being on one's own private authority, even a guilty one, since no law grants a license to kill him, then surely someone who kills himself is also a murderer. And the more innocent he was in the matter for which he thought he should be killed, the guiltier he becomes in killing himself. We rightly detest what Judas did, and the truth judges that when he hanged himself with a noose he increased rather than expiated the guilt of that wicked betrayal. For in despairing of God's mercy he repented in a deadly way and left himself no room for a saving repentance. How much more, then, ought someone to refrain from killing himself who has nothing in himself to punish by such a penalty! For when Judas killed himself, he killed a wicked man; and yet he ended this life guilty not only of Christ's death but of his own, because, though he was killed on account of his crime, he was

killed by another crime of his own. But why should a person who has done nothing wrong do wrong to himself? Why should he, by killing himself, kill an innocent human being so as not to suffer a guilty one, and commit a sin of his own against himself so that another's sin is not committed against him?

THE VIOLENT LUST OF ANOTHER, WHICH THE MIND SUFFERS UNWILLINGLY IN A BODY OVERPOWERED

Chastity is a virtue of the soul and is not lost when the body is overpowered.

1.18 But, they say, the fear is that even another's lust may defile. It will not defile if it is another's; and if it does defile, it will not be another's. Chastity is a virtue of the soul, and it has as its companion courage, by which it resolves to endure any evil rather than consent to evil. Yet no one, however great-souled and chaste, has control over what is done to their flesh, but only over what they assent to or refuse in their mind. Given this, who in their right mind would think they lose their chastity if, perhaps, a lust not their own is exercised and satisfied on their flesh after it has been seized and overpowered? For if chastity is lost in this way, then chastity will certainly not be a virtue of the soul, nor will it belong among the goods by which we live well. It will be counted among the goods of the body, such as strength, beauty, sound health and anything of that kind—goods which, even if they are diminished, do not diminish a good and righteous life at all. If chastity is something of that sort, why do people struggle to keep from losing it even at the risk of their bodies? But if it is a good of the soul, it is not lost even when the body is overpowered. Indeed, when the good of holy continence refuses to yield to the uncleanness of carnal desires, the body itself is also made holy. And so, as long as continence persists with unshaken resolve in not yielding to them, holiness is not lost even from the body, because the will to use the body in holiness persists—and, as far as lies within its power, the ability as well.

For a body is not holy because its members are intact, or because they are untouched by any hand. Bodies can suffer violence through various accidents, even being wounded, and doctors working to restore health sometimes do things there that are horrible to see. A midwife examining a certain girl's virginity by hand destroyed it in the course of the examination, whether out of malice, ignorance or accident. I do not suppose anyone is so foolish in their thinking as to believe that this girl lost anything of the holiness even of her body, although the intactness of that part of her body was now lost. Therefore, as long as the soul's resolve remains, through which the body too was made worthy of being sanctified, the violence of another's lust does not take away holiness from the body itself, since perseverance in its own continence preserves it. Or suppose some woman, her mind corrupted and the vow she had made to God violated, goes off to her seducer to be defiled. As she goes off for this purpose, do we call her holy even in body, when the holiness of soul through which her body was made holy has been lost and destroyed? Far from us be this error! Let us rather learn from this that, just as holiness of body is not lost while holiness of soul remains, even when the body is overpowered, so holiness of body is lost when holiness of soul is violated, even if the body is untouched. Therefore a woman who has been violently overpowered without any consent of her own, and raped through another's sin, has nothing to punish in herself by a voluntary death—and how much less before it happens! She must not commit a murder that is certain while the crime itself, though another's, still hangs uncertain.

LUCRETIA, WHO KILLED HERSELF BECAUSE OF THE RAPE INFLICTED ON HER

Lucretia, praised by Rome for killing herself after rape, was either an adulteress or a murderer.

1.19 Or perhaps they will dare to contradict this plain reasoning? We say that when the body is overpowered, and the resolve to be chaste is not changed by any consent to evil, the crime belongs

only to the man who has intercourse by force, not to the woman who is overpowered and does not consent with any will of her own to the man who lies with her. Will they dare to contradict this—those against whom we are defending as holy not only the minds but also the bodies of the Christian women overpowered in captivity? They certainly extol Lucretia, a noble married woman of ancient Rome, with great praise for her chastity. When the son of King Tarquin had overpowered her by force and satisfied his lust on her body, she disclosed the wicked young man's crime to her husband Collatinus and her kinsman Brutus, most distinguished and courageous men, and bound them to take vengeance. Then, sick at heart and unable to bear the foul thing committed against her, she killed herself. What shall we say? Should she be judged an adulteress, or chaste? Who would think this question worth any effort?[29] A certain declaimer, speaking on this subject brilliantly and truthfully, said: "Remarkable to say: there were two, and only one committed adultery." Splendidly and most truly said. For he saw, in the union of two bodies, the foulest lust of the one and the most chaste will of the other. And attending not to what was done by the joining of bodies but to what was done by the difference of minds, he said: "There were two, and only one committed adultery."

But what does it mean that the woman who did not commit adultery is punished more severely? For he was driven from his homeland with his father, while she suffered the supreme penalty. If her being overpowered against her will was no unchastity, then her being punished though chaste is no justice. I appeal to you, Roman laws and judges! Even after crimes had been committed, you would not let even a criminal be killed with impunity if he had not been condemned. So if someone brought this charge before your court, and it were proved to you that a woman had been killed who was not only uncondemned

29 Lucretia was raped by Sextus Tarquinius, son of Rome's last king. Her death led Brutus and Collatinus to expel the Tarquins and found the Roman Republic (traditionally 509 BC).

but chaste and innocent, would you not punish the one who did it with fitting severity? That is what Lucretia did. That Lucretia—yes, that much-celebrated Lucretia—went on to kill Lucretia: innocent, chaste, a victim of violence. Pronounce your sentence. And if you cannot do so because there is no one present for you to punish, why do you praise with such acclaim the killer of an innocent and chaste woman? Certainly you have no way of defending her before the judges of the underworld, even such judges as are celebrated in the songs of your poets. For she is placed, of course, among those "who, guiltless, brought death upon themselves by their own hand and, hating the light, flung away their lives." She longs to return to the world above, but "divine law stands in the way, and the gloomy marsh with its unlovely water holds her fast."[30]

Or perhaps she is not there because she killed herself not as one guiltless but as one with a guilty conscience? For what if—something only she herself could know—although the young man assaulted her violently, she was also enticed by her own lust and consented, and, punishing this in herself, was so grieved that she thought it had to be expiated by death? Even so, she should not have killed herself, if she could have repented fruitfully before her false gods. Still, perhaps that is how it was, and it is false that "there were two, and only one committed adultery"; perhaps both committed adultery, he by open assault, she by hidden consent. In that case she did not kill herself guiltless, and so her learned defenders can say that she is not in the underworld among those "who, guiltless, brought death upon themselves by their own hand." But this case is so hemmed in on both sides that if the murder is played down, the adultery is confirmed, and if the adultery is cleared, the murder is compounded. There is no way out at all when it is said: "If adulterous, why praised? If chaste, why slain?"

For us, however, to refute these people who, strangers to every thought of holiness, insult the Christian women raped in captivity, it is enough to take the example of this noble woman

30 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.434–436 and 438–439, describing the suicides in the underworld.

and what was said in her splendid praise: "There were two, and only one committed adultery." For they preferred to believe that Lucretia was a woman who could not have stained herself by any adulterous consent. So the fact that she killed herself because she had suffered an adulterer, though she was no adulteress, comes not from love of chastity but from the weakness of shame. She was ashamed of the foul act another had committed on her, even if not with her. And as a Roman woman, all too eager for praise, she feared that what she had suffered by violence while she lived would be thought, if she went on living, to have been suffered willingly. That is why she thought she must offer that punishment as a witness to her state of mind before the eyes of people to whom she could not show her conscience. She blushed to be thought an accomplice in the deed if she bore patiently what another had shamefully done to her. Christian women did not do this. They have suffered similar things, yet they are still alive. They have not avenged another's crime on themselves, so as not to add crimes of their own to the crimes of others—as they would if, because the enemy had committed rapes on them out of lust, they committed murders on themselves out of shame. For they have within them the glory of chastity, the testimony of their conscience. They have it in the sight of their God, and they seek nothing further, since there is nothing further they could rightly do—lest they stray from the authority of God's law by wrongly trying to escape the offense of human suspicion.

THAT THERE IS NO AUTHORITY THAT GIVES CHRISTIANS THE RIGHT TO KILL THEMSELVES FOR ANY REASON

The commandment "You shall not kill" forbids killing oneself.

1.20 It is not without reason that nowhere in the holy canonical books can we find any divine command or permission to put ourselves to death, whether to gain immortality itself or to avoid or escape any evil. Indeed, we must understand that we are forbidden to do so where the law says, "You shall not kill." This is

especially so because it did not add "your neighbor," as it did when it prohibited false witness: "You shall not bear false witness," it says, "against your neighbor." Yet that does not mean that anyone who bears false witness against himself should think himself free of this crime. The one who loves takes the rule for loving his neighbor from himself, since it is written, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[31] Now, someone who confesses something false about himself is no less guilty of false witness than if he did it against his neighbor. This is so even though the commandment that prohibits false witness prohibits it against one's neighbor, and those who do not understand it rightly might think it is not forbidden to stand as a false witness against oneself. How much more, then, must we understand that it is not lawful for a person to kill himself! For in the words "You shall not kill," with nothing added afterward, no one is understood to be excepted—not even, of course, the very person to whom the command is given. That is why some try to extend this commandment even to wild animals and livestock, so that on this basis it would be unlawful to kill any of them either. Then why not to plants too, and to whatever is nourished by the soil and fixed in it by roots? For this kind of thing too, though it has no sensation, is said to live, and so it can also die, and accordingly, when force is applied, it can be killed. Hence the apostle, speaking of seeds of this kind, says, "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies"; and in the psalm it is written, "He killed their vines with hail." Are we then, on this account, when we hear "You shall not kill," to regard pulling up a shrub as a sacrilege, and to fall in, like utter madmen, with the error of the Manichaeans?[32] So let us set these ravings aside. When we read "You shall not kill," we do not take this to be said of shrubs, because they have no sensation. Nor do we take it to be said of irrational animals—whatever flies, swims, walks or creeps—

31 Exodus 20:13 and 20:16; Leviticus 19:18 (quoted in Matthew 22:39).
32 1 Corinthians 15:36; Psalm 77:47 (78:47 in most English Bibles). The Manichaeans, a dualist sect to which Augustine belonged in his youth, held that particles of divine light were imprisoned in plants.

because they are not joined to us by any bond of reason, since it was not given to them to have reason in common with us (and so, by the most just ordering of the Creator, both their life and their death are subject to our use). It remains, then, that we understand "You shall not kill" as said of human beings: neither another, therefore, nor yourself. For whoever kills himself kills nothing other than a human being.

THE KILLINGS OF HUMAN BEINGS THAT ARE EXEMPT FROM THE CHARGE OF MURDER

Killing by God's command or by lawful public authority is not murder.

1.21 But the same divine authority has made certain exceptions to the rule that it is not lawful to kill a human being. These exceptions are those whom God commands to be killed, either by a law he has given or by an explicit command addressed to a particular person for a particular time. (The one who owes his service to the one who commands does not himself kill; he is like a sword, an instrument in the hand of the one who uses it. And so those who waged wars on God's authority, or who, acting in the role of public power, punished criminals with death according to his laws—that is, by the command of the most just reason—in no way acted against this commandment that says, "You shall not kill." And Abraham was not only not blamed on a charge of cruelty but was even praised for his devotion, because he was willing to kill his son, not wickedly but in obedience;[33] and it is rightly asked whether we should regard as done at God's command Jephthah's killing of his daughter, who came out to meet her father, when he had vowed to sacrifice to God whatever first came out to meet him as he returned victorious from battle. Nor is Samson excused for crushing himself together with his enemies under the collapse of the house, except on the ground that the Spirit, who worked miracles through him, had secretly commanded it.) With these exceptions, then—those whom either

33 Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac is told in Genesis 22.

a just law commands in general, or God himself, the source of justice, commands in particular to be killed—anyone who kills a human being, whether himself or anyone else, is caught in the crime of murder.[34]

WHETHER SUICIDE CAN EVER BE A SIGN OF GREATNESS OF SOUL

Suicide shows weakness of mind rather than greatness of soul.

1.22 And all who have done this to themselves may perhaps be admired for greatness of mind, but they are not to be praised for soundness of wisdom. Yet if you consult reason more carefully, it will not even be right to call it greatness of mind when someone has killed himself because he could not bear hardships of some kind, or the sins of others. For what is revealed is rather a weak mind, one that cannot bear either the harsh enslavement of its body or the foolish opinion of the crowd. The greater spirit is rightly said to be the one that can bear a life of misery rather than flee it, and can despise human judgment—especially that of the crowd, which is usually wrapped in the fog of error—in comparison with the light and purity of conscience. So if we must think it is done from greatness of mind when a person inflicts death on himself, then it is rather that Theombrotus in whom we find this greatness of mind. They say that after reading Plato's book in which he discussed the immortality of the soul, he threw himself headlong from a wall and so departed from this life to the one he believed to be better. For no calamity and no crime, whether real or falsely charged, pressed upon him that he could not bear and so removed himself from; only greatness of mind was present to make him seize death and break the sweet bonds of this life. Yet that this was done greatly rather than well, Plato himself, whom he had read, could have testified to him. Plato would surely have done it himself first and foremost, or even prescribed it, had he not judged, with the same

34 Jephthah's vow is in Judges 11; Samson's death in Judges 16.

mind with which he saw the immortality of the soul, that it was by no means to be done—indeed, that it was to be forbidden.[35]

"But," they say, "many have killed themselves to avoid falling into the hands of their enemies." We are not now asking whether it has been done, but whether it should have been done. For sound reason must be placed even above examples—though examples too agree with it, namely those that are the more worthy of imitation the more they excel in devotion. The patriarchs did not do it, nor the prophets, nor the apostles. For the Lord Christ himself, when he advised them, if they suffered persecution, to flee from city to city, could have advised them to lay hands on themselves so as not to fall into the hands of their persecutors. Now if he did not command or advise his own to depart from this life in that way—he who promised that he would prepare eternal dwellings for them when they departed—then whatever examples the nations who do not know God may put forward, it is clear that this is not permitted to those who worship the one true God.[36]

WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE CATO IS, WHO KILLED HIMSELF BECAUSE HE COULD NOT BEAR CAESAR'S VICTORY

Cato's suicide at Utica is a poor example, since he let his own son live under Caesar.

1.23 Yet even they, apart from Lucretia, about whom we have already said what seemed right, do not easily find anyone whose authority they can cite as a precedent, except that Cato who killed himself at Utica. This is not because he was the only one who did it, but because he was considered a learned and upright man, so that it might reasonably be thought that what he did could have been, or could be, done rightly. What shall I say about his deed above all, except that his friends, some of them learned men too, who more wisely tried to dissuade him from

35 Theombrotus (or Cleombrotus) of Ambracia, whose story is told by Callimachus and by Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.84); the book was Plato's *Phaedo*.
36 Matthew 10:23; John 14:2.

doing it, judged it the act of a weaker rather than a stronger spirit? It showed, in their view, not an honor guarding against disgrace but a weakness unable to endure adversity. Cato himself passed this same judgment in the case of his dearly loved son. For if it was shameful to live under Caesar's victory, why did he make himself the author of this shame for his son, whom he instructed to hope for everything from Caesar's kindness? Why did he not force him to die with him as well?[37] For if Torquatus, to his credit, killed his son who had fought the enemy against orders, even though he was victorious, why did the defeated Cato spare his defeated son, when he did not spare himself? Or was it more shameful to be a victor against orders than to bear a victor against honor? In no way, therefore, did Cato judge it shameful to live under Caesar as victor; otherwise he would have freed his son from this shame with a father's sword. What then remains, except that as much as he loved his son, whom he both hoped and wished Caesar would spare, so much did he begrudge Caesar the glory of sparing him as well—as Caesar himself is said to have remarked—or, to put it more mildly, he was ashamed?[38]

THAT IN THE VIRTUE IN WHICH REGULUS SURPASSED CATO, CHRISTIANS EXCEL FAR MORE

Regulus, who endured captivity rather than kill himself, is a better model than Cato.

1.24 But those we are arguing against do not want us to prefer to Cato the holy man Job, who chose to suffer such horrible evils in his own flesh rather than be rid of all his torments by putting himself to death. Nor do they want us to prefer other saints from our Scriptures—which stand highest in supreme authority and are most worthy of belief—who chose to bear captivity and the

37 Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), Stoic and opponent of Julius Caesar, killed himself at Utica in North Africa after Caesar's victory at Thapsus in 46 BC.
38 Titus Manlius Torquatus, consul in 340 BC, had his son executed for engaging in single combat against orders, though the son won. Caesar is reported to have said that Cato had begrudged him the chance to save his life.

domination of their enemies rather than kill themselves. Very well: from their own literature I will prefer to Marcus Cato that same Regulus. For Cato had never defeated Caesar; defeated by him, he scorned to submit to him, and to avoid submitting he chose to be killed by his own hand. Regulus, by contrast, had already defeated the Carthaginians, and as a Roman commander had won for Roman rule a victory not to be lamented, over fellow citizens, but to be praised, over enemies. Yet when he was later defeated by them, he chose to bear them as a slave rather than remove himself from them by dying. And so he kept both his endurance under Carthaginian domination and his constancy in his love for the Romans, removing neither his defeated body from the enemy nor his undefeated mind from his fellow citizens. Nor was his refusal to kill himself due to love of this life. He proved this when, for the sake of his promise and his oath, he returned without any hesitation to those same enemies whom he had offended more gravely by his words in the senate than by his arms in war. So great a despiser of this life, then, who preferred to have it ended by raging enemies through any tortures rather than destroy himself, beyond doubt judged it a great crime for a person to kill himself. Among all their praiseworthy men, distinguished by the marks of virtue, the Romans bring forward none better. Good fortune did not corrupt him, for in so great a victory he remained very poor; nor did misfortune break him, for he returned fearless to so dreadful a death. These were very brave and illustrious men, defenders of an earthly homeland, worshipers of gods who were false, yet not false worshipers themselves but most true to their oaths. They could have struck down defeated enemies by the custom and law of war, yet when they were defeated by enemies they refused to strike themselves down; and though they had no fear at all of death, they preferred to bear their conquerors as masters rather than inflict death on themselves. If so, how much more will Christians, who worship the true God and long for the heavenly homeland, refrain from this crime, if divine dispensation has for a time subjected them to their enemies, either to

test them or to correct them! In that humiliation he does not desert them, he who, though the Most High, came so humbly for their sake. And this is all the more true since no rights of any military authority, or of such service, bind them to strike down even a defeated enemy. What error so wicked, then, creeps in, that a person kills himself either because an enemy has sinned against him, or to keep an enemy from sinning against him, when he would not dare to kill the enemy himself, whether that enemy has sinned or is about to sin?

THAT SIN SHOULD NOT BE AVOIDED BY SIN

One must not commit the certain sin of suicide to avoid a possible future sin.

1.25 "But," it is said, "one must fear and guard against the danger that the body, subjected to lust, may by the most seductive pleasure entice the mind to consent to sin. So," they say, "each person ought to kill himself before committing that sin—now not on account of another's sin, but on account of his own." Certainly a mind that is subject to God and his wisdom rather than to the body and its desire will in no way consent to the lust of its own flesh, aroused by another's lust. And yet, if it is a detestable deed and a damnable crime for a person to kill even himself, as truth clearly proclaims, who would be so foolish as to say, "Let us commit murder now, in case we perhaps fall into adultery later"? If wickedness has such dominion that we are choosing not innocence but sins, is it not better to risk an adultery that is uncertain because it lies in the future than to commit a murder that is certain because it is in the present? Is it not better to commit a disgraceful act that can be healed by repentance than a crime that leaves no room for saving repentance? I have said this because of those men or women who, to avoid not another's sin but their own—for fear that, subjected to another's lust, they might consent to their own when it is aroused—think they should do violence to themselves to the point of death. But far be it from a Christian mind, which trusts in its God and, having

placed its hope in him, relies on his help—far be it, I say, that such a mind should yield to any pleasures of the flesh so as to consent to what is shameful. And if that disobedience of desire which still dwells in our dying members moves as if by a law of its own, apart from the law of our will, how much more is it free of guilt in the body of one who does not consent, if it is free of guilt in the body of one who is asleep!

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND ACTS OF THE SAINTS THAT ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN DONE ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED

Holy women who drowned themselves may have acted on a divine command, like Samson.

1.26 "But," they say, "certain holy women in the time of persecution, to escape those who were assailing their chastity, threw themselves into a river that would carry them off and drown them, and died in that way; and their martyrdoms are celebrated in the Catholic Church with a veneration that draws great crowds." About these women I dare not pass any rash judgment. For I do not know whether divine authority, through some trustworthy testimonies, persuaded the Church to honor their memory in this way; and it may be so. For what if they did this not misled by human reasoning but commanded by God—not erring, but obeying? In the case of Samson it is not right for us to believe anything else. When God commands, and makes known without any ambiguity that he is commanding, who would call obedience a crime? Who would accuse devout compliance? But it does not follow that anyone who decides to sacrifice his son to God does so without crime, just because Abraham did this too, and was praised for it.[39] For when a soldier, obeying the authority under which he is lawfully placed, kills a human being, he is not guilty of murder under any law of his state; indeed, if he

39 Eusebius (*Church History* 8.12) tells of a mother and her two daughters from Antioch who drowned themselves in a river during the persecution under Diocletian.

does not do it, he is guilty of desertion and contempt of command. But if he had done it on his own initiative and authority, he would have incurred the crime of shedding human blood. So for the very thing for which he is punished if he does it without orders, he will be punished if he does not do it when ordered. If this is so when a commander gives the order, how much more when the Creator gives it! So let anyone who hears that it is not lawful to kill himself do it, if he has been commanded by the one whose commands it is not lawful to disregard—only let him make sure that the divine command does not waver with any uncertainty. We reach the conscience only through the ear; we do not claim for ourselves the judgment of hidden things. "No one knows what is happening in a person except the spirit of the person, which is in him."[40] This we say, this we affirm, this we prove in every way: that no one ought to inflict a voluntary death on himself as a way of escaping temporal troubles, for fear of falling into eternal ones; no one on account of another's sins, for fear of beginning to have a very grave sin of his own, when he was not defiled by another's; no one on account of his own past sins, for which he needs this life all the more, so that they can be healed by repentance; no one out of longing, as it were, for a better life hoped for after death, because the better life after death does not receive those who are guilty of their own death.

WHETHER VOLUNTARY DEATH SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN ORDER TO AVOID SIN

If suicide were a remedy for sin, the newly baptized should all kill themselves.

1.27 One reason remains, which I had begun to discuss, for which it is thought useful for a person to kill himself: so as not to fall into sin, whether through the allure of pleasure or the savagery of pain. If we are willing to admit this reason, it will lead us so far that people should be urged to kill themselves at the very

40 1 Corinthians 2:11.

moment when, washed in the bath of holy regeneration, they have received the forgiveness of all their sins. For that is the time to guard against all future sins, when all past ones have been wiped away. If this is rightly done by a voluntary death, why is it not done then above all? Why does any baptized person spare himself? Why does he thrust his newly freed head back into all the many dangers of this life, when it is so easily in his power to escape them all by killing himself, and when it is written: "Whoever loves danger will fall into it"?[41] Why, then, are so many and such great dangers loved, or at any rate, even if they are not loved, taken on, by someone who stays in this life when he is permitted to leave it? Or does so senseless a perversity overturn the heart and turn it away from considering the truth, that a person thinks this: if he ought to kill himself so as not to collapse into sin under the domination of a single captor, he must nevertheless go on living in order to endure the world itself, which is full at every hour of temptations? These include temptations like the one dreaded under a single master, and countless others, without which this life is not lived. What reason is there, then, for us to spend our time on those exhortations in which we address the baptized and try to kindle in them a zeal for virginal integrity, or for the continence of widowhood, or for faithfulness in the marriage bed itself? We have better shortcuts, far removed from every danger of sinning. We could persuade anyone we can, immediately after the forgiveness of their sins, to seize death and inflict it on themselves, and so send them to the Lord healthier and purer. Now, anyone who thinks this should be attempted and urged on people is, I do not say foolish, but insane. With what face, then, can he say to someone, "Kill yourself, so that you do not add a graver sin to your small ones while you live under a master whose foreign ways know no shame"? He cannot, except with the utmost wickedness, say, "Kill yourself now that all your sins are absolved, so that you do not commit such sins again, or even worse ones, while you live in a world all too alluring with so many impure pleasures, so

41 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 3:26.

frenzied with so many unspeakable cruelties, so hostile with so many errors and terrors." Since it is wicked to say this, it is certainly wicked to kill oneself. For if there could be any just cause for doing this voluntarily, there would surely be none more just than this one. But since not even this one is just, there is none.

BY WHAT JUDGMENT OF GOD THE LUST OF THE ENEMY WAS ALLOWED TO SIN AGAINST THE BODIES OF THE CHASTE

God may have permitted the rapes to humble pride or to guard against it.

1.28 So, you who are faithful to Christ, do not let your life be a burden to you if your chastity has been made a plaything by the enemy. You have a great and true consolation if you keep a sure conscience that you did not consent to the sins of those who were permitted to sin against you. If perhaps you ask why they were permitted, the providence of the Creator and Ruler of the world is indeed deep, and "his judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out." Yet question your own souls faithfully: perhaps you were too puffed up with pride over this good of integrity, of continence, or of chastity, and, delighting in human praise, even envied others in this respect. I do not accuse what I do not know, nor do I hear what your hearts answer when they are questioned. Still, if they answer that it is so, do not be amazed that you have lost what you longed to please people with, while what cannot be shown to people has remained yours.[42] If you did not consent to those who sinned, divine help came to divine grace, so that it would not be lost. Human disgrace came upon human glory, so that it would not be loved. Take comfort in both, you who are fainthearted: on the one side you were tested, on the other chastised; on the one side justified, on the other corrected. But some women's hearts, when questioned, answer that they have never been proud of the good of virginity, or widowhood, or marital chastity. Agreeing with the humble, they have rejoiced with trembling in God's

42 Romans 11:33.

gift. They have envied no one an excellence of holiness and chastity equal to their own. Setting aside human praise, which is usually paid all the more lavishly the rarer the good that calls for it, they have wished rather that their number were larger than that they themselves should stand out more by being few. Even these women, who are like this, must not complain that it was permitted if foreign lust violated some of them too. Nor should they believe that God neglects such things because he permits what no one commits with impunity. For certain burdens, so to speak, of evil desires are both let loose in the present through God's hidden judgment and reserved for his open judgment at the last. Perhaps, too, these women, who know well that their hearts were not puffed up with pride over this good of chastity, and who nevertheless suffered the enemy's violence in their flesh, had some hidden weakness. It could have swelled into arrogant pride if they had escaped this humiliation in that devastation. Just as some were "snatched away by death so that wickedness might not change their understanding," so something was snatched from these women by force so that prosperity might not change their modesty. Consider both groups: those who were already proud of their flesh because it had suffered no one's shameful touch, and those who might perhaps have become proud if it had not been handled by the enemy's violence. For both, chastity was not taken away. Instead, humility was instilled. For the first, help came to a swelling already present. For the second, a swelling about to arise was headed off.[43]

This too should not be passed over in silence. Some of the women who suffered these things may have thought several things about chastity. They may have thought that the good of continence should be counted among bodily goods, and lasts only as long as the body is not handled by anyone's lust. They may also have thought that it does not reside solely in the strength of the will, assisted by God, so that both body and spirit may be holy, and that it is not the kind of good that cannot be

43 Wisdom 4:11.

taken away against the mind's will. That error has perhaps been taken from them. For they consider with what conscience they have served God, and with unshaken faith they do not think him capable of in any way abandoning those who served him and called upon him as they did. Nor can they doubt how much chastity pleases him. So they see that it follows that he would never have permitted these things to happen to his saints if the holiness he conferred on them, and loves in them, could perish in that way.

WHAT THE HOUSEHOLD OF CHRIST SHOULD REPLY TO UNBELIEVERS WHO TAUNT THEM THAT CHRIST DID NOT FREE THEM FROM THE ENEMY'S FURY

Christians answer the taunt "Where is your God?" by pointing to God's presence everywhere.

1.29 So the whole household of the supreme and true God has its own consolation. It does not deceive, and it is not founded on hope in things that totter or slip away. Nor need it regret even this temporal life, in which it is being trained for eternal life. It uses earthly goods like a pilgrim, without being captured by them, and by evils it is either tested or corrected. Others mock its uprightness, and when it happens to fall into some temporal evils, they say to it, "Where is your God?" Let them say where their own gods are when they suffer the very things they worship those gods, or insist they must be worshiped, in order to avoid.[44] For the household answers: "My God is present everywhere, wholly everywhere, enclosed nowhere. He can be present unseen and absent without moving. When he harasses me with adversity, he is either examining my merits or chastising my sins, and he keeps an eternal reward for me in return for temporal evils piously endured. But who are you, that it should be worth talking with you even about your gods, much less about my God? He 'is to be feared above all gods, for the

44 Psalm 41:4 (42:3 in most English Bibles).

gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens.'"[45]

WHAT SHAMEFUL PROSPERITY THOSE WHO COMPLAIN ABOUT CHRISTIAN TIMES WANT TO ABOUND IN

Those who blame Christian times only want luxury without fear, as Scipio Nasica foresaw.

1.30 Think of that Scipio Nasica of yours, once your pontiff. Amid the terror of the Punic War, when the best man in Rome was sought to receive the Phrygian rites, the entire senate chose him. Perhaps you would not dare to look him in the face. If he were alive, he himself would restrain you from this shamelessness. For why, when afflicted by adversity, do you complain about Christian times? Is it not because you want your luxury left undisturbed, so that you may wallow in utterly depraved morals with every harsh trouble removed? You do not want peace and an abundance of every kind of plenty in order to use these goods honorably, that is, modestly, soberly, temperately, and piously. You want them so that an endless variety of pleasures may be pursued with insane extravagance, and so that, amid prosperity, evils may spring up in your morals that are worse than raging enemies.[46] But that Scipio, your chief pontiff, judged by the whole senate to be the best of men, feared this calamity for you. So he did not want Carthage, then the rival of Roman rule, to be destroyed, and he opposed Cato when Cato moved that it be destroyed. He feared security as an enemy of weak spirits, and he saw that fear was necessary as a suitable guardian for the citizens, as though they were wards. Nor was he mistaken in his judgment: events themselves proved how truly

45 Psalm 95:4–5 (96:4–5 in most English Bibles).

46 Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica was chosen in 204 BC as Rome's "best man" to receive the sacred image of the Phrygian Great Mother (Cybele). Augustine here merges him with his son, Scipio Nasica Corculum, chief pontiff, who opposed the destruction of Carthage.

he spoke.[47] For once Carthage was destroyed, and the great terror of the Roman commonwealth had been driven off and extinguished, such great evils born of prosperity followed at once. Concord was corrupted and torn apart, first by savage and bloody seditions. Then, soon after, through a chain of evil causes, it was torn apart by civil wars as well. So much slaughter was wrought, so much blood was shed, and such savagery seethed with greed for proscriptions and plunder, that those Romans who had feared evils from their enemies while their life was more upright now suffered crueler things from their fellow citizens, once that uprightness was lost. And that very lust for domination, which among the other vices of the human race was present in a purer form in the Roman people as a whole, prevailed at last in a few of the more powerful; and then it crushed the rest, worn down and exhausted, under the yoke of slavery as well.

BY WHAT STAGES OF VICE THE LUST FOR POWER GREW AMONG THE ROMANS

Prosperity after Carthage fell fed ambition, greed and the lust for domination.

1.31 For when would that lust have come to rest in those most proud minds before it reached royal power through a succession of offices? Yet there would have been no opportunity for holding office after office unless ambition prevailed. And ambition would hardly prevail except among a people corrupted by greed and luxury. The people became greedy and luxurious through prosperity. Nasica, with the greatest foresight, judged that this prosperity must be guarded against when he did not want the greatest, strongest, and richest of enemy cities to be removed. He wanted lust to be held down by fear, so that lust, held down, would not run riot in luxury, and luxury, restrained, would not let greed rampage either. With these vices barred, the virtue

47 Cato the Elder (234–149 BC), who famously insisted that Carthage must be destroyed. It was razed in 146 BC.

useful to the city would flourish and grow, and the liberty befitting that virtue would endure. The same reason, and the same most farsighted love of his country, lay behind another act. This same chief pontiff of yours was chosen as the best of men by the senate of that time without a single dissenting vote, a fact that must often be repeated. When the senate set about building a theater, he checked it in this plan and this craving. In a most weighty speech he persuaded them not to let Greek luxury creep into the manly ways of their country, and not to give in to foreign depravity so as to weaken and sap Roman virtue. His authority was so strong that the senate, moved by his words and acting with foresight, forbade from then on even the benches to be set out. These benches were piled up for the occasion at the shows of the games, and the city had already begun to use them. How eagerly he would have removed the theatrical shows themselves from the city of Rome, if he had dared to resist the authority of those he thought were gods! He did not understand that they were harmful demons. Or, if he did understand, he too thought they should be placated rather than despised. For the teaching from above had not yet been made known to the nations. That teaching, cleansing the heart by faith, would change human affections through humble piety so that they would strive for heavenly and even more-than-heavenly things, and it would free them from the domination of proud demons.

THE FOUNDING OF THE THEATRICAL SHOWS

The gods themselves demanded theatrical shows, which corrupted Roman morals.

1.32 But know this, you who are ignorant of these things and you who pretend not to know them. Take note, you who grumble against the one who freed you from such masters. The theatrical shows, spectacles of obscenity and license for frivolity, were instituted at Rome not by human vices but by the commands of your gods. It would be more tolerable for you to pay divine honors to that Scipio than to worship gods of this kind. For those

gods were no better than their own pontiff. Pay attention now, if a mind drunk on errors swallowed for so long allows you to think anything sane! The gods ordered theatrical shows to be put on for them in order to calm a plague of the body. But the pontiff forbade the stage itself to be built in order to guard against a plague of the soul. If you have any light of mind to rank the soul above the body, choose whom you will worship![48] Nor did that plague of the body subside because the effete madness of theatrical shows crept in among a warlike people, previously accustomed only to the games of the circus. Rather, the cunning of the wicked spirits foresaw that the plague was about to cease when its due end came. So it used the occasion to send another plague, far more serious, in which it takes the greatest delight, and it sent this one not on bodies but on morals. This plague blinded the minds of the wretched with such darkness, and disfigured them with such ugliness, that even now something has happened that will perhaps seem incredible when our descendants hear of it. After the city of Rome was devastated, those whom this plague possessed, and who managed to flee from there and reach Carthage, went mad every day in the theaters, competing with one another in their frenzy for the actors.

THE VICES OF THE ROMANS, WHICH THE OVERTHROW OF THEIR COUNTRY DID NOT CORRECT

Refugees from Rome crowded the theaters of Carthage while the East mourned the City.

1.33 O minds out of your minds! What is this enormous, not error, but madness? As we have heard, the peoples of the East bewailed your ruin, and the greatest cities in the most remote lands held public mourning and lamentation. Meanwhile you were seeking out the theaters, entering them, filling them, and behaving far more insanely than before! This corruption and plague of souls, this overthrow of uprightness and decency, is

48 According to Livy (7.2), stage shows were first introduced at Rome in 364 BC to appease the gods during a plague.

what that Scipio feared for you. He feared it when he forbade theaters to be built, when he saw that you could easily be corrupted and overthrown by prosperity, and when he did not want you to be free from fear of an enemy. For he did not think a commonwealth happy when its walls were standing and its morals were falling. But with you, the seductions of impious demons had more force than the warnings of farsighted men. That is why you do not want the evils you do to be charged to you, while you charge the evils you suffer to Christian times. For in your security you are not seeking a commonwealth at peace, but luxury unpunished. Corrupted by prosperity, you could not be corrected by adversity either. That Scipio wanted you to be frightened by an enemy so that you would not dissolve into luxury. Yet even when crushed by the enemy you did not curb your luxury. You lost the benefit of calamity: you have become most wretched, and you have remained most wicked.

GOD'S MERCY, WHICH SOFTENED THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY

The invaders, by sparing those in the churches, imitated Romulus's asylum.

1.34 And yet the fact that you are alive is God's doing. By sparing you he warns you to be corrected through repentance. Even though you are ungrateful, he granted that you should escape the hands of the enemy, either under the name of his servants or in the places of his martyrs. Romulus and Remus are said to have established an asylum, so that whoever fled there would be free from all punishment, for they sought to increase the population of the city they were founding. This precedent has turned out remarkably, to the honor of Christ. The destroyers of the City established what its founders had established before. But what is so great about the founders doing this to make up the

number of their citizens, compared with the destroyers doing it to preserve a multitude of their enemies?[49]

THE CHURCH'S HIDDEN CHILDREN AMONG THE UNGODLY, AND THE FALSE CHRISTIANS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Hidden future citizens live among the enemies, and false Christians among the faithful.

1.35 These are the answers, and others like them, fuller and more fitting ones if it can find any, that the redeemed household of the Lord Christ and the pilgrim city of Christ the King should give to its enemies. But let it remember that among these very enemies future citizens lie hidden. Then it will not think it fruitless, even with regard to them, to bear with them while they are hostile, until it wins them over to confessing the faith. In the same way, as long as it is a pilgrim in the world, the city of God has with it some from the number of its enemies. They are joined to it by communion in the sacraments, but they will not be with it in the eternal lot of the saints. Some of them are hidden, some open. They do not even hesitate to join the enemies themselves in grumbling against God, whose sacrament they bear. At one time they fill the theaters with those enemies, at another the churches with us. But we have far less reason to despair of the correction of some even of these people, since among the most open adversaries predestined friends lie hidden, as yet unknown even to themselves. For in this age these two cities are entangled and mixed together until they are separated at the last judgment. Concerning their origin, their progress, and their appointed ends, I will set out what I think must be said, as far as God helps me. I will do so for the glory of the city of God, which will stand out more clearly by contrast with what is alien to it.

49 According to Livy (1.8), Romulus opened a sanctuary on the Capitoline Hill to attract settlers to his new city.

WHAT SUBJECTS ARE TO BE DISCUSSED IN WHAT FOLLOWS

Augustine outlines the arguments of the books to come.

1.36 But I still have some things to say against those who blame the disasters of the Roman commonwealth on our religion, because it forbids them to sacrifice to their gods. For I must recall the evils, as many and as great as occur to me or seem sufficient, that the city and the provinces belonging to its empire endured before their sacrifices were forbidden. They would no doubt attribute all of these to us, if our religion had already shone upon them too, or had forbidden them their sacrilegious rites as it does now. Then I must show which of their ways the true God, in whose power are all kingdoms, deigned to help in increasing their empire, and for what reason. I must also show how little those whom they think are gods helped them, and how much more those gods harmed them by deceiving and misleading them. Finally, I will speak against those who, refuted and convicted by the clearest evidence, try to maintain that the gods are to be worshiped not for the benefit of the present life but for the sake of the life that is to come after death. Unless I am mistaken, this question will be much more laborious and will deserve subtler discussion. In it I must argue against philosophers as well, and not just any philosophers. I mean those who are renowned among them for the most outstanding glory and who agree with us on many things: on the immortality of the soul, on the true God having created the world, and on his providence, by which he rules the whole of what he created. But since they too must be refuted on the points where they disagree with us, we must not fail in this duty. Having refuted impious objections with whatever strength God grants, we may then uphold the city of God, true piety, and the worship of God, in which alone eternal happiness is truthfully promised. So let this be the limit of this book, so that we may take up what comes next in our plan with a new beginning.

Book II

Rome's moral decline
The gods never taught the Romans to live well; their shows and rites corrupted public morals.

THE LIMIT THAT MUST BE SET TO THE NEED FOR ARGUMENT

Some opponents will never stop arguing, so not every objection deserves a reply.

2.1 Suppose the weak understanding that comes from human habit did not dare to resist the reasoning of plain truth. Suppose it submitted its sickness to sound teaching as to a medicine, until it was healed by divine help won through devout faith. Then those who think rightly, and set out their thoughts in adequate words, would need no long discourse to refute any error of empty opinion. As it is, however, foolish minds suffer from a greater and more loathsome disease. Through it they defend their irrational impulses as if these were reason and truth itself, even after a reason has been fully given, as fully as one human being owes it to another. They do this either from excessive blindness, which keeps them from seeing even what is plain, or from the most obstinate perversity, which keeps them from accepting even what they see. So it becomes necessary to say a great deal about things that are mostly clear. It is as though we were presenting them not to people with open eyes, for them to look at, but, in a manner of speaking, to people groping with their eyes shut, for them to touch. And yet what end will there be to debate, what limit to talk, if we think we must always reply to those who reply? For some either cannot understand what is

said, or are so hardened by the perversity of their minds that they will not yield even if they do understand. They "reply and speak wickedness," as it is written, and are tirelessly empty. Suppose we chose to refute their objections every time they resolved, with brazen face, not to think about what they say, so long as they contradict our arguments in any way at all. You see how endless, wearisome and fruitless that would be.[1] So, my son Marcellinus, I would not want you, or the others whom this work of mine serves usefully and freely in the love of Christ, to be the kind of judges of my writings who always want a reply whenever they hear something said against what they read. Otherwise they become like those foolish women the apostle mentions, "always learning and never arriving at knowledge of the truth."[2]

WHAT WAS SETTLED IN THE FIRST BOOK

Augustine summarizes Book 1 and announces Rome's earlier disasters as his next subject.

2.2 In the previous book, then, I set out to speak about the city of God, the subject for which this whole work was undertaken with his help. It struck me that I must first resist those who blame the Christian religion for these wars that are grinding this world down, and above all for the recent devastation of the city of Rome by the invaders. They blame it because it forbids them to serve demons with abominable sacrifices. Instead, they ought to credit Christ with this: for the sake of his name, and against the custom and practice of war, the invaders left spacious religious places free for them to take refuge in. In many cases the invaders so honored service devoted to Christ, not only genuine service but even service feigned out of fear, that they judged it forbidden to themselves to do what the law of war would have permitted against these people. From this arose the question why these divine benefits came also to the ungodly and ungrate-

1 Psalm 93:4 (94:4 in most English Bibles).
2 2 Timothy 3:7.

ful, and why, likewise, the harsh things done by the enemy afflicted the godly together with the ungodly. This question extends to many matters. It commonly troubles many people in the face of all the daily gifts of God and disasters of men, since both often befall those who live well and those who live badly, mixed together and without distinction. To resolve it, as the work I had undertaken required, I dwelt on it for some time. Above all I wished to console the holy and devoutly chaste women on whom the enemy perpetrated something that brought them the pain of shame, though it did not take away the firmness of their purity. They should not be sorry to be alive, since there is no wickedness for them to be sorry for. Then I said a few things against those who, with the most shameless insolence, harass the Christians afflicted by those adversities, and especially mock the shame of women who were humiliated, chaste and holy though they were. These people are utterly wicked and irreverent, far degenerated from those very Romans whose many splendid deeds are praised and celebrated in literature. Indeed, they are vehemently opposed to the glory of those Romans. For Rome, founded and enlarged by the labors of the ancients, they had made fouler while it still stood than when it fell. In its fall, stones and timbers came down. In their lives, however, all the defenses and adornments fell, not of walls but of morals, since their hearts burned with cravings more deadly than the fires that burned the roofs of that city. With these words I ended the first book. Next, then, I resolved to describe the evils that city has suffered since its origin, whether at home or in the provinces already subject to it. They would blame all of these on the Christian religion if the teaching of the gospel had already been sounding forth then, bearing its free witness against their false and deceitful gods.

THAT HISTORY MUST BE CALLED ON TO SHOW WHAT EVILS BEFELL THE ROMANS WHILE THEY WORSHIPED THE GODS, BEFORE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION GREW STRONG

Educated pagans know Rome suffered disasters long before Christ but hide it from the crowd.

2.3 But remember that in recalling these things I am still dealing with the uneducated. Their ignorance gave rise to the common proverb: "No rain? The Christians are to blame." Those of them who have been trained in liberal studies and love history know these things perfectly well. But to make the crowds of the uninstructed as hostile to us as possible, they pretend not to know them. They strive to persuade the common people that the disasters which must afflict the human race at certain intervals of place and time happen because of the Christian name, which is spreading everywhere, against their gods, with immense fame and most brilliant renown. Let them recall with us, then, the many and various calamities by which the Roman state was ground down before Christ came in the flesh, and before his name became known to the nations with that glory which they envy in vain. In the face of these calamities, let them defend their gods if they can, if the gods are worshiped so that their worshipers may not suffer such evils. For if their worshipers suffer anything of the kind now, they insist that it must be blamed on us. Why, then, did those gods allow the things I am about to describe to happen to their worshipers, before the proclaimed name of Christ offended them and prohibited their sacrifices?

THAT THE WORSHIPERS OF THE GODS NEVER RECEIVED ANY PRECEPTS OF GOODNESS FROM THEM, AND IN THEIR RITES CELEBRATED EVERY KIND OF OBSCENITY

The gods never taught morals, and their festivals displayed obscenities Augustine saw as a young man.

2.4 First, why were their gods unwilling to see to it that their worshipers did not have the very worst morals? The true God rightly

neglected those who did not worship him. But those gods, whose worship these most ungrateful people complain they are barred from, why did they not help their worshipers to live well by any laws at all? It was surely only fitting that, just as these people cared for those gods' rites, the gods should care for these people's deeds. But the reply comes that each person is evil by his own will. Who would deny it? Yet it was the business of gods who give counsel not to hide the precepts of a good life from the peoples who worshiped them. They should have set them out in clear preaching, met with sinners through their seers and rebuked them, openly threatened evildoers with punishment and promised rewards to those who live rightly. When did anything of the kind ever ring out, in a ready and lofty voice, in the temples of those gods? We too, as young men, used sometimes to go to the spectacles and mockeries of sacrilege. We watched people in frenzies, we listened to the musicians, and we took pleasure in the most shameful shows put on for gods and goddesses. They were held for the Heavenly Virgin and for Berecynthia, mother of all. Before her litter, on the solemn day of her bathing, the most worthless actors sang such things in public as would be unfit for the ears, I do not say of the mother of the gods, but of the mother of any senator whatever or of any respectable man. Indeed, they would be unfit for the ears of the actors' own mothers. For human modesty has something in it toward parents that not even wickedness itself can take away. The actors would have been ashamed to rehearse at home, in front of their own mothers, the obscene filth of words and deeds that they performed in public before the mother of the gods, while a vast crowd of both sexes watched and listened. If curiosity could lure that crowd to gather around, at least its offended chastity ought to have sent it away abashed.[3] What is sacrilege, if those are sacred rites? Or what is pollution, if that is a washing? And these were called "courses," as though a banquet were being celebrated at which unclean demons fed on their own

3 The Heavenly Virgin (Caelestis) was the chief goddess of Carthage; Berecynthia is Cybele, the Great Mother, whose image was ceremonially bathed each year.

feast. Who would not perceive what kind of spirits delight in such obscenities? Only someone who either does not know whether there are any unclean spirits at all, deceiving under the name of gods, or who leads the kind of life in which it is these, rather than the true God, whom he both longs to have favorable and dreads to have angry.[4]

THE OBSCENITIES WITH WHICH THE MOTHER OF THE GODS WAS HONORED BY HER WORSHIPERS

Scipio Nasica would never want his own mother honored like the Mother of the gods.

2.5 I would like to have as judge in this matter not these people, who are more eager to delight in the vices of a most disgraceful custom than to fight against them, but that very Scipio Nasica. He was chosen by the senate as the best man, and the image of this demon was received by his hands and carried into the City. Let him tell us whether he would have wished his own mother to deserve so well of the commonwealth that divine honors were decreed for her. It is well known, after all, that the Greeks and Romans and other nations decreed such honors to certain mortals whose benefits to them they had valued highly, and that they believed these mortals had become immortal and been received into the number of the gods. Surely he would have wished such happiness for his mother, if it were possible. Then again, suppose we asked him whether he would want those obscenities to be celebrated among her divine honors. Would he not cry out that he would rather his mother lay dead and without any feeling than live on as a goddess in order to listen to such things with pleasure? Far be it from us to think it of him. He was a senator of the Roman people, a man of the mind that made him forbid a theater to be built in the city of brave men. Such a man would not want his mother worshiped so that, as a goddess, she would be won over by rites whose words would

4 *Fercula* meant both the dishes of a banquet and the litters carrying sacred images in procession.

have offended her as a matron. Nor would he in any way believe that divinity could so turn the modesty of a praiseworthy woman into its opposite that her worshipers would invoke her with such honors. Had insults like these been hurled at anyone in her presence while she lived among men, her relatives, her husband and her children would have blushed for her, unless she had stopped her ears and taken herself away. So the mother of the gods was such that even the worst of men would be ashamed to have her as a mother. Intending to take possession of Roman minds, she sought out the best man. She did not mean to make him the best by warning and helping him. She meant to mislead and deceive him, like the woman of whom it is written: "But a woman captures the precious souls of men." Her aim was that this man of great natural gifts, exalted by what seemed a divine testimony and truly thinking himself the best, should not seek true piety and religion. Without these, every talent, however praiseworthy, vanishes in pride and falls. How, then, could that goddess seek the best man except treacherously, when she seeks in her rites the kind of things that the best men shrink from bringing into their own banquets?[5]

THAT THE GODS OF THE PAGANS NEVER LAID DOWN A TEACHING ON HOW TO LIVE WELL

No temple ever taught the precepts of good living that churches teach.

2.6 This is why those divinities did not care about the life and morals of the cities and peoples who worshiped them. Without any terrifying prohibition of their own, they allowed them to be filled with such horrible and detestable evils and to become utterly wicked. These evils were not in their fields and vines, not in their houses and money, not even in the body itself, which is subject to the mind, but in the mind itself, in the very spirit that rules the flesh. Or, if they did forbid it, let that rather be shown, let that be proved. And let them not boast to us of some whisperings or other, breathed into the ears of a very few and handed

5 Proverbs 6:26.

down as if in secret religion, from which honesty and chastity of life might be learned. Rather, let them point out or name places once consecrated to such gatherings. I do not mean places where games were held with the obscene words and gestures of actors, nor where the Fugalia are celebrated with every license of filth let loose (a festival of flight indeed, but the flight of modesty and decency). I mean places where the peoples might hear what the gods commanded about restraining greed, breaking ambition and curbing luxury, and where the wretched might learn what Persius rebukes them for needing to learn, when he says: "Learn, you wretched ones, and come to know the causes of things: what we are, and for what life we are born; what rank is assigned to us, or where the gentle turn around the post is to be taken, and from what point; what limit there is to money; what it is right to wish for; what use hard coin has; how much it is fitting to bestow on your country and your dear relatives; what God has commanded you to be, and in what place among human affairs you are set."[6] Let them say in what places these precepts of teaching gods used to be read aloud and frequently heard by the peoples who worshiped them. We, for our part, point to churches established for this very purpose wherever the Christian religion spreads.

THAT THE DISCOVERIES OF PHILOSOPHY ARE USELESS WITHOUT DIVINE AUTHORITY, SINCE A PERSON INCLINED TO VICE IS MOVED MORE BY WHAT THE GODS DID THAN BY WHAT PEOPLE ARGUED

Philosophy is human discovery, and worshipers imitate Jupiter rather than Plato.

2.7 Or perhaps they will remind us of the schools and debates of the philosophers? First, these are not Roman but Greek. Or if they now count as Roman because Greece too has become a Roman province, they are still not precepts of the gods but the

6 Persius (AD 34–62), Roman satirist; the lines are from *Satires* 3. The Fugalia is an obscure festival, and Augustine puns on its name, from *fuga*, "flight."

discoveries of men. Endowed with the keenest intellects, these men tried as best they could to track down by reasoning what lay hidden in the nature of things. They sought what in conduct was to be pursued and what avoided, and what in the very rules of reasoning followed by sure connection, or did not follow, or was even contradictory. Some of them discovered certain great things, insofar as they had divine help. Insofar as they were held back by their humanity, however, they erred. This happened above all when divine providence justly resisted their pride, so as to show, even by comparison with them, the way of piety that rises from humility to the heights. We shall have occasion to investigate and discuss this later, if it is the will of the true God and Lord. Still, if the philosophers discovered something that could suffice for leading a good life and attaining a happy one, how much more justly would divine honors be decreed to such men! How much better and more honorable it would be for Plato's books to be read in a temple of Plato than for Galli to be castrated, eunuch priests consecrated and madmen gashed in the temples of demons! The same goes for whatever else is usually celebrated in the rites of such gods, whether cruel or shameful, or shamefully cruel or cruelly shameful. How much more worthwhile it would be, for training the young in justice, to have the laws of the gods recited publicly than to praise the laws and institutions of the ancestors in vain! For all the worshipers of such gods, as soon as lust drives them on, "dipped in burning poison," as Persius says, look more at what Jupiter did than at what Plato taught or Cato judged.[7] Hence in Terence a dissolute young man looks at a picture painted on a wall. It showed "how Jupiter, they say, once sent a golden shower into Danaë's lap." From this great authority he draws a defense for his own depravity, boasting that in doing it he is imitating a god.[8]

7 The Galli were the castrated priests of Cybele, the Great Mother.

8 Terence, *The Eunuch*, where the young Chaerea justifies his assault on a girl by Jupiter's seduction of Danaë.

"And what a god!" he says. "The one who shakes the temples of heaven with his mighty thunder. Was I, a mere little man, not to do the same? Well, I did it, and gladly."

THE THEATRICAL SHOWS, IN WHICH THE GODS ARE NOT OFFENDED BY THE DISPLAY OF THEIR OWN DISGRACEFUL ACTS BUT APPEASED

The gods themselves required the theatrical shows that displayed their crimes.

2.8 "But," they say, "these things are not handed down in the rites of the gods. They come from the tales of the poets." I do not wish to say that those mystic rites are more shameful than these theatrical ones. What I do say, and history refutes those who deny it, is this. The Romans did not bring those very shows, in which the inventions of the poets reign, into the rites of their gods out of ignorant deference. Rather, the gods themselves brought it about, by harsh commands and, in a sense, by extortion, that the shows be staged for them solemnly and consecrated to their honor. I touched on this briefly in the first book. For when a plague was growing worse, theatrical shows were first instituted at Rome by the authority of the pontiffs. In conducting his life, then, who would not think he should follow the things acted out over and over in shows instituted by divine authority, rather than the things written down in laws promulgated by human counsel? If the poets falsely portrayed Jupiter as an adulterer, then surely the gods, being chaste, ought to have been angry and taken vengeance because such a crime was invented in human shows, not because the shows were neglected. And these are the more tolerable kinds of theatrical show, namely comedies and tragedies. These are poets' tales composed for performance at spectacles, with much shamefulness in their content but at least, unlike many others, no obscenity in their words. Boys are even made by their elders to read and learn them among the studies called honorable and liberal.

WHAT THE EARLY ROMANS THOUGHT ABOUT CURBING THE LICENSE OF POETS, WHICH THE GREEKS, FOLLOWING THE JUDGMENT OF THE GODS, CHOSE TO LEAVE FREE

Cicero reports that early Rome, unlike Greece, forbade poets to slander citizens.

2.9 What the ancient Romans thought about this, Cicero testifies in the books he wrote *On the Commonwealth*. There Scipio says in the discussion: "Comedies could never have made their outrages acceptable in the theaters if the customs of life had not allowed it." And the older Greeks at least kept their faulty opinion consistent. Among them it was even permitted by law for comedy to say whatever it wished, about whomever it wished, by name. So, as Africanus says in the same books: "Whom did it not touch, or rather, whom did it not harass? Whom did it spare? Granted, it wounded populist politicians, wicked men who stirred up sedition in public life: Cleon, Cleophon, Hyperbolus. Let us put up with that," he says, "even though it is better for such citizens to be branded by a censor than by a poet."[9] "But Pericles had led his city with the greatest authority for very many years, in peace and in war. That he should be assaulted in verse, and the verses performed on stage, was no more fitting than if our Plautus," he says, "or Naevius had wanted to abuse Publius and Gnaeus Scipio, or Caecilius Marcus Cato." Then, a little later, he says: "Our Twelve Tables, by contrast, made very few offenses punishable by death, yet among these they thought this one too should be so punished: if anyone sang a mocking chant or composed a song that brought disgrace or dishonor on another. Excellent. For our lives ought to be exposed to the judgments of magistrates and to lawful trials, not to the wit of poets. Nor should we have to hear a reproach except on condition that we may reply and defend ourselves in court." I have thought it right to excerpt

9 Cicero's dialogue *On the Commonwealth*, whose main speaker is Scipio Africanus the Younger, survives only in part. Cleon, Cleophon and Hyperbolus were Athenian demagogues mocked in comedy.

these passages word for word from the fourth book of Cicero's *On the Commonwealth*, though I have left out or slightly changed some things to make them easier to understand.[10] For they bear closely on the point I am trying to explain, if I can. He then says other things, and concludes this passage by showing that the ancient Romans disliked having any living person either praised or blamed on stage. But, as I said, the Greeks wanted this to be permitted, more shamelessly but more consistently. They saw that their gods welcomed and enjoyed reproaches in stage plays not only of men but even of the gods themselves. It made no difference whether the poets had invented these reproaches or whether the gods' real misdeeds were recounted and acted out in the theaters. If only their worshipers had thought those misdeeds worthy of laughter alone, and not of imitation too! For it would have been too arrogant to spare the reputation of the city's leading men and of its citizens, when the divinities did not want their own reputation spared.

WITH WHAT SKILL IN HARM THE DEMONS WANT EITHER FALSE OR TRUE CRIMES TOLD ABOUT THEMSELVES

Demons want even false crimes told about them, to lend vice divine authority.

2.10 They offer a defense: these things are said of the gods not truly but falsely, as inventions. That defense is itself the more wicked thing, if you consult the reverence that religion requires. But if you consider the malice of demons, what could be more cunning or more crafty as a means of deception? For when abuse is hurled at a leading man of one's country who is good and useful to it, is it not all the more outrageous the further it is from the truth and the more foreign to his life? What punishments, then, are enough when so wicked and so glaring an injury is done to a god? But the evil spirits whom these people take for gods want even crimes they never committed to be told

10 Plautus, Naevius and Caecilius were early Roman comic poets. The Twelve Tables were Rome's earliest written law code (c. 450 BC).

of them, so long as they can wrap human minds in these beliefs as if in nets and drag them along with themselves to the punishment that has been predestined. Perhaps it was men who committed these things, men whom these spirits are glad to have regarded as gods. These spirits are glad of human errors, and by a thousand arts of harm and deceit they put themselves forward in those men's place to be worshiped. Or perhaps these crimes truly belong to no men at all, and yet these most deceitful spirits gladly accept their being invented about divinities. Either way, the aim is that an authority strong enough to justify wicked and shameful deeds may seem to have been brought down to earth from heaven itself. Since, then, the Greeks felt themselves to be the slaves of such divinities, amid so many great insults to those divinities on the stage, they thought that the poets should by no means spare them. Either they desired to become like their gods even in this way, or they feared that, by seeking a more honorable reputation for themselves and so ranking themselves above the gods, they would provoke them to anger.

HOW THE GREEKS ADMITTED ACTORS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE, ON THE GROUND THAT IT WAS UNJUST TO DESPISE THOSE WHO APPEASED THE GODS

The Greeks honored actors because their gods enjoyed the shows.

2.11 To this same consistency belongs the fact that they also thought the actors of those plays worthy of no small civic honor. Indeed, as is recorded in that same book *On the Commonwealth*, Aeschines of Athens, a most eloquent man, regularly acted in tragedies as a young man and then entered public life. The Athenians also often sent Aristodemus, likewise a tragic actor, as their envoy to Philip on the gravest matters of peace and war. For they saw that these same arts and these same theatrical shows were pleasing even to their gods, and so it was not thought consistent to class those who performed them among

the disgraced.[11] This the Greeks did shamefully, to be sure, but certainly in complete harmony with their gods. They did not dare to shield the lives of citizens from being torn to pieces by the tongues of poets and actors, since they saw these same men carping at the life of the gods with the gods' own will and pleasure. And the very men who performed these things in the theaters, things the Greeks knew were pleasing to the divinities they served, they thought not only far from contemptible in the city but worthy of the highest honor. What reason could they possibly find for honoring priests, because through them they offered victims acceptable to the gods, while holding actors in disgrace? For it was the gods' own instruction that had taught them to present this pleasure, or honor, to the gods, who demanded it and grew angry if it was not done. This is all the more so since Labeo, whom they proclaim the greatest expert in matters of this kind, distinguishes good divinities from evil ones by this very difference in worship. He asserts that evil gods are appeased by slaughter and grim supplications, but good gods by joyful and pleasant services, such as, in his own words, games, banquets, and *lectisternia*. What all this amounts to we shall discuss more carefully later, God willing.[12] As for the present matter, there are two possibilities. Perhaps all these services are offered indiscriminately to all the gods as though all were good (for it is not fitting for gods to be evil, though in fact these, being unclean spirits, are all evil). Or perhaps, by some fixed distinction, as Labeo thought, these services are allotted to some gods and those to others. Either way, the Greeks are entirely consistent in holding both groups in honor: the priests through whom the victims are offered and the actors through whom the shows are presented. Otherwise they might be convicted of wronging either all their gods, if the shows please them all, or, what is

11 Aeschines (c. 390–c. 314 BC) was an Athenian orator and the rival of Demosthenes; Philip is Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great.

12 Cornelius Labeo was a writer on Roman religion, probably of the 3rd century AD. *Lectisternia* were ceremonial banquets at which images of the gods were placed on couches before laden tables.

more outrageous, those gods they consider good, if the shows are loved by those alone.

THAT THE ROMANS, BY TAKING FROM POETS THE FREEDOM AGAINST MEN THAT THEY ALLOWED AGAINST THE GODS, THOUGHT BETTER OF THEMSELVES THAN OF THEIR GODS

Rome protected citizens from poets' abuse while letting its gods be mocked.

2.12 But the Romans, as Scipio boasts in that dialogue *On the Commonwealth*, did not want their lives and reputations exposed to the abuse and insults of poets, and they even made it a capital offense for anyone to dare to compose such a song. Toward themselves this was an honorable enough provision, but toward their gods it was arrogant and irreligious. They knew that their gods allowed themselves to be torn apart by the abuse and slanders of poets, not only patiently but gladly. Yet they judged that they themselves, rather than the gods, did not deserve injuries of this kind. They even fortified themselves against them by law, while they mixed the gods' disgraces into their sacred solemnities as well. Do you really, Scipio, praise the fact that Roman poets were denied the license to inflict disgrace on any Roman, when you see that they spared none of your gods? Do you really value the reputation of your senate house more than that of the Capitol, indeed of Rome alone more than that of all heaven? Is that why poets were forbidden even by law to use a slanderous tongue against your fellow citizens, while they could hurl such great insults at your gods in safety, with no senator, no censor, no leading man, no pontiff to stop them? It was outrageous, apparently, for Plautus or Naevius to slander Gnaeus Scipio, or for Caecilius to slander Marcus Cato. Yet was it fitting for your Terence to stir up the wickedness of young men by the disgraceful example of Jupiter Best and Greatest?

THAT THE ROMANS SHOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT THEIR GODS, WHO DEMANDED TO BE WORSHIPED WITH DISGRACEFUL SHOWS, WERE UNWORTHY OF DIVINE HONOR

The Romans despised actors yet worshiped gods who demanded acting, which proves those gods false.

2.13 But perhaps, if he were alive, he would answer me: "How could we want these things to go unpunished, when the gods themselves willed them to be sacred? They introduced into Roman custom the theatrical shows in which such things are celebrated, recited, and acted, and they ordered those shows to be dedicated and presented in their honor." Then why was it not rather understood from this very fact that they were not true gods, nor in any way worthy of receiving divine honors from that commonwealth? It would have been wholly unfitting and wholly wrong to worship gods who demanded shows performed with insults against the Romans. How, then, I ask, were they thought worthy of worship? How were they not recognized as detestable spirits, who out of a craving to deceive demanded that their own crimes be celebrated among their honors? Likewise the Romans were already oppressed by a harmful superstition, so that they worshiped gods whom they saw wanted theatrical obscenities consecrated to them. Even so, mindful of their own dignity and sense of shame, they by no means honored the actors of such plays as the Greeks did. Instead, as the same Scipio says in Cicero, since they regarded the art of acting and the whole stage as a disgrace, they decided that this class of men should not only be deprived of the honors open to the other citizens but even be removed from their tribe by the censor's mark. An admirable piece of prudence, certainly, and one to be counted among the Romans' merits. But I wish it had followed itself and been consistent with itself. For look: quite rightly, any Roman citizen who chose to become an actor was not only given no path to public office, but was not even allowed, under the censor's mark, to keep his own tribe. O spirit of a city eager for praise, and truly Roman! But let someone answer me: by what

consistent reasoning are actors driven from every honor, while theatrical shows are mixed into the honors of the gods? For a long time Roman virtue knew nothing of those theatrical arts. If they had been sought out to amuse human pleasure, they would have crept in through the corruption of human morals. But it was the gods who demanded that these arts be presented to them. How, then, is the actor cast aside, through whom a god is worshiped? And with what effrontery is the actor of that theatrical obscenity branded, if the god who exacts it is adored? In this dispute let the Greeks and the Romans contend. The Greeks think they are right to honor actors, because they worship gods who demand theatrical shows. The Romans, however, do not allow actors to disgrace even a plebeian tribe, much less the senate house. In this debate the following line of reasoning settles the whole question. The Greeks propose: "If such gods are to be worshiped, then surely such men are also to be honored." The Romans add: "But such men are by no means to be honored." The Christians conclude: "Therefore such gods are by no means to be worshiped."

THAT PLATO, WHO GAVE POETS NO PLACE IN A WELL-ORDERED CITY, WAS BETTER THAN THESE GODS WHO WANTED TO BE HONORED WITH THEATRICAL SHOWS

Plato, who banished poets, deserved divine honors more than the gods who demanded shows.

2.14 Next we ask about the poets themselves, the composers of such plays. They are forbidden by the law of the Twelve Tables to damage the reputation of citizens, yet they hurl such shameful insults at the gods. Why are they not held to be disreputable like the actors? By what reasoning is it right that the actors who perform poetic fictions and portray disgraced gods are branded with infamy, while the authors are honored? Or should the palm perhaps go instead to the Greek Plato? When he was shaping by reason what a city ought to be, he held that poets should be expelled from the city as enemies of the truth. He, at any rate, both resented the insults to the gods and refused to let the

minds of citizens be painted over and corrupted by fictions. Now compare Plato's humanity, which expels poets from the city so that citizens may not be deceived, with the divinity of the gods, which demands theatrical shows in its own honor. Plato, though he did not persuade them by his arguments, at least urged on Greek frivolity and wantonness that such things should not even be written. The gods, by their command, extorted from Roman seriousness and restraint that such things should actually be performed.[13] Nor did the gods want these things merely performed, but dedicated to them, consecrated to them, solemnly presented to them. To whom, then, would the city more honorably have decreed divine honors? To Plato, who forbade these shameful and abominable things, or to the demons, who delight in this deception of men whom Plato could not persuade of the truth?

Labeo thought that this Plato should be listed among the demigods, like Hercules, like Romulus. He ranks demigods above heroes, but places both among the divinities. Yet I have no doubt that this man whom he calls a demigod should be preferred not only to the heroes but even to the gods themselves. The laws of the Romans do come close to Plato's arguments. He condemns all poetic fictions, while they at least take away from poets the license to slander human beings. He bars poets from living in the city itself, while they at least bar the actors of poetic plays from fellowship in the civic community. And if the Romans had dared to do anything against the gods who call for theatrical shows, they might perhaps have barred the actors altogether. So the Romans could by no means receive or hope for laws from their gods that would establish good morals or correct bad ones, since by their own laws they outdo those gods and convict them. For the gods demand theatrical shows in their own honor, while the Romans bar theatrical men from all honors. The gods order the disgraces of the gods to be celebrated for them in poetic fictions, while the Romans restrain the shamelessness of poets from disgracing men. And that demigod Plato

13 Plato banishes the poets from his ideal city in the *Republic* (books 2–3 and 10).

both resisted the lust of such gods and showed what ought to be brought to completion, building on the Roman character. He would not allow the poets themselves to live at all in a well-ordered city, whether they lie as they please or set before wretched human beings the gods' supposed worst deeds for imitation. We, for our part, do not call Plato either a god or a demigod. We do not compare him with any holy angel of the supreme God, or any truthful prophet, or any apostle, or any martyr of Christ, or any Christian person at all. The reason for this view of ours will be explained in its proper place, with God's help. But since they themselves will have it that he was a demigod, we judge that he should be preferred, if not to Romulus and Hercules (though no historian or poet has ever said or invented that Plato killed his brother or committed any crime), then certainly to Priapus, or to some Cynocephalus, or finally to Fever. These divinities the Romans partly received from abroad and partly consecrated as their own.[14] How, then, could such gods use good precepts and laws either to forbid such great evils of mind and morals when they threatened, or to see that they were rooted out once they had taken hold? These gods actually saw to it that disgraceful deeds were sown and multiplied. They wanted such acts, whether their own or presented as their own, to become known to whole peoples through theatrical festivals, so that the most wicked human lust might be kindled of its own accord, as if by divine authority. In vain does Cicero cry out against this. Speaking of the poets, he says: "When to them is added the shouting and approval of the people, as if of some great and wise teacher, what darkness they draw over us, what fears they bring in, what desires they inflame!"

14 Priapus was a fertility god; the "Dog-headed" (Cynocephalus) was the Egyptian Anubis; Fever (Febris) was worshiped as a Roman goddess. Romulus killed his brother Remus.

THAT THE ROMANS SET UP SOME OF THEIR GODS NOT BY REASON BUT BY FLATTERY

Rome gave Romulus a flamen but never honored Plato with even a shrine.

2.15 And what reasoning, rather than mere flattery, is there in their choice even of these false gods? This Plato, whom they want to be a demigod, labored through such long discussions so that human morals might not be corrupted by evils of the mind, the evils most of all to be guarded against. Yet they did not think him worthy of even a little shrine. Their Romulus, on the other hand, they ranked above many gods, even though their more esoteric teaching, so to speak, commends him as a demigod rather than a god. For they even instituted a flamen for him. This kind of priesthood was so preeminent in Roman rites, as the flamen's peaked cap bears witness, that they had only three flamens, established for three divinities: the flamen of Jupiter, the flamen of Mars, and the flamen of Quirinus for Romulus. For through the goodwill of the citizens Romulus was, as it were, received into heaven and afterward named Quirinus.[15] And so by this honor Romulus was preferred to Neptune and Pluto, the brothers of Jupiter, and even to Saturn, their father. The priesthood they had granted to Jupiter as something great, they granted to Romulus as well, and to Mars as his father, perhaps on Romulus' account.

THAT IF THE GODS HAD ANY CONCERN FOR JUSTICE, THE ROMANS OUGHT TO HAVE RECEIVED RULES FOR LIVING FROM THEM RATHER THAN BORROWING LAWS FROM OTHER PEOPLE

Rome borrowed Solon's laws because its gods never gave it laws for living.

2.16 If the Romans had been able to receive laws for living from their gods, they would not have borrowed the laws of Solon from

the Athenians some years after Rome was founded. Moreover, they did not keep those laws as they received them, but tried to make them better and more correct. Lycurgus, it is true, pretended that he had established laws for the Spartans on the authority of Apollo, but the Romans wisely refused to believe this, and so did not take their laws from that source. Numa Pompilius, who succeeded Romulus as king, is said to have framed certain laws, though they were by no means sufficient for governing the city, and he also established many rites for the Romans. Yet he is not reported to have received those laws from the divinities. So the evils of the mind, the evils of life, the evils of morals are so great that the Romans' most learned men affirm that commonwealths perish through them even while their cities stand. Yet their gods took no care at all to keep these evils from befalling their worshipers.[16]

THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN AND OTHER WRONGS THAT FLOURISHED IN THE ROMAN STATE EVEN IN ITS PRAISED TIMES

The rape of the Sabine women, Collatinus's exile and Camillus's trial show Rome's early injustice.

2.17 Or was it perhaps because, as Sallust says, "justice and goodness prevailed among them by nature no less than by laws," that the divinities laid down no laws for the Roman people? It was by this justice and goodness, I suppose, that the Sabine women were carried off. For what could be more just and better than for other men's daughters, lured by the trick of a show, to be not received from their parents but carried off by force, each man seizing what he could? If the Sabines acted unjustly in refusing their daughters when they were asked for, how much more unjust was it to seize them when they were not given? A war

15 A flamen was a priest devoted to a single god; the three major flamens wore a distinctive conical cap called the *apex*.

16 Solon (c. 640–c. 560 BC) was the Athenian lawgiver whose laws Roman envoys reportedly studied before the Twelve Tables were drawn up (451–450 BC). Lycurgus was the legendary lawgiver of Sparta.

could more justly have been waged against a people that had refused its daughters in marriage to the neighbors of its own region and borders who asked for them, than against one that was demanding them back after they had been taken. That, then, is what should rather have happened. Then Mars would have helped his son in battle, so that he might avenge by arms the wrong of the marriages refused and in that way obtain the women he wanted.[17] For perhaps by some right of war a victor might justly carry off women who had been unjustly refused. But by no right of peace did he seize women who had not been given to him, and he waged an unjust war against their parents, who were justly angry. This much, admittedly, turned out more usefully and happily: though the circus games remained as a memorial of that fraud, the example of the crime found no favor in that city and empire. The Romans more readily went astray by consecrating Romulus as their god after that wrongdoing than by permitting, through any law or custom, his deed to be imitated in the seizing of women. It was by this justice and goodness that, after King Tarquin had been driven out with his children—the king whose son had violently raped Lucretia—the consul Junius Brutus forced his colleague Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, the husband of that same Lucretia, a good and innocent man, to resign his office because of his name and his kinship with the Tarquins, and would not allow him to live in the city.[18] Brutus committed this crime with the people favoring or tolerating it, the same people from whom Collatinus, like Brutus himself, had received the consulship. It was by this justice and goodness that Marcus Camillus, an outstanding man of his time, was put on trial. After a ten-year war in which the Roman army had so often fought badly and suffered heavy losses, when Rome itself was already doubting and trembling for its survival, he defeated with great ease the people of Veii, the most dangerous

17 *The War with Catiline* 9.1. Legend told that Romulus invited the neighboring Sabines to games and had his men seize their daughters as wives.
18 Lucius Junius Brutus and Collatinus were the first consuls (509 BC) after the expulsion of Tarquin the Proud; the rape of Lucretia by Tarquin's son Sextus, and her suicide, had sparked the revolt.

enemies of the Roman people, and captured their very wealthy city. Yet through the envy of those who disparaged his virtue and the insolence of the tribunes of the plebs, he was put on trial. He found the city he had liberated so ungrateful that, quite certain of his condemnation, he went into exile of his own accord, and in his absence he was even fined ten thousand pieces of bronze money—he who was soon to be once more the avenger of his ungrateful country against the Gauls.[19] I am weary now of recounting the many foul and unjust things that shook that city, when the powerful tried to subject the common people to themselves and the people refused to be subjected. The champions of each side acted more from partisan zeal and the love of winning than from any thought of what was fair and good.

WHAT SALLUST'S HISTORY REVEALS ABOUT THE MORALS OF THE ROMANS, EITHER RESTRAINED BY FEAR OR LOOSENED BY SECURITY

Sallust admits Rome's virtue came from fear of enemies and collapsed after Carthage fell.

2.18 So I will restrain myself and call Sallust himself as a witness instead. In praising the Romans, he made the remark from which this whole discussion of ours arose: "Justice and goodness prevailed among them not more by laws than by nature." He was extolling the period when, after the kings had been expelled, the city grew to an incredible extent in a short span of time. Yet this same Sallust admits, in the first book of his *Histories* and at its very opening, that even then the trouble began soon. A short time after the commonwealth had passed from the kings to the consuls, there were wrongs done by the more powerful. Because of these wrongs there was a secession of the plebs from the patricians, and there were other dissensions in

19 Marcus Furius Camillus captured the Etruscan city of Veii, near Rome, around 396 BC; recalled from exile, he was credited with saving Rome after the Gauls sacked it around 390 BC.

the City.[20] For he had recorded that the Roman people lived with the best morals and in the greatest harmony between the second and the last Carthaginian wars. He said that the cause of this good was not love of justice but fear of an untrustworthy peace while Carthage still stood. That is why the famous Nasica did not want Carthage destroyed: he wanted to check wickedness and preserve those excellent morals, so that vices might be held in check by fear. Then Sallust immediately added: "But discord, greed, ambition, and the other evils that usually arise in prosperity increased enormously after the destruction of Carthage." The point is that we should understand that they usually arose and increased even before. He then went on to give the reason for saying this: "For the wrongs done by the more powerful," he says, "and because of them the secession of the plebs from the patricians, and other dissensions at home, existed right from the beginning. Affairs were conducted with fair and moderate justice only after the kings had been driven out, and only while the fear of Tarquin and the heavy war with Etruria lasted." You see how, even in that short time after the kings were driven out (that is, thrown out), affairs were conducted with a measure of fair and moderate justice, and he said the cause was fear. The Romans feared the war that King Tarquin, driven from his kingdom and from the City, was waging against them in alliance with the Etruscans. Now notice what he adds next: "Then the patricians began to treat the plebs as slaves. They disposed of their lives and their backs as the kings had done, drove them from their land, and held power alone, with everyone else shut out. The plebs were crushed by these cruelties and above all by debt, since in continual wars they had to bear both taxes and military service. So they took up arms and occupied the Sacred Mount and the Aventine, and then secured for themselves tribunes of the plebs and other rights. The end of the discord and strife on both sides came with the Second Punic War." You see what kind of people the Romans were from that

20 The quoted line is from *The War with Catiline* 9.1; Sallust's *Histories* survive only in fragments.

time on, that is, from a short while after the kings were driven out. Yet these are the people of whom he says: "Justice and goodness prevailed among them not more by laws than by nature."

Now if this is what we find in the times when the Roman commonwealth is proclaimed to have been at its finest and best, what do we suppose should be said or thought about the age that followed? To use the same historian's words, "changing little by little, from the finest and best it became the worst and most shameful." As he recorded, this happened after the destruction of Carthage. How Sallust himself briefly recalls and describes those times can be read in his *Histories*. He shows to what great moral evils, born of prosperity, things came, down to the civil wars. "From that time," as he says, "the morals of our ancestors were swept headlong, no longer little by little as before, but like a torrent. The young were so corrupted by luxury and greed that it may rightly be said that a generation was born who could neither keep property of their own nor let others keep theirs." Sallust then says much more about the vices of Sulla and the rest of the commonwealth's disgrace, and other writers agree with him on these things, though they are far from his equal in eloquence.[21]

Yet you see, I think, into what a cesspool of the worst morals that city had sunk before the coming of our heavenly King. Anyone who pays attention can see it very easily. For these things happened not only before Christ, present in the flesh, had begun to teach, but even before he was born of the Virgin. Their gods, with malignant cunning, planted in human minds the opinions from which such vices grew wild like a forest. Yet these people do not dare to blame their gods for all the many great evils of those times, whether the more tolerable earlier ones or the intolerable and horrifying ones after Carthage was overthrown. Why, then, do they blame the present evils on Christ? By his most wholesome teaching he forbids the worship of false and deceitful gods. He detests and condemns with divine authority

21 Lucius Cornelius Sulla (c. 138–78 BC), general and dictator, whose proscriptions made him a byword for cruelty.

these harmful and shameful human cravings. And from a world wasting away and sinking under these evils he is gradually drawing out his household everywhere, so that with it he may found an eternal city, most glorious not by the applause of vanity but by the judgment of truth.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE ROMAN COMMONWEALTH BEFORE CHRIST ABOLISHED THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS

Rome became the worst and most shameful commonwealth long before Christ.

2.19 Look: the Roman commonwealth, "changing little by little, from the finest and best became the worst and most shameful." I am not the first to say this. Their own authors, from whom we learned these things for a fee, said it long before the coming of Christ. Look: before the coming of Christ, after Carthage was destroyed, "the morals of our ancestors were swept headlong, no longer little by little as before, but like a torrent; the young were so corrupted by luxury and greed." Let them read out to us the precepts against luxury and greed that their gods gave to the Roman people! If only those gods had merely kept silent about chastity and moderation! Instead they also demanded from that people disgraceful and shameful things, and through their false divinity lent those things a pernicious authority. Let them read ours. Through the prophets and the holy gospel, through the Acts of the Apostles and through the letters, so many precepts against greed and luxury are proclaimed everywhere to peoples gathered for this very purpose. How excellently, how divinely they sound! They do not clatter like the quarrels of philosophers; they thunder as if from oracles and from the clouds of God. And yet these people do not blame their gods for the fact that, before the coming of Christ, luxury and greed and cruel and disgraceful morals made the commonwealth the worst and most shameful. But the commonwealth's affliction, whatever their pride and pleasures may have suffered in our time, they lay at the door of the Christian religion. Suppose all these were to hear and heed together its precepts about just and upright living: the

kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and young women, the old with the young, every age able to understand and both sexes, and those whom John the Baptist addresses, the tax collectors themselves and the soldiers. Then the commonwealth would adorn the lands of this present life with its happiness, and would ascend to the summit of eternal life, there to reign in perfect happiness.[22] But one person hears and another scorns, and more people are friendlier to vices that flatter to their harm than to the useful harshness of the virtues. So the servants of Christ are commanded to endure even the worst and most shameful commonwealth, if they must. This holds whether they are kings or princes or judges, soldiers or provincials, rich or poor, free or slaves, of either sex. By this very endurance they are to win for themselves a most glorious place in that most holy and most august senate of the angels, the heavenly commonwealth, where God's will is law.

WHAT KIND OF HAPPINESS THOSE WHO BLAME CHRISTIAN TIMES WANT TO ENJOY, AND WHAT MORALS THEY WANT TO LIVE BY

Augustine imagines the pagans' ideal: a city of pleasure where nothing is forbidden.

2.20 But such worshipers and lovers of those gods, whose imitators in crimes and vices they even rejoice to be, do not care in the least whether the commonwealth is the worst and most shameful. "Just let it stand," they say, "just let it flourish, filled with wealth, glorious with victories, or, better still, secure in peace. What else does it matter to us? What matters more to us is that everyone should keep increasing his riches. Those riches must keep up with his daily extravagance, and through them the more powerful can bring the weaker under his control. Let the poor court the rich to get their fill, and to enjoy quiet idleness under their patronage. Let the rich use the poor to supply clients and

22 Echoing Psalm 148:11–12; John the Baptist's counsel to tax collectors and soldiers is in Luke 3:12–14.

to serve their own arrogance. Let the people applaud not those who look after their interests but those who lavish pleasures on them. Let nothing hard be commanded and nothing impure forbidden. Let kings care not how good their subjects are, but how submissive. "Let the provinces serve their kings not as guides of morals but as lords of property and providers of their pleasures. Let them not honor their kings sincerely but fear them slavishly. Let the laws attend to the damage a man does to another's vineyard rather than the damage he does to his own life. Let no one be brought before a judge unless he has been a nuisance or a harm to another's property, house or safety, or to someone against that person's will. Otherwise let everyone do as he pleases with his own property, with his own household, or with anyone willing. Let there be plenty of public prostitutes, both for all who care to enjoy them and especially for those who cannot keep private ones. Let huge and lavishly decorated houses be built, and let sumptuous banquets be thronged. Wherever anyone likes and can, let there be gaming and drinking, vomiting and dissipation, day and night. Let dances resound everywhere. Let the theaters seethe with cries of indecent glee and with every kind of pleasure, whether the cruelest or the most shameful. "Let anyone who dislikes this happiness be a public enemy. Whoever tries to change it or take it away, let the free multitude turn him away from their ears, turn him out of his home, turn him out of the land of the living. Let those be held to be true gods who have secured this happiness for the peoples and preserved it once it was gained. Let them be worshiped as they wish. Let them demand whatever shows they wish, shows they can enjoy with their worshipers or at their worshipers' expense. Only let them see to it that such happiness has nothing to fear from an enemy, nothing from plague, nothing from any disaster." What sane person would compare such a commonwealth, I will not say to the Roman Empire, but to the house of Sardanapalus? He was a king long ago, so given over to pleasures that he had it inscribed on his tomb that in death he possessed only what his lust had swallowed up and consumed while he

was alive.[23] If these people had such a king, one who indulged them in these things and opposed no one in them with any severity, they would dedicate a temple and a flamen to him more gladly than the ancient Romans did to Romulus.

CICERO'S OPINION OF THE ROMAN COMMONWEALTH

Cicero's Scipio argues that without justice there is no commonwealth at all.

2.21 But perhaps they scorn the man who said that the Roman commonwealth had become the worst and most shameful. Perhaps they do not care how full it is of the stain and disgrace of the worst and most shameful morals, but only that it should hold together and last. If so, let them hear that it did not merely become the worst and most shameful, as Sallust relates. As Cicero argues, it had already perished altogether, and no commonwealth at all remained. For Cicero brings in Scipio, the very man who had wiped out Carthage, discussing the commonwealth at a time when people already sensed that it was about to perish through the corruption Sallust describes. The discussion is set after one of the Gracchi had been killed, and Sallust writes that serious seditions began with him. His death is mentioned in those same books.[24] At the end of the second book Scipio had made a comparison. With strings or pipes, and in singing and in voices, a certain harmony must be kept among distinct sounds, and trained ears cannot bear it if that harmony is altered or out of tune. This harmony is produced by the controlled blending of very unlike voices, and yet it is concordant and consistent. In the same way, he said, a city is made up of the highest, the lowest and the middle orders between them, as if they were sounds, and it is harmonious through the agreement of very unlike elements under a controlled proportion. What musicians call har-

23 Sardanapalus, the legendary last king of Assyria, was proverbial for luxury; Cicero quotes his epitaph in the *Tusculan Disputations* (5.101).
24 Cicero's dialogue *On the Commonwealth* (*De re publica*) is set in 129 BC, with Scipio Aemilianus, who destroyed Carthage in 146 BC, as its main speaker. Tiberius Gracchus, the reforming tribune, was killed in 133 BC.

mony in song is concord in a city. That concord is the tightest and best bond of security in any commonwealth, and it cannot possibly exist without justice. He then discussed somewhat more fully and richly how much justice benefits a city and how much harm its absence would do. After that Philus, one of those present at the discussion, took up the matter. He asked that this very question be treated more carefully and that more be said about justice. His reason was a saying then commonly current, that a commonwealth cannot be governed without injustice.[25] Scipio agreed that this question should be discussed and untangled. He replied that, in his view, nothing yet said about the commonwealth would let them go any further unless one thing were established. It must be shown not only that the claim "it cannot be governed without injustice" is false, but that this is perfectly true: a commonwealth cannot be governed without the highest justice. The treatment of this question was put off to the following day, and in the third book the matter was fought out in a great contest. For Philus himself took up the case of those who held that a commonwealth cannot be run without injustice. Above all he took care that no one should think he held this view himself. He argued diligently for injustice against justice, trying, as it were, to show by plausible reasons and examples that injustice is useful to a commonwealth and justice useless. Then, at everyone's request, Laelius undertook to defend justice. He maintained as strongly as he could that nothing is so hostile to a city as injustice, and that a commonwealth cannot be run, or stand at all, except by great justice.[26]

WHAT A COMMONWEALTH IS

Scipio defines a commonwealth as the affair of a people united by agreement about right.

When this question had been treated as fully as seemed sufficient, Scipio returns to what had been interrupted. He recalls

25 Lucius Furius Philus, consul in 136 BC, is one of the speakers in Cicero's dialogue.

and commends his brief definition of the commonwealth (*res publica*): it is the people's affair (*res populi*). He specifies that a people is not every gathering of a multitude, but a gathering united by agreement about what is right and by a partnership in common interest. He then explains how useful definition is in argument. From these definitions of his he concludes that a commonwealth, that is, the people's affair, exists when it is well and justly administered, whether by a single king, by a few aristocrats, or by the whole people. But the king may be unjust, and him he called a tyrant, in the Greek fashion. The aristocrats may be unjust, and their combination he called a faction. Or the people itself may be unjust, and for this he found no customary name except to call it, too, a tyrant. In any of these cases the commonwealth is no longer merely flawed, as had been argued the day before. As reasoning drawn from those definitions had shown, there is no commonwealth at all. It would not be the people's affair when a tyrant or a faction had seized it. Nor would the people itself still be a people if it were unjust, since it would no longer be a multitude united by agreement about what is right and by a partnership in common interest, which was how a people had been defined.

When, then, the Roman commonwealth was such as Sallust describes, it was no longer merely "the worst and most shameful," as he says. By the reasoning set out in the discussion of the commonwealth held among its great leaders of that time, it did not exist at all. Cicero himself says the same at the beginning of the fifth book, speaking not as Scipio or anyone else but in his own voice. He first quotes the line of the poet Ennius in which he had said: "The Roman state stands on its ancient ways and on its men." "That line," Cicero says, "for its brevity as much as its truth, seems to me to have been uttered as if by an oracle. For the men could not have founded so great a commonwealth, ruling so justly far and wide, or held it for so long, if the city had not had such ways. Nor could the ways have done so, if these

26 Gaius Laelius, consul in 140 BC, was Scipio's close friend.

men had not led it.[27] "And so, before our own time, ancestral custom itself brought forward outstanding men, and excellent men preserved the old custom and the institutions of our ancestors. But our age received the commonwealth like a splendid painting fading with age. It not only neglected to restore it with the same colors it once had, but did not even take care to preserve at least its shape and, so to speak, its outlines. For what remains of those ancient ways on which he said the Roman state stood? We see them so worn out by forgetfulness that they are not only no longer practiced but no longer even known. And what am I to say about the men? For the ways themselves have perished through a lack of men. For so great an evil we must not only give an account; in a sense we must plead our case like men on trial for our lives. "For it is through our own vices, not by some accident, that we keep the commonwealth in name but have long since lost it in reality."

Cicero admitted this long after the death of Africanus, whom he made a speaker on the commonwealth in his books, but still before the coming of Christ. If such things had been felt and said after the Christian religion had spread and come to prevail, which of these people would not hold that they should be blamed on the Christians? Why, then, did their gods not take care that the commonwealth should not perish and be lost back then? Long before Christ came in the flesh, Cicero mourned it so bitterly as lost. Let its admirers consider what it was like even in the days of those ancient men and ways. Did true justice flourish in it? Or was it perhaps, even then, not alive in its morals but only painted in colors? Cicero himself expressed this without realizing it, while he was praising the commonwealth. But we will look into this elsewhere, God willing.[28] In its proper place I will try to show that it never was a commonwealth, because there never was true justice in it. I will argue this from Cicero's

27 Quintus Ennius (239–169 BC), early Roman epic poet; the line comes from his *Annals*.

28 Africanus here is Scipio Aemilianus, who earned the name by destroying Carthage; he died in 129 BC.

own definitions, in which, through Scipio as speaker, he briefly set out what a commonwealth is and what a people is. Many statements in that same discussion, whether his own or those of the speakers he created, also bear witness to this. According to more plausible definitions, though, it was a commonwealth after its own fashion, and the earlier Romans administered it better than the later ones. But true justice exists only in that commonwealth whose founder and ruler is Christ, if we may call it a commonwealth too, since we cannot deny that it is the people's affair.[29] But this word is used commonly elsewhere in other senses, and it may be rather remote from our usual way of speaking. If so, true justice certainly exists in that city of which holy Scripture says: "Glorious things are said of you, city of God."[30]

THAT THE GODS OF THE ROMANS NEVER TOOK ANY CARE THAT THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD NOT PERISH THROUGH BAD MORALS

The gods gave no laws to keep the commonwealth from perishing through vice.

2.22 But as far as the present question goes, however praiseworthy they claim that commonwealth was or is, their own most learned authors say that long before Christ's coming it had become "the worst and most shameful." Or rather, it no longer existed at all: it had perished completely through utterly abandoned morals. So, to keep it from perishing, the gods who guarded it ought above all to have given rules for life and morals to the people who worshiped them. That people worshiped them with so many temples, so many priests and kinds of sacrifice, such manifold and varied rites, so many festal solemnities, so many crowded celebrations of so many great games. Yet in all this the demons did nothing but mind their own business. They did not care how those people lived. Indeed, they cared that

29 Augustine returns to this argument in Book 19 (chapters 21–24).
30 Psalm 86:3 (87:3 in most English Bibles).

they should live even depravedly, so long as the people, kept in subjection by fear, performed all these services in their honor. Or if they did give such rules, let them be produced, displayed, read out. Which laws of the gods given to that city did the Gracchi despise, so as to throw everything into turmoil with their seditions? Which did Marius and Cinna and Carbo despise, so as to go on even to civil wars, undertaken for the most unjust causes, waged cruelly and ended more cruelly still? Which, finally, did Sulla himself despise? Who would not shudder at his life, character and deeds, as Sallust and other historians describe them? Who would not admit that the commonwealth perished then?[31]

Or perhaps, because of the morals of such citizens, they will dare, as they usually do, to set against us in defense of their gods that line of Virgil: "All the gods on whom this empire had stood departed, leaving their shrines and altars"? First, if that is so, they have no reason to complain of the Christian religion, claiming that their gods were offended by it and deserted them. For their ancestors long ago drove so many tiny gods away from the City's altars by their morals, like flies. But in any case, where was this crowd of divinities when Rome was captured and burned by the Gauls, long before the ancient morals were corrupted? Were they there, perhaps, but asleep? For at that time the whole City had been brought under the enemy's power and only the Capitoline hill remained. It too would have been taken, had not the geese at least stayed awake while the gods slept.[32] This is how Rome nearly sank into the superstition of the Egyptians, who worship beasts and birds: they used to hold a solemn festival in honor of a goose. But for the moment I am not yet discussing these external evils, which belong to the body rather than the mind and come from enemies or some other disaster. Now I am dealing with the decay of morals. First they faded

31 The Gracchi brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, were reforming tribunes killed in civil strife (133 and 121 BC); Marius, Cinna, Carbo and Sulla led the opposing sides in the civil wars of the 80s BC.

32 Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.351–352. The Gauls sacked Rome around 390 BC, and the sacred geese of Juno were said to have raised the alarm that saved the Capitol.

little by little, then they rushed headlong like a torrent. They brought such ruin on the commonwealth, though its houses and walls stood intact, that their great authors do not hesitate to say it was lost at that time. And the gods would indeed have been right to depart, "leaving their shrines and altars," and let it be lost, if the city had despised their rules about good living and justice. But as it is, what sort of gods were they, I ask, if they refused to live with the people who worshiped them, when they had not taught that people, living badly, to live well?

THAT THE CHANGES OF TEMPORAL AFFAIRS DEPEND NOT ON THE FAVOR OR HOSTILITY OF DEMONS BUT ON THE JUDGMENT OF THE TRUE GOD

Marius prospered and Regulus suffered, so earthly fortune does not depend on the gods.

2.23 What of the fact that they even seem to have helped fulfill these people's cravings, and are shown not to have taken charge of curbing them? For it was they who helped Marius, a new man of humble birth, the bloodiest instigator and conductor of civil wars, to become consul seven times. They also helped him to die an old man in his seventh consulship, so that he did not fall into the hands of Sulla, who was soon to be victor. But if their gods did not help him to these things, they make no small admission. They admit that this temporal happiness, which they love too much, can come to a man in such measure even without the favor of their gods. Men like Marius can be heaped with health and strength, wealth and honors, rank and long life, and enjoy them to the full, while the gods are angry. And men like Regulus can be tormented by captivity, slavery and destitution, by sleeplessness and pain, and die of them, while the gods are their friends. If they concede that this is so, they confess in short that the gods are of no use and are worshiped for nothing.[33] For suppose they insisted that the people learn things opposed to the

33 A "new man" (*novus homo*) was the first of his family to reach the consulship; Marius died in 86 BC.

virtues of the mind and integrity of life, whose rewards are to be hoped for after death. Suppose also that even in these passing, temporal goods they neither harm those they hate nor help those they love. Then why are they worshiped? Why are they sought out to be worshiped with such zeal? Why, in hard and gloomy times, is there grumbling that they have departed as if offended? Why is the Christian religion attacked with the most outrageous abuse on their account? But if they do have power in these matters to do good or harm, why did they stand by Marius, the worst of men, and fail Regulus, the best? Does this show that they themselves are most unjust and most wicked? And if people think that for this very reason they should be feared and worshiped all the more, let them not think that either. For Regulus is not found to have worshiped them any less than Marius did. Nor should anyone conclude that the worst life is the one to choose because the gods are thought to have favored Marius more than Regulus. For Metellus, the most highly praised of the Romans, who had five sons who became consuls, was happy even in temporal things. Catiline, the worst of men, was crushed by poverty and laid low in the war his own crime had started, and was unhappy. And good people who worship God surpass all others in the truest and most certain happiness, which he alone can bestow.[34]

So when that commonwealth was perishing through bad morals, their gods did nothing to guide or correct those morals so that it would not perish. On the contrary, they helped to deprave and corrupt them, so that it would perish. And let them not pretend to be good on the ground that they departed as if offended at the citizens' wickedness. They were certainly there. They are exposed, they are convicted. They could neither come to the rescue by giving rules nor hide by keeping silent. I pass over the fact that the people of Minturnae, pitying Marius, commended him to the goddess Marica in her grove, so that she might make

34 Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (second century BC) was proverbial for his good fortune and his sons' honors. Catiline led a conspiracy against the republic in 63 BC and was killed in battle the next year.

everything prosper for him. Returning safe from utter despair, he led a cruel army into the City, cruel himself. How bloody that victory of his was, how unworthy of fellow citizens, how much more savage than an enemy's, let anyone who wishes read in those who have written of it.[35] But, as I said, I pass over this. I do not attribute Marius's bloodstained good fortune to some Marica or other. Rather, I attribute it to the hidden providence of God, which closes the mouths of these people and frees from error those who do not act out of partisan zeal but consider these things wisely. For even if demons have some power in these matters, they have only as much as the secret decision of the Almighty permits them. This is so that we may not prize earthly happiness highly, since it is often granted even to the wicked, as it was to Marius. Nor, on the other hand, should we think it bad, since we see that many devout and good worshipers of the one true God have enjoyed it in abundance, in spite of the demons. Nor should we suppose that these most unclean spirits must be appeased or feared for the sake of these earthly goods or evils. For just as wicked men on earth cannot do all they want, neither can those spirits, except so far as the ordering of God allows. No one fully comprehends his judgments, and no one justly reprehends them.

THE DEEDS OF SULLA, IN WHICH THE DEMONS BOASTED OF BEING HIS HELPERS

The gods foretold Sulla's victories but never warned him against his crimes.

2.24 Sulla himself, certainly, made his own times so terrible that people longed, by comparison, for the earlier times he seemed to be avenging. Livy writes that when Sulla first moved his camp toward the City against Marius, the entrails were so favorable as he sacrificed that the diviner Postumius asked to be kept under

35 Minturnae was a town south of Rome where Marius, fleeing Sulla in 88 BC, was captured and then released; Marica was a local goddess with a sacred grove nearby.

guard. He was ready to suffer the death penalty if Sulla did not, with the gods' help, accomplish what he had in mind. Look: the gods had not departed, "leaving their shrines and altars," when they were foretelling the outcome of events and cared nothing about correcting Sulla himself. They promised him great happiness by their prophecies, but did not break his evil craving with threats. Later, when he was in Asia waging the Mithridatic war, Jupiter sent him word through Lucius Titius that he would defeat Mithridates. And so it happened.[36] And afterward, as Sulla was preparing to return to the City and avenge with citizens' blood the wrongs done to himself and his friends, the same Jupiter again sent him word, through a soldier of the Sixth Legion. Jupiter said that he had earlier foretold the victory over Mithridates, and now promised to give Sulla the power to recover the commonwealth from his enemies, though not without much bloodshed. Then Sulla asked what form had appeared to the soldier. When the soldier described it, Sulla recognized the form he had earlier heard described by the man who had brought him the message from the same god about the Mithridatic victory. What answer can be given here? Why did the gods take care to announce these supposedly happy events, while not one of them took care to correct Sulla by warning him? Yet Sulla was going to commit such great evils with wicked civil arms that they would not merely disfigure the commonwealth but destroy it altogether. Clearly, as I have often said, as we know from the sacred writings, and as the facts themselves sufficiently show, the demons are seen to be minding their own business. They want to be taken for gods and worshiped, and to have things offered to them. Those who offer these things become their partners and share with them one and the same very bad case at the judgment of God.

Then, when Sulla had come to Tarentum and sacrificed there, he saw on the head of a calf's liver the likeness of a golden crown. The diviner Postumius then declared that it signified a

36 Livy was the great historian of Rome under Augustus. Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, fought Rome in the 80s BC.

splendid victory, and ordered Sulla to eat those entrails alone. A little while afterward a slave of a certain Lucius Pontius cried out in prophecy: "I come as a messenger from Bellona. The victory is yours, Sulla." Then he added that the Capitol would burn. Having said this, he at once left the camp. He came back the next day in greater agitation and cried out that the Capitol had burned. And the Capitol had in fact burned. This was certainly easy for a demon both to foresee and to report very quickly. But do notice this, which is most relevant to the case: what kind of gods they long to live under, those who blaspheme the Savior who frees the wills of the faithful from the domination of demons.[37] The man cried out in prophecy, "The victory is yours, Sulla." And so that he would be believed to cry this out by a divine spirit, he also announced something that was about to happen and soon did happen, in a place far from where the man was through whom that spirit spoke. Yet he did not cry, "Hold back from crimes, Sulla"—the crimes so horrible that Sulla committed there as victor, the man to whom a golden crown, the most illustrious sign of that very victory, had appeared in the calf's liver. If just gods, and not impious demons, were in the habit of giving such signs, they would surely have shown in those entrails the abominable evils to come, gravely harmful to Sulla himself. For that victory did not profit his standing as much as it harmed his cravings. Because of it he gaped after things beyond all measure, and, exalted and thrown headlong by success, he himself perished in his morals more than he destroyed his enemies in their bodies. These things, truly sad and truly lamentable, those gods did not foretell—not by entrails, not by auguries, not by anyone's dream or prophecy. For they feared his being corrected more than his being defeated. Indeed, they were busy making sure that this glorious conqueror of his fellow citizens would be conquered and taken captive by abominable vices, and through them bound in far tighter subjection to the demons themselves.

37 Bellona was the Roman goddess of war. The temple of Jupiter on the Capitol burned in 83 BC.

HOW STRONGLY EVIL SPIRITS INCITE PEOPLE TO WICKEDNESS, WHEN THEY LEND THE QUASI-DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THEIR OWN EXAMPLE TO THE COMMISSION OF CRIMES

Demons staged phantom battles to make civil war look godlike.

2.25 From this, who would not understand, who would not see—unless he has chosen to imitate such gods rather than be separated from their company by divine grace—how hard these evil spirits strive to lend crimes a sort of divine authority by their own example? They were even seen fighting among themselves on a broad plain in Campania, where not long afterward armies of citizens clashed in an impious battle. First, huge crashes were heard there, and soon many reported that for several days they had seen two armies in combat. When this fight ended, people also found footprints, as of men and horses, as many as such a clash could have stamped out. So if divinities really fought one another, human civil wars are now excused. Still, let us consider what malice or what wretchedness such gods must have. But if they only pretended to have fought, what else were they doing but making the Romans, when fighting civil wars, seem to commit no crime, as if following the example of the gods? For civil wars had already begun, and the accursed slaughter of several abominable battles had already taken place. Many had already been moved by the case of a soldier who, while stripping the spoils from a man he had killed, recognized his brother once the corpse was bared. Cursing civil wars, he killed himself on the spot and joined himself to his brother's body. So, to keep people from being sickened by so great an evil, and instead to make the passion for wicked arms grow more and more, the harmful demons chose to appear to men fighting among themselves. These were the demons whom those people took for gods and thought should be worshiped and revered. Their aim was that civic affection would not shrink from imitating such battles, but that human crime would instead be excused by divine example. With this same cunning the evil spirits also ordered that the the-

atrical shows, about which I have already said a great deal, be dedicated and consecrated to them. In these shows the gods' great outrages were celebrated in theatrical songs and in the staging of stories. As a result, anyone who believed the gods had done such things, and anyone who did not believe it but still saw how gladly they had such things performed for them, could imitate them without a qualm. Someone might have thought that the poets had written insults against the gods rather than anything worthy of them. To prevent this, wherever the poets recorded that the gods had fought among themselves, the gods themselves confirmed the poets' verses in order to deceive people. They displayed their battles to human eyes not only through actors in the theater but also in person on the open field.

We have been compelled to say this because their own authors did not hesitate in the least to say and write that the citizens' utterly corrupt morals had already ruined the Roman commonwealth before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that nothing of it remained. They do not blame this ruin on their gods. Yet they blame on our Christ the passing evils, which cannot destroy good people, whether they live or die. And they do so although our Christ repeatedly gives so many commands in favor of the best morals and against corrupt ones. Their gods, by contrast, issued no such commands to the people who worshiped them and did nothing of the kind to keep that commonwealth from perishing. On the contrary, they corrupted those same morals with the harmful authority of their own example, as it were, and so worked rather to make it perish. No one, I think, will now dare to say that it perished at that time because "all the gods departed, leaving their shrines and altars," as though they were friends of virtue offended by human vices. They are proved to have been present by all those signs from entrails, auguries and prophecies, by which they were so eager to boast of themselves and recommend themselves as knowing the future in advance and as helpers in battle. Had they really gone away, the Romans, driven only by their own desires, would

have flared up into civil war less fiercely than they did at the gods' incitement.

THE SECRET ADMONITIONS OF THE DEMONS ABOUT GOOD MORALS, WHILE ALL WICKEDNESS WAS TAUGHT OPENLY IN THEIR RITES

Demons may whisper moral advice in secret, but they teach vice in public.

2.26 Since this is so, consider what has been done openly and plainly. Disgraceful acts mixed with cruelties have been consecrated and dedicated to these deities, along with their own shameful deeds and crimes, whether revealed or invented. This was done at their own demand, and they grew angry if it was not done, even at fixed and appointed festivals. And all this has been put on show before everyone's eyes as models for imitation. Why is it, then, that these same demons are nevertheless said to give certain good moral precepts in their shrines and secret sanctuaries to some chosen initiates of theirs? By delighting in pleasures of this kind they confess themselves to be unclean spirits. By their own outrages and crimes, whether disclosed or feigned, they testify that they are the authors of a wicked and unclean life. And they demand that these be celebrated, a demand pressed on the shameless and extorted from the decent. If they really do give such precepts, the malice of these harmful spirits must be noted and exposed as all the more cunning for this very reason. For such is the power of uprightness and chastity that all of human nature, or nearly all, is moved by praise of it. Nor is human nature ever so corrupted by vice that it has lost all sense of what is honorable. So the malice of demons does not complete its work of deception unless at some point it "transforms itself into angels of light," as we know is written in our Scriptures. Outside, then, unclean impiety roars around the crowds with the loudest din; inside, a feigned chastity barely whispers to a few. The shameful is offered in the open, the praiseworthy in secret. Honor lies hidden, and dishonor lies open. The evil that is done summons every spectator;

the good that is spoken scarcely finds any listeners. It is as if the honorable were something to blush at and the dishonorable something to boast of. But where does this happen except in the temples of demons? Where but in the lodging houses of deceit? The secret teaching is meant to catch the more honorable, who are few. The public display is meant to keep the many, who are utterly base, from being reformed.[38]

Where and when the initiates of Caelestis heard precepts of chastity, we do not know. But in front of the shrine itself, where we used to see that image set up, we all flocked in from every side. We stood wherever each of us could find room and watched the shows being performed with the closest attention. We looked by turns at the procession of prostitutes on one side and at the virgin goddess on the other. We saw her worshiped by suppliants, and disgraceful things performed before her. We saw no modest mimes there, no actress with any more decency than the rest; every service of obscenity was carried out in full. Everyone knew what pleased the virgin deity, and the performance was such that a married woman would carry home from the temple a better education in vice. Some of the more modest women turned their faces away from the actors' lewd movements, yet they learned the art of vice by stealthy watching. For they were embarrassed before men and did not dare to look openly at the indecent gestures. But they dared far less to condemn with a chaste heart the rites of the goddess they revered.[39] Yet this was offered openly to be learned in the temple, while people at least sought privacy at home in order to commit it. Human modesty, if there was any there, must have been utterly amazed. People did not commit freely the human outrages that they learned as a religious duty in the presence of the gods. And they knew the gods would be angry with them unless they also took care to stage those outrages. For what other spirit stirs the most wicked minds by a hidden prompting, urges on the com-

38 2 Corinthians 11:14.

39 Caelestis ("the Heavenly One") was the great goddess of Carthage, where Augustine studied as a young man.

mission of adultery and feeds on it once committed? Who else can it be but the one who also delights in such rites? He sets up images of demons in the temples and loves images of vices in the shows. He whispers words of justice in secret to deceive even the few who are good, and he multiplies enticements to wickedness in the open to take possession of the countless who are wicked.

WITH WHAT RUIN OF PUBLIC MORALS THE ROMANS DEDICATED OBSCENE SHOWS TO APPEASE THEIR GODS

Cicero himself had to appease Flora with obscene games.

2.27 Cicero, a serious man and a philosopher of sorts, was about to become aedile. He proclaims in the hearing of the city that among the other duties of his office he must appease Mother Flora by celebrating games. These are games that are usually celebrated the more devoutly, the more indecently. Elsewhere, when he was already consul and the city was in extreme danger, he says that games had been held for ten days and that nothing which might help to appease the gods had been left undone. As if it would not have been better to provoke such gods by restraint than to appease them by debauchery. It would have been better even to stir them to hostility by decency than to soothe them with such foulness. For the men on whose account the gods were being appeased could not have done more harm, however monstrous their cruelty, than the gods themselves did when they were appeased by the foulest depravity.[40] Indeed, to avert the bodily harm feared from the enemy, the gods were won over in a way that vanquished virtue in people's minds. These gods would not stand as defenders against those attacking the walls unless they first became the attackers of good morals. Consider this appeasement of such deities, utterly wanton, impure, shameless, wicked and unclean. The admirable character of Roman virtue deprived its performers of their civic honor,

40 Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.5.36 (70 BC), and *Against Catiline* 3.20, from his consulship in 63 BC. Flora's games, the Floralia, were notorious for their indecency.

removed them from their tribe, branded them as base and declared them infamous. Consider, I say, this appeasement of such deities, shameful, and to be shunned and detested by true religion. Consider these seductive and criminal stories about the gods, and these disgraceful acts of the gods, whether wickedly and shamefully done or more wickedly and shamefully invented. All this the whole city learned with its public eyes and ears. It saw that these things, once performed, pleased the deities. It therefore believed that they should not only be displayed for the gods but also imitated by the city itself. It did not learn that supposedly good and honorable something which was spoken to so few and so secretly (if indeed it was spoken at all) that the real fear seemed to be that it might become known, rather than that it might not be practiced.[41]

THE SAVING POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The Church gathers people to hear how to live well, not to watch obscenity.

2.28 Through the name of Christ, human beings are rescued from the hellish yoke of these most unclean powers and from sharing in their punishment. They are brought out of that night of most destructive impiety into the light of most saving piety. Yet the unjust and ungrateful, possessed more deeply and more tightly by that wicked spirit, complain and grumble about it. They grumble because the peoples flock to church in a chaste gathering, with men and women decently separated. There they may hear how well they ought to live here for a time, so as to deserve to live happily and forever after this life. There holy Scripture and the teaching of justice ring out from a raised place in the sight of all. Those who practice it hear it to their reward, and those who do not hear it to their judgment. Some who mock such precepts do come there. But all their insolence is either laid aside through a sudden change of heart or held in check by

41 At Rome actors were legally disgraced: the censors could bar them from office and strike them from their voting tribe.

fear or shame. For nothing shameful or disgraceful is set before them to watch and imitate in that place. There the commands of the true God are taught, or his miracles told, or his gifts praised, or his benefits asked for.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE ROMANS TO ABANDON THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS

Augustine urges the Romans to leave false gods and seek the heavenly homeland.

2.29 Long for these things instead, O admirable Roman spirit, O descendants of men like Regulus, Scaevola, Scipio and Fabricius! Long for these instead, and distinguish them from that utterly base vanity and the utterly deceitful malice of demons. If anything praiseworthy stands out in you by nature, only true piety purifies and perfects it, while impiety ruins and punishes it. Choose now what you will follow, so that you may be praised without any error, not in yourself but in the true God. For in those days you had the people's glory, but by a hidden judgment of divine providence you lacked the true religion to choose. Wake up, it is day! You have already woken up in some of your own people. We glory in their perfect virtue and even in their sufferings for the true faith. They struggled everywhere against the most hostile powers and conquered them by dying bravely, and "with their blood they won this homeland for us."[42] To that homeland we invite and urge you, so that you may be added to the number of its citizens. Its asylum, in a sense, is the true forgiveness of sins. Do not listen to your degenerate offspring who disparage Christ or Christians and accuse them of bringing bad times. What they seek are times in which life is not peaceful but wickedness is safe. Such times never pleased you, not even for the sake of your earthly homeland. Seize the heavenly one now. For it you will labor very little, and in it you will reign truly and

42 Heroes of the early Republic, famed for keeping faith, enduring pain and refusing bribes; the Scipios defeated Carthage. The closing words echo Virgil, *Aeneid* 11.24–25.

forever. For there neither the hearth of Vesta nor the stone of the Capitol awaits you, but the one true God, who "sets no limits to things nor time, and will grant an empire without end."[43]

Do not seek after false and deceitful gods. Rather, cast them off and despise them as you spring forth into true freedom. They are not gods. They are evil spirits, and your eternal happiness is a torment to them. Juno seems to have begrudged the Trojans, from whom you trace your physical descent, the citadels of Rome. Yet she begrudged them less than these demons, whom you still think are gods, begrudge the whole human race its everlasting dwelling places. And you yourself have passed judgment on such spirits to no small extent. You appeased them with shows, and yet you chose to brand as infamous the men through whom you staged those shows. Allow your freedom to be claimed back from the unclean spirits who had laid on your neck the burden of consecrating and celebrating their own disgrace. You have removed the performers of divine crimes from your offices of honor. Now pray to the true God to remove from you those gods who delight in their crimes, whether those crimes are real, which is most disgraceful, or false, which is most malicious.[44] It is good that you refused of your own accord to open citizenship to actors and stage performers. Now wake up more fully! In no way is the divine majesty appeased by arts that defile human dignity. How, then, can you think that gods who delight in such services are to be counted among the holy heavenly powers? You did not think that the men who perform those same services should be counted among Roman citizens of any sort at all. Incomparably more glorious is the city on high. There victory is truth, dignity is holiness, peace is happiness, and life is eternity. If you were ashamed to admit such men into your community, far less does that city admit such gods into its own. So if you desire to reach the blessed city, shun the company of

43 The "asylum" recalls the refuge Romulus opened to populate early Rome. The closing words adapt Jupiter's promise to Rome in Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.278–279.

44 Juno's hatred of the Trojans, and her efforts to keep them from founding Rome, drive the plot of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

demons. Gods who are appeased through the base are worshiped unworthily by the honorable. So let Christian cleansing remove these gods from your piety, just as the censors' mark removed those men from your dignity. There remain bodily goods, which are the only goods the wicked want to enjoy, and bodily evils, which are the only evils they refuse to endure. These demons do not have the power over such things that they are thought to have. And even if they did have it, we ought rather to despise these things as well than worship the demons for their sake, and by worshiping them be unable to reach the goods they begrudge us. Even in these matters, I say, the demons do not have the power claimed by those who argue that they should be worshiped for these things. This we shall see next, so that this book may end here.

Book III

Rome's disasters before Christ
Wars, civil strife and calamities struck Rome long before Christianity, while the gods were worshiped.

THE ADVERSITIES THAT ALONE THE WICKED FEAR, AND THAT THE WORLD ALWAYS SUFFERED WHILE IT WORSHIPED THE GODS

The gods did not shield their worshipers even from famine, war and captivity.

3.1 I think enough has now been said about the evils of character and of soul, which are the ones above all to be guarded against. The false gods took no care to help the people who worshiped them avoid being crushed under the heap of those evils; rather, they worked to see that they were crushed as heavily as possible. Now I see that I must speak of the evils that are the only ones these people refuse to endure: famine and disease, war and plunder, captivity and slaughter, and anything similar that we already mentioned in the first book. For the wicked count as evils only those things that do not make people wicked. Nor are they ashamed that, surrounded by the goods they praise, they who praise them are themselves bad. They are more upset if they have a bad villa than if they have a bad life—as if the greatest good for a human being were to have everything good except himself. Yet not even evils of this kind, the only ones these people dread, did their gods prevent from befalling them back when they worshiped those gods freely. For at various times and in various places before the coming of our Redeemer, the human race was being ground down by countless disasters,

some of them even beyond belief. What gods did the world worship then, other than these? The only exceptions were the one Hebrew people and certain individuals outside that people, wherever they were found worthy of divine grace by the most hidden and most just judgment of God. But so as not to go on too long, I will pass over the grievous evils of other nations everywhere. I will speak only of what concerns Rome and the Roman Empire—that is, the City itself in the proper sense, and whatever lands were joined to it by alliance or made subject to it by treaty—and of what they suffered before the coming of Christ, when they already belonged, so to speak, to the body of its commonwealth.

WHETHER THE GODS, WORSHIPED ALIKE BY ROMANS AND GREEKS, HAD REASONS FOR ALLOWING TROY TO BE DESTROYED

If the gods punished Troy for Laomedon's perjury, they were poor prophets and builders.

3.2 First, Troy itself, or Ilium, from which the Roman people take their origin (for I must not pass over or gloss over what I also touched on in the first book): it had the same gods and worshiped them—so why was it conquered, captured and destroyed by the Greeks? "Priam," they say, "paid for the perjuries of his father Laomedon." Is it true, then, that Apollo and Neptune served this same Laomedon as hired laborers? For he is said to have promised them wages and then sworn falsely. I am surprised that Apollo, famous as a prophet, toiled at so great a construction without knowing that Laomedon was going to deny what he had promised. Then again, it was hardly fitting for Neptune himself—Apollo's uncle, Jupiter's brother, king of the sea—to be ignorant of the future.[1] For Homer, who is said to have lived before that city was founded, brings Neptune on stage prophesying something great about the line of Aeneas, from

1 Laomedon, king of Troy and father of Priam, was said to have cheated Apollo and Neptune of the wages promised for building Troy's walls.

whose descendants Rome came. Neptune even snatched Aeneas away in a cloud, as he himself says, so that he would not be killed by Achilles—although, as he admits in Virgil, he longed "to overturn from their foundations the walls of perjured Troy, built by his own hands." So these great gods, Neptune and Apollo, not knowing that Laomedon would deny them their wages, built the walls of Troy unpaid and unthanked. Let these people consider whether it is not a graver thing to believe in such gods than to break an oath sworn to them. For not even Homer himself found this easy to believe: he has Neptune fighting against the Trojans but Apollo fighting for them, although the story says that both were offended by that perjury.[2] If, then, they believe the myths, let them blush to worship such divinities; if they do not believe the myths, let them not put forward Trojan perjuries as an excuse—or else let them marvel that the gods punished Trojan perjuries but loved Roman ones. For how else did Catiline's conspiracy, in so great and so corrupt a city, find such an abundant supply of men whose hands and tongues kept them fed by perjury or by the blood of fellow citizens? For what else were the senators doing, so often bribed in the courts, and the people, so often bribed in elections or in whatever cases were handled before them in public assemblies, but sinning by perjury as well? Amid utterly corrupt morals the ancient custom of swearing oaths was kept up, not so that people would be held back from crimes by religious fear, but so that perjuries too might be added to their other crimes.

THAT THE GODS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN OFFENDED BY THE ADULTERY OF PARIS, SINCE IT IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN COMMON AMONG THEMSELVES

Gods who committed adultery themselves cannot have punished Troy for Paris's adultery.

3.3 There is no reason, then, to imagine that the gods by whom, as they say, that empire had stood were angry with the perjured

Trojans, when it is proven that they were simply beaten by the stronger Greeks. Nor was it out of anger at Paris's adultery—another defense some offer for them—that they deserted Troy. For they are usually the authors and teachers of sins, not their avengers. "The city of Rome," says Sallust, "as I have learned, was founded and at first inhabited by Trojans who, exiles under Aeneas's leadership, were wandering without a settled home." If, then, the divinities judged that Paris's adultery had to be avenged, it should have been punished more among the Romans, or at least among the Romans too, since Aeneas's mother did that very thing. But how could they hate that outrage in Paris when they did not hate in their colleague Venus (to say nothing of other cases) what she had committed with Anchises, by whom she bore Aeneas? Is it because the one was done to Menelaus's indignation, the other with Vulcan's consent? [3] For the gods, I suppose, are so far from jealous of their wives that they even condescend to share them with human beings. Perhaps I will be thought to be mocking the myths and not treating so weighty a matter seriously. Very well, then: let us not believe, if you like, that Aeneas is the son of Venus. There—I grant it, provided that Romulus is not the son of Mars either. But if the one, why not the other? Or is it right for gods to mingle with human women, but wrong for human men to mingle with goddesses? A harsh condition, or rather an incredible one: that what Venus's rights in lovemaking allowed to Mars should not be allowed to Venus herself under her own rights. Yet both stories have been confirmed by Roman authority. For the more recent Caesar believed in his ancestress Venus no less than the more ancient Romulus believed in his father Mars.[4]

2 Homer, *Iliad* 20, where Poseidon (Neptune) rescues Aeneas and foretells that his line will rule; Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.810–811.

3 Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 6.1.

4 Julius Caesar's family, the Julii, claimed descent from Venus through Aeneas's son Iulus.

VARRO'S OPINION THAT IT IS USEFUL FOR PEOPLE TO PRETEND THEY ARE DESCENDED FROM GODS

Varro says belief in divine descent is useful even if false.

3.4 Someone may say: "Do you really believe these things?" No, I certainly do not believe them. For even Varro, their most learned man, all but admits that they are false, though not boldly or confidently. But he says it is useful for cities that brave men should believe themselves born of gods, even if it is false. In that way the human mind, bearing the confidence of divine descent, will undertake great enterprises more boldly, carry them out more vigorously, and so, through that very assurance, accomplish them more successfully. You see how wide a field this opinion of Varro's, which I have expressed in my own words as best I could, opens up for falsehood. From it we can understand that many rites and quasi-religious practices could have been fabricated wherever lies, even about the gods themselves, were thought to benefit the citizens.[5]

THAT THERE IS NO PROOF THE GODS PUNISHED THE ADULTERY OF PARIS, SINCE THEY DID NOT AVENGE IT IN THE CASE OF ROMULUS' MOTHER

If the gods hated adultery, they should have punished Rome for Romulus's mother.

3.5 But whether Venus could have borne Aeneas from intercourse with Anchises, or Mars fathered Romulus from intercourse with Numitor's daughter, let us leave undecided. For an almost identical question arises from our own Scriptures too, where it is asked whether the rebel angels slept with the daughters of men, from whom giants—that is, exceedingly large and strong men—were born, and with whom the earth was then filled. So for the time being let our argument apply to either alternative.

5 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), the most learned Roman scholar, whose lost *Antiquities* Augustine draws on throughout.

For if what they read about Aeneas's mother and Romulus's father is true, how can human adulteries displease the gods, when they tolerate adulteries so amicably among themselves? But if it is false, even so they cannot be angry at real human adulteries, since they take delight even in false adulteries of their own.[6] Add to this that if the story about Mars is not believed, so that the story about Venus need not be believed either, then the case of Romulus's mother cannot be defended by any pretext of intercourse with a god. Moreover, she was a priestess of Vesta, and so the gods ought to have avenged that sacrilegious outrage on the Romans rather than Paris's adultery on the Trojans. For the ancient Romans themselves used to bury alive priestesses of Vesta caught in sexual misconduct, whereas adulterous women, though they punished them with some penalty, they never punished with death. So much more severely did they avenge what they took to be divine sanctuaries than they avenged human marriage beds.

THE FRATRICIDE OF ROMULUS, WHICH THE GODS DID NOT AVENGE

The gods punished Paris's adultery but ignored Romulus's murder of his brother.

3.6 I add another point. If the sins of human beings displeased those divinities, so that, offended by Paris's deed, they deserted Troy and handed it over to sword and fire, then the murder of Romulus's brother should have stirred them more against the Romans than the deceiving of a Greek husband stirred them against the Trojans. Fratricide in a city being born should have provoked them more than adultery in a city already reigning. Nor does it matter for the case we are now arguing whether Romulus ordered this to be done or did it himself—something many deny out of shamelessness, many doubt out of shame, many gloss over out of grief. So let us not linger over a more

6 Numitor's daughter, the Vestal Rhea Silvia, was the mother of Romulus and Remus. The biblical question concerns Genesis 6:1–4.

careful investigation of the matter by weighing the testimony of many writers. It is plainly established that Romulus's brother was killed, and not by enemies or by strangers. If Romulus either committed this crime or commanded it, he was more truly the head of the Romans than Paris was of the Trojans. Why, then, did that abductor of another man's wife provoke the anger of the gods against the Trojans, while this killer of his own brother invited the protection of those same gods for the Romans?[7] But if that crime had nothing to do with Romulus's act or command, then, since it certainly ought to have been avenged, the whole city committed it, because the whole city disregarded it; and it killed not just a brother but—what is worse—a father. For both were founders, though one was removed by crime and not allowed to become ruler. There is nothing, I think, that can be said about what evil Troy deserved, that the gods should desert it so that it could be destroyed, or what good Rome deserved, that the gods should take up residence in it so that it could grow—unless it is that, once defeated, they fled from Troy and betook themselves to the Romans, to deceive them in the same way. Or rather, they both stayed there, to deceive in their usual fashion those who would later inhabit those same lands, and here, by practicing those same arts of deceit even more, they gloried in greater honors.

THE OVERTHROW OF TROY, WHICH FIMBRIA, MARIUS' GENERAL, DESTROYED

Fimbria, a Roman, destroyed Ilium for staying loyal to Sulla, and the gods did nothing.

3.7 Surely, when civil wars were already breaking out on every side, what wretched offense had Ilium committed that it should be destroyed by Fimbria, a man of the worst sort from the party of Marius, far more savagely and cruelly than it had once been destroyed by the Greeks? For back then many escaped from it, and many who were captured at least lived on in slavery. Fim-

7 Romulus's twin brother Remus was killed at the founding of Rome.

bria, however, first issued an edict that no one was to be spared, and then burned the whole city and everyone in it. This is what Ilium earned—not from the Greeks, whom it had provoked by its own wrongdoing, but from the Romans, whom it had propagated through its own disaster—while those gods the two shared did nothing to help ward this off, or, which is the truth, had no power to do so. Did then, too, "all the gods depart, leaving their shrines and altars"—the gods by whom that town had stood after it was rebuilt from the ancient fires and ruins left by the Greeks? But if they had departed, I ask the reason. And the better I find the townspeople's cause, the worse I find the gods'.[8] For they had shut their gates against Fimbria in order to keep their city intact for Sulla; that is why he burned them in his anger, or rather wiped them out completely. At that time Sulla was still the leader of the better side in the civil conflict; he was still striving to recover the commonwealth by arms; these good beginnings had not yet produced their evil outcomes. What better, then, could the citizens of that city have done—what more honorable, what more loyal, what more worthy of their kinship with Rome—than to preserve their city for the better cause of the Romans and shut their gates against a parricide of the Roman commonwealth? But let the defenders of the gods take note how utterly this led to their ruin. Suppose the gods did desert the adulterers and abandon Ilium to the flames of the Greeks so that a more chaste Rome might be born from its ashes. Why, then, did they later also desert that same city, kin to the Romans? It was not rebelling against Rome, its noble daughter; it was keeping the most steadfast and dutiful faith with Rome's more righteous party. And yet they abandoned it to be destroyed—not by brave Greek warriors, but by the foulest of the Romans. Or if the cause of Sulla's party displeased the gods—the cause for which the wretched townspeople had shut their gates to preserve their city—why were they promising and foretelling such great good fortune to that same Sulla? Are they not recognized here too as flat-

8 Gaius Flavius Fimbria, a commander of Marius's party, sacked Ilium in 85 BC. The quotation is Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.351–352.

terers of the fortunate rather than defenders of the unfortunate? So even then Ilium was not destroyed because they had deserted it. For the demons, ever most watchful for opportunities to deceive, did what they could. For when all the images had been overthrown and burned along with the town, only the statue of Minerva, as Livy writes, is said to have stood intact amid the vast ruin of her temple. This was not so that it might be said in their praise, "Gods of our fathers, under whose divine power Troy ever stands," but so that it might not be said in their defense, "All the gods departed, leaving their shrines and altars." For they were permitted to do this much: not something by which they could be proved powerful, but something by which they could be convicted of having been present.[9]

WHETHER ROME SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO THE GODS OF TROY

Rome was foolish to entrust itself to the gods who failed Troy.

3.8 After the proof given by Troy itself, then, with what wisdom, pray, was Rome entrusted to the gods of Ilium for safekeeping? Someone might say that they had already settled in Rome when Ilium fell to Fimbria's assault. Then how did Minerva's statue remain standing? Again, if they were at Rome when Fimbria destroyed Ilium, perhaps they were at Ilium when Rome itself was captured and burned by the Gauls. But since their hearing is very sharp and their movements very swift, they came back quickly at the cry of a goose, so as to protect at least the Capitoline hill, which had held out; as for defending the rest, they were warned too late to come back.[10]

9 Livy's account is lost. The verses are Virgil, *Aeneid* 9.247 and 2.351–352.
10 The Gauls sacked Rome around 390 BC; according to legend, the sacred geese of Juno alerted the defenders of the Capitol to a night attack.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT THE GODS GRANTED THE PEACE OF NUMA'S REIGN

Numa's long peace was God's gift, not the reward of his new rites.

3.9 These same gods are also believed to have helped Numa Pompilius, Romulus's successor, to have peace for the whole of his reign and to close the gates of Janus, which are customarily open in time of war—as a reward, no doubt, for establishing many rites for the Romans. That man would indeed have deserved congratulation on so long a respite, if only he had known how to spend it on wholesome pursuits and, setting aside a most pernicious curiosity, to seek the true God with true piety. As it is, the gods did not grant him that leisure; but perhaps they would have deceived him less had they not found him at leisure. For the less occupied they found him, the more they occupied him themselves. What he contrived, and by what arts he was able to associate such gods with himself or with that city, Varro reveals; this will be discussed more carefully in its proper place, if the Lord pleases.[11] For now, though, since the question concerns the gods' benefits: peace is a great benefit, but it is a benefit of the true God, and often, like the sun, like the rain and the other supports of life, it is bestowed even on the ungrateful and the worthless. But if those gods conferred so great a good on Rome or on Pompilius, why did they never grant it to the Roman Empire afterward, even in its most praiseworthy times? Were the rites more useful when they were being instituted than when, once instituted, they were being celebrated? Yet at that time they did not yet exist, but were being added so that they might exist; later they already existed, and were being maintained so that they might be of benefit. Why is it, then, that those forty-three years—or, as others would have it, thirty-nine—passed in such long peace under Numa's reign, while afterward,

11 Numa Pompilius, legendary second king of Rome, was credited with founding its religious institutions. The gates of the temple of Janus were closed only when Rome was at peace.

once the rites had been instituted and the very gods invited by those rites had become the City's guardians and protectors, scarcely a single year is recorded, as a great marvel, in all the many years from the founding of the City down to Augustus—a year after the First Punic War—in which the Romans were able to close the gates of war?[12]

WHETHER IT WAS DESIRABLE FOR THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO BE ENLARGED BY SUCH FURY OF WARS, WHEN IT COULD HAVE BEEN QUIET AND SAFE THROUGH THE POLICY FOLLOWED UNDER NUMA

Rome's constant wars made it great but not happy; Numa's peace was better.

3.10 Or will they answer that the Roman Empire could not have grown so far and wide, or won such great renown, except through constant wars, one following continuously on another? A fine reason indeed! Why did the empire have to be restless in order to be great? In human bodies, is it not better to have a moderate stature with health than to attain some gigantic bulk through endless afflictions—and, once you have attained it, not to rest, but to be tormented by evils all the greater as your limbs are larger? And what harm would there have been—or rather, what great good—if those times had lasted which Sallust touches on when he says: "So in the beginning kings (for that was the first name of rule on earth) went different ways: some trained the mind, others the body. Even then human life was lived without craving; each was content with what was his own."[13] Or, for the empire to grow so much, did there have to come about what Virgil deplores when he says: "until, little by little, a worse and tarnished age took its place, and the madness of war, and the love of gain"? But clearly the Romans have a just defense for undertaking and waging such great wars: what compelled them to resist enemies who fell upon them so aggressively was not

12 The gates of Janus were closed in 235 BC, after the First Punic War (264–241 BC) against Carthage.

13 Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 2.1.

greed for winning human praise, but the necessity of protecting their safety and freedom. Granted—let it be so. For, as Sallust himself writes, "after their state, enlarged by laws, customs and territory, seemed quite prosperous and quite powerful, envy arose from wealth, as usually happens with human affairs. So neighboring kings and peoples tested them in war; few of their friends came to their aid, for the rest, struck with fear, kept clear of the dangers. But the Romans, alert at home and in the field, made haste, made ready, urged one another on, went out to meet the enemy, and shielded liberty, country and parents with arms.[14] "Later, when they had driven off the dangers by their courage, they brought help to allies and friends, and won friendships more by giving favors than by receiving them." By these arts Rome grew honorably. But in Numa's reign, so that there could be such a long peace, were the wicked attacking and testing them in war, or was none of this happening, so that the peace could endure? For if even then Rome was being provoked by wars and yet arms were not met with arms, then whatever means were used to pacify the enemies without their being defeated in any battle or terrified by any martial assault—those same means should always have been used, and Rome should always have reigned in peace with the gates of Janus shut. And if this was not in their power, then Rome did not have peace for as long as their gods wished, but for as long as the neighboring peoples all around wished, who did not provoke it with any war—unless, perhaps, such gods will even dare to sell one man what another man has willed or not willed. It does indeed make a difference—owing to their own vice—how far these demons are permitted to frighten or to stir up wicked minds. But if they always had this power, and if something else were not often brought about against their efforts by a more hidden and higher power, they would always have in their control peace and victory in war, which nearly always come about through the movements of human minds. Yet that these often happen against the demons' will is admitted not only by the myths, which tell many

14 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.326–327; Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 6.3–5.

lies and scarcely indicate or hint at anything true, but even by Roman history itself.

THE STATUE OF APOLLO AT CUMAE, WHOSE WEEPING WAS BELIEVED TO FORETELL THE DEFEAT OF THE GREEKS, WHOM HE COULD NOT HELP

Apollo's weeping statue at Cumae could not save the Greeks it mourned.

3.11 This is exactly why the famous Apollo of Cumae was reported to have wept for four days during the war against the Achaeans and King Aristonicus. The soothsayers were terrified by this portent and thought the statue should be thrown into the sea. But the old men of Cumae intervened. They reported that the same portent had appeared in that very image during the wars with Antiochus and with Perseus, and they testified that, because the outcome had been fortunate for the Romans, gifts had been sent to this same Apollo of theirs by decree of the senate. Then other soothsayers were summoned as more expert, and they answered that the weeping of Apollo's statue was favorable to the Romans precisely because Cumae was a Greek colony. By his weeping, they said, Apollo was signifying grief and disaster for his own lands, the place he had been brought from, that is, for Greece itself. Soon afterward it was announced that King Aristonicus had been defeated and captured. Apollo certainly did not want him defeated, and he grieved at it, and he showed this even by the tears of his stone.[15] So the songs of the poets, though mythical, are true to life, and it is not altogether inappropriate that they describe the ways of demons. For in Virgil, Diana grieved for Camilla, and Hercules wept for Pallas as he was about to die. Perhaps this is also why Numa Pompilius acted as he did. He had peace in abundance, but he did not know, and did not ask, whose gift it was. At his leisure he

15 Aristonicus claimed the kingdom of Pergamum and was defeated by Rome in 129 BC. Antiochus III of Syria and Perseus of Macedon were kings defeated by Rome in the early second century BC.

pondered to which gods he should entrust the safety and kingdom of Rome. He did not think that the true, almighty, supreme God cared about these earthly things. He also recalled that the Trojan gods whom Aeneas had brought had been unable to preserve for long either the kingdom of Troy or the kingdom of Lavinium, which Aeneas himself had founded. So he thought that other gods should be provided. These he would add to the earlier ones, who had either already crossed over to Rome with Romulus or were going to cross over at some point after Alba was destroyed. The new gods would serve either as guards for fugitives or as helpers for the weak.[16]

HOW MANY GODS THE ROMANS ADDED BEYOND NUMA'S ESTABLISHMENT, AND HOW THEIR NUMBER DID THEM NO GOOD

Rome kept adding gods, yet grew no happier for them.

3.12 Yet Rome did not deign to be content with these rites, many as Pompilius had established there. For it did not yet have the supreme temple of Jupiter himself. It was King Tarquin who built the Capitol there. Aesculapius, moreover, made his way from Epidaurus to Rome, so that, as a most skilled physician, he might practice his art with greater glory in the most famous of cities. The Mother of the gods came too, from Pessinus, wherever that may be. For it was unfitting that, when her son was already presiding over the Capitoline hill, she herself should still lie hidden in some obscure place. Yet if she is the mother of all the gods, she not only followed some of her sons to Rome but also went ahead of others who were still to follow. I would certainly be surprised if she gave birth to the Cynocephalus, who came from Egypt long afterward.[17] Whether the goddess Fever was also born of her, let Aesculapius, her great-grandson, decide. But wherever Fever was born, the foreign

16 In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Camilla is a warrior maiden fighting against Aeneas (Book 11), and Pallas is the young son of Evander, Aeneas' ally (Book 10); both die in battle.
17 Aesculapius, god of healing, was brought from Epidaurus in 293 BC, and the Mother of the gods (Cybele) from Pessinus in Phrygia in 204 BC.

gods will not, I think, dare to call her low-born, a goddess who is a Roman citizen. Rome was placed under the protection of so many gods. Who can count them? There are native and foreign gods, gods of heaven, earth and the underworld, gods of the sea, of springs and of rivers. As Varro says, there are certain gods and uncertain ones, and in every kind of god, as among animals, there are males and females. Under the protection, then, of so many gods, Rome should not have been shaken and afflicted by such great and dreadful disasters as those I shall recount, a few out of many. For with its great smoke, as if a signal had been given, it had gathered far too many gods for its protection. By establishing and providing temples and altars, sacrifices and priests for them, it offended the supreme true God, to whom alone these things are rightly due.[18] And indeed Rome lived more happily with fewer gods. But the larger it grew, the more gods it thought it should employ, as a ship needs more sailors. I suppose it despaired that those fewer gods would be enough to help it in its greatness. Yet under them it had lived better, compared with its later and worse life.

First, under the kings themselves, apart from Numa Pompilius, of whom I have already spoken above, how great was the evil of that quarrelsome strife which drove Romulus to have his brother killed!

BY WHAT RIGHT AND WHAT TREATY THE ROMANS GOT THEIR FIRST WIVES

Rome won its first wives by fraud and then fought their fathers.

3.13 How was it that neither Juno, who with her Jupiter was already cherishing "the Romans, lords of the world, the toga-wearing race," nor Venus herself could help her descendants of Aeneas to win wives in a good and fair way? Instead, the disaster of this shortage struck them so hard that they seized wives by deceit. Soon they were forced to fight their fathers-in-law, so

18 Varro's *Antiquities* catalogued the Roman gods, including "certain" and "uncertain" ones.

that the wretched women, not yet reconciled to their husbands after the wrong done them, were already given a dowry of their parents' blood. "But the Romans defeated their neighbors in this conflict," you say. Yes, and how many wounds and how many deaths, on both sides, among people so closely related and so near, did those victories cost! Think of one Caesar, a father-in-law, and one Pompey, his son-in-law, and this when Caesar's daughter, Pompey's wife, was already dead. With what great and what just stirring of grief Lucan cries out on their account: "Wars worse than civil, across Emathia's plains, and crime made lawful, we sing."[19] So the Romans won. They won so that, with hands bloody from slaughtering their fathers-in-law, they might wring pitiable embraces from those men's daughters. The women did not dare to weep for their slain fathers, for fear of offending their victorious husbands. While the battle was still going on, they had not known for whom to pray. Such marriages were the gift to the Roman people not of Venus but of Bellona. Or perhaps Allecto, that fury of the underworld, now that Juno favored the Romans, had more license against them than when Juno's prayers had roused her against Aeneas. Andromache was more fortunate in her captivity than those Roman brides were in their marriages. Though hers was a slave's union, Pyrrhus killed none of the Trojans after he had embraced her. The Romans, by contrast, were killing in battle the fathers-in-law whose daughters they were already embracing in the bridal chamber. Andromache, subject to the victor, could only grieve for the death of her people, not fear it. These women, joined to the combatants, feared their parents' deaths when their husbands went out to fight and grieved for them when their husbands came back. Neither their fear nor their grief was free.[20] Because of the deaths of their fellow citizens and kin, their

19 The first quotation is from Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.282. The second is the opening of Lucan's *Civil War* (*Pharsalia*) 1.1–2. Emathia means Thessaly, where Caesar defeated Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BC.

20 Bellona was the Roman goddess of war. In Virgil's *Aeneid* 7, Juno rouses the fury Allecto against Aeneas; Andromache, Hector's widow, became the captive of Pyrrhus after the fall of Troy.

brothers and parents, they were either tormented, as devotion required, or they rejoiced, cruelly, at their husbands' victories. There was more. As wars swing back and forth, some women lost their husbands to their parents' swords, and some lost both parents and husbands to the swords of both sides. For the Romans, too, faced no small dangers. It even came to a siege of the city, and they defended themselves behind closed gates. When the gates were opened by treachery and the enemy were let within the walls, a wicked and terribly savage battle was fought in the forum itself, between sons-in-law and fathers-in-law. The abductors were even being defeated. Fleeing again and again into their houses, they disgraced their earlier victories still more grievously, though those victories too were shameful and lamentable. At this point, however, Romulus, now despairing of his own men's courage, prayed to Jupiter that they might stand firm, and on this occasion Jupiter acquired the name Stator. There would have been no end to so great an evil had not the abducted women rushed out with torn hair, thrown themselves at their parents' feet, and calmed their most just anger, not with victorious arms but with suppliant devotion. Then Romulus was compelled to accept Tatius, king of the Sabines, as partner in his kingdom, though he could not bear a brother as partner. But how long would he tolerate this man, when he had not endured his own brother, his twin? So after Tatius too was killed, he held the kingdom alone, so as to be the greater god. What are these rights of marriage, these incitements to war, these bonds of brotherhood and kinship, of alliance and divinity? What, finally, is this life of a city under so many guardian gods? You see how much could be said on this subject, and how many things, were it not that my purpose is concerned with what remains and my discourse hastens on to other matters.[21]

21 *Stator* means "the one who makes men stand firm." Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, shared rule with Romulus until he was murdered.

THE IMPIETY OF THE WAR THE ROMANS WAGED ON THE ALBANS, AND THE VICTORY WON THROUGH THE LUST FOR DOMINATION

Rome destroyed Alba, its own mother city, in a war of ambition.

3.14 What then happened after Numa, under the other kings? With how great an evil, not only for themselves but for the Romans as well, were the Albans provoked to war! No doubt this was because Numa's long peace had grown cheap. How often the Roman and Alban armies were slaughtered, and how both cities were ground down! For Alba, founded by Aeneas' son Ascanius, was a nearer mother of Rome than Troy itself. Provoked by King Tullus Hostilius, it fought. In fighting it was struck down and struck others down in turn, until many grew weary of battles in which both sides were equally worn away. Then it was decided to settle the outcome of the war by means of triplet brothers, one set from each side. From the Romans came forward the three Horatii, from the Albans the three Curiatii. Two of the Horatii were overcome and killed by the three Curiatii, but the three Curiatii were overcome and killed by one Horatius. So Rome emerged victorious, but with such loss, even in that final contest, that out of six only one returned home.[22] Whose was the loss on both sides, whose the grief, if not that of Aeneas' stock, of Ascanius' descendants, of Venus' offspring, of Jupiter's grandsons? For this too was a war worse than civil, when the daughter city fought the mother city. And to this last battle of the triplets was added another evil, savage and dreadful. Both peoples had been friends before, since they were neighbors and kin, and the sister of the Horatii had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii. When she saw her betrothed's spoils on her victorious brother, she wept, and for this that same brother killed her. The feeling of this one woman seems to me more humane than that of the whole Roman people. She was grieving for the man to whom she

22 Tullus Hostilius was the third king of Rome. The legendary combat of the Horatii and Curiatii is told by Livy (1.24–26).

was already bound by the pledge of betrothal, or perhaps even for her brother himself, who had killed the man to whom he had promised his sister. I do not think she was to blame for weeping. For why else, in Virgil, does dutiful Aeneas grieve, to his credit, for an enemy slain by his own hand?[23] Why else did Marcellus weep in pity for Syracuse? He recalled how the city's height and glory, so recent, had suddenly fallen beneath his hands, and he reflected on the common lot of all. I beg that we obtain this much from human feeling: that a woman may weep without guilt for her betrothed killed by her brother, if men have wept, and been praised for it, even for enemies they themselves defeated. So, at the very time that woman was weeping for the death her brother had inflicted on her betrothed, Rome was rejoicing that it had waged war against its mother city with such slaughter and had won with such an outpouring of kindred blood on both sides.[24]

THE LUST FOR DOMINATION

Sallust names the lust for domination as the cause of wars of conquest.

Why do they hold up before me the name of praise and the name of victory? Remove the obstacles of insane opinion, and let the crimes be seen naked, weighed naked, judged naked. Let a cause be stated for the war on Alba, as adultery was stated for the war on Troy. None such is found, nothing even like it. There was only this: that Tullus might "rouse to arms men grown idle, and ranks now unused to triumphs." It was through that vice, then, that so great a crime was committed, a war against allies and kin. Sallust touches on this vice in passing as a great one. Having briefly praised earlier times, when people lived their lives without craving and each was well content with his own, he says: "But after Cyrus in Asia, and the Lacedaemonians and

23 In *Aeneid* 10.821–832, Aeneas pities the young Lausus after killing him.
24 Marcus Claudius Marcellus captured Syracuse in 212 BC and is said to have wept over the city.

Athenians in Greece, began to subdue cities and nations, to treat the lust for domination as a cause for war, and to think that the greatest glory lay in the greatest empire," and so on, as he had set out to say. For my purpose it is enough to have quoted his words this far.[25] This lust for domination harasses the human race with great evils and grinds it down. Conquered by this lust, Rome celebrated a triumph for having conquered Alba, and called the praise of its own crime glory. For, as our Scripture says, "the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul, and the one who does wicked things is blessed." So let the deceptive coverings and the misleading whitewash be stripped away from things, so that they may be examined honestly. Let no one say to me, "That man was great, and so was that one, because he fought this other man and won." Gladiators fight too, and they too win, and that cruelty too has its rewards of praise. But I think it better to pay the penalty for any kind of idleness than to seek the glory of such arms. And yet if gladiators came out into the arena to fight each other, one of them the son and the other the father, who would bear such a spectacle? Who would not bar it?[26] How then could a contest of arms between a mother city and a daughter city be glorious? Or was it different because there was no arena there? Because broader fields were filled with the corpses not of two gladiators but of many, from two peoples? Because those contests were enclosed not by an amphitheater but by the whole world, and an impious spectacle was offered both to the living of that time and to posterity, as far as this story reaches?

Yet those gods, the protectors of the Roman empire, were in the grip of their own enthusiasm, like spectators at a theater watching such contests. They were not satisfied until the sister of the Horatii, because of the three slain Curiatii, was herself added by her brother's sword to her two brothers, a third death on the other side, so that Rome, though it had won, should not

25 The verse is Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.813–815; the quotation is Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 2.2.

26 Psalm 9:24 (10:3 in most English Bibles).

have fewer deaths either. Then, as the fruit of victory, Alba was overthrown. After Ilium, which the Greeks destroyed, and after Lavinium, where Aeneas had founded a kingdom of foreigners and fugitives, Alba was the third place where those Trojan deities had dwelt. But perhaps, as was their habit, they had already moved away from there too, and that is why it was destroyed. No doubt "all the gods by whom that empire had stood had departed, leaving their shrines and altars." Look, they had departed now for the third time, so that Rome, the fourth, might be entrusted to them with the utmost foresight! For Alba had displeased them, where Amulius reigned after driving out his brother, and Rome had pleased them, where Romulus reigned after killing his brother.[27] "But before Alba was destroyed," they say, "its people were transferred to Rome, so that one city might be made of both." Granted, let it be so. Yet that city, the kingdom of Ascanius and the third home of the Trojan gods, was a mother overthrown by her daughter city. And in order that the remnants of war might make one people out of two, much blood of both was first shed as a pitiful cement. Why should I now go through, one by one, how under the remaining kings the same wars were renewed so often? They seemed to have been ended by victories, and they were finished again and again with great slaughter. Again and again, after treaty and peace, they were resumed between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law and their stock and descendants. It was no small sign of this calamity that none of those kings closed the gates of war. So none of them, under so many protecting gods, reigned in peace.

27 The quotation adapts Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.351–352, on the gods abandoning Troy. Amulius seized the throne of Alba from his brother Numitor, grandfather of Romulus and Remus.

WHAT THE LIFE AND END OF THE ROMAN KINGS WERE LIKE

Most of Rome's kings died violently, and Romulus's deification was flattery.

3.15 And what ends did the kings themselves come to? As for Romulus, let the legend-making flattery that claims he was received into heaven look to that. Let certain of their writers look to it too, who said that because of his savagery he was torn to pieces by the senate. They say that a certain Julius Proculus was bribed to claim that Romulus had appeared to him and through him had commanded the Roman people to worship him among the deities. In this way, they say, the people, who had begun to swell with anger against the senate, were checked and calmed. For an eclipse of the sun had also occurred. The ignorant multitude did not know that it was produced by the fixed law of the sun's course, and attributed it to Romulus' merits. As if, had that been the sun in mourning, people should not rather have believed for that very reason that he had been murdered, and that the crime itself had been revealed by the very light of day turning away! This is what truly happened when the Lord was crucified through the cruelty and impiety of the Jews.[28] That this darkening of the sun did not occur through the regular course of the heavenly bodies is shown clearly enough by the fact that it was then the Jewish Passover. For the Passover is solemnly kept at full moon, while a regular eclipse of the sun occurs only at the end of the lunar month. Cicero, too, indicates clearly enough that Romulus' reception among the gods was imagined rather than real. He does so even while praising him in his books *On the Commonwealth*, in a speech by Scipio: "He achieved so much," he says, "that when he suddenly disappeared during an eclipse of the sun, he was thought to have been placed among the gods. No mortal has ever been able to

28 Julius Proculus, according to Roman legend, reported that the deified Romulus had appeared to him after vanishing.

attain such a reputation without extraordinary glory of virtue." (When he says that Romulus suddenly disappeared, what must surely be understood is either the violence of a storm or a murder and crime done in secret. For other writers of theirs add to the eclipse a sudden storm as well, which surely either gave occasion for the crime or carried Romulus off by itself.)[29] Indeed, in the same books the same Cicero speaks of Tullus Hostilius, the third king counting from Romulus, who was likewise consumed by lightning. He says that Tullus too was not believed to have been received among the gods through such a death. Perhaps this was because the Romans did not want to make common, that is, to make cheap, what had been established, that is, believed, in the case of Romulus, by readily granting it to another as well. He also says openly in his invectives: "Romulus, who founded this city, we have raised to the immortal gods by our goodwill and by report." He thereby shows that it did not really happen, but was put about and spread abroad out of goodwill, because of the merits of Romulus' virtue. And in the dialogue *Hortensius*, speaking of regular eclipses of the sun, he says: "so as to produce the same darkness it produced at the death of Romulus, which occurred during an eclipse of the sun." Here, certainly, he was not in the least afraid to speak of the man's death, because he was writing as a debater rather than as a eulogist.[30]

HOW THE KINGS DIED

Tullus burned, Tarquinius Priscus and Servius were murdered, and Tarquin the Proud thrived.

As for the other kings of the Roman people, apart from Numa Pompilius and Ancus Marcius, who died of illness, what dreadful ends they had! Tullus Hostilius, as I said, the conqueror and destroyer of Alba, was burned up by lightning together with his

29 Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 2.17.

30 The invective quoted is Cicero's third speech *Against Catiline* (3.2). The *Hortensius* is a lost dialogue of Cicero's urging the study of philosophy.

whole household. Tarquinius Priscus was murdered by the sons of his predecessor. Servius Tullius was killed through the wicked crime of his son-in-law Tarquin the Proud, who succeeded him on the throne. Yet when so great a parricide had been committed against the best king of that people, the gods did not "depart, leaving their shrines and altars." These are the gods who, they say, were so moved by Paris' adultery that they did this to wretched Troy and left it to the Greeks to be destroyed and burned. On the contrary, Tarquin himself succeeded the father-in-law he had killed. Those gods watched this wicked parricide reigning after murdering his father-in-law. They watched him glorying, moreover, in many wars and victories and building the Capitol from the spoils. They did not withdraw; they stayed and were present. And they allowed their king Jupiter to preside and reign over them in that loftiest temple, that is, in the work of a parricide. For it was not that he built the Capitol while still innocent and was later driven from the City for his misdeeds. Rather, he gained the very throne from which he could build the Capitol by committing a most monstrous crime. As for the Romans later driving him from the throne and shutting him out of the city walls, the sin in question, the rape of Lucretia, was not his but his son's. It was committed not only without his knowledge but even in his absence. At that time he was besieging the city of Ardea; he was waging war on behalf of the Roman people. We do not know what he would have done if his son's outrage had been brought to his attention. And yet, without his judgment being sought or tested, the people took his command from him. They took back the army, which was ordered to desert him, then closed the gates and would not let him enter on his return. He, for his part, waged very heavy wars in which he wore down those same Romans by stirring up their neighbors. But when he was deserted by those on whose help he relied and could not recover his kingdom, he lived quietly as a private citizen for fourteen years, as it is said, in the town of Tusculum near Rome, and grew old with his wife. That was perhaps a more desirable end than his father-in-law's, who was

killed by the crime of his son-in-law, and not, it is reported, without his own daughter's knowledge. Yet the Romans did not call this Tarquin cruel or wicked, but proud. Perhaps it was because, with a pride of another kind, they could not bear his royal arrogance. For they made so light of his crime in killing his father-in-law, their excellent king, that they made him their king. I wonder whether, in this, they did not commit a crime graver still, by giving so great a reward for so great a crime. And yet the gods did not "depart, leaving their shrines and altars." Unless, perhaps, someone defends these gods by saying that they stayed in Rome in order to punish the Romans with penalties rather than help them with benefits, seducing them with empty victories and crushing them with very heavy wars.

This was the life of the Romans under the kings, in that praiseworthy period of the commonwealth, up to the expulsion of Tarquin the Proud, for some two hundred and forty-three years. In all that time, all those victories, bought with so much blood and such great calamities, scarcely extended that empire twenty miles from the City. That is an area that could not even be compared now with the territory of some town in Gaetulia.[31]

THE FIRST CONSULS OF ROME, ONE OF WHOM DROVE THE OTHER FROM THE COUNTRY AND THEN, AFTER THE MOST ATROCIOUS MURDERS OF HIS OWN FAMILY, DIED WOUNDED BY A WOUNDED ENEMY

In the first consular year Brutus killed his sons and drove out his innocent colleague.

3.16 To this period let us also add the time during which, as Sallust says, affairs were conducted "with fair and moderate justice," "until the fear of Tarquin and the grievous war with Etruria were laid to rest." For as long as the Etruscans were helping Tarquin in his attempts to regain the throne, Rome was shaken by a grievous war. That is why he says the common-

31 Gaetulia was a region on the desert fringe of Roman North Africa, Augustine's own part of the world.

wealth was governed with fair and moderate justice: fear compelled it, not justice persuaded it. And within that very short period, how deadly was the year in which the first consuls were elected, after the royal power had been driven out! They did not even complete their year. For Junius Brutus stripped his colleague Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus of office and drove him out of the City. Then he himself soon fell in battle, he and the enemy wounding each other, after he had first put to death his own sons and his wife's brothers, because he had learned that they had conspired to restore Tarquin. Virgil, after recording this deed with praise, at once shuddered at it in compassion.[32] For after saying, "And the father will summon to punishment his sons who stir up new wars, for the sake of fair liberty," he immediately cries out: "Unhappy man, however later ages will take those deeds!" However posterity may take those deeds, he means—that is, however they may hold them up and extol them—the man who killed his sons is unhappy. And as if to console the unhappy man he adds: "Love of country and a boundless craving for praise prevail." In this Brutus, who both killed his sons and, struck in return by the enemy he struck, Tarquin's son, could not outlive him—while Tarquin himself outlived Brutus—does not the innocence of his colleague Collatinus seem to have been avenged? For Collatinus, a good citizen, suffered after Tarquin's expulsion the very thing that the tyrant Tarquin himself suffered. Indeed, this same Brutus is said to have been a blood relative of Tarquin too; but Collatinus, it seems, was weighed down by the likeness of his name, because he too was called Tarquinius.[33] So he should have been forced to change his name, not his country; at the very least, this one word could have been dropped from his name, and he could have been called simply L. Collatinus. But he was not allowed to lose what he could have lost without any harm, precisely so that he—the first consul—would be ordered to give up his office, and—a good citizen—his citizenship. Is this too glory, this detestable injustice

32 These quotations come from Sallust's lost *Histories*.
33 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.820–823.

of Junius Brutus, of no use whatever to the commonwealth? Was it to commit this too that "love of country and a boundless craving for praise prevailed"? After Tarquin the tyrant had been expelled, Lucretia's husband, L. Tarquinius Collatinus, was certainly elected consul together with Brutus. How justly the people looked to a citizen's character, not to his name! How impiously Brutus deprived his colleague in that first and new office of both his country and his office, when, if this offended him, he could have deprived him merely of his name! These evils were done, these misfortunes happened, at the very time when that commonwealth was conducted with fair and moderate justice. Lucretius, too, who had been chosen to replace Brutus, was carried off by illness before that same year was over. So Publius Valerius, who had succeeded Collatinus, and Marcus Horatius, who had been appointed in place of the dead Lucretius, completed that funereal and hellish year, which had five consuls—the year in which the Roman commonwealth inaugurated the new honor and power of the consulship itself.[34]

THE EVILS THAT TROUBLED THE ROMAN COMMONWEALTH AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE CONSULSHIP, WHILE THE GODS IT WORSHIPED GAVE NO HELP

After the kings, Rome suffered class conflict, famines, plagues and defeats.

3.17 Then, when fear had diminished a little—not because the wars had ceased, but because they pressed less heavily—once, that is, the period in which affairs were conducted with fair and moderate justice had come to an end, there followed what the same Sallust briefly sets out: "Then the patricians drove the plebs as if under the rule of slaves, disposed of their lives and their backs in the manner of kings, drove them off their land, and held power alone, with everyone else shut out. Oppressed by these cruelties and above all by debt, since through constant wars it bore both taxes and military service at once, the plebs

34 Spurius Lucretius, Lucretia's father.

took up arms and occupied the Sacred Mount and the Aventine, and then secured for itself tribunes of the plebs and other rights. The end of the discord and of the struggle on both sides was the Second Punic War." Why, then, should I either put up with such delays in writing, or inflict them on those who will read? How wretched that commonwealth was over so long an age, through so many years up to the Second Punic War, with wars abroad never ceasing to disturb it and with discord and civil strife within, Sallust has briefly indicated. Accordingly, those victories were not the solid joys of the happy but the empty consolations of the wretched, seductive incitements for people anything but at peace to undertake one fruitless evil after another. And let good and sensible Romans not be angry with us for saying this—though on this matter they need neither be asked nor warned, since it is quite certain that they will not be angry at all. For we say nothing more harshly, nor anything harsher, than their own authors, whom we fall far short of in style and in leisure; and yet they themselves labored to learn those authors by heart, and they compel their sons to labor at it too. But those who are angry—how would they put up with me if I said what Sallust says? "A great many disturbances, seditions and finally civil wars arose, while a powerful few, to whose favor most people had yielded, aimed at domination under the honorable name of senators or of people; and citizens were called good and bad not for their services to the commonwealth, since all were equally corrupt, but whoever was richest and strongest in doing wrong was regarded as good, because he defended the existing state of affairs." Now, if those writers of history thought it belonged to honest freedom of speech not to keep silent about the evils of their own city—a city they were compelled to praise in many places with great acclaim, since they had no other, truer city into which eternal citizens are to be chosen—what ought we to do? Our freedom must be all the greater as our hope in God is better and more certain, when they blame the present evils on our Christ, so that weaker and less instructed minds may be turned away from that city in which alone life is to be lived

unceasingly and happily. Nor do we say more horrible things against their gods than their own authors say again and again—authors they read and extol. Indeed, we have taken what we say from those very authors, and we are in no way able to say either such things as they do or all of them.

WHERE WERE THE GODS?

Augustine lists plagues, famines and defeats and asks where the gods were.

Where, then, were those gods who are thought worth worshiping for the sake of the slight and deceptive happiness of this world, when the Romans, to whom they peddled themselves as worthy of worship with the most lying cunning, were harassed by such calamities? Where were they when the consul Valerius was killed defending the Capitol, which exiles and slaves had seized? He was more easily able to help the temple of Jupiter than that crowd of so many deities, with their Greatest and Best king, whose temple he had freed, was able to come to his aid. Where were they when the city, worn out by a dense succession of the evils of sedition, was waiting in a brief lull for the envoys sent to Athens to borrow laws, and was ravaged by severe famine and plague? Where were they when the people, again suffering from famine, created the first prefect of the grain supply; and when, as that famine grew worse, Spurius Maelius, because he had distributed grain to the starving multitude, incurred the charge of aiming at kingship, and, at the urging of that same prefect, was killed on the orders of the dictator L. Quinctius, a man decrepit with age, by Quintus Servilius, master of the horse, amid an enormous and most dangerous uproar in the city? Where were they when a very great plague broke out and the people, long and greatly worn out by useless gods, decided that new *lectisternia* must be offered, something they had never done before? Couches were spread in honor of the gods, and that is how this rite—or rather sacrilege—got its name. Where were they when, through ten consecutive years of fighting badly, the

Roman army had suffered frequent and great defeats at Veii, and would have gone on suffering them had help not at last come through Furius Camillus, whom the ungrateful city later condemned? Where were they when the Gauls captured Rome, plundered it, burned it, filled it with slaughter? Where were they when that notorious plague wrought such enormous destruction, in which that same Furius Camillus also died, who had earlier defended the ungrateful commonwealth against the Veientines and later avenged it on the Gauls?[35] During this plague they brought in theatrical shows, another new plague—not for the bodies of the Romans but, what is far more destructive, for their morals. Where were they when another grave plague broke out that was believed to come from poisonings by matrons—women many and noble beyond belief, whose conduct was found to be worse than any plague? Or when both consuls with their army, trapped by the Samnites at the Caudine Forks, were forced to make a disgraceful treaty with them, so that six hundred Roman knights were handed over as hostages, and the rest, having lost their arms, stripped of everything else and deprived even of their coverings, were sent under the enemy's yoke in a single garment each? Or when, while everyone else was suffering from a severe plague, many in the army also died struck by lightning? Or when, again, because of another unbearable plague, Rome was compelled to summon Aesculapius from Epidaurus as a physician god and put him to work—since Jupiter, the king of all, who had long been seated on the Capitol, had perhaps been kept from learning medicine by the many debaucheries to which he had devoted his youth? Or when, as the Lucanians, Bruttians, Samnites, Etruscans and Senonian Gauls conspired against them at one and the same time, first Roman envoys were killed by them, and then an army was crushed together with its praetor, seven tribunes perishing with

35 Marcus Furius Camillus captured Veii in 396 BC and was later exiled by the Romans.

him, along with thirteen thousand soldiers?[36] Or when, after long and serious seditions at Rome, in which the plebs had finally seceded to the Janiculum in a hostile breach, the calamity of this evil was so dire that because of it a dictator, Hortensius, was appointed—something usually done only in extreme dangers—and he, after bringing the plebs back, died while still in that office, which had happened to no dictator before? And this was a graver charge against those gods, since Aesculapius was by then present.

Then indeed so many wars sprang up everywhere that, for lack of soldiers, the *proletarii* were enrolled in the army—men who had received this name because, too poor to serve as soldiers, they had leisure only for producing offspring. Pyrrhus, too, king of Greece, then celebrated with immense glory, was summoned by the Tarentines and became an enemy of the Romans. When he consulted about the future outcome of events, Apollo quite wittily gave him so ambiguous an oracle that, whichever of the two things happened, he himself would be thought divine. For he said: "I say that you, Pyrrhus, the Romans can conquer." And so, whether Pyrrhus was conquered by the Romans or the Romans by Pyrrhus, the soothsayer could safely await either outcome. What a slaughter of both armies there was then, and how horrifying! In it Pyrrhus nevertheless came out on top, so that he could now proclaim Apollo divine by his own interpretation—had not the Romans come away the victors soon afterward in another battle.[37] And amid such great slaughter of wars a grave plague also broke out among women. For pregnant women were dying before they could bring their offspring to term. Here, I suppose, Aesculapius excused himself on the ground that he professed to be a chief physician, not a midwife. Livestock too were dying in the same way, so that it was even believed that animals as a kind would die out. And

36 Aesculapius (Greek Asclepius), god of healing, whose cult was brought to Rome from Epidaurus in Greece in 293 BC.

37 *Proles* is Latin for "offspring." The oracle's Latin can mean either "you can conquer the Romans" or "the Romans can conquer you."

what of that memorable winter, raging with such incredible severity that snow lay at a horrifying depth for forty days even in the Forum, and the Tiber too was frozen solid with ice? If it had happened in our times, what things, and how many, would these people have said! And what of that equally enormous plague—how many it killed while it raged! When it stretched into another year, far more severe, with Aesculapius present to no purpose, recourse was had to the Sibylline Books. In that kind of oracle, as Cicero records in his books *On Divination*, people usually rely rather on the interpreters, who conjecture at uncertain meanings as they can or as they wish.[38] At that time, then, it was declared that the cause of the plague was that many people were occupying a great many sacred buildings and holding them as private property. In this way, for the time being, Aesculapius was cleared of the serious charge of incompetence or laziness. But why had those buildings been occupied by many people with no one preventing it, unless because prayers to so great a crowd of deities had long been offered in vain, and so the places were gradually deserted by their worshipers, so that, as if empty, they could be claimed without offending anyone, at least for human uses? For if the buildings, carefully reclaimed and restored at that time as if to quell the plague, had not later been neglected and appropriated in the same way and so lain forgotten, Varro would certainly not be credited with great learning for recording so many unknown things when he writes about sacred buildings. But what was secured for the moment was not the driving off of the plague, but an elegant excuse for the gods.

THE DISASTERS THAT WORE DOWN THE ROMANS IN THE PUNIC WARS, WHILE THE PROTECTION OF THE GODS WAS SOUGHT IN VAIN

The Punic Wars devastated many peoples, and Regulus was captured.

3.18 Then in the Punic Wars, when victory long hung doubtful and uncertain between the two empires, and two very powerful

peoples were driving their strongest and richest assaults against each other, how many smaller kingdoms were crushed! What great and famous cities were destroyed, how many communities afflicted, how many ruined! How far and wide so many regions and lands were laid waste! How often the conquered, on this side and that, became conquerors! What numbers of human beings were consumed, both soldiers fighting and peoples taking no part in arms! What a mass of ships was overwhelmed in sea battles too, and sunk by every variety of storm! If we tried to recount or even recall these things, we too would become nothing but writers of history. At that time the Roman city, thrown into turmoil by great fear, ran to remedies futile and ridiculous. On the authority of the Sibylline Books the Secular Games were revived, whose celebration had been instituted at intervals of a hundred years and had lapsed in happier times through neglectful memory.[39] The pontiffs also renewed the sacred games for the powers of the underworld, these too abolished in the better years before. No doubt, then, when they were renewed, the underworld, enriched by such an abundance of the dying, delighted even to play games—while in truth wretched human beings, by those very raging wars and bloody hostilities and deathly victories on this side and that, were putting on great games for the demons and rich banquets for the underworld. Nothing more wretched, indeed, happened in the First Punic War than that the Romans were so badly defeated that even the famous Regulus was captured, whom we mentioned in the first and second books—a truly great man, earlier the victor over and tamer of the Carthaginians, who would even have brought the First Punic War itself to an end had he not, out of excessive greed for praise and glory, imposed on the exhausted Carthaginians harsher terms than they could bear. If that man's captivity, so utterly unexpected, his slavery, so utterly

38 The Sibylline Books, a collection of prophetic verses kept at Rome and consulted in times of crisis.

39 The Secular Games marked the end of a *saeculum*, an age reckoned at about a century.

undeserved, his oath, so utterly faithful, and his death, so utterly cruel, do not force those gods to blush, then it is true that they are made of bronze and have no blood.[40]

Nor were very grave evils lacking within the walls at that time. For the Tiber overflowed far beyond its usual bounds, and almost all the low-lying parts of the City were wrecked, some buildings swept away by its force as if by a torrent, others soaked as if by a long-standing pool and so collapsing. Then a fire, more destructive still, followed this disaster: seizing all the taller buildings around the Forum, it did not spare even the temple of Vesta, its own most intimate home, where virgins—not so much honored as condemned—had been accustomed to give it, as it were, everlasting life by the most careful replacement of wood. But at that time the fire there was not only living but raging. Terrified by its onslaught, the virgins could not rescue from that blaze those fateful sacred objects, which had already brought down three cities in which they had been; and Metellus the pontiff, somehow forgetful of his own safety, rushed in and snatched them away, half burned himself.[41] For the fire did not recognize even him, nor indeed was there any divinity there that would not also have fled, even if there had been one. So a man was able to help Vesta's sacred objects, rather than they the man. And if they could not drive the fire away from themselves, what help could they give, against those floods and flames, to the city whose safety they were believed to protect? Indeed, the event itself made plain that they could do nothing at all. These things would never be thrown in their faces by us if they said that those rites were instituted not to protect these temporal goods but to signify eternal ones; and that therefore, when it happened that the rites perished because they were bodily and visible, nothing was diminished of the things for which they had been instituted, and they could be restored again for the same

40 *Aerei* can mean both "of bronze," like their statues, and "of air," like the bodies of demons.

41 The sacred objects, including the Palladium, were believed to have come from Troy by way of Lavinium and Alba Longa; the fire was in 241 BC.

purposes. But as it is, with astonishing blindness, they think that through rites which could perish it could be brought about that the earthly safety and temporal happiness of the city could not perish. Accordingly, since it is shown that even while those rites remained intact, ruin and misfortune broke in upon them all the same, they are ashamed to change an opinion they cannot defend.

THE AFFLICTION OF THE SECOND PUNIC WAR, IN WHICH THE STRENGTH OF BOTH SIDES WAS EXHAUSTED

Hannibal's invasion and Cannae nearly destroyed Rome.

3.19 As for the Second Punic War, it would take far too long to recount the disasters of two peoples fighting each other so long and over so wide an area—so much so that even those who set out not so much to narrate Rome's wars as to praise Rome's empire admit that the one who won looked more like the one defeated. When Hannibal rose up from Spain, crossed the Pyrenees, ran through Gaul, broke through the Alps, and, his strength growing over so long a circuit, laying waste or subduing everything, burst like a torrent into the narrows of Italy—what bloody battles were fought, how often were the Romans defeated! How many towns went over to the enemy, how many were captured and crushed! What dreadful battles, so often glorious for Hannibal through Roman disaster! And what am I to say of the astonishingly horrible disaster at Cannae, where Hannibal, though he was utterly cruel, is said to have been so sated by such a slaughter of his bitterest enemies that he ordered them to be spared?[42] From there he sent three *modii* of gold rings to Carthage, so that they would understand that so much Roman rank had fallen in that battle that it could more easily be grasped by measure than by number; and that from this the slaughter of the rest of the crowd—as much more numerous as it was lower in rank—lying there without rings, should be thought something to be guessed at rather than reported. Then there fol-

42 At Cannae in southern Italy, in 216 BC, Hannibal destroyed a huge Roman army.

lowed such a shortage of soldiers that the Romans gathered criminals by offering them immunity and granted freedom to slaves, and with these an army to be ashamed of was not so much reinforced as created. So the slaves—or rather, not to do them an injustice, the freedmen they now were—who were to fight for the Roman commonwealth lacked arms. Arms were taken down from the temples, as if the Romans were saying to their gods: "Put down what you have held so long to no purpose; perhaps our slaves can do something useful with what you, our deities, could not."[43] Then too, when the treasury ran out of money to pay the troops, private wealth went to public use, each person contributing what he had to such an extent that, apart from a single ring and a single *bulla* each—pitiful badges of rank—the senate itself kept no gold for itself, and still less the other orders and tribes. Who could put up with these people if in our times they were reduced to such poverty, when we can hardly put up with them now, when more is lavished on actors for superfluous pleasure than was then contributed to the legions for their very survival?[44]

THE END OF THE SAGUNTINES, WHOM THE ROMAN GODS DID NOT HELP WHEN THEY PERISHED FOR THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH ROME

Saguntum, Rome's faithful ally, perished while the gods looked on.

3.20 But among all the evils of the Second Punic War, nothing was more pitiable, or more deserving of pitiful lament, than the destruction of the Saguntines. This city in Spain, the closest of friends to the Roman people, was overthrown while it kept faith with that same people. For it was here that Hannibal, having broken the treaty, looked for pretexts to provoke the Romans to war. So he was fiercely besieging Saguntum. When this was heard at Rome, envoys were sent to Hannibal to tell him to aban-

43 A *modius* was a Roman dry measure of about nine liters; gold rings were worn by men of senatorial and equestrian rank.
44 The *bulla* was a protective amulet worn by freeborn Roman children.

don the siege. Rebuffed, they went on to Carthage and lodged a complaint about the broken treaty, then returned to Rome with nothing accomplished. While these delays dragged on, that wretched city—very wealthy, and very dear both to its own commonwealth and to Rome's—was destroyed by the Carthaginians in the eighth or ninth month. To read of its end, let alone to write of it, is horrifying. Yet I will recall it briefly, for it bears closely on the matter at hand. First it wasted away from hunger; indeed, some are said to have fed even on the corpses of their own people.[45] Then, exhausted in every way, and so as at least not to fall into Hannibal's hands as captives, the city built a huge pyre at public expense, and into its flames they all threw themselves and their families, whom they had also struck down with the sword. Here those gluttonous, good-for-nothing gods should have done something—those gods who gape greedily at the fat of sacrifices and deceive people with the fog of their lying divinations. Here they should have done something: come to the aid of the city most friendly to the Roman people, and not let it perish when it was perishing for keeping faith. They themselves, surely, had presided as intermediaries when it was bound to the Roman commonwealth by the treaty made between them. So, while guarding what it had joined by agreement, bound by its word, and tied fast by oath, with those very gods as overseers, it was besieged, crushed and consumed by a faithless enemy. If those same gods later frightened Hannibal with storm and lightning when he was right at the walls of Rome and drove him far away, that was the time when they should first have done something of the kind. For I dare to say that they could more honorably have raged with a storm on behalf of the friends of the Romans—who were in peril precisely because they would not break faith with the Romans, and who then had no help at all—than on behalf of the Romans themselves, who were fighting for their own sake and were well supplied against Hannibal. If, then, these gods were guardians of Roman happiness and glory,

45 Saguntum, a city on the east coast of Spain allied with Rome, was besieged and taken by Hannibal in 219 BC, which led to the Second Punic War.

they would have averted from it so grave a reproach as the disaster of Saguntum. As it is, how foolish it is to believe that it was thanks to these gods as defenders that Rome did not perish when Hannibal was victorious—gods who could not help the city of Saguntum, so that it would not perish for its friendship with Rome! If the people of Saguntum had been Christian and had suffered something of this kind for the faith of the gospel—though they would not have destroyed themselves either by sword or by fire—yet if they had suffered destruction for the gospel faith, they would have suffered it in the hope with which they had believed in Christ: a hope not of a reward for the briefest time, but of an eternity without end. But as for these gods, who are said to be worshiped—and whose worship is demanded—precisely so that happiness in these slipping and passing things may be secure, what will their defenders and apologists answer us about the destruction of the Saguntines, except what they answer about the death of Regulus? The only difference is that he was one man, while this was a whole city; but in both cases the cause of death was keeping faith. For it was because of this that he chose to return to the enemy, and that the city refused to go over to the enemy. Does keeping faith, then, provoke the anger of the gods? Or can not only individual men but even whole cities perish while the gods are favorable? Let them choose which they prefer. If those gods are angry at faith kept, let them look for faithless people to worship them. But if, even when the gods are favorable, men and cities can be afflicted with many heavy torments and perish, then they are worshiped to no profit as far as this happiness is concerned. So let those who think they have been made unhappy by the loss of their gods' rites stop being indignant. For even if those gods had not only remained with them but also shown them favor, they could have—not, as now, grumbled about their misery—but, as Regulus and the Saguntines did then, been horribly tortured and utterly destroyed.

HOW UNGRATEFUL THE CITY OF ROME WAS TO SCIPIO, ITS DELIVERER, AND WHAT ITS MORALS WERE AT THE TIME SALLUST DESCRIBES AS ITS BEST

Rome exiled Scipio, its savior, and Asian luxury began to corrupt it.

3.21 Next, between the second and the last Carthaginian war—the period when, according to Sallust, the Romans lived with the best morals and the greatest concord (for I pass over much, mindful of the limits of the work I have undertaken)—in that very period, then, of the best morals and the greatest concord, the great Scipio gave way to the accusations of his enemies. He was the liberator of Rome and Italy; the illustrious and wonderful finisher of that Second Punic War, so horrifying, so ruinous, so dangerous; the conqueror of Hannibal and tamer of Carthage; a man whose life from his youth is described as devoted to the gods and nurtured in their temples. Deprived of the fatherland that his own courage had made safe and free, he spent and ended the rest of his life in the town of Liternum. After his famous triumph he felt no longing for that city—so much so that he is said to have ordered that not even his funeral be held, once he was dead, in his ungrateful fatherland. It was then, too, that for the first time Asiatic luxury, worse than any enemy, crept into Rome, through the proconsul Gnaeus Manlius, who celebrated a triumph over the Galatians.[46] For it was then, it is said, that bronze-fitted couches and costly coverlets were first seen; then that female harp-players and other licentious vices were brought into banquets. But my purpose now is to speak of the evils that people suffer against their will, not of those they commit willingly. So what I recalled about Scipio—that, yielding to his enemies, he died outside the fatherland he had liberated—bears more on the present discussion: the Roman divinities, whose temples he had kept Hannibal away from, did not repay

46 Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 BC; he withdrew to Liternum in Campania and died there around 183 BC. Gnaeus Manlius Vulso celebrated his triumph over the Galatians of Asia Minor in 187 BC.

him in kind, though they are worshiped only for the sake of this kind of happiness. But because Sallust said that morals at that time were at their best, I thought I should mention this point about Asiatic luxury, so that it may be understood that Sallust too said this by comparison with other times—times in which morals were certainly worse, amid the most grievous discords. For it was then—that is, between the second and the last Carthaginian war—that the Voconian law too was passed, forbidding anyone to make a woman his heir, not even an only daughter. What could be said or thought more unjust than this law, I do not know. Still, throughout that whole interval between the two Punic wars, unhappiness was more bearable. The army was worn down only by wars abroad, but it was consoled by victories; and at home no discords raged, as they did at other times. But in the last Punic War, in a single onslaught by the other Scipio—who for this reason likewise acquired the surname Africanus—Rome's rival for empire was destroyed root and branch. After that, the Roman commonwealth was overwhelmed by such mountains of evils that Carthage, by being destroyed so quickly, can be shown to have done more harm than it had earlier done by being an enemy for so long. For from the prosperity and security that followed, morals were thoroughly corrupted, and those evils were heaped up.[47] Throughout this whole period up to Caesar Augustus—who seems to have wrested from the Romans, by every means, a liberty that was no longer glorious even in their own opinion, but quarrelsome, ruinous, and by now plainly enervated and feeble; to have brought everything back under a king's discretion; and, so to speak, to have restored and renewed a commonwealth that had collapsed from diseased old age—throughout that whole period, then, I pass over the military disasters that came again and again from one cause or another. I pass over the treaty of Numantia, stained with horrifying disgrace. The chickens, you see, had flown out of their cage and, as they say, had given the

47 The Voconian law dates from 169 BC. The "other Scipio" is Scipio Aemilianus, who destroyed Carthage in 146 BC.

consul Mancinus a bad omen—as if, during all the years in which that small city, though besieged, had battered the Roman army and had already begun to be a terror to the Roman commonwealth itself, the other commanders had marched against it under a different omen.[48]

THE EDICT OF MITHRIDATES ORDERING THE DEATH OF ALL ROMAN CITIZENS FOUND IN ASIA

Mithridates had all Romans in Asia murdered on one day.

3.22 But these things, I say, I pass over—though I would by no means keep silent about this: that Mithridates, king of Asia, ordered all the Roman citizens living abroad anywhere in Asia, who were there in countless numbers attending to their business, to be killed on a single day; and it was done. How pitiful a sight that was: everyone suddenly, wherever he happened to be found—in the field, on the road, in town, at home, in the street, in the forum, in a temple, in bed, at a banquet—unexpectedly and impiously slaughtered! What groans of the dying there were, what tears of those looking on—perhaps even of those striking the blows! How harsh the compulsion on the hosts, not only to see those abominable murders in their own houses but even to commit them, their faces suddenly changing from the gracious kindliness of hospitality to carry out an enemy's work in time of peace—with wounds, I should say, entirely mutual, since the one struck was wounded in body and the striker in mind! Had all these men, too, despised the auguries?[49] Did they have no gods, household or public, to consult when they set out from their homes on that journey from which there was no return? If so, these people have no reason to complain about our times on this score: the Romans long ago despised these vain things. But if they did consult them, let them answer what good

48 In 137 BC the consul Gaius Hostilius Mancinus, defeated before Numantia in Spain, concluded a humiliating treaty that the senate repudiated. Romans took omens from the feeding of sacred chickens.

49 Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, ordered the massacre of Romans and Italians in the province of Asia in 88 BC.

these things did, at a time when they were lawful—at least as far as human laws went—and no one forbade them.

THE INTERNAL EVILS THAT TROUBLED THE ROMAN COMMONWEALTH, PRECEDED BY A PORTENT: THE MADNESS OF ALL THE ANIMALS THAT SERVE HUMAN BEINGS

A portent of maddened animals preceded the Social War.

3.23 But now let us briefly recall, as far as we can, those evils which were the more wretched the more internal they were: civil discords—or rather uncivil ones—no longer mere riots but actual wars within the City, where so much blood was shed, where party passions raged no longer through disputes in the assemblies and shouts hurled back and forth, but now openly with sword and weapons. The Social Wars, the Slave Wars, the civil wars—how much Roman blood they shed, how much devastation and depopulation of Italy they caused! For before the allies in Latium rose against Rome, all the animals subject to human use—dogs, horses, donkeys, oxen, and whatever other livestock were under human control—suddenly turned wild and, forgetting their domestic gentleness, left their shelters and roamed free. They shunned every approach, not only of strangers but even of their own masters, and anyone who dared to press on them at close quarters met death or danger.[50] Of what great evil was this a sign, if it was a sign—and how great an evil it was in itself, even if it was no sign! Had this happened in our times, we would have to endure these people raging more madly than those Romans endured their animals.

THE CIVIL STRIFE STIRRED UP BY THE GRACCHAN REVOLTS

The Gracchi's land reforms began the civil bloodshed.

3.24 The beginning of the civil evils was the riots of the Gracchi, stirred up by their agrarian laws. For they wanted to divide

among the people the lands that the nobility held wrongfully. But to dare to uproot an injustice already long established was most dangerous—indeed, as events themselves showed, most ruinous. What deaths there were when the elder Gracchus was killed! And again when his brother was killed, not long afterward! For nobles and commoners alike were put to death not by laws and the proper order of authority, but by mobs and armed clashes. After the killing of the second Gracchus, the consul Lucius Opimius—who had taken up arms against him within the City and, having crushed and killed him together with his associates, had made a great slaughter of citizens—is said, when he held an inquiry and pursued the rest by judicial investigation, to have put three thousand men to death. From this one can understand how great a multitude of deaths the turbulent clash of arms could have produced, when the supposedly careful examination of the courts produced so many.[51] Gracchus' killer sold his head to the consul for its weight in gold; for that bargain had been struck before the murder. In this slaughter the former consul Marcus Fulvius was also killed, together with his children.[52]

THE TEMPLE OF CONCORD, BUILT BY DECREE OF THE SENATE ON THE SCENE OF RIOTS AND KILLINGS

The senate built a temple of Concord on the site of a massacre.

3.25 A fine decree of the senate indeed: on the very spot where that deadly riot took place, where so many citizens of every rank fell, a temple of Concord was built, so that, as a witness to the punishment of the Gracchi, it might strike the eyes of those who addressed the people and prick their memory. But what was this but a mockery of the gods—to build a temple to that goddess who, if she had been present in the city, would not have let it collapse, torn apart by such dissensions? Unless perhaps Con-

50 The Social War (91–88 BC) was fought between Rome and its Italian allies (*socii*), who demanded Roman citizenship.

51 Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, tribune in 133 BC, and his brother Gaius, killed in 121 BC, proposed laws redistributing public land.

52 Marcus Fulvius Flaccus, consul in 125 BC, was Gaius Gracchus' chief ally.

cord, guilty of this crime for having deserted the citizens' hearts, deserved to be shut up in that temple as in a prison. For if they wanted to fit the facts, why did they not build a temple of Discord there instead? Or is any reason given why Concord should be a goddess and Discord not, so that, according to Labeo's distinction, the one is good and the other bad? He himself seems to have followed nothing but his observation that at Rome a temple had been set up to Fever as well as to Health. In the same way, then, a temple ought to have been set up not only to Concord but also to Discord. So the Romans chose to live dangerously with so evil a goddess angry at them, and did not recall that the destruction of Troy had its origin in offending her. For because she had not been invited among the gods, she contrived a quarrel among three goddesses by slipping in a golden apple. Hence the strife of divinities, Venus victorious, Helen carried off, and Troy destroyed. So if perhaps, indignant that she had not been deemed worthy of any temple among the gods in the City, she was already troubling the city with such great riots, how much more fiercely could she be provoked when she saw a temple to her adversary built on the site of that slaughter—that is, on the site of her own handiwork![53] When we laugh at these vanities, those learned and wise men are indignant; and yet the worshipers of good and bad divinities cannot get out of this question of Concord and Discord. Either they neglected the worship of these goddesses and preferred Fever and Bellona, to whom they built ancient shrines; or they worshiped these as well—since, as Concord departed, Discord raged and led them all the way to civil wars.

53 In the myth, Discord (Eris), not invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, threw down a golden apple "for the fairest"; Paris awarded it to Venus, who gave him Helen.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF WAR THAT FOLLOWED THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE OF CONCORD

Seditions, the Social War, slave revolts and piracy followed the temple of Concord.

3.26 A splendid obstacle to sedition, they thought, to set a temple of Concord, witness to the slaughter and punishment of the Gracchi, before the eyes of those who addressed the people! How much they gained by it is shown by the worse things that followed. For from then on the popular speakers strove not to avoid the example of the Gracchi but to outdo their program: Lucius Saturninus, tribune of the plebs, Gaius Servilius, praetor, and much later Marcus Drusus. Through the seditions of all these men, first very grievous slaughters broke out even then, and afterward the Social Wars flared up, by which Italy was severely afflicted and reduced to astonishing devastation and depopulation. Then came the Slave War, and the civil wars. What battles were fought, what blood was shed, so that nearly all the peoples of Italy, on whom the power of the Roman empire chiefly rested, were subdued as if they were some savage foreign race![54] Now, how the Slave War was started by a very few gladiators—that is, fewer than seventy—what numbers it reached, how fierce and savage it became, which generals of the Roman people that host defeated, which cities and regions it laid waste and how: even those who wrote its history have scarcely been able to set it out adequately. Nor was that the only slave war: bands of slaves had earlier ravaged the province of Macedonia, and then Sicily and the seacoast. And who could describe, as their magnitude deserves, how many and how horrifying were the deeds committed first in the raids and then in the full-scale wars of the pirates?[55]

54 Lucius Appuleius Saturninus and Gaius Servilius Glaucia were killed in 100 BC; the tribune Marcus Livius Drusus was murdered in 91 BC, setting off the Social War.

55 The revolt led by the gladiator Spartacus lasted from 73 to 71 BC.

THE CIVIL WAR OF MARIUS AND SULLA

Marius and Sulla filled Rome with slaughter in turn.

3.27 When Marius, already bloodied with the blood of citizens after killing many of the opposing party, had been defeated and fled the City, then—to use Cicero's words—"the city had scarcely begun to breathe again a little when afterward Cinna, with Marius, prevailed. Then indeed, with the most illustrious men killed, the lights of the city were put out." Afterward Sulla avenged the cruelty of this victory—with what loss of citizens and what disaster to the commonwealth, there is no need even to say. For about this vengeance, which was more ruinous than if the crimes being punished had been left unpunished, Lucan too says: "The cure went beyond all measure and followed too far where the disease led the hand. The guilty perished—but only when none but the guilty could be left alive."[56] In that war of Marius and Sulla, apart from those who fell in battle outside, in the City itself the streets, squares, forums, theaters and temples were filled with corpses, so that it was hard to judge when the victors caused more deaths—before, in order to win, or afterward, because they had won. First, at Marius' victory, when he restored himself from exile, besides the killings carried out everywhere in every direction, the head of the consul Octavius was displayed on the Rostra; the Caesars were butchered by Fimbria in their own homes; the two Crassi, father and son, were slaughtered in each other's sight; Baebius and Numitorius were dragged with a hook and died with their entrails strewn about; Catulus drank poison to escape his enemies' hands; and Merula, the flamen of Jupiter, opened his veins and offered even his own blood in sacrifice to Jupiter. And right before Marius' own eyes men were cut down on the spot if, when they greeted him, he had refused to hold out his right hand to them.[57]

56 Cicero, *Against Catiline* 3.24; Lucan, *Civil War* 2.142–144.
57 The Rostra was the speakers' platform in the Forum.

WHAT SULLA'S VICTORY WAS LIKE, AS AVENGER OF MARIUS' CRUELTY

Sulla's victory brought proscriptions and massacres in peacetime.

3.28 Then followed Sulla's victory—the avenger, to be sure, of this cruelty. After so much citizens' blood, by the shedding of which it had been won, with the war now over but the enmities still alive, it ran riot even more cruelly in peace. Already, after the earlier and the most recent slaughters of the elder Marius, others more grievous had been added by the younger Marius and by Carbo, of the same Marian party. With Sulla approaching, despairing not only of victory but even of their own survival, they filled everything with fresh slaughters of their own. For besides the carnage spread far and wide in various places, they even besieged the senate, and men were led out of the senate house itself, as if out of a prison, to the sword. Mucius Scaevola, the pontiff, was killed clinging to the very altar of Vesta—since nothing was held more sacred among the Romans than her temple—and with his own blood he nearly put out the fire that was always kept burning by the perpetual care of the virgins.[58] Then Sulla entered the City as victor—the man who, in the Villa Publica, with not war but peace itself now raging, had cut down seven thousand men who had surrendered (and who were therefore certainly unarmed), not by fighting but by giving an order. Throughout the City every Sullan struck down whomever he pleased, so that the deaths could not be counted at all, until it was suggested to Sulla that some should be allowed to live, so that the victors would have people to rule. Then that license to cut throats, which had been rushing madly this way and that in every direction, was checked, and the famous list was posted amid great rejoicing: it contained two thousand men of the two distinguished orders—the equestrian and the senatorial—to be killed and proscribed. The number saddened people, but the

58 Quintus Mucius Scaevola, chief pontiff, was killed in 82 BC on the orders of the younger Marius; the sacred fire of Vesta was tended by the Vestal Virgins.

limit consoled them; and there was not so much grief because so many were falling as there was joy because the rest no longer had to fear.[59] But in the case of some of those who were ordered to die, even the security of the rest, cruel as it was, groaned at the refined kinds of death. One man was torn apart without any blade by the hands of those mangling him—human beings tearing a living human being more savagely than wild beasts tear a discarded corpse. Another had his eyes gouged out and his limbs cut off piece by piece, and was forced to live a long time in such torments—or rather to die a long time. Some noble cities too were put up for auction like country estates; and one, as if a single defendant were being sent to execution, was ordered to be slaughtered whole. These things were done in peace after the war, not to hasten the winning of victory, but so that the victory won should not be despised. Peace competed with war in cruelty, and won. For war struck down the armed; peace, the defenseless. War meant that whoever was struck might strike back if he could; peace meant not that whoever had escaped might live, but that he would die without resisting.[60]

A COMPARISON OF THE GOTHIC INVASION WITH THE DISASTERS THE ROMANS SUFFERED FROM THE GAULS OR FROM THE AUTHORS OF THE CIVIL WARS

Rome's civil wars were crueler than the Gallic or the Gothic sack.

3.29 What frenzy of foreign nations, what savagery of invading peoples can be compared with this victory of citizens over citizens? What did Rome see that was more deadly, more hideous, more bitter: the irruption of the Gauls long ago and of the Goths a little while ago, or the ferocity of Marius and Sulla and of other most eminent men in their factions—her own lights, as it were—against her own limbs? The Gauls, it is true, slaughtered the senate, or whatever of it they could find anywhere in the City apart

59 The Villa Publica was a public building on the Campus Martius outside the city walls.

60 The city slaughtered whole was probably Praeneste, whose male inhabitants Sulla massacred in 82 BC.

from the Capitoline citadel, which alone was defended after a fashion. But to those stationed on that hill they at least sold their lives for gold—lives which, even if they could not seize them with the sword, they could still have worn away by siege. The Goths, on the other hand, spared so many senators that it is more surprising that they killed any at all.[61] But Sulla, while Marius was still alive, occupied as victor the very Capitol that had been safe from the Gauls, in order to decree killings. And when Marius had slipped away in flight, to return fiercer and bloodier, Sulla on the Capitol, even by a decree of the senate, deprived many of their lives and property. As for the Marian faction, in Sulla's absence what was sacred to them, what would they spare, when they did not spare Mucius—a citizen, a senator, a pontiff—as he clasped in a pitiful embrace the very altar where, as they say, the destinies of Rome resided? Moreover, Sulla's last proscription list, to say nothing of countless other deaths, cut the throats of more senators than the Goths were able even to rob.

THE CHAIN OF VERY MANY AND VERY GRIEVOUS WARS THAT CAME BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST

Civil wars ran from Marius and Sulla to Augustus, in whose reign Christ was born.

3.30 With what face, then, with what heart, with what shamelessness, what folly—or rather what madness—do they refuse to blame those evils on their gods, and yet blame these on our Christ? The cruel civil wars—more bitter, as even their own writers admit, than all wars against foreign enemies, wars by which that commonwealth was judged not merely afflicted but utterly ruined—arose long before the coming of Christ. Through a chain of wicked causes they passed from the war of Marius and Sulla to the wars of Sertorius and Catiline (the one had been proscribed by Sulla, the other nurtured by him); from there to

61 The Gauls sacked Rome in about 390 BC (traditional date); the Goths under Alaric took the city in AD 410.

the war of Lepidus and Catulus (one wanted to undo Sulla's acts, the other to defend them); from there to the war of Pompey and Caesar. Pompey had been a follower of Sulla and had equaled or even surpassed his power; Caesar could not bear Pompey's power—but only because he did not have it himself—and yet, once Pompey was defeated and killed, he went beyond it. From there they came down to the other Caesar, who was later called Augustus, in whose reign Christ was born.[62] For Augustus himself also waged civil wars against many, and in them many very distinguished men perished, among them Cicero, that eloquent master of the art of governing the commonwealth. Gaius Caesar, the conqueror of Pompey, who used his victory in the civil war with clemency and granted his opponents their lives and their rank, was cut down in the very senate house, as one who aspired to kingship, by a conspiracy of certain noble senators, supposedly for the liberty of the commonwealth. After that Antony, a man very different in character, defiled and corrupted by every vice, seemed to be reaching for Caesar's power; and Cicero resisted him vehemently, again for that so-called liberty of the fatherland. Then that other Caesar had come forward, a young man of remarkable gifts, the adopted son of Gaius Caesar, who, as I said, was later called Augustus. Cicero favored this young Caesar, so that his power might be built up against Antony, hoping that once Antony's domination had been driven off and crushed, he would restore the liberty of the commonwealth. So blind was Cicero, so unable to foresee the future, that the very young man whose rank and power he was fostering both allowed Antony to kill that same Cicero, as part of a kind of pact of concord, and subjected to his own rule the very liberty of the commonwealth on whose behalf Cicero had cried out so loudly.[63]

62 Sertorius, a Marian general, held out in Spain until 72 BC; Catiline led the conspiracy of 63 BC; Lepidus and Catulus, consuls in 78 BC, fought each other the following year.

63 Octavian, Antony and Lepidus formed the Second Triumvirate in 43 BC; Cicero was proscribed and killed that year.

HOW SHAMELESSLY THOSE WHO ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WORSHIP THE GODS BLAME CHRIST FOR PRESENT TROUBLES, WHEN SUCH GREAT DISASTERS HAPPENED WHILE THE GODS WERE WORSHIPED

Pagans blame Christ for today's troubles but not their gods for far worse ones.

3.31 Let those who are ungrateful to our Christ for such great blessings accuse their own gods of such great evils. Certainly, when those evils were happening, the altars of the deities were warm, "and breathed with Sabaean incense and fresh garlands"; the priesthoods were held in honor, the shrines gleamed; people sacrificed, held games and worked themselves into frenzies in the temples—at the very time when so much citizen blood was being shed by citizens everywhere, not only in other places but even among the very altars of the gods. Cicero did not choose a temple to flee to, because Mucius had chosen one in vain. But those who with far less justification insult Christian times either fled to the places most dedicated to Christ, or were led there by the invaders themselves so that they might live.[64] This I know, and anyone who judges without partisanship readily recognizes it with me—to pass over the many things I have already mentioned and the many more that I thought it too long to mention: if the human race had received Christian teaching before the Punic Wars, and such devastation had followed as wore down Europe and Africa in those wars, not one of the sort of people we now have to endure would have attributed those evils to anything but the Christian religion. Still less would their voices be tolerated, as far as the Romans are concerned, if the reception and spread of the Christian religion had been followed by the invasion of the Gauls, or by that devastation by the flooding of the Tiber and by fire, or—what surpasses all evils—by those civil wars. Other evils, too, happened so incredibly that they were

64 The quoted words echo Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.416–417, on the altars of Venus at Paphos.

counted among prodigies. If these had happened in Christian times, to whom would they impute them as crimes, if not to Christians? I pass over the things that were more astonishing than harmful: oxen speaking, unborn infants crying out certain words from their mothers' wombs, serpents flying, women and hens turned into the male sex, and other things of this kind. These, found in their books—books not of fables but of history—whether they are true or false, bring people not destruction but amazement. But when it rained earth, when it rained chalk, when it rained stones (not in the sense that hail is commonly called by that name, but actual stones), these things could certainly do serious harm. We read in their writers that when the fires of Etna ran down from the very summit of the mountain to the nearest shore, the sea boiled so that the rocks were scorched and the pitch of the ships melted. This was surely no slight harm, however incredibly astonishing it was.[65] Again, from the same blaze of fire, they wrote that Sicily was filled with so great a mass of ash that it buried, crushed and brought down the houses of the city of Catania; moved by this calamity, the Romans mercifully remitted its tribute for that year. They also recorded that in Africa, when it was already a province of the Roman people, there was a multitude of locusts that was like a prodigy. After consuming the fruits and the leaves of the trees, they say, it was cast into the sea in a huge and immeasurable cloud. When it died and was washed back onto the shores, and the air was corrupted as a result, so great a plague arose that in the kingdom of Masinissa alone eight hundred thousand people are reported to have perished, and many more in the lands nearest the coast. At Utica, they affirm, out of the thirty thousand young men who were there, ten thousand were left. Such folly as we have to endure and are compelled to answer—which of these things would it not attribute to the Christian religion, if it saw them in Christian times?[66] And yet they do not attribute

65 Etna: the volcano in eastern Sicily.

66 Masinissa was king of Numidia and Rome's ally (died 148 BC); Utica was a city near Carthage. The plague is dated to 125 BC.

these things to their gods, whose worship they demand back precisely so that they may not suffer these things or even lesser ones—when those who worshiped them before endured greater ones.

Book IV

Why Rome grew great
Not the swarm of pagan gods, but the one true God gives and takes away earthly kingdoms.

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED IN THE FIRST BOOK

Augustine recalls his answer to those who blame Christianity for their troubles and expose their gods as demons.

4.1 Having begun to speak about the city of God, I thought I should first answer its enemies. They chase after earthly joys and gape after fleeting things. Whatever grief they suffer in those things, which comes from the mercy of a God who warns rather than the severity of a God who punishes, they lay at the door of the Christian religion, which is the one saving and true religion. Among them is also an uneducated crowd, and it is stirred to hate us more fiercely by what passes for the authority of the learned. The unlearned suppose that the unusual things that have happened in their own times did not usually happen in times past. Their opinion is reinforced even by people who know it to be false, who hide what they know so that they may seem to have just grounds for grumbling against us. Therefore it was necessary to show, from the books their own authors committed to memory so that the history of past times might be known, that the case is far otherwise than they think. At the same time it was necessary to teach that the false gods they used to worship openly, or still worship in secret, are the most unclean spirits and the most malignant and deceitful demons. They are so wicked that they delight in their own crimes, whether real or even invented, but still their own, and they

wanted these celebrated in their honor at their festivals. As a result, human weakness cannot be held back from committing damnable deeds, since what seems a divine authority is offered for imitating them. We have proved these things not from our own conjecture. Partly we drew on recent memory, because we ourselves have seen such things performed, and performed for such deities. Partly we drew on the writings of those who left them on record for posterity, not as if to insult their gods but as if to honor them. So it was that Varro, a man among them of the greatest learning and the weightiest authority, wrote separate books on human and on divine matters, assigning some books to human affairs and others to divine according to the dignity of each subject. He placed the theatrical shows not even among human matters but among divine ones. Yet surely, if there were only good and honorable people in the city, theatrical shows ought not to have had a place even among human matters. He certainly did not do this on his own authority. Born and raised at Rome, he found them already among the divine matters.[1] At the end of the first book we briefly set out what was to be said next, and in the two following books we have said some of it. We recognize, then, that we owe our readers what remains, since they are expecting it.

WHAT THE SECOND AND THIRD BOOKS CONTAIN

Books 2 and 3 covered Rome's moral and material disasters; now Augustine turns to why its empire grew.

4.2 We had promised, then, to say certain things against those who blame our religion for the disasters of the Roman commonwealth. We also promised to recount whatever evils, and however great, might come to mind or seem enough, that the city or the provinces belonging to its empire suffered before their sacrifices were prohibited. They would undoubtedly attribute all of these to us if our religion had already shone upon them, or had

1 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), Roman scholar whose *Antiquities of Human and Divine Things* is Augustine's chief source on Roman religion.

in this way barred them from their sacrilegious rites. I think we have dealt with these matters sufficiently in the second and third books. In the second we treated the evils of morals, which are to be counted the only evils, or the greatest. In the third we treated the evils that fools dread to suffer as if they were the only ones, namely evils of the body and of external things, which the good also often suffer. But the evils by which they themselves become evil, they bear, I will not say patiently, but gladly. And how little I have said about that city alone and its empire! I have not said everything even of that, up to Caesar Augustus. What if I had chosen to recount and dwell on the evils that human beings do not inflict on one another, such as the devastation and destruction caused by warring armies, but that befall earthly things from the elements of the world itself? Apuleius touches on these briefly in one passage of the little book he wrote, *On the World*, where he says that all earthly things undergo change, upheaval and destruction.[2] To use his own words, he says that in immense earthquakes the ground has split open and cities have been swallowed up with their peoples. Whole regions have been washed away by sudden downpours. Lands that were once part of the mainland have been made into islands by waves that came as strangers and newcomers, while others, as the sea grew sluggish and withdrew, have become passable on foot. Cities have been overthrown by winds and storms. Fires have flashed from the clouds, and regions of the East were consumed by them and perished, while in western parts gushing springs and floods have wrought the same havoc. And once, when the craters on Etna's summit burst open, rivers of flame ran down its slopes like a torrent of heaven-sent fire. Suppose I had wished to gather these and similar events recorded in history, from wherever I could. These are things that happened in those times, before the name of Christ curbed any of these people's empty practices, which are so ruinous to true salvation. When would I have finished? I

2 Apuleius (2nd century AD), North African Platonist and author of *The Golden Ass*; *On the World* is his Latin version of a Greek treatise attributed to Aristotle.

had also promised to show which of their moral qualities the true God, in whose power all kingdoms lie, saw fit to assist in enlarging their empire, and for what reason. I also promised to show how little those they consider gods helped them, and indeed how much harm those gods did them by deceiving and misleading them. This, I see, is what I must now discuss, and especially the growth of the Roman Empire. As for the harmful deceit of the demons they worshiped as gods, and how much evil it brought upon their morals, a good deal has already been said, above all in the second book. Throughout all three completed books, moreover, wherever it seemed appropriate, we have pointed out how much consolation God has granted to good and bad alike, even amid the evils of war, through the name of Christ. The invaders paid that name such honor, contrary to the custom of war. God acted here as the one who "makes his sun rise on the good and the bad, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."[3]

WHETHER THE BREADTH OF AN EMPIRE, WHICH IS WON ONLY BY WARS, SHOULD BE COUNTED AMONG THE GOODS OF THE WISE OR OF THE HAPPY

A vast empire won by war brings no more happiness than great wealth brings an anxious rich man.

4.3 Now, then, let us see what grounds they have for daring to attribute the vast extent and long duration of the Roman Empire to those gods. They claim to have worshiped these gods honorably, even through the homage of indecent shows and the services of indecent men. Yet I would first like to ask briefly what reason or what prudence there is in wanting to boast of an empire's breadth and greatness. You cannot show that people are happy when they live constantly amid the disasters of war and in bloodshed. The blood may be that of fellow citizens or of enemies, but it is still human blood, and they live with dark fear and bloodthirsty craving. The joy they acquire is like glass,

3 Matthew 5:45.

brittle in its brilliance, and they dread all the more terribly that it may suddenly shatter. To make this easier to judge, let us not be tossed about by empty bluster and vanish into thin air. Nor should we blunt the edge of our attention with high-sounding words when we hear of "peoples," "kingdoms" and "provinces." Instead, let us take two individuals. Each single person, like a single letter in speech, is in effect an element of a city and of a kingdom, however vast its territory. Let us imagine one of these two as poor, or rather of modest means, and the other as very rich. The rich man is anxious with fears and wasting away with sorrows. He burns with greed, is never secure and always restless, and pants from the endless struggles of his feuds. By these miseries he does increase his estate to an immense degree, but with those increases he also piles up the bitterest cares. The man of modest means, on the other hand, is content with his small and compact household estate. He is dearly loved by his family and enjoys the sweetest peace with relatives, neighbors and friends. He is devout in piety, kindly in mind, sound in body, frugal in life, chaste in conduct and secure in conscience. I doubt anyone is so foolish as to dare to hesitate over which of them to prefer. The same rule of fairness that holds for these two individuals holds for two families, for two peoples and for two kingdoms. If our attention is corrected by applying that rule carefully, we shall very easily see where emptiness dwells and where happiness does. Therefore, if the true God is worshiped and served with true rites and good morals, it is beneficial for good men to reign far and wide and for a long time. This benefits not so much the rulers themselves as those over whom they reign. For as far as the rulers are concerned, their piety and integrity, which are great gifts of God, are enough for true happiness, by which this life is lived well and eternal life is received afterward. On this earth, then, the reign of the good is a benefit not so much to the good themselves as to human affairs. The reign of the wicked, however, does more harm to those who reign, since they lay waste their own souls through their greater freedom to commit crimes. Those who are made subject to them

as servants are harmed only by their own wickedness. For whatever evils unjust masters inflict on the just are not the punishment of guilt but the testing of virtue. So the good man is free even if he is a slave, while the wicked man is a slave even if he reigns. And he is the slave not of one man but, what is worse, of as many masters as he has vices. Speaking of these vices, divine Scripture says: "For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is also bound as a slave."[4]

HOW LIKE ROBBERIES KINGDOMS ARE WITHOUT JUSTICE

Without justice, kingdoms are great robberies, as a captured pirate told Alexander the Great.

4.4 Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves but little kingdoms? A gang, too, is a band of human beings. It is ruled by a leader's command, held together by a pact of association, and divides its plunder by an agreed law. Suppose this evil grows through an influx of desperate men until it holds territory, sets up a base, seizes cities and subjugates peoples. Then it more openly takes on the name of kingdom. That name is now publicly conferred on it not because its greed has been removed but because impunity has been added. A captured pirate gave a witty and truthful answer to the famous Alexander the Great. The king asked the man what he meant by infesting the sea. With defiant frankness he replied: "The same as you mean by infesting the whole world. But because I do it with a small boat, I am called a robber; because you do it with a great fleet, you are called an emperor."[5]

4 2 Peter 2:19.

5 The anecdote comes from Cicero's *On the Commonwealth*, Book 3.

THE RUNAWAY GLADIATORS, WHOSE POWER WAS LIKE ROYAL DIGNITY

A band of runaway gladiators under Spartacus briefly held power like a kingdom.

4.5 So I will not ask what sort of men Romulus gathered together. It was greatly to their advantage that, once they were given a share in a city, they stopped thinking about the punishments they owed for their former life. Fear of those punishments had been driving them on to greater crimes, and now they could be more peaceable toward human society. What I do say is this. The Roman Empire itself was already great, had subjugated many nations and was a terror to the rest. Yet it suffered bitterly, feared gravely, and only with no small effort crushed the threat and avoided a huge disaster when a handful of gladiators escaped from a training school in Campania. They raised a great army, had three generals, and laid waste to Italy far and wide and most cruelly. Let them tell us which god helped these men rise from a small and contemptible band of robbers to a kingdom feared even by Roman forces and strongholds as great as those were. Or will they deny that the gladiators had divine help because they did not last long? As if any human being's life were long![6] On that reckoning, then, the gods help no one to reign, since every individual dies quickly. Nor should something be counted as a benefit if it vanishes like vapor within a short time in each person, and so, one by one, in all of them. For what does it matter to those who worshiped the gods under Romulus and died long ago that the Roman Empire grew so great after their death? They are pleading their cases in the underworld. Whether those cases are good or bad is not relevant to the present question. And the same must be understood of everyone who has passed hastily and hurriedly through that empire in the few days of their lives, carrying the burden of their deeds. This is true even though the empire stretches over long ages, as some

6 The revolt of Spartacus (73–71 BC), led by Spartacus with Crixus and Oenomaus.

mortals die and others take their place. But if even benefits that last only the briefest time are to be credited to the gods' help, those gladiators were helped not a little. They broke the chains of slavery, fled and escaped. They gathered a great and very strong army. Obeying the plans and orders of their kings, they were greatly feared by the mighty Romans and could not be beaten by several Roman generals. They seized a great deal, won very many victories, enjoyed whatever pleasures they wanted and did whatever lust suggested. In the end, until they were defeated, which was achieved only with the greatest difficulty, they lived on the heights as rulers. But let us come to greater things.

THE GREED OF KING NINUS, WHO WAS THE FIRST TO MAKE WAR ON HIS NEIGHBORS IN ORDER TO RULE MORE WIDELY

Ninus of Assyria began wars of conquest, and his long-lasting empire was simply a great robbery.

4.6 Justin followed Pompeius Trogus in writing a history of the Greek world, or rather of foreign peoples. Like Trogus, he wrote in Latin, but he also wrote in abridged form. He begins his work as follows: "At the beginning of history, rule over peoples and nations lay in the hands of kings. They were raised to the height of this majesty not by courting the populace but by a moderation proven among good men. The peoples were bound by no laws. It was the custom to defend the borders of one's rule rather than to extend them, and each kingdom was confined within its own homeland. The first of all to change the ancient, almost ancestral custom of the nations was Ninus, king of the Assyrians, through a new craving for empire. He was the first to wage war on his neighbors, and he completely subdued peoples still unskilled at resisting, as far as the borders of Libya." And a little later he says: "Ninus made the greatness of the dominion he had

won secure by holding it without interruption.[7] "Having subdued his nearest neighbors, he moved on to others, stronger now through the forces he had added. Each victory became the instrument of the next, and so he subjugated the peoples of the whole East." Whatever the reliability of what Justin or Trogus wrote—and other, more trustworthy writings show that they told some falsehoods—other writers agree too that King Ninus extended the Assyrian kingdom far and wide. The Assyrian kingdom lasted so long that the Roman Empire has not yet reached its age. As those who have written chronological history report, it endured for twelve hundred and forty years from the first year of Ninus's reign, until it passed to the Medes. But consider making war on one's neighbors, advancing from there against others, and crushing and subduing peoples who have done one no harm, out of sheer craving for dominion. What else is this to be called but a great robbery?

WHETHER EARTHLY KINGDOMS ARE HELPED OR ABANDONED BY THE AID OF THE GODS IN THEIR RISE AND FALL

Assyria and Persia grew great without Rome's gods, so those gods deserve no credit for Rome.

4.7 If this kingdom was so great and so long-lasting without any help from the gods, why is the Roman kingdom, so broad in space and so long in time, attributed to the Roman gods? Whatever the cause of the one, it is also the cause of the other. But if they contend that the Assyrian kingdom must also be attributed to the gods' help, I ask: which gods? The other nations that Ninus conquered and subjugated did not worship different gods at that time. Perhaps the Assyrians had gods of their own, more skilled craftsmen, so to speak, at building and preserving an empire. Did those gods die when the Assyrians themselves

7 Justin (probably 2nd–3rd century AD) abridged the *Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus, a historian of Augustus's time. Ninus was the legendary founder of the Assyrian empire.

lost their empire? Or were they not paid their wages, or promised greater wages elsewhere, so that they preferred to go over to the Medes? And from there did they go over again to the Persians, when Cyrus invited them and promised something more advantageous? After the reign of Alexander of Macedon, which was great in extent but very brief in duration, that nation still endures to this day in its own kingdom, within no narrow bounds in the East.[8] If that is so, the gods are faithless, deserting their own people and going over to the enemy. Not even Camillus, a mere man, did that. He conquered and captured a bitterly hostile city, and then found Rome, for whom he had conquered it, ungrateful. Yet afterward, forgetting the injury and remembering his country, he set it free once more, this time from the Gauls. Otherwise, the gods are not as strong as gods ought to be, since human counsel or force can overcome them. Or perhaps, when they wage war among themselves, gods are overcome not by human beings but by other gods, the particular gods of each city. In that case the gods too have feuds among themselves, and each takes up the cause of his own side. So a city should not have worshiped its own gods rather than other gods who could help its own.[9] Finally, however we explain this passing over or flight of the gods, this migration or desertion in battle, the name of Christ had not yet been preached in those times and in those parts of the world when those kingdoms were lost and transferred through enormous disasters of war. After twelve hundred years and more, the kingdom was taken from the Assyrians. Suppose the Christian religion had already been there at that time, preaching another, eternal kingdom and forbidding the sacrilegious worship of false gods. What else would the empty-headed people of that nation have said, except that a kingdom preserved for so long could have perished for no other reason than the abandonment of their own religion and the acceptance

8 Cyrus the Great founded the Persian empire by overthrowing the Medes in the 6th century BC; the Persia of Augustine's day was the Sassanid empire.

9 Marcus Furius Camillus captured Veii (c. 396 BC), was later exiled, and returned to rescue Rome from the Gauls (c. 390 BC).

of this one? In that empty talk, which could well have been heard, let these people look at themselves as in a mirror. And if they have any shame at all, let them blush to make similar complaints. And yet the Roman Empire has been afflicted rather than changed. This also happened to it at other times, before the name of Christ, and it recovered from that affliction. Such a recovery should not be despaired of in these times either. For who knows the will of God in this matter?

WHICH GODS THE ROMANS THINK ENLARGED AND PRESERVED THEIR EMPIRE, WHEN THEY BELIEVED THAT EACH GOD COULD HARDLY BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE CARE OF EVEN A SINGLE THING

Rome's swarm of tiny gods, each with one petty task, could not have built an empire.

4.8 Next, if you please, let us ask which god in particular, or which gods, out of the vast crowd the Romans worshiped, they believe enlarged and preserved that empire. In so glorious a work, so full of dignity, they surely dare not assign any part to the goddess Cloacina. Nor would they assign any part to Volupia, who is named from pleasure (*voluptas*), or to Lubentina, whose name comes from lust (*libido*). The same goes for Vaticanus, who presides over the wailing (*vagitus*) of infants, and for Cunina, who looks after their cradles (*cunae*). And how could all the names of the gods and goddesses be listed in a single passage of this book? The Romans could scarcely fit them into great volumes, since they assigned each deity its own function for each individual thing. They did not think the care of the fields should be entrusted to any single god. Instead they put the countryside (*rura*) in the charge of the goddess Rusina and the mountain ridges (*iuga*) in the charge of the god Jugatinus. Over the hills (*colles*) they set the goddess Collatina, and over the valleys (*valles*) Vallonia.[10] They could not even find a single Segetia to whom they might entrust the crops (*segetes*) once and for all.

10 Cloacina was the goddess of Rome's great sewer, the Cloaca Maxima.

Instead, they wanted the goddess Seia in charge of sown grain for as long as it was under the ground. When it was above ground and forming the standing crop, they wanted the goddess Segetia. And when the grain was harvested and stored, they put the goddess Tutilina in charge, so that it might be kept safe (*tuto*). Who would not think Segetia was enough, for the whole time the crop advanced from its first green shoots to its dry ears? Yet one was not enough for people who loved a multitude of gods; and so the wretched soul prostituted itself to a crowd of demons, scorning the chaste embrace of the one true God. So they put Proserpina in charge of the sprouting grain. The god Nodutus was over the joints and knots (*nodi*) of the stalks, and the goddess Volutina over the wrappings (*involumenta*) of the husks. When the husks open (*patescunt*) for the ear to come out, the goddess Patelana takes charge. When the crops are leveled off with new ears, the goddess Hostilina takes charge, because the ancients used *hostire* for "to level." Over the flowering grain was the goddess Flora, over the grain turning milky (*lactescentibus*) the god Lacturnus, and over the ripening (*maturescentibus*) grain the goddess Matuta. When the crops are weeded (*runcantur*), that is, removed from the earth, the goddess Runcina presides. I do not list them all, because I am sickened by what does not shame them. I have mentioned these very few only to make it clear that they would never dare to say these deities established, enlarged and preserved the Roman Empire. Each was assigned to its own functions in such a way that nothing as a whole was entrusted to any single one. When, then, would Segetia look after the empire, when she was not allowed to care for crops and trees at the same time? When would Cunina think about arms, when her jurisdiction was not permitted to extend beyond the cradles of little children? When would Nodutus help in war, when he was concerned not even with the husk of the ear but only with the knot of the joint? Each person sets one doorkeeper at his house, and since the doorkeeper is a human being, he is quite enough. These people set three gods there: Forculus for the doors (*fores*), Cardea for the hinge (*cardo*) and

Limentinus for the threshold (*limen*). Evidently Forculus could not guard the hinge and the threshold at the same time.

WHETHER THE SIZE AND DURATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE SHOULD BE CREDITED TO JUPITER, WHOM HIS WORSHIPERS THINK THE SUPREME GOD

If Jupiter, king of the gods, built Rome's empire, why did the Romans make images of him?

4.9 So let us leave aside this crowd of petty gods, or at least set them aside for a while, and inquire into the role of the greater gods by which Rome was made so great that it ruled so many nations for so long. No doubt, then, this is the work of Jupiter. For they want him to be the king of all the gods and goddesses: his scepter shows this, and so does the Capitol on its high hill. Of this god they proclaim, as most fitting, a saying that was in fact a poet's: "All things are full of Jupiter." Varro believes that he is worshiped even by those who worship one God alone without an image, but that he is called by another name. If that is so, why was he treated so badly at Rome—as indeed among the other nations too—as to have an image made of him?[11] This so displeases Varro himself that, although he was weighed down by the perverse custom of so great a city, he did not hesitate in the least to say and to write that those who set up images for the peoples both took away fear and added error.

WHAT OPINIONS WERE FOLLOWED BY THOSE WHO SET DIFFERENT GODS OVER DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

Assigning Juno, Neptune, Pluto and others to parts of the world contradicts the claim that Jupiter fills all things.

4.10 Why, too, is Juno joined to him as his wife, she who is called "sister and spouse"? Because, they say, we take Jupiter to be the ether and Juno the air, and these two elements are joined, one

11 The quotation is Virgil, *Eclogues* 3.60. Those who worship one God without images are the Jews.

above, the other below. Then he is not the one of whom it was said, "All things are full of Jupiter," if Juno too fills some part. Or does each fill both, so that these two spouses are in both of these elements, and in each of them, at once? Then why is the ether given to Jupiter and the air to Juno? Finally, these two would be enough: why is the sea assigned to Neptune and the earth to Pluto? And so that these two would not be left without wives either, Salacia is added to Neptune and Proserpina to Pluto. For just as Juno, they say, holds the lower part of the sky, that is, the air, so Salacia holds the lower part of the sea and Proserpina the lower part of the earth. They look for a way to patch up their fables, and find none.[12] For if these things were so, their ancients would have taught that the world has three elements rather than four, so that each pair of divine spouses could be assigned to one element. But in fact they have affirmed in every way that ether is one thing and air another. Water, on the other hand, whether upper or lower, is certainly water. Suppose it is different—is it so different that it is not water? And what can the lower earth be but earth, however great the difference that distinguishes it? Then again, look: the whole bodily world is now complete in these four or three elements. Where will Minerva be? What will she hold? What will she fill? For she was installed on the Capitol together with them, although she is not the daughter of both.[13] Or if they say that Minerva holds the upper part of the ether, and that this gave the poets occasion to invent the story that she was born from Jupiter's head, why then is she not rather reckoned queen of the gods, since she is higher than Jupiter? Is it because it was unfitting to put the daughter above the father? Then why was this same justice not observed in the case of Jupiter himself toward Saturn? Is it because Saturn was defeated? So they fought? Heaven forbid, they say; that is the chatter of fables. Very well: let the fables not be believed, and let

12 "Sister and spouse" echoes Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.47. Salacia was a Roman goddess of salt water.

13 Jupiter, Juno and Minerva were worshiped together in the great temple on the Capitol; in myth Minerva was the daughter of Jupiter alone.

better things be thought of the gods. Why then was Jupiter's father not given a seat of honor that was, if not higher, at least equal? Because, they say, Saturn is the length of time. So those who worship Saturn worship time, and Jupiter, king of the gods, is implied to have been born of time. For what is unworthy in saying that Jupiter and Juno were born of time, if he is the sky and she the earth, since sky and earth were certainly made? Their learned and wise men have this too in their books. And it was not from poetic fictions but from the books of the philosophers that Virgil said: "Then the almighty father, Ether, came down with fertile showers into the lap of his glad wife"—that is, into the lap of Tellus, or Earth. For here too they want there to be certain distinctions: in the earth itself they think Terra is one thing, Tellus another, Tellumo another, and they hold all these as gods, called by their own names, distinguished by their own functions, venerated with their own altars and rites.[14] They also call this same earth the mother of the gods, so that the poets' fictions now become more tolerable, if, according to their books—not of poetry but of rites—Juno is not only Jupiter's sister and wife but also his mother. They want this same earth to be Ceres, and Vesta too, although more often they declare that Vesta is nothing but fire, the fire of hearths, without which a city cannot exist; and that virgins customarily serve her for this reason, that just as nothing is born from a virgin, so nothing is born from fire. All this vanity surely had to be abolished and extinguished by him who was born of a virgin. For who could bear it that, although they attributed so much honor and, as it were, chastity to fire, they sometimes do not blush to call Vesta Venus as well, so that the virginity honored in her handmaids vanishes? For if Vesta is Venus, how could virgins duly serve her by abstaining from the works of Venus? Or are there two Venuses, one a virgin, the other a married woman? Or rather three: one of virgins, who is also Vesta, another of wives, another of prostitutes? It was to this last that the Phoenicians even made a gift from the prostitution of their daughters before they gave them to husbands.

14 Virgil, *Georgics* 2.325–326.

Which of them is Vulcan's wife? Certainly not the virgin, since she has a husband. And heaven forbid it should be the prostitute, lest we seem to wrong the son of Juno and fellow worker of Minerva. So she is understood to belong to the married women—but we would not want them to imitate her in what she did with Mars. "There you go again," they say, "back to fables." What justice is this, to be angry with us for saying such things about their gods, and not to be angry with themselves, who most gladly watch these crimes of their gods in the theaters?[15] And—what would be unbelievable if it were not proved by the fullest testimony—these very theatrical crimes of the gods were instituted in honor of those same gods.

THE MANY GODS WHOM THE MORE LEARNED PAGANS MAINTAIN ARE ONE AND THE SAME JUPITER

If all the gods are really Jupiter under different names, the Romans should simply have worshiped one god.

4.11 Let them assert it, then, with as many arguments and disputations of natural philosophy as they like. Now let Jupiter be the soul of this bodily world, who fills and moves this whole mass built and compacted from four elements, or however many they please; now let him yield his shares of it to his sister and brothers; now let him be the ether, so as to embrace from above Juno, the air spread out beneath; now let him, together with the air, be the whole sky, and make the earth fruitful with fertile showers and seeds, as his wife and at the same time his mother (for this is not shameful among divine beings); now—so that we need not run through everything—let him be the one god of whom, many think, the most famous of poets said: "For god pervades all lands, and the tracts of sea, and the depths of the sky." Let him be Jupiter in the ether, Juno in the air, Neptune in the sea, Salacia too in the lower parts of the sea, Pluto in the earth, Proserpina in the lower earth, Vesta in household hearths, Vul-

15 Vulcan, the smith god, son of Juno and partner of Minerva in the crafts, was the husband of Venus; her adultery with Mars is a famous myth.

can in the smiths' furnace, sun and moon and stars in the heavens, Apollo in those who prophesy, Mercury in trade, the god of beginnings in Janus, the god of boundaries in Terminus, Saturn in time, Mars and Bellona in wars, Liber in vineyards, Ceres in grain, Diana in forests, Minerva in minds. Finally, let him be in that crowd of what we might call plebeian gods as well: let him preside, under the name of Liber, over the seed of men, and under the name of Libera over that of women; let him be Diespater, who brings the birth through to the light of day (*diem*); let him be the goddess Mena, whom they put in charge of women's menstruation; let him be Lucina, who is invoked by women in labor; let him bring help (*opem*) to the newborn by receiving them into the lap of the earth, and be called Opis; let him open their mouths in crying (*vagitus*) and be called the god Vaticanus;[16] let him lift (*levare*) the child from the ground and be called the goddess Levana; let him guard the cradle (*cunae*) and be called Cunina; let it be no one else but he in those goddesses who sing the fates to the newborn and are called the Carmentes; let him preside over chance events and be called Fortuna; as the goddess Rumina let him put the breast to the infant's lips, for the ancients called the breast *ruma*; as the goddess Potina let him give drink (*potio*); as the goddess Educa let him supply food (*esca*); let him be named Paventia from the fright (*pavor*) of infants, Venilia from hope that comes (*venit*), Volupia from pleasure (*voluptas*), Agenoria from action (*actus*); let him be named the goddess Stimula from the goads (*stimuli*) by which a person is driven to excessive action; let him be the goddess Strenia by making people strenuous, Numeria who teaches them to count (*numerare*), Camena who teaches them to sing (*canere*); let him be both the god Consus by giving counsel (*consilia*) and the goddess Sentia by inspiring opinions (*sententiae*); let him be the goddess Juventas, who receives the beginnings of youth once the boy's toga is laid aside; let him also be Bearded Fortune, who clothes grown men with a beard—though they did not care to honor those men enough to give this divinity,

16 Virgil, *Georgics* 4.221–222.

whatever it is, at least a male name: either Barbatus, from *barba* [beard], as Nodutus comes from *nodi* [knots], or at any rate not Fortuna but, since it has beards, Fortunius. As the god Jugatinus let him join (*iungere*) spouses; and when the girdle of a virgin bride is loosed, let him be invoked and be called the goddess Virginensis; let him be Mutunus or Tutunus, who among the Greeks is Priapus. If they are not ashamed, let all these I have named, and whatever I have not named (for I did not think everything should be said)—let all these gods and goddesses be the one Jupiter, whether all of them are, as some would have it, his parts, or his powers, as it seems to those who like to think he is the soul of the world, a view held, supposedly, by great and very learned men.[17] If these things are so (what that amounts to I do not yet ask for the moment), what would they lose by the wiser shortcut of worshiping the one god? For what of him would be slighted, if he himself were worshiped? But if there was reason to fear that his parts, if passed over or neglected, would be angry, then it is not true, as they claim, that this whole life, which contains all the gods as its powers or members or parts, is the life of a single living being; rather, each part has its own life, separate from the rest, if one can be angry apart from another, and one can be appeased while another is provoked. But if it is said that all of them together—that is, Jupiter himself as a whole—could have been offended if his parts were not also worshiped one by one and in detail, that is a foolish thing to say. For none of them would be passed over, since he himself, the one who contained them all, would be worshiped. For, to pass over other points, which are innumerable: when they say that all the stars are parts of Jupiter, that they all live and have rational souls and are therefore beyond dispute gods, they do not see how many of them they fail to worship, how many they build no temples for and set up no altars to—though they did think altars should be set up to a very few of the stars and sacrifice offered to them individually. If, then, those not worshiped individually are angry, are they not afraid to live under a whole

17 Priapus was a fertility god whose statues displayed an enormous erect phallus.

sky of anger, having appeased only a few? But if they worship all the stars because they are in Jupiter, whom they worship, they could by that shortcut supplicate all of them in him alone—for then no one would be angry, since in him alone no one would be slighted—rather than worship some and so give a just cause for anger to those passed over, who are far more numerous; especially when Priapus, distended in shameful nakedness, was preferred to them as they shine from their seat on high.

THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO THOUGHT GOD THE SOUL OF THE WORLD AND THE WORLD THE BODY OF GOD

If God is the world's soul, every creature trampled or killed would be a part of God.

4.12 What about this? Should it not move sharp-witted people—or people of any kind at all, since no outstanding intelligence is needed for this—to set aside their zeal for argument and pay attention? If God is the soul of the world, and the world is to that soul as a body, so that there is one living being consisting of soul and body; and if this God holds all things within himself in a kind of lap of nature, so that from his soul, by which this whole mass is given life, the lives and souls of all living things are drawn, each according to its lot at birth—then nothing at all remains that is not a part of God. If that is so, who does not see what impiety and irreverence follow? Whatever anyone treads on, he treads on a part of God, and in the killing of any living creature a part of God is slaughtered. I do not want to say everything that may occur to those who think about this, but which cannot be said without shame.

THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT ONLY RATIONAL LIVING BEINGS ARE PARTS OF THE ONE GOD

Making rational beings parts of God leads to absurdities, such as part of God being beaten.

4.13 But if they contend that only rational animals, such as human beings, are parts of God, then I do not see, if the whole world is

God, how they can separate the beasts from his parts. But what need is there to wrestle over this? As for the rational animal itself, that is, man, what more wretched belief could there be than that a part of God is beaten when a boy is beaten? And then, that parts of God should become wanton, unjust, impious and altogether damnable—who could bear that, unless he were completely insane? Finally, why is he angry with those who do not worship him, when it is his own parts that do not worship him? It remains, then, for them to say that all the gods have their own lives, that each lives for himself, that none of them is a part of any other, but that all should be worshiped who can be known and worshiped, since they are so many that not all can be. And since Jupiter presides over them as king, it is he, I suppose, whom they think established or enlarged the Roman kingdom. For if he did not do it himself, what other god do they believe could have undertaken so great a work, when all are busy with their own functions and works, and none intrudes on another's? So it was by the king of the gods that the kingdom of men could be extended and increased.

THAT THE GROWTH OF KINGDOMS IS WRONGLY CREDITED TO JUPITER, SINCE IF VICTORY IS A GODDESS, AS THEY CLAIM, SHE ALONE WOULD BE ENOUGH FOR THIS BUSINESS

If Victory is a goddess, she alone would suffice to enlarge kingdoms, and Jupiter is unnecessary.

4.14 Here my first question is this: why is Kingdom itself not also some god? Why should it not be, if Victory is a goddess? Or what need is there of Jupiter himself in this matter, if Victory favors and is propitious and always goes to those she wants to be victors? With this goddess favorable and propitious, even if Jupiter were idle or busy with something else, what nations would remain unsubdued? What kingdoms would not yield? Or do good men perhaps dislike fighting with the most unjust wickedness, and provoking peaceful neighbors who do them no wrong with an unprovoked war, in order to enlarge their kingdom? Clearly, if that is how they feel, I approve and praise them.

WHETHER IT BEFITS GOOD MEN TO WANT TO RULE MORE WIDELY

Good men should prefer small kingdoms living in harmony to empires grown through others' wickedness.

4.15 Let them consider, then, whether it may not, perhaps, be unbecoming for good men to rejoice in the vastness of their kingdom. For it was the wickedness of those against whom just wars were waged that helped the kingdom to grow; and it would surely have been small if its neighbors, being peaceable and just, had provoked no war against themselves by any wrong. In that case, human affairs being happier, all kingdoms would be small, rejoicing in harmonious neighborliness, and there would be very many kingdoms of nations in the world, as there are very many houses of citizens in a city. Therefore, to wage war and to enlarge a kingdom by subduing nations seems happiness to the wicked, necessity to the good. But since it would be worse for wrongdoers to rule over the more just, it is not inappropriately called happiness as well. Yet beyond doubt it is a greater happiness to have a good neighbor living in harmony than to subjugate a bad neighbor waging war. It is a wicked wish to want to have someone to hate or to fear, so that there may be someone to conquer. If, then, by waging wars that were just—not impious, not unjust—the Romans were able to acquire so great an empire, must they also worship the wickedness of others as some kind of goddess? For we see that it contributed greatly to this vastness of empire, by making others into wrongdoers, so that there would be people against whom just wars could be waged and the empire increased. And why should Wickedness—at least that of foreign nations—not be a goddess too, if Fear and Pallor and Fever have earned the right to be Roman gods? By these two, then—that is, the wickedness of others and the goddess Victory—with wickedness stirring up the causes of wars and Victory bringing those same wars to a happy end, the

empire grew even while Jupiter was on holiday.[18] For what role would Jupiter have here, when the things that might be thought his benefits are held to be gods, called gods, worshiped as gods, and are themselves invoked for their own roles? He too would have some role here, if he himself were called Kingdom, as she is called Victory. Or if kingdom is Jupiter's gift, why should victory not also be held to be his gift? And it certainly would be, if not a stone on the Capitol but the true King of kings and Lord of lords were known and worshiped.[19]

WHY THE ROMANS, WHO ASSIGNED A SEPARATE GOD TO EVERY THING AND EVERY MOVEMENT, CHOSE TO HAVE THE TEMPLE OF QUIET OUTSIDE THE GATES

The Romans had gods for every action but kept Quiet, or Rest, outside the city gates.

4.16 What astonishes me most is this. They assigned individual gods to individual things and almost to individual movements: they named the goddess Agenoria, to rouse people to action; the goddess Stimula, to goad them to action beyond measure; the goddess Murcia, who would not move a person beyond measure but make him, as Pomponius says, *murcidus,* that is, excessively lazy and inactive; the goddess Strenia, to make him strenuous; and they undertook to perform public rites to all these gods and goddesses. Yet Quies [Rest], whom they named as the one who makes people quiet, they refused to adopt publicly, although she had a temple outside the Colline Gate. Was this a sign of a restless mind? Or was it rather a signal that whoever persisted in worshiping that crowd—not of gods at all, but of demons—could not have rest? To that rest the true physician calls us, saying: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls."[20]

18 Pavor (Fear) and Pallor were vowed shrines by King Tullus Hostilius during a battle; Febris (Fever) had temples at Rome.
19 "King of kings and Lord of lords" echoes Revelation 19:16 and 1 Timothy 6:15.
20 Matthew 11:29. Lucius Pomponius wrote Atellan farces in the early 1st century BC; the Colline Gate was in Rome's northeastern wall.

WHETHER, IF JUPITER HAS SUPREME POWER, VICTORY TOO OUGHT TO BE THOUGHT A GODDESS

If Jupiter sends Victory, the true King of the ages, not a false goddess, grants victory.

4.17 Or perhaps they say that Jupiter sends the goddess Victory, and that she, obeying him as king of the gods, goes to whomever he commands and takes her seat on their side? This is truly said —not of that Jupiter whom they invent, according to their own notion, as king of the gods, but of the true King of the ages. He sends not Victory, who has no substance at all, but his angel, and makes whomever he wills victorious. His counsel may be hidden; it cannot be unjust. For if Victory is a goddess, why is Triumph not a god as well, joined to Victory as husband, or brother, or son? Indeed, these people have held such opinions about the gods that, if the poets had invented them and we attacked them, they would answer that these were poets' fictions, to be laughed at, not to be attributed to true divinities. And yet they did not laugh at themselves when they did not read such ravings in the poets but worshiped them in the temples. They should therefore have asked Jupiter for everything and prayed to him alone. For wherever he sent Victory—if she is a goddess and subject to that king—she could not dare to resist him and do her own will instead.

HOW THOSE WHO THINK FELICITY AND FORTUNE GODDESSES TELL THEM APART

The Romans worshiped both Felicity and Fortune, though fortune strikes the good and bad alike.

4.18 And what of the fact that Felicity, too, is a goddess? She received a temple, earned an altar, and fitting rites were paid to her. Then she alone should have been worshiped. For where she was present, what good would be absent? But what does it mean that Fortune too is held to be a goddess and is worshiped? Is happiness one thing and fortune another? Yes, because fortune

can also be bad, whereas happiness, if it were bad, would not be happiness. Certainly we ought to think that all the gods of both sexes (if they even have a sex) are nothing but good. Plato says this; other philosophers say it; so do the outstanding rulers of the commonwealth and of peoples. How then is the goddess Fortune sometimes good, sometimes bad? Or perhaps when she is bad she is not a goddess but is suddenly turned into an evil demon? How many of these goddesses are there, then? Surely as many as there are fortunate people—that is, people of good fortune.[21] For since there are also very many others at the same time—that is, at one and the same moment—who have bad fortune, would she, if she were one and the same, be both good and bad at once: one thing to these, another to those? Or is the one who is a goddess always good? Then she is Felicity herself: why are different names used? But this can be tolerated, for one thing is often called by two names. But why different temples, different altars, different rites? There is a reason, they say: happiness is what good people have as a result of prior merits, whereas fortune—the kind called good—befalls people, good and bad alike, fortuitously, without any weighing of merits; hence her very name, Fortune. How then is she good, when she comes without any judgment to good and bad alike? And why is she worshiped at all, when she is so blind, running into anyone at random, that she often passes by her worshipers and clings to those who despise her? Or if her worshipers do gain something, so that she sees and loves them, then she follows merits and does not come by chance. Where, then, is that definition of Fortune? What becomes of her taking her very name from what is fortuitous? For it is no use worshiping her if she is fortune. But if she distinguishes her worshipers so as to benefit them, she is not fortune. Or does Jupiter send her too wherever he wishes? Then let him alone be worshiped, for Fortune cannot resist him when he commands her and sends her wherever he wishes. Or at any

21 Augustine plays on *felicitas,* which is both the ordinary word for happiness and the name of the goddess Felicity.

rate let the wicked worship her—those who do not want to have the merits by which the goddess Felicity might be invited.

WOMEN'S FORTUNE

A statue of Women's Fortune was said to have spoken, a trick of demons.

4.19 They attribute so much to this so-called divinity they call Fortune that they have put on record that her image—which was dedicated by married women and called Women's Fortune—actually spoke, and said not once but twice that the matrons had dedicated her duly. If this is in fact true, we should not be surprised. For it is not difficult for evil demons to deceive even in this way. These people ought rather to have recognized their arts and tricks from the very fact that the goddess who spoke was the one who befalls by chance, not the one who comes for merits. For Fortune was talkative and Felicity mute—and for what purpose, except that people, having won Fortune's favor, should not care about living rightly, since she would make them fortunate without any good merits?[22] And surely, if Fortune speaks, it should at least have been not Women's Fortune but rather Men's Fortune that spoke, so that the very women who dedicated the image would not be thought to have invented so great a miracle out of female talkativeness.[23]

VIRTUE AND FAITH, WHICH THE PAGANS HONORED WITH TEMPLES AND RITES, PASSING OVER OTHER GOODS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN WORSHIPED LIKEWISE IF DIVINITY WAS RIGHTLY GIVEN TO THESE

Virtue and Faith received temples, though they are God's gifts and other virtues were ignored.

4.20 They also made Virtue a goddess. If she really were a goddess, she would have deserved to be preferred to many. And now,

22 The temple of Fortuna Muliebris ("Women's Fortune") outside Rome was said to commemorate the women who turned Coriolanus back from attacking the city in the early fifth century BC.

since she is not a goddess but a gift of God, let her be sought from him who alone can give her, and the whole crowd of false gods will vanish. But why was Faith also believed to be a goddess, and why did she too receive a temple and an altar? Whoever wisely recognizes her makes himself a dwelling place for her. But how do they know what faith is, whose first and greatest duty is that one should believe in the true God? And why was Virtue not enough? Is not Faith included there as well?[24] For they saw that virtue was to be divided into four kinds: prudence, justice, courage, and temperance. And since each of these has its own subdivisions, faith is among the parts of justice, and it holds the highest place among us who know what is meant by "The just shall live by faith." But I am amazed at these lovers of a multitude of gods: if faith is a goddess, why did they wrong so many other goddesses by passing them over, when they could have dedicated temples and altars to them in the same way? Why did temperance not deserve to be a goddess, when several Roman leaders won no small glory in her name? Why, finally, is courage not a goddess—she who stood by Mucius when he stretched his right hand into the flames; who stood by Curtius when he threw himself headlong into the chasm in the earth for his country; who stood by Decius the father and Decius the son when they vowed themselves to death for the army?[25] That is, if true courage was present in all of them—which is not the question now. Why did prudence, why did wisdom earn no place among the divinities? Or is it because they are all worshiped under the general name of virtue itself? In that case the one God too could be worshiped, of whom the other gods are thought to be parts. But in that one virtue are both faith and chastity, which nevertheless earned altars outside it, in temples of their own.

23 Fortuna Virilis ("Men's Fortune") was another Roman cult of Fortune.
24 Fides, the Roman goddess of good faith and trustworthiness, had a temple on the Capitol; Augustine plays on *fides* as religious faith.
25 Habakkuk 2:4, quoted in Romans 1:17. Mucius Scaevola burned his hand before the Etruscan king Porsenna, Curtius leapt into a chasm that opened in the Forum, and the two Decii gave their lives in battle (340 and 295 BC).

THAT THOSE WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE ONE GOD SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE BEEN CONTENT WITH VIRTUE AND FELICITY

Virtue and Felicity together would supply everything, making the crowd of other gods superfluous.

4.21 It is not truth but vanity that makes these goddesses; for these are gifts of the true God, not goddesses themselves. Yet where there are virtue and happiness, what else is sought? What will satisfy someone for whom virtue and happiness are not enough? For virtue embraces everything that ought to be done, happiness everything that ought to be desired. If Jupiter was worshiped so that he might give these—since the breadth and duration of a kingdom, if it is any good at all, belongs to that same happiness—why was it not understood that they are gifts of God, not goddesses? And if they were thought to be goddesses, at least that huge crowd of other gods should not have been sought. For let them consider the functions of all the gods and goddesses, which they invented as they pleased according to their own notions, and let them find, if they can, anything that any god could supply to a person who has virtue and has happiness. What learning would need to be sought from Mercury or from Minerva, when virtue would bring everything with it? For the ancients defined virtue as the very art of living well and rightly. Hence they thought that the Latins took their word for art, *ars*, from the Greek word for virtue, ἀρετὴ [*aretē*]. But if virtue could come only to the talented, what need was there of the god Catius Pater, who made people *cati*, that is, sharp, when happiness could confer this? For to be born talented is a matter of happiness. So even if the goddess Felicity could not be worshiped by someone not yet born, so that, won over, she might grant him this, she would grant it to his parents, her worshipers, so that talented children would be born to them. What need was there for women in labor to call on Lucina, when, if Felicity were present, they would not only give birth well but give birth

to good children?[26] What need was there to commend newborns to the goddess Ops, wailing infants to the god Vaticanus, infants lying in the cradle to the goddess Cunina, nursing infants to the goddess Rumina, children standing up to the god Statilinus, children coming toward someone to the goddess Adeona and going away to Abeona; to commend them to the goddess Mens, that they might have a good mind; to the god Volumnus and the goddess Volumna, that they might will good things; to the wedding gods, that they might marry well; to the country gods, that they might reap the richest harvests, and above all to the divine Fructesea herself; to Mars and Bellona, that they might wage war well; to the goddess Victory, that they might win; to the god Honor, that they might be honored; to the goddess Pecunia, that they might be moneyed; to the god Aesculanus and his son Argentinus, that they might have copper and silver money? For they made Aesculanus the father of Argentinus because copper money came into use first and silver later. I am surprised, though, that Argentinus did not beget Aurinus, since gold money followed too.[27] If they had that god, they would rank Aurinus above his father Argentinus and his grandfather Aesculanus, just as they ranked Jupiter above Saturn. What need was there, then, to worship and invoke such a crowd of gods for these goods of mind, body, or external circumstance (and I have not mentioned them all, nor could they themselves provide minute individual gods for all human goods, divided up minutely and one by one), when the one goddess Felicity could confer everything by a great and easy shortcut, and no other would be sought, not only for obtaining goods but even for driving away evils? For why should the divine Fessona be invoked for the weary, the divine Pellonia for driving off enemies, and for the sick a physician—Apollo or Aesculapius, or both at once

26 Lucina, a title of Juno, was the goddess who presided over childbirth.

27 The names are etymological: Statilinus from *stare* ("stand"), Adeona and Abeona from *adire* and *abire* ("approach," "depart"), Mens means "mind," Fructesea comes from *fructus* ("crops"), Bellona from *bellum* ("war"), and Pecunia means "money." Aesculanus comes from *aes* ("copper"), Argentinus from *argentum* ("silver"), and Aurinus would come from *aurum* ("gold").

when the danger was great? Nor would the god Spiniensis need to be asked to root the thorns out of the fields, nor the goddess Rubigo to stay away: with Felicity alone present and protecting, either no evils would arise or they would be driven off with the greatest ease. Finally, since we are dealing with these two goddesses, Virtue and Felicity: if happiness is the reward of virtue, it is not a goddess but a gift of God; but if she is a goddess, why should she not be said to confer virtue as well, since even to attain virtue is a great happiness?[28]

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO WORSHIP THE GODS, WHICH VARRO BOASTS HE GAVE THE ROMANS

Varro boasts of teaching which god to ask for what, as one must know a doctor's trade.

4.22 What, then, of Varro's boast that he is doing his fellow citizens an immense service, because he not only lists the gods whom the Romans ought to worship but also says what belongs to each? "Just as it is no use," he says, "to know the name and appearance of some man who is a physician and not know that he is a physician," so, he says, it is no use to know that Aesculapius is a god if you do not know that he helps health, and so do not know why you ought to pray to him. He confirms this with another comparison too, saying that no one can live well—or indeed live at all—if he does not know who is a smith, who a baker, who a plasterer, from whom he can ask for any useful thing, whom he can take on as a helper, whom as a guide, whom as a teacher. In the same way, he asserts, no one can doubt that knowledge of the gods is useful on this condition: that one knows what force, capacity, and power each god has over each thing. "For from this," he says, "we shall be able to know which god we ought to call upon and invoke for each purpose, so that we do not do what the mimes do, and ask Liber for water and the Lymphs for wine." A great benefit indeed! Who would not

28 Spiniensis comes from *spina* ("thorn"); *rubigo* is rust, the blight that attacks grain.

thank him, if he were showing the truth, and if he taught people to worship the one true God, from whom all good things come?[29]

FELICITY, WHOM THE ROMANS, WORSHIPERS OF MANY GODS, LONG DID NOT WORSHIP WITH DIVINE HONOR, THOUGH SHE ALONE WOULD HAVE SUFFICED IN PLACE OF ALL

Felicity, who alone could give everything, was neglected for centuries and never given the highest place.

4.23 But—and this is what we are now discussing—if their books and rites are true and Felicity is a goddess, why was she alone not established as the one to be worshiped, since she could confer everything and make a person happy by a shortcut? For who wishes for anything except in order to become happy? Why, finally, did Lucullus build a temple to so great a goddess so late, after so many Roman leaders? Why did Romulus himself, wishing to found a happy city, not build a temple to her above all, and not pray to the other gods for anything, since nothing would be lacking if she were present? For he himself would not have become king first, nor afterward, as they suppose, a god, if he had not had this goddess favorable to him. Why, then, did he establish for the Romans the gods Janus, Jupiter, Mars, Picus, Faunus, Tiberinus, Hercules, and any others there may be?[30] Why did Titus Tatius add Saturn, Ops, Sun, Moon, Vulcan, Light, and whatever others he added—among them even the goddess Cloacina—while neglecting Felicity? Why did Numa add so many gods and so many goddesses without her? Or perhaps he could not see her in so great a crowd? King Hostilius, certainly, would not have introduced new gods of his own, Fear and Pallor, to be appeased, if he had known or worshiped this goddess. For with

29 Liber was the Roman god of wine; the Lymphs were water nymphs.
30 Lucius Licinius Lucullus, consul in 151 BC, built a temple to Felicitas from the spoils of his campaign in Spain.

Felicity present, all fear and pallor would not withdraw appeased; they would be driven out and flee.[31]

Next, what does it mean that the Roman Empire was already growing far and wide, and still no one worshiped Felicity? Was that why the empire was greater rather than happier? For how could there be true happiness where there was no true piety? For piety is the truthful worship of the true God, not the worship of all those false gods, who are so many demons. But even later, after Felicity had been received into the number of the gods, the great unhappiness of the civil wars followed. Or perhaps Felicity was justly indignant that she was invited so late, and not to be honored but rather to be insulted, being worshiped alongside Priapus and Cloacina and Fear and Pallor and Fever and the rest —not divinities to be worshiped but the crimes of their worshipers?

Finally, if so great a goddess was thought fit to be worshiped along with that most unworthy crowd, why was she not at least worshiped more splendidly than the rest? For who could tolerate that Felicity was placed neither among the Consentes gods, who they say are called into Jupiter's council, nor among the gods they call the select gods? A temple should have been made for her that stood out both for the height of its site and for the dignity of its workmanship. Indeed, why not something better than for Jupiter himself? For who but Felicity gave even Jupiter his kingdom?—if, that is, he was happy while he reigned. And happiness is preferable to a kingdom. For no one doubts that one can easily find a man who is afraid to become king; but no one is found who does not want to be happy.[32] So if they think the gods themselves can be consulted through augury or in any other way, they should have been consulted on this question: whether they were willing to give up their place to Felicity, if perhaps the site where a larger and loftier temple was to be built

31 Titus Tatius, a Sabine king, shared rule with Romulus; Numa and Tullus Hostilius were Rome's second and third kings.

32 The Di Consentes were the twelve chief gods of Rome; the "select gods" were the twenty principal deities Varro treated in the last book of his *Antiquities*.

for Felicity was already occupied by the temples or altars of others. Even Jupiter himself would give way, so that Felicity might rather hold the very summit of the Capitoline Hill. For no one would resist Felicity except someone who wanted to be unhappy—which is impossible. Jupiter, if consulted, would by no means at all do what three gods—Mars, Terminus, and Juventas—did to him, when they absolutely refused to yield their place to their superior and king.[33] For, as their writings record, when King Tarquin wanted to build the Capitol and saw that the site that seemed to him the worthiest and most suitable was already occupied by other gods, he did not dare to do anything against their will. Believing that they would willingly give way to so great a divinity, their own sovereign—for there were many of them on the spot where the Capitol was built—he asked by augury whether they were willing to yield the place to Jupiter. And all of them were willing to move from there, except those I have mentioned: Mars, Terminus, and Juventas. So the Capitol was built in such a way that these three were also inside it, but with images so obscure that even the most learned people scarcely knew it. Jupiter himself, then, would by no means have scorned Felicity, as he was scorned by Terminus, Mars, and Juventas. But even those who had not given way to Jupiter would surely give way to Felicity, who had made Jupiter their king. Or if they did not give way, they would not do so out of contempt for her, but because they would rather be obscure in the house of Felicity than stand out in their own places without her.

Thus, with the goddess Felicity established in the most spacious and loftiest place, the citizens would learn where help was to be sought for every good wish. And so, at nature's own prompting, the superfluous multitude of other gods would be abandoned: Felicity alone would be worshiped, she alone prayed to, her temple alone thronged by citizens who wanted to be happy—and there would be none of them who did not want this. And so she who was sought by everyone would be sought

33 Terminus was the god of boundary stones and Juventas the goddess of youth; Livy (1.55) tells the story of their refusal.

from herself. For who would want to receive anything from any god except happiness, or what he thinks contributes to happiness? Accordingly, if happiness has it in her power to decide with which person she will be (and she has, if she is a goddess), what folly is it, really, to seek her from some god when you could obtain her from herself? So they ought to have honored this goddess above the other gods, by the dignity of her site as well. For, as we read in their own writers, the early Romans worshiped some Summanus or other, to whom they attributed lightning by night, more than Jupiter, to whom lightning by day belonged. But after a splendid and lofty temple was built for Jupiter, the crowd flocked to him because of the temple's grandeur—so much so that one can hardly find anyone who remembers even having read the name of Summanus, since it can no longer be heard. But if happiness is not a goddess, because—as is the truth—it is a gift of God, then let that God be sought who can give it, and let the harmful multitude of false gods be abandoned, which the empty multitude of foolish people follows, making gods for themselves out of God's gifts and offending him whose gifts they are by the obstinacy of a proud will. For whoever worships happiness as a goddess and abandons God, the giver of happiness, can no more escape unhappiness than someone who licks painted bread, and does not ask the man who has real bread for it, can escape hunger.

HOW THE PAGANS DEFEND THEIR WORSHIPING DIVINE GIFTS THEMSELVES AMONG THE GODS

Pagans reply that their ancestors named unknown gods after the gifts they gave.

4.24 But I should like to examine their reasoning. "Are we really to believe," they say, "that our ancestors were so foolish as not to know that these things are divine gifts, not gods? On the contrary, they knew that such things are granted to no one except by the bounty of some god. Since they could not find the names of those gods, they called the gods by the names of the things they perceived to be given by them, sometimes altering the

words a little. So from *bellum* [war] they named Bellona, not Bellum; from *cunae* [cradles], Cunina, not Cuna; from *segetes* [crops], Segetia, not Seges; from *poma* [fruits], Pomona, not Pomum; from *boves* [oxen], Bubona, not Bos. Or else they changed the word not at all, but named the gods just as the things themselves are named. So the goddess who gives money was called Pecunia [Money], without the money itself ever being thought a goddess. In the same way there is Virtus [Virtue], who gives virtue; Honor, who gives honor; Concordia [Concord], who gives concord; Victoria [Victory], who gives victory." "So," they say, "when Felicity is called a goddess, what is meant is not the thing itself that is given, but the divinity by whom happiness is given."

THE ONE GOD ALONE WHO IS TO BE WORSHIPED: THOUGH HIS NAME IS UNKNOWN, HE IS FELT TO BE THE GIVER OF HAPPINESS

If happiness comes from an unknown god, that one God, not Jupiter, should be worshiped.

4.25 Now that this reasoning has been offered to us, we shall perhaps find it much easier to persuade those whose hearts are not too hardened of what we want. Human weakness has already perceived that happiness can be given only by some god. This was perceived by people who worshiped a great many gods, among them Jupiter himself, their king. Because they did not know the name of the one by whom happiness was given, they chose to call him by the name of the very thing they believed he gave. In doing so, they showed clearly enough that happiness could not be given even by Jupiter, whom they already worshiped, but only by the one whom they thought should be worshiped under the name of happiness itself. I fully affirm that they believed happiness to be given by some god whom they did not know. Let him, then, be sought; let him be worshiped; and that is enough. Let the din of countless demons be cast aside. Let this god not be enough for anyone for whom his gift is not enough. Let the God who gives happiness, I say, not be enough to worship for anyone for whom happiness itself is not enough

to receive. But let anyone for whom it is enough (and a human being has nothing more he ought to wish for) serve the one God who gives happiness. This is not the one they call Jupiter. For if they acknowledged him as the giver of happiness, they would certainly not look for another god or goddess, by whom happiness might be given, under the name of happiness itself. Nor would they think that Jupiter himself should be worshiped amid such insults. He is said to be an adulterer with other men's wives. He is said to be the shameless lover and abductor of a beautiful boy.[34]

THE THEATRICAL SHOWS THAT THE GODS DEMANDED THEIR WORSHIPERS CELEBRATE FOR THEM

Cicero blames Homer for the gods' crimes, yet the gods themselves demanded shows acting them out.

4.26 "But Homer invented these things," says Cicero, "and transferred human qualities to the gods; I would rather he had transferred divine ones to us." That serious man was rightly displeased with the poet who fabricated crimes for the gods. Why, then, are theatrical shows presented in honor of the gods, when these very things are constantly recited, sung and acted in them? Why do the most learned men list them among divine rites? Here let Cicero cry out, not against the inventions of the poets, but against the institutions of the ancestors. Or would the ancestors not cry out in turn: "What have we done? The gods themselves demanded that these things be presented in their honor. They commanded it fiercely and foretold disaster unless it was done. When something was neglected, they punished it most severely. When what had been neglected was done, they showed that they were appeased." Among their mighty works and wondrous deeds is recorded the story I am about to tell.[35] Titus Latinius, a Roman countryman and head of a household, was told in a dream to report to the senate that the Roman

34 The boy is Ganymede, whom Jupiter carried off to be his cupbearer.
35 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.65.

Games should be held over again. The reason was that on their first day a grim order had displeased the divinities, who were evidently looking for merriment from the games: a certain criminal had been ordered to be led to execution while the people looked on. The man warned by the dream did not dare to carry out the command the next day. On the second night the same order was given again, more sternly, and he lost his son because he did not obey. On the third night he was told that a greater punishment threatened him if he did not obey. When even then he did not dare, he fell into an acute and dreadful illness. Then at last, on the advice of his friends, he brought the matter before the magistrates and was carried into the senate on a litter. When he had related the dream, his health was immediately restored, and he walked away well, on his own feet.[36] Astounded by so great a miracle, the senate decreed that the games be held again at four times the expense. Who with a sound mind does not see what was happening? People subject to malignant demons, from whose domination nothing frees us but the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, were compelled by force to present to such gods things that sound judgment could have recognized as shameful. Certainly the poets' tales of the divinities' crimes are constantly performed in those games, and it was those very games that were held again by order of the senate, under compulsion from the divinities. In those games the vilest actors sang of Jupiter, the corrupter of chastity, acted him and won applause. If this was fiction, he should have been angry. But if he delighted in his crimes, even fictional ones, then when he was worshiped, who was being served but the devil? Was this the one to found, extend and preserve the Roman Empire—a god more contemptible than any Roman who disliked such things? Was this the one to give happiness—a god who was worshiped so unhappily, and who, if not worshiped in this way, grew angry more unhappily still?

36 The story is told by Livy (2.36) and Cicero (*On Divination* 1.55); the Roman Games were Rome's chief annual festival in honor of Jupiter.

THE THREE KINDS OF GODS DISCUSSED BY THE PONTIFF SCAEVOLA

Scaevola held that the poets' gods are false but that the people should be deceived about religion.

4.27 It is recorded that the most learned pontiff Scaevola argued that three kinds of gods have been handed down: one by the poets, a second by the philosophers, a third by the leaders of the state. The first kind, he says, is trifling, because many unworthy things are invented about the gods. The second does not suit states, because it contains some things that are superfluous, and some that it would actually harm the people to know. About the superfluous there is no great issue, for the legal experts too have a saying: "What is superfluous does no harm." But what are the things that do harm if they are brought out before the multitude? "These," he says: "that Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor and Pollux are not gods. For learned men teach that they were human beings and died in accordance with the human condition." What else? "That states do not have true images of those who really are gods, since the true God has neither sex nor age nor defined bodily limbs."[37] The pontiff does not want the people to know these things, for he does not think they are false. He therefore considers it expedient for states to be deceived in religion. Varro himself does not hesitate to say the same, even in his books on divine matters. A splendid religion for the weak to flee to for liberation! When he seeks the truth that would set him free, it is thought expedient for him to be deceived. Why Scaevola rejects the poetic kind of gods is not passed over in silence in the same writings. It is, of course, because the poets so disfigure the gods that they cannot even be compared with good men. They make one god steal and another commit adultery, and likewise have them say or do other base and absurd things of one sort or another. They tell how three goddesses competed with

37 Quintus Mucius Scaevola (died 82 BC), jurist and pontifex maximus, Rome's chief priest.

one another for the prize of beauty, and how the two who were defeated by Venus destroyed Troy. They tell how Jupiter himself turned into a bull or a swan to sleep with some woman, how a goddess married a man, how Saturn devoured his children. In short, nothing marvelous or vicious can be imagined that is not found there, however utterly foreign to the nature of the gods. O Scaevola, chief pontiff, abolish the games, if you can! Command the people not to pay such honors to the immortal gods, where they enjoy admiring the crimes of the gods and like to imitate those that can be done.[38] But suppose the people answer you: "You pontiffs brought these things in on us." Then ask the gods themselves, at whose instigation you ordered these things, not to order such things to be presented to them. If these things are evil, and therefore in no way to be believed of the majesty of the gods, the greater is the wrong done to the gods about whom they are invented with impunity. But the gods do not listen to you. They are demons; they teach depravity; they delight in what is shameful. Not only do they not count it a wrong if such things are invented about them. On the contrary, the wrong they cannot bear is for these things not to be performed at their festivals. Now suppose you were to appeal to Jupiter against them, especially since more of his crimes are acted in the theatrical shows than anyone else's. You call Jupiter the God by whom this whole world is ruled and governed. Even so, are you not doing him the greatest wrong precisely by thinking that he should be worshiped together with these others, and by declaring him their king?

WHETHER THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS HELPED THE ROMANS GAIN AND ENLARGE THEIR EMPIRE

Gods appeased by shameful shows could not have enlarged or preserved the Roman Empire.

4.28 Gods like these, then, could in no way have increased and preserved the Roman Empire. They are appeased, or rather

accused, by such honors. Indeed, it is a greater crime that they take delight in falsehoods about themselves than if true things were told of them. If they had been able to do this, they would rather have bestowed so great a gift on the Greeks. The Greeks worshiped them more honorably and worthily in divine rites of this kind, that is, in theatrical shows. They did not exempt themselves from the bites of the poets, by which they saw the gods torn to pieces, and gave the poets license to abuse any man they pleased. They did not judge the actors themselves disgraceful, but even held them worthy of distinguished honors. Moreover, just as the Romans could have gold money even though they did not worship the god Aurinus, so they could also have had silver and copper money even if they worshiped neither Argentinus nor his father Aesculanus. And so on with everything else, which I am tired of going over again.[39] So too, then, they could in no way have had a kingdom against the will of the true God. But if these many false gods had been ignored or despised, and that one God had been known and worshiped with sincere faith and good conduct, they would have had a better kingdom here, whatever its size. And afterward they would have received an everlasting one, whether they had a kingdom here or not.

THE FALSITY OF THE OMEN THOUGHT TO SHOW THE STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF THE ROMAN KINGDOM

The omen that Terminus would not yield to Jupiter proved false when Rome's borders shrank.

4.29 What, then, are we to make of what they called a most splendid omen, which I mentioned a little earlier: that Mars, Terminus and Juventas refused to give up their place even to Jupiter, king of the gods? This signified, they say, that the people of Mars, that is, the Roman people, would yield to no one the place it held; that no one would move the Roman boundaries,

38 The beauty contest is the judgment of Paris, after which Juno and Minerva turned against Troy; the goddess who married a mortal is Thetis, bride of Peleus.
39 Augustine mocked these gods of gold (*aurum*), silver (*argentum*) and copper (*aes*) money in chapter 21.

because of the god Terminus; and that Roman youth would give way to no one, because of the goddess Juventas. Let them consider, then, what sort of king of their gods and giver of their kingdom they take him to be, if these omens cast him as an adversary to whom it was splendid not to yield. And yet, if these things are true, they have nothing at all to fear. For they will not admit that the gods who would not yield to Jupiter have yielded to Christ. Yet with the boundaries of the empire intact, they could indeed yield to Christ, both from their dwelling places and above all from the hearts of believers. But before Christ came in the flesh, and indeed before the things we are quoting from their books were written—though still after that omen occurred under King Tarquin—the Roman army was several times routed, that is, put to flight. This proved false the omen by which Juventas had not yielded to Jupiter. The people of Mars was crushed in the City itself when the Gauls overwhelmed it and broke in. And when many cities defected to Hannibal, the boundaries of the empire were squeezed into a narrow space. So the splendor of the omens was emptied out, and what remained was defiance against Jupiter—the defiance not of gods but of demons. For it is one thing not to have yielded, another to have returned to the place from which you had yielded. And later, too, the boundaries of the Roman Empire in the eastern regions were changed by the will of Hadrian.[40] For he ceded three noble provinces, Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria, to the rule of the Persians. So that god Terminus, who according to them protected the Roman boundaries and by that most splendid omen had not yielded his place to Jupiter, seems to have feared Hadrian, a king of men, more than the king of the gods. The provinces I mentioned were recovered at another time, but almost within our own memory Terminus retreated again. This was when Julian, devoted to the oracles of those gods, with reckless daring ordered the ships carrying the army's food supply to be burned.

40 The Gauls sacked Rome around 390 BC; Hannibal invaded Italy in the Second Punic War (218–201 BC). Hadrian, emperor AD 117–138, gave up Trajan's eastern conquests.

The army, deprived of its supplies, and soon after bereft of the emperor himself, who was killed by an enemy wound, was reduced to such want that not one man would have escaped. For the enemy attacked from all sides the soldiers who had been thrown into confusion by the emperor's death. They were saved only because a peace agreement fixed the empire's frontiers there, where they remain to this day. The loss was not, indeed, as great as the territory Hadrian had conceded, but the frontiers were still fixed by a compromise halfway between.[41] It was therefore an empty augury by which the god Terminus did not yield to Jupiter—the same god who yielded to Hadrian's will, and yielded also to Julian's rashness and to Jovian's necessity. The more intelligent and serious Romans saw this, but they had little power against the custom of the city, which had been bound to demonic rites. For even they, though they felt these things were empty, nevertheless thought that the religious worship owed to God should be offered to the nature of things, which is established under the rule and command of the one true God. They were, as the apostle says, "serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." The help of this true God was needed, so that holy and truly devout men might be sent who would die for the true religion, and so that false religions might be removed from among the living.[42]

WHAT EVEN THEIR WORSHIPERS ADMIT THEY THINK ABOUT THE GODS OF THE NATIONS

Cicero and Balbus condemn superstition yet cannot free the ancestral religion from the same charge.

4.30 Cicero, though an augur himself, mocks auguries. He mocks people who steer the decisions of their lives by the cries of a raven or a crow. But this Academic, who insists that everything is uncertain, does not deserve to carry any authority in these

41 Julian, the last pagan emperor (AD 361–363), died on campaign against Persia; his successor Jovian made peace by ceding territory.
42 Romans 1:25.

matters. In Cicero's second book *On the Nature of the Gods*, Quintus Lucilius Balbus presents an argument. Balbus himself brings in superstitions drawn from the nature of things, as though they were matters of natural science and philosophy. Yet he is indignant at the setting up of images and at mythical beliefs, and speaks as follows: "Do you see, then, how reasoning has been dragged away from natural phenomena, which were well and usefully discovered, toward invented and fictitious gods? This has given birth to false beliefs, confused errors and superstitions fit for old women. For the shapes of the gods are known to us, along with their ages, their clothing and their adornments. So are their lineages, marriages and kinships, and everything about them has been remodeled in the likeness of human weakness.[43] They are even portrayed with troubled minds, for we have heard of the gods' lusts, sorrows and fits of anger. Nor, as the stories tell it, have the gods been without wars and battles. And this is not only as in Homer, where different gods defended two opposing armies from opposite sides. They have also waged wars of their own, as against the Titans or the Giants. All this is said and believed most foolishly, and it is full of emptiness and utter frivolity." Look, meanwhile, at what those who defend the gods of the nations admit! Next he says that these things belong to superstition, while what he himself appears to teach along Stoic lines belongs to religion. "For not only the philosophers," he says, "but our ancestors too separated superstition from religion. Those who prayed and sacrificed all day long that their children might outlive them were called superstitious."[44] Who can fail to see what he is doing? Because he fears the custom of the city, he is trying to praise the religion of the ancestors and wants to separate it from superstition. But he cannot find a way to do it. For if the ancestors called those who prayed and sacrificed all day long superstitious, what of those who established

43 Quintus Lucilius Balbus is the Stoic spokesman in Book 2 of Cicero's dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods*; Cicero himself held the priestly office of augur, an interpreter of omens from birds.

44 The pun is untranslatable: *superstites*, "survivors," is taken as the root of *superstitiosi*, "superstitious."

the very things he criticizes? These people set up images of the gods distinguished by different ages and dress, and gave the gods lineages, marriages and kinships. When these things are condemned as superstitious, the blame certainly falls on the ancestors who set up and worshiped such images. It falls on him as well. However much eloquence he strains to wriggle his way into freedom, he was obliged to venerate these things. Nor would he have dared to mutter in a public assembly what he proclaims so eloquently in this debate. Let us Christians, then, give thanks to the Lord our God—not to heaven and earth, as this man argues, but to him who made heaven and earth. It is he who has overthrown these superstitions, which this Balbus, stammering as his name suggests, barely manages to criticize. He overthrew them through the most exalted humility of Christ and through the preaching of the apostles. He overthrew them through the faith of the martyrs, who died for the truth and live with the truth. He did this not only in religious hearts but even in superstitious temples, by the free servitude of his own people.[45]

THE OPINIONS OF VARRO, WHO REJECTED POPULAR BELIEF AND, THOUGH HE DID NOT REACH KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE GOD, STILL HELD THAT ONE GOD SHOULD BE WORSHIPED

Varro admits he would have founded religion differently and thought worship without images purer.

4.31 What of Varro himself? We regret that he placed theatrical shows among divine matters, even though he did not do so by his own judgment. In many places he urges the worship of the gods like a religious man. Yet does he not admit that the things he records the Roman city as having established are not what he follows by his own judgment? He even does not hesitate to confess that, if he were founding that city anew, he would have ded-

45 Latin *balbus* means "stammerer"; Augustine puns on the name with *balbutiens*, "stammering."

icated the gods and their names according to the pattern of nature instead. But since he now lives among an ancient people, he says that he must keep the history of names and surnames received from the ancients just as it was handed down. He says he writes and investigates these matters so that the common people may be more willing to worship the gods than to despise them. With these words this most acute man shows clearly enough that he is not disclosing everything. Some things were objects of contempt not only to himself. Even the common people would have found them contemptible if they had not been kept quiet. I might have been thought to be guessing at this, if he did not say it plainly himself in another place. There, speaking about religious practices, he says that there are many true things which it is not useful for the common people to know. He adds that there are things which, though false, it is expedient for the people to believe otherwise. That, he says, is why the Greeks shut away their *teletae* [initiation rites] and mysteries behind silence and walls. Here he has certainly given away the whole policy of the so-called wise men by whom cities and peoples were to be ruled. Yet the evil demons take marvelous delight in this deceit, for they possess deceivers and deceived alike. From their domination nothing sets us free but the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This same most acute and learned author also says that the only people who seem to him to have grasped what God is are those who believed him to be the soul that governs the world by motion and reason. So he did not yet hold what the truth holds, for the true God is not a soul but the maker and founder of the soul as well. Still, if he could have stood free of the prejudices of custom, he would have acknowledged and urged that one God should be worshiped, who governs the world by motion and reason. The only question left between him and us on this matter would then be that he called God a soul, rather than the creator of the soul too. He also says that the ancient Romans worshiped the gods without images for more than a hundred and seventy years. “If this had continued to this day,” he says, “the

gods would be worshiped more purely." Among others, he calls the Jewish nation as a witness to this opinion of his. He does not hesitate to close the passage by saying that those who first set up images of the gods for the peoples both took away fear from their cities and added error. He wisely judged that the gods could easily be despised in the senselessness of images. He does not say that they "handed down" error, but that they "added" it. By this he certainly means us to understand that there was error already, even without images. So he says that only those grasped what God is who believed him to be the soul governing the world, and he judges that religion is practiced more purely without images. Who, then, does not see how close he came to the truth? For if he had had any strength to resist the long antiquity of so great an error, he would surely have judged that the one God, by whom he believed the world to be governed, should be worshiped, and worshiped without an image. Having come so close to the truth, he might perhaps easily have been reminded of the changeableness of the soul. He would then have perceived that the true God is rather the unchangeable nature which created the soul itself as well. This being so, whatever mockeries of the many gods such men put into their writings, they were driven by the hidden will of God to confess them rather than trying to win belief for them. So when we bring forward any testimony from these sources, we do so to refute those who refuse to notice how great and how malignant a power of demons we are freed from. We are freed by the unique sacrifice of such holy blood poured out, and by the gift of the Spirit bestowed.

FOR WHAT SHOW OF ADVANTAGE THE RULERS OF THE NATIONS WANTED FALSE RELIGIONS TO CONTINUE AMONG THE PEOPLES SUBJECT TO THEM

Rulers taught the people false beliefs about the gods to bind them more closely, like the demons.

4.32 He also says, on the subject of the generations of the gods, that peoples have leaned more toward the poets than toward the

natural philosophers. That, he says, is why his ancestors, the ancient Romans, believed in the sex and the generations of the gods and arranged their marriages. This seems to have happened for one reason only. It was the business of supposedly prudent and wise men to deceive the people in matters of religion. In doing so, they not only worshiped the demons but even imitated them, for the demons' greatest craving is to deceive. The demons can possess no one except those they have tricked and deceived. In the same way, men in power used the name of religion to persuade the peoples that things they knew to be empty were true. These men were certainly not just; they were like the demons. In this way they bound the peoples more tightly, as they supposed, to civil society, so that they might likewise possess them as subjects. But what weak and unlearned person could escape both deceivers at once, the rulers of the city and the demons?

THAT THE TIMES OF ALL KINGS AND KINGDOMS ARE ORDERED BY THE JUDGMENT AND POWER OF THE TRUE GOD

The true God, who alone gives happiness, gives earthly kingdoms to good and bad according to a hidden order.

4.33 That God, then, the author and giver of happiness, gives earthly kingdoms to both the good and the bad, because he alone is the true God. He does not do this rashly or as if by chance, for he is God, not fortune. He does it according to an order of things and times that is hidden from us but perfectly known to him. Yet he does not serve this order of times as one subject to it. Rather, he rules it as its master and arranges it as its governor. Happiness, however, he gives only to the good. Those who serve may have it or lack it, and those who reign may have it or lack it. But it will be complete in that life where no one will serve any longer. And so earthly kingdoms are given by him to the good and to the bad alike. He does this so that his worshipers, who are still little children in the progress of the soul, may not crave these gifts from him as though they were some-

thing great. And this is the mystery of the Old Testament, in which the New lay hidden: there the promises and gifts are earthly. Yet even then spiritual people understood, though they did not yet proclaim it openly, what eternity was signified by those temporal things. They also understood in which gifts of God true happiness lay.

THE KINGDOM OF THE JEWS, FOUNDED AND PRESERVED BY THE ONE TRUE GOD AS LONG AS THEY REMAINED IN THE TRUE RELIGION

God gave the Hebrews every earthly good without the Roman gods, while they remained faithful.

4.34 He wished it to be known that even those earthly goods lie in the power of the one God himself. These are the only goods craved by those who cannot think of anything better. They do not lie in the power of the many false gods whom the Romans had believed they must worship. For this reason he multiplied his people in Egypt from a very few, and then freed them from there with wonderful signs. Those women did not call on Lucina when he himself preserved their offspring from the hands of the Egyptians. The Egyptians were persecuting them and wanted to kill all the infants, yet the children multiplied in marvelous ways and the nation grew beyond belief. Without the goddess Rumina they sucked at the breast, and without Cunina they lay in their cradles. Without Educa and Potina they took food and drink. Without all those gods of childhood they were brought up, and without the gods of marriage they were married. Without the worship of Priapus they lay with their wives. Without any invocation of Neptune the sea parted and opened a way for them as they crossed. Then, as the waves returned upon themselves, it overwhelmed the enemies who were pursuing them. Nor did they consecrate some goddess Mannia when they received manna from heaven. When the rock was struck and poured out water for them in their thirst, they did not worship Nymphs and Lymphs. They waged wars without the frenzied rites of Mars and Bellona. They did not, of course, conquer

without victory. Yet they regarded victory not as a goddess but as the gift of their God. Without Segetia they had crops, and without Bubona cattle. They had honey without Mellona and fruit without Pomona. In short, everything for which the Romans thought they had to pray to such great crowds of false gods, these people received far more happily from the one true God. But they sinned against him. They were led astray by impious curiosity, as if by magic arts, and drifted away to foreign gods and idols. Finally, they killed Christ. Had they not done these things, they would have remained in the same kingdom—not a larger one, perhaps, but a happier one.[46] And now they are scattered through almost all lands and nations, and this is the providence of that one true God. Everywhere the images, altars, groves and temples of the false gods are being overthrown and sacrifices forbidden. God's purpose is that their own books may prove how this was prophesied so long before. Otherwise, if it were read only in ours, people might think we had invented it. What follows must now be considered in the next book, and here an end must be put to this lengthy one.

46 Augustine coins "Mannia" from manna; Mellona was the goddess of honey (*mella*).

Book V

Fate, providence and Roman virtue
Against astrology; God's foreknowledge and free will; why God rewarded Roman love of glory.

PREFACE

Augustine asks why the true God willed the Roman Empire to be so great and lasting.

5.pr It is established that happiness is the fullness of all things worth desiring. It is not a goddess but a gift of God. Therefore no god is to be worshiped by human beings except one who can make them happy; if happiness were a goddess, she alone would rightly be said to deserve worship. So let us now go on to consider why God, who can also give those goods that even people who are not good, and therefore not happy, can possess, willed the Roman Empire to be so great and so long-lasting. For we have already said a great deal to show that it was not the multitude of false gods they worshiped that did this, and we will say more wherever it seems appropriate.

THAT THE CAUSE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND OF ALL KINGDOMS IS NEITHER CHANCE NOR THE POSITION OF THE STARS

Kingdoms come from divine providence, not chance or the stars; astrology cannot explain twins.

5.1 The cause of the greatness of the Roman Empire, then, is neither chance nor fate, in the sense understood by those who call "chance" whatever has no causes, or has causes that do not

come from any rational order, and call "fate" whatever happens by the necessity of some order, apart from the will of God and of human beings. Human kingdoms are established, quite simply, by divine providence. If anyone attributes them to fate because he calls the very will or power of God by the name of fate, let him keep his opinion but correct his language. For why does he not say first what he will say later, when someone asks him what he meant by "fate"? When people hear that word, the ordinary usage of speech makes them understand nothing but the force of the position of the stars at the moment when someone is born or conceived. Some detach this from the will of God; others affirm that this too depends on it. Those who think that the stars, without God's will, decide what we do, or what goods we have and what evils we suffer, must be denied a hearing by everyone. This applies not only to those who hold the true religion but also to those who want to be worshipers of any gods whatever, even false ones. For what does this opinion accomplish except that no god at all is worshiped or prayed to? But our argument is not directed against these people now. It is directed against those who oppose the Christian religion in defense of the beings they think are gods. Then there are those who make the position of the stars depend on the will of God, while holding that the stars in some way decide what each person is like and what good or evil befalls him. Suppose they think these same stars have this power handed over to them by his supreme power, so that they decide these things by their own will. In that case they do great injury to heaven. They suppose that in heaven's most illustrious senate, so to speak, and its most splendid senate house, crimes are decreed to be committed. If any earthly city had decreed such crimes, the verdict of the human race would have required it to be overthrown. And then what judgment over human actions is left to God, if a heavenly necessity is imposed on those actions, when he is the Lord of both stars and human beings? Or suppose they do not say that the stars, though they have received their power from the supreme God, decide these things by their own choice, but that in impos-

ing such necessities they are simply carrying out his commands. Are we then to think of God himself what seemed utterly unworthy to think of the stars' will? But suppose it is said that the stars signify these things rather than cause them. Their position would then be a kind of speech that foretells the future without bringing it about, and this was the view of men of no small learning. It is true that astrologers do not usually speak this way. They do not say, for example, "Mars in this position signifies a murderer," but "makes a murderer." Still, let us grant that they do not speak as they should, and that they ought to take from the philosophers the rule of speech for announcing what they think they find in the position of the stars. How is it, then, that they have never been able to explain the differences between twins? These differences are often very great: in their lives, their actions, what happens to them, their professions, skills, honors and the other things that belong to human life, and even in their death. As far as these things go, many strangers are more like them than the twins are like each other. Yet twins are separated at birth by a very small interval of time, and at conception they were sown in a single act of intercourse, at a single moment.

THE LIKE AND UNLIKE HEALTH OF TWINS

Twins who fell ill together are better explained by medicine than by the stars.

5.2 Cicero says that Hippocrates, the most renowned of physicians, left it in writing that he suspected certain brothers of being twins, because they had begun to fall ill at the same time, and their illness grew worse at the same time and eased at the same time. Posidonius the Stoic, who was much devoted to astrology, used to maintain that they had been born and conceived under the same configuration of the stars. So what the physician believed was due to a very similar bodily constitution, the philosopher-astrologer attributed to the force and configuration of the stars at the time when they were conceived and

born.[1] In this case the physician's conjecture is far more acceptable, and more credible because it is closer to hand. The parents, as they were affected in body when they had intercourse, could have affected the first beginnings of the children conceived, so that, having received their earliest growth from the mother's body, they were born with similar health. Then they were raised in one house on the same food. Medicine testifies that the air, the situation of the place and the quality of the water have great power to dispose a body well or badly. They were also accustomed to the same exercises. So they would have had bodies so similar that they were moved to fall ill in the same way, at one time and from the same causes. But some people want to drag in the configuration of the sky and the stars at the time when the twins were conceived or born to explain this sameness in falling ill. Yet so many things of the most different kinds, with the most different effects and outcomes, could be conceived and born at the same time in the land of one region under the same sky. I do not know what effrontery it takes to argue like that. We, on the other hand, know of twins who not only have different occupations and travels but also suffer different illnesses. Hippocrates, it seems to me, would give a very easy explanation of this. Different food and exercise, which come not from the body's constitution but from the will of the mind, could have caused them to have different health. But Posidonius, or any champion of fate-dealing stars, would be hard put to find anything to say here, unless he wants to make fools of untrained minds in matters they know nothing about. Consider what they try to make of the tiny interval of time between twins at birth, on account of the small portion of the sky where the mark of the hour is placed, which they call the horoscope. Either this interval does not have as much force as the difference found in the twins' wills, actions, characters and fortunes, or it has even more force than the twins' birth,

1 Cicero reported this in his treatise *On Fate*, in a passage now lost. Hippocrates of Cos (5th century BC) was the founder of Greek medicine; Posidonius of Apamea (c. 135–51 BC) was a Stoic philosopher and polymath.

whether low or noble, which is the same for both. Yet the astrologers attribute the greatest differences of rank to nothing but the hour at which each is born. So if one twin is born so quickly after the other that the same part of the horoscope remains, I look for everything to be equal, and that cannot be found in any twins. But if the delay of the second changes the horoscope, I look for different parents, and twins cannot have those.[2]

THE ARGUMENT THE ASTROLOGER NIGIDIUS TOOK FROM THE POTTER'S WHEEL ON THE QUESTION OF TWINS

Nigidius's potter's wheel cannot explain the great differences between twins born moments apart.

5.3 So it is useless to bring forward that famous invention about the potter's wheel. They say Nigidius gave this answer when he was troubled by the question, and that this is why he was called Figulus, "the Potter." He spun a potter's wheel with all the force he could. While it was turning, he struck it twice with ink, as quickly as possible, as if in a single spot. When the motion stopped, the marks he had made were found on the rim of the wheel at no small distance apart. "So," he said, "given the enormous speed of the heavens, even if one twin is born after the other as quickly as I struck the wheel twice, the gap amounts to a very great distance in the expanse of the sky. This," he said, "is the source of whatever great differences are reported in the characters and fortunes of twins." This fiction is more fragile than the pots fashioned by that spinning.[3] For suppose there is so great a difference in the sky, one that cannot be captured in birth charts, that one twin receives an inheritance and the other does not. Then how do they dare, after examining the birth charts of other people who are not twins, to pronounce on matters of this kind? Those matters belong to that hidden region which no one can grasp and mark down at the moments of

2 The horoscope is the point of the zodiac rising on the eastern horizon at the moment of birth, which astrologers held to be decisive.

3 Publius Nigidius Figulus (d. 45 BC) was a Roman scholar and astrologer and a friend of Cicero. *Figulus* means "potter."

birth. But suppose they say such things in the nativities of others because these things belong to longer stretches of time. The moments of tiny fractions that twins may have between them at birth would then be assigned to the smallest matters, about which astrologers are not usually consulted. After all, who would consult them about when to sit down, when to take a walk, or when or what to eat for lunch? But are these the things we are talking about, when we point out so many differences, and such great ones, in the characters, deeds and fortunes of twins?

ESAU AND JACOB, TWINS VERY UNLIKE EACH OTHER IN CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

The twins Esau and Jacob, born one holding the other's heel, led utterly different lives.

5.4 In the ancient memory of our fathers, to speak of famous cases, two twins were born one after the other in such a way that the second was holding the foot of the first. So many were the differences in their lives and characters, so great the disparity in their actions, so great the dissimilarity in their parents' love, that the very distance between them made them enemies of each other. Are we saying this because when one was walking the other was sitting, when one was asleep the other was awake, and when one was speaking the other was silent? Such things belong to those minutiae that cannot be grasped by those who write down the configuration of the stars at a person's birth for astrologers to consult. One served as a hired laborer; the other was never a servant. One was loved by his mother; the other was not. One lost an honor that was held to be great among them; the other obtained it. And what about their wives, their children, their possessions—what a difference![4] If, then, these things belong to those tiny fractions of time that twins have between them, and are not ascribed to the birth charts, why are they stated when the birth charts of other people are examined? But

4 Jacob and Esau; see Genesis 25–33.

if they are stated because they belong not to imperceptible fractions but to stretches of time that can be observed and recorded, what is that potter's wheel doing here? Its only use is to send people with hearts of clay spinning in circles, so that the empty chatter of the astrologers may not be exposed.

HOW THE ASTROLOGERS ARE SHOWN TO PROFESS AN EMPTY SCIENCE

Twins conceived together but born apart expose the contradictions of astrology.

5.5 What about those very men whom Hippocrates, examining them as a physician, suspected of being twins, because their illness appeared worse and milder in both at the same time? Do they not sufficiently refute those who want to assign to the stars what came from a similar bodily constitution? For why were they ill in the same way and at the same time, and not one earlier and the other later, in the order in which they had been born? After all, they could not both be born at once. Or if being born at different times made no difference to their falling ill at different times, why do the astrologers insist that a difference in the time of birth has force to produce differences in other things? Why could the twins travel at different times, marry at different times, beget children at different times, and do much else, because they were born at different times, and yet could not, for the same reason, also fall ill at different times? For if the unequal delay in being born changed the horoscope and brought inequality into everything else, why did their illnesses keep what they had from being conceived at the same time? Or suppose the fates of health are said to lie in conception, while those of other things lie in birth. Then the astrologers ought not to say anything about health after examining birth charts, since they are not given the hour of conception to examine. But suppose they predict illnesses without examining the horoscope of conception because the moments of birth indicate them. How then could they tell either of those twins, from the hour of his birth, when he would fall ill, when the other twin, who did not

have the same hour of birth, had to fall ill at the same time? Next I ask this. Suppose the interval of time at the birth of twins is so great that their birth charts must turn out different because of the different horoscope, and therefore all the cardinal points differ, and the astrologers place so much power in these that the fates too differ because of them. How could this happen, when their conception cannot have taken place at different times? Or if two children conceived at one moment of time could have unequal fates regarding birth, why could not two born at one moment of time have unequal fates regarding life and death? For if the single moment at which both were conceived did not prevent one from being born first and the other later, why, if two are born at one moment, should anything prevent one from dying first and the other later? If conception at a single moment allows twins to have different fortunes in the womb, why should not birth at a single moment also allow any two people to have different fortunes on earth? In that way all the inventions of this art, or rather this vanity, would be swept away. What does it mean that those conceived at one time, at one moment, under one and the same position of the sky, have different fates that lead them to birth at different hours, while two children born of two mothers at the same moment of time, under one and the same position of the sky, cannot have different fates that lead them to a different necessity of living or dying? Or do those who are conceived not yet have fates, which they cannot have unless they are born? Then what do they mean when they say that if the hour of conception could be found, the astrologers could foretell many things more divinely? This is also why some people spread the story that a certain wise man chose the hour at which to have intercourse with his wife, so as to beget a wonderful son. This, finally, is the source of the reply that Posidonius, a great astrologer and also a philosopher, used to give about those twins who fell ill together. He said it happened because they had been born at the same time and conceived at the same time. He added conception precisely so that no one could object that they could not have been born at exactly the

same time, since they were agreed to have been conceived at exactly the same time. His aim was not to attribute their falling ill in the same way and together to the explanation close at hand, a similar bodily constitution, but to bind that very sameness of health with starry bonds as well. If, then, conception has so much power to make fates equal, the same fates ought not to have been changed by birth. Or if the fates of twins are changed because they are born at different times, why should we not rather understand that their fates had already been changed, so that they would be born at different times? Does the will of the living, then, not change the fates of birth, when the order of birth changes the fates of conception?

TWINS OF DIFFERENT SEX

Twins of different sex, conceived at one moment, refute the power of the stars.

5.6 And yet, even in the conception of twins, where the moments of time are certainly the same for both, how does it happen that under the same fateful constellation one is conceived male and the other female? We know twins of different sex. Both are still living, and both are still in the prime of life. Their bodily appearance is alike, as far as it can be between the sexes, yet in their way and aim of life they are very different. There are the activities in which a woman's must necessarily differ from a man's: he serves in the office of a count and is almost always away from home, while she never leaves her native soil and her own country estate. But beyond these, there is something even harder to believe if one believes in fates ruled by the stars, though not surprising if one considers the wills of human beings and the gifts of God. He is married, and she is a consecrated virgin. He has fathered many children, and she has never even married.[5] But, it is objected, the force of the horoscope counts for a great deal. I have already discussed enough how it counts for nothing. But whatever its force, they say it operates at birth. Does it also

5 A count (*comes*) was a high-ranking officer in the late Roman imperial service.

operate at conception? There it is obvious that there was a single act of intercourse. And so great is the power of nature that once a woman has conceived, she cannot conceive another child at all. Hence the moments of conception must be the same for twins. Or perhaps, because they were born under different horoscopes, either he was changed into a male or she into a female while they were being born? It might not be entirely absurd to say that certain influences from the stars have force over the differences of bodies alone. We see the very seasons of the year vary with the sun's approach and withdrawal. We see certain kinds of things grow and shrink with the waxing and waning of the moon, such as sea urchins and shellfish and the wonderful tides of the ocean. But it would be absurd to say that the choices of the will are subject to the positions of the stars. Yet these people, by trying to bind even our actions to that source, prompt us to ask why their theory cannot hold good even for bodies themselves. For what belongs so much to the body as the body's sex? And yet twins of different sex could be conceived under the same position of the stars. What, then, could be said or believed that is more foolish than this? The position of the stars, which was the same for both at the hour of conception, could not keep her from having a different sex from the brother with whom she shared a constellation. Yet the position of the stars at the hour of their birth could make her differ from him so greatly in the holiness of virginity.

THE CHOICE OF A DAY FOR TAKING A WIFE, OR FOR PLANTING OR SOWING IN A FIELD

Choosing lucky days for marriage or planting contradicts the astrologers' own theory of fate.

5.7 And who can bear the fact that, by choosing days, they contrive new fates for their own actions? Evidently that man was not born to have a remarkable son, but rather to father a contemptible one, and so, being a learned man, he chose the hour at which to sleep with his wife. He therefore made a fate that he did not have, and by his own act something began to be fated

that had not been fated at his birth. What extraordinary folly! A day is chosen for taking a wife. This is done, I suppose, because unless a day is chosen one might stumble on a bad day and marry unhappily. Then where is what the stars already decreed for him at his birth? Can a man change, by choosing a day, what has already been fixed for him, while what he himself has fixed by choosing a day cannot be changed by some other power? Next, if only human beings are subject to constellations, and not everything under heaven, why do they choose some days as suitable for planting vines or trees or crops, and other days for taming livestock or for putting males to the herds of mares or cows so they will breed, and so on? But if chosen days have power in these matters because the position of the stars governs all earthly bodies, living or not, according to the differences between moments of time, then let them consider how countless are the things that are born, or arise, or begin at a single point of time. These have such different outcomes that they would convince any child that these observations deserve ridicule. For who is so senseless as to dare to say that all trees, all plants, all beasts, snakes, birds, fish and worms each have a different moment of birth? Yet people often test the skill of astrologers by bringing them the constellations of dumb animals, whose births they carefully observe at home for this very trial. And they prefer to all others those astrologers who examine the constellations and say that it was not a human being who was born but an animal. They even dare to say what kind of animal: whether suited for wool, or for carrying loads, or for the plow, or for guarding the house. They are tested even on the fates of dogs, and they give these answers to loud cries of admiration. People are so foolish as to think that when a human being is born, all other births are held back, so that not even a fly is born under the same region of the sky at the same moment. For if they admit the fly, the reasoning proceeds and leads them step by small step from flies to camels and elephants. Nor do they want to notice that when a day has been chosen for sowing a field, a great many grains go into the ground together and sprout

together, and when the crop comes up they grow green, mature and turn golden together. And yet, of the ears that are the same age as the rest and, if I may put it so, sprouted together with them, some are destroyed by blight, some are ravaged by birds, and some are plucked by people. How will they say that these had different constellations, when they see them meet such different ends? Or will they repent of choosing days for these things and deny that they come under the decree of heaven, and subject only human beings to the stars—the only beings on earth to whom God has given free wills? When all this is considered, it is not unreasonable to believe that when astrologers give many answers that are astonishingly true, this happens by the hidden prompting of spirits that are not good. Their concern is to plant these false and harmful opinions about astral fate in human minds and to strengthen them. It does not happen by noting and examining a horoscope by some art, for there is no such art.

THOSE WHO CALL BY THE NAME OF FATE NOT THE POSITION OF THE STARS BUT THE CHAIN OF CAUSES DEPENDING ON GOD'S WILL

Those who call the chain of causes under God's will "fate" differ from us only in a word.

5.8 There are those, however, who use the name "fate" not for the arrangement of the stars as it is when anything is conceived, born or begun, but for the whole connection and chain of causes by which everything that happens happens. We need not labor and fight with them very much over a dispute about a word, since they attribute this very order of causes, this kind of connection, to the will and power of the supreme God. He is most rightly and most truly believed both to know all things before they happen and to leave nothing unordered. From him come all powers, though the wills of all do not come from him. That it is above all the will of the supreme God, whose power extends invincibly through all things, that they call fate is proved as follows. These verses, unless I am mistaken, are by Annaeus Seneca: "Lead me, supreme father and ruler of the high heavens,

wherever you please; I do not delay to obey.[6] "Here I am, eager. Suppose I am unwilling: I shall follow groaning, and suffer as a bad man what I could have done as a good one. The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling." Plainly, in this last line he has given the name "fates" to what he had called above the will of the supreme father. He says he is ready to obey that will, so as to be led willingly and not dragged unwillingly—since, of course, "the fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling." The lines of Homer that Cicero translated into Latin also support this view: "The minds of men are like the light with which father Jupiter himself has lit up the earth."[7] A poet's opinion would carry no authority on this question. But Cicero says that the Stoics, when asserting the power of fate, were in the habit of using these lines of Homer. So the question concerns not the opinion of that poet but the opinion of those philosophers. Through these lines, which they bring into their discussion of fate, it is made perfectly plain what they think fate is, since they name Jupiter, whom they hold to be the supreme god, and say that the connection of the fates depends on him.

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN FREE WILL, AGAINST CICERO'S DEFINITION

Against Cicero, Augustine holds that God's foreknowledge and human free will are compatible.

5.9 Cicero tries to refute these men, but he does not think he can prevail against them unless he does away with divination. He tries to do away with it by denying that there is any knowledge of the future; he argues with all his strength that there is no such knowledge at all, whether in man or in god, and no prediction of events. In this way he both denies the foreknowledge of God and tries to overthrow all prophecy, though it is clearer than daylight, by empty arguments and by setting up against

6 Lucius Annaeus Seneca (d. AD 65), Stoic philosopher; the lines (*Letters* 107.11) are his Latin version of a prayer by the Greek Stoic Cleanthes.
7 Homer, *Odyssey* 18.136–137.

himself certain oracles that can easily be refuted—and even these he does not refute. In refuting the conjectures of the astrologers, however, his eloquence reigns supreme, because they really are such that they destroy and refute themselves. Yet those who make fate depend on the stars are far more tolerable than this man who abolishes foreknowledge of the future. For to admit that God exists and to deny that he foreknows the future is the most obvious madness.[8] He saw this himself, and so he even attempted what is written: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'"—but not in his own person. For he saw how odious and offensive it would be. So in his books *On the Nature of the Gods* he made Cotta argue on this subject against the Stoics, and he preferred to cast his vote for Lucilius Balbus, to whom he gave the task of defending the Stoic position, rather than for Cotta, who argues that there is no divine nature. In his books *On Divination*, on the other hand, he attacks foreknowledge of the future quite openly and in his own person. He seems to do all this to avoid admitting fate and losing free will. For he thinks that once knowledge of the future is granted, fate follows so inevitably that it cannot be denied at all.[9] But however matters stand with the tangled debates and disputes of the philosophers, we, just as we confess the supreme and true God, so also confess his will, his supreme power and his foreknowledge. Nor are we afraid that what we do by our will we do not do by our will, because he whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foreknew that we would do it. This is what Cicero feared, so that he attacked foreknowledge; and what the Stoics feared, so that they said not everything happens by necessity, although they maintained that everything happens by fate. What, then, did Cicero fear in foreknowledge of the future, that he strove to undermine it with so detestable an argument? Clearly this: if all future things are foreknown, they will come about in the order in

8 Cicero argues this in his dialogue *On Divination* (44 BC), Book 2.
9 Psalm 13:1 (14:1 in most English Bibles). Gaius Aurelius Cotta and Quintus Lucilius Balbus are speakers in Cicero's dialogue, representing the Academic and Stoic positions.

which they were foreknown to come about. If they come about in that order, the order of events is fixed for God who foreknows it. If the order of events is fixed, the order of causes is fixed, for nothing can happen without being preceded by some efficient cause. But if the order of causes by which everything that happens happens is fixed, then, he says, everything that happens happens by fate. If that is so, nothing is in our power and there is no choice of the will. And if we grant that, he says, all human life is overturned: laws are made in vain, rebukes and praises, blame and encouragement are used in vain, and there is no justice at all in the rewards appointed for the good and the punishments for the wicked. So, to keep these unworthy and absurd consequences, so ruinous to human affairs, from following, he will not have foreknowledge of the future. And he forces the religious mind into this tight corner, so that it must choose one of two things: either that something is in our will, or that there is foreknowledge of the future. For he thinks both cannot be true, but that if one is affirmed the other is abolished. If we choose foreknowledge of the future, the choice of the will is abolished; if we choose the choice of the will, foreknowledge of the future is abolished. And so he, as a great and learned man who took the greatest and most expert thought for human life, chose of these two the free choice of the will. To establish it, he denied foreknowledge of the future, and so, in his wish to make men free, he made them sacrilegious. The religious mind, however, chooses both, confesses both, and affirms both by the faith of piety. "How can that be?" he asks. For if there is foreknowledge of the future, all those linked consequences will follow, until we arrive at the point where nothing is in our will. Again, if anything is in our will, we arrive by retracing the same steps at the point where there is no foreknowledge of the future. For we go back through them all like this: if there is choice of the will, not everything happens by fate; if not everything happens by fate, there is no fixed order of all causes; if there is no fixed order of causes, neither is there a fixed order of events for God who foreknows them, since events cannot happen unless causes

precede and produce them; if the order of events is not fixed for God who foreknows them, not everything comes about as he foreknew it would come about; and further, if not everything comes about as he foreknew it would, then, he says, there is not in God foreknowledge of all future things.

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE AND OUR WILLS

Augustine answers Cicero: our wills are themselves among the causes God foreknows.

Against these sacrilegious and impious ventures, we say both that God knows all things before they happen and that we do by our will whatever we feel and know is done by us only because we will it. We do not say that everything happens by fate; indeed we say that nothing happens by fate. For we show that the name "fate," as people usually apply it—that is, to the arrangement of the stars at the time someone is conceived or born—means nothing, since the thing itself is asserted to no purpose. The order of causes, on the other hand, in which the will of God is supremely powerful, we neither deny nor call by the word "fate"—unless perhaps we understand *fatum* as derived from *fari*, that is, from speaking. For we cannot deny that it is written in the holy Scriptures: "God has spoken once; these two things I have heard: that power belongs to God, and to you, Lord, belongs mercy, for you repay each one according to his works."[10] When it says "he has spoken once," this is understood to mean that he spoke immovably, that is, unchangeably, just as he knows unchangeably all things that will happen and that he himself will do. On this reasoning, then, we could call it fate from "speaking," were it not that this name is already customarily understood of something else, toward which we do not want people's hearts to be inclined. But it does not follow that, if the order of all causes is fixed for God, nothing is therefore in the choice of our will. For our wills themselves are in the order of causes, which is fixed for God and contained in his foreknowledge, since human wills

10 Psalm 61:11–12 (62:11–12 in most English Bibles).

too are the causes of human actions. And so he who foreknew all the causes of things certainly could not, among those causes, have been ignorant of our wills, which he foreknew to be the causes of our actions.

Indeed, what Cicero himself concedes—that nothing happens unless an efficient cause precedes it—is enough to refute him on this question. What good does it do him to say that nothing happens without a cause, but that not every cause is a cause of fate (*fatalis*), since there is chance cause, natural cause and voluntary cause? It is enough that he admits that everything that happens happens only when a cause precedes it. For we say that the causes called chance causes (from which fortune too takes its name) are not nonexistent but hidden, and we attribute them to the will either of the true God or of spirits of whatever kind. And natural causes we by no means separate from the will of him who is the author and founder of all nature. Voluntary causes, moreover, belong either to God, or to angels, or to human beings, or to animals of whatever kind—if indeed we should call "wills" those movements of souls lacking reason by which they do things according to their nature when they seek or avoid something. By the wills of angels I mean those of good angels, whom we call angels of God, and of evil angels, whom we call angels of the devil or even demons; and likewise of human beings, both good and wicked. From this it follows that there are no efficient causes of all that happens except voluntary causes, that is, causes belonging to that nature which is the spirit of life. For this air, or wind, is also called *spiritus* [breath, spirit]; but since it is a body, it is not the spirit of life. The spirit of life, then, which gives life to all things and is the creator of every body and of every created spirit, is God himself, a spirit who is certainly uncreated. In his will is supreme power, which helps the good wills of created spirits, judges the evil ones, orders them all, and grants powers to some and not to others. For just as he is the creator of all natures, so he is the giver of all powers—but not of wills. Evil wills do not come from him, since they are contrary to nature, which does come from him. Bodies, then, are rather

subject to wills: some to ours, that is, to those of all mortal living things, and more to those of human beings than of beasts; others to the wills of angels. But all are subject above all to the will of God, to whom all wills too are subject, since they have no power except what he grants. God, then, is the cause of things that makes and is not made. Other causes both make and are made, as all created spirits are, especially rational ones. Bodily causes, however, which are made rather than make, are not to be counted among efficient causes, since they can do only what the wills of spirits do through them. How, then, does the order of causes, which is fixed for God who foreknows it, bring it about that nothing is in our will, when our wills have a large place in that very order of causes? Let Cicero contend, then, with those who say that this order of causes is fated, or rather call it by the name of fate. We shrink from that name, chiefly because of the word itself, which is customarily understood of something unreal. But in denying that the order of all causes is utterly fixed and fully known to God's foreknowledge, we detest him more than we do the Stoics. For either he denies that God exists—which he tried to do, speaking through another character, in his books *On the Nature of the Gods*—or, if he admits that God exists while denying that he foreknows the future, even so he is saying nothing other than what that fool said in his heart: "There is no God." For one who does not foreknow all future things is certainly not God. Therefore our wills too have just as much power as God willed and foreknew that they would have. And so whatever power they have, they have it with complete certainty, and what they are going to do, they themselves are entirely going to do, because he whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foreknew that they would have that power and would do it. So if I chose to apply the name "fate" to anything, I would rather say that the fate of the weaker is the will of the stronger, who has the weaker in his power, than that the choice of our will is taken away by that order of causes which the Stoics call fate—not in the ordinary sense, but in their own peculiar way.

WHETHER ANY NECESSITY RULES HUMAN WILLS

The necessity of God's foreknowledge does not take away the freedom of our will.

5.10 So we need not fear that necessity either. Out of fear of it the Stoics labored to distinguish the causes of things, exempting some from necessity and subjecting others to it. Among those they did not want to be under necessity they placed our wills as well, so that our wills would not lose their freedom by being subjected to necessity. Now if we are to call "our" necessity that which is not in our power but accomplishes what it can even against our will, as the necessity of death does, then it is clear that our wills, by which we live rightly or wrongly, are not under any such necessity. For we do many things that we certainly would not do if we did not want to. To this belongs, first of all, willing itself. If we will, it exists; if we do not will, it does not. For we would not will if we did not want to.[11] But suppose necessity is defined as that by which we say it is necessary that something be so or happen so. Then I do not see why we should fear that it will take away the freedom of our will. For we do not place God's life or God's foreknowledge under necessity when we say it is necessary that God always live and foreknow all things. Nor is his power diminished when it is said that he cannot die or be deceived. His inability here is of such a kind that, if he could do these things, he would surely have less power. He is rightly called almighty, even though he cannot die or be deceived. For he is called almighty because he does what he wills, not because he suffers what he does not will. If that happened to him, he would by no means be almighty. So there are some things he cannot do precisely because he is almighty. So too, when we say it is necessary that, when we will, we will by free choice, we undoubtedly speak the truth. Yet we do not thereby subject free choice itself to the necessity that takes

11 The Latin printed here reads *uoluerunt* ("they wanted"), but the sense requires *noluerunt* ("they did not want"), and the translation follows that sense.

away freedom. Our wills, then, are our own. They themselves do whatever we do by willing, and it would not be done if we did not want it. And whatever anyone suffers against his will through the will of other people, even then it is will that prevails. It may not be his will, but it is still a human will. The power, however, is God's. For if there were only a will that could not do what it willed, it would be thwarted by a more powerful will. Even so, the will would be nothing other than a will. It would belong not to someone else but to the one who willed, even if he could not carry out what he willed. Hence whatever a person suffers against his will, he should not attribute to the wills of human beings, or of angels, or of any created spirit. He should attribute it rather to the will of him who gives power to those who will.

It does not follow, then, that nothing is in our will because God foreknew what would be in our will. For he who foreknew this did not foreknow nothing. And if he who foreknew what would be in our will foreknew not nothing but something, then surely, even though he foreknows it, there is something in our will. We are therefore in no way forced either to keep God's foreknowledge and abolish the will's free choice, or to keep the will's free choice and deny (an impious thing) that God foreknows the future. Rather, we embrace both. We confess both faithfully and truly: the one so that we may believe rightly, the other so that we may live rightly. And a person lives badly who does not believe rightly about God. So far be it from us to deny his foreknowledge in order to will freely, since it is with his help that we are free, or will be. Laws, then, are not in vain, nor are reproofs, exhortations, praise and blame. For he foreknew that these too would exist, and they have great power, as much power as he foreknew they would have. Prayers too are effective in obtaining what he foreknew he would grant to those who pray. And rewards have justly been appointed for good deeds, and punishments for sins. For a person does not sin because God foreknew that he would sin. On the contrary, there is no doubt that it is he himself who sins when he sins. This is precisely because he

whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foreknew that the one who would sin was not fate, not fortune, not anything else, but the man himself. If he does not want to sin, he certainly does not sin. But if he chooses not to sin, God foreknew that too.

GOD'S UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE, BY WHOSE LAWS ALL THINGS ARE HELD TOGETHER

God's providence orders everything from angels to a bird's feather, so it also orders kingdoms.

5.11 Therefore the supreme and true God, with his Word and the Holy Spirit, which three are one, is one God almighty. He is the creator and maker of every soul and every body. By sharing in him, all are happy who are happy in truth and not in vanity. He made man a rational animal, composed of soul and body. When man sinned, he neither let him go unpunished nor abandoned him without mercy. To good and bad alike he gave existence, which they share with stones; seminal life, which they share with trees; sensory life, which they share with animals; and intellectual life, which they share with the angels alone. From him comes every limit, every form, every order. From him come measure, number and weight. From him comes whatever exists by nature, of whatever kind and whatever worth;[12] from him come the seeds of forms, the forms of seeds, and the motions of seeds and forms. He gave the flesh its origin, beauty and health, its fruitfulness in reproduction, the arrangement of its limbs, and the well-being that comes from their harmony. To the irrational soul he gave memory, sense and appetite, and to the rational soul, in addition, mind, intelligence and will. He has left nothing without a harmony of its parts and a kind of peace: not heaven and earth, not angel and man, and not even the inner organs of a tiny and insignificant creature, a bird's little feather, a plant's little flower or a tree's leaf. It is in no way to be believed that this God willed the kingdoms of men, with their

12 "Measure, number and weight" echoes Wisdom 11:20 (11:21 in some numberings): "You have ordered all things in measure, number and weight."

dominions and their subjections, to lie outside the laws of his providence.

BY WHAT MORALS THE ANCIENT ROMANS DESERVED TO HAVE THE TRUE GOD ENLARGE THEIR EMPIRE, THOUGH THEY DID NOT WORSHIP HIM

The early Romans' love of praise and glory curbed their other vices and drove them to great deeds.

5.12 Let us see, then, which qualities of the Romans the true God, in whose power even earthly kingdoms lie, deigned to help in enlarging their empire, and for what reason. To be able to discuss this more fully, I wrote the previous book, which bears on this point and shows that in this matter there is no power in those gods whom they thought should be worshiped even for trivial matters. I also wrote the earlier parts of the present volume, which I have carried up to this point, to dispose of the question of fate. My purpose was that no one already persuaded that the Roman Empire was not spread and preserved by the worship of those gods should attribute it to some fate or other rather than to the most powerful will of the supreme God. The ancient and earliest Romans, then, so far as their history teaches and commends them, worshiped false gods like other nations, with the sole exception of the Hebrew people, and sacrificed victims not to God but to demons. Nevertheless, they were "greedy for praise and generous with money; they wanted immense glory and honest wealth." This glory they loved most ardently. For it they wanted to live, and for it they did not hesitate to die. All their other cravings they suppressed by their immense craving for this one thing. Finally, since it seemed inglorious for their country to serve and glorious for it to rule and command, they desired with all their zeal that it should first be free, and then be mistress.[13] Hence it was that, unable to bear royal domination, "they made for themselves annual commands

13 Sallust (86–c. 35 BC), Roman historian, *The War with Catiline* 7.6; Augustine quotes him repeatedly in what follows.

and two commanders." These were called consuls, from *consulere*, "to take counsel," not kings or lords, from *regnare* and *dominari*, "to reign" and "to dominate." Kings (*reges*), to be sure, seem to take their name better from *regere*, "to rule," just as kingdom (*regnum*) comes from kings, and kings, as I said, from ruling. But royal arrogance was regarded not as the discipline of one who rules or the goodwill of one who takes counsel, but as the pride of one who dominates. So once King Tarquin had been expelled and consuls instituted, there followed what the same author set down in praise of the Romans: "Once it had gained its liberty, it is incredible to recall how much the city grew in a short time, so great a desire for glory had come over it." It was this eagerness for praise and this desire for glory, then, that accomplished those many marvelous deeds, deeds praiseworthy and glorious, that is, by human estimation.[14]

The same Sallust praises the great and distinguished men of his own time, Marcus Cato and Gaius Caesar. He says that for a long time the commonwealth had had no one great in virtue, but that within his own memory there had been these two, men of immense virtue though of different character. Among Caesar's praises he records that "he longed for a great command, an army, a new war, where his virtue could shine forth." So it was among the wishes of men great in virtue that Bellona should rouse wretched nations to war and drive them with her bloody scourge, so that there might be a place for their virtue to shine. This, surely, was the work of that eagerness for praise and desire for glory. So it was first out of love of liberty, later also of domination, and out of desire for praise and glory, that they did many great things.[15] Their famous poet also bears witness to both these things. On the first he says: "Porsenna too was ordering them to take back the banished Tarquin, and was pressing the city with a mighty siege; the sons of Aeneas were rushing upon

14 Sallust, *Catiline* 6.7 and 7.3. Tarquin the Proud was Rome's last king, traditionally expelled in 509 BC.

15 Sallust, *Catiline* 53.6 and 54.4, on Cato the Younger (95–46 BC) and Julius Caesar (100–44 BC). Bellona was the Roman goddess of war.

the sword for liberty." At that time, then, it was a great thing to them either to die bravely or to live free. But once liberty was gained, so great a desire for glory had come over them that liberty alone was too little unless domination too was sought. For they set great store by what the same poet says, putting the words in Jupiter's mouth: "Indeed, harsh Juno, who now wearies sea and lands and sky with fear, will change her counsels for the better and with me will cherish the Romans, lords of the world, the toga-clad race. So it is decreed. An age will come, as the five-year cycles glide by, when the house of Assaracus will crush Phthia and famed Mycenae in slavery and lord it over conquered Argos."[16] Virgil, in presenting Jupiter as if foretelling these things as future, was himself recalling things already done and looking at things present. But I wanted to mention them to show that, after liberty, the Romans prized domination so highly that it was counted among their great glories. Hence also that passage of the same poet in which he sets above the arts of other nations those arts proper to the Romans: ruling, commanding, subjugating and subduing peoples. He says: "Others will hammer out breathing bronze more softly, I grant it, and draw living faces from marble. They will plead cases better, trace the movements of the heavens with the rod and tell of the rising stars. You, Roman, remember to rule the peoples with your command (these will be your arts), to impose the ways of peace, to spare the subjected and to subdue the proud in war."[17] They practiced these arts the more skillfully, the less they gave themselves over to pleasures. They did not yet enfeeble mind and body by craving and piling up riches, corrupt their morals through those riches, rob wretched citizens or lavish gifts on shameless stage performers. By the time Sallust was writing and Virgil was singing these things, men of that kind already surpassed others in moral decay and abounded in it. They sought

16 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.646–648 and 1.279–285. Porsenna was an Etruscan king. Assaracus was an ancestor of the Trojans, from whom the Romans claimed descent, while Phthia, Mycenae and Argos were the Greek homes of Troy's conquerors.
17 *Aeneid* 6.847–853.

honors and glory not by those arts but by tricks and deceits. Hence the same author says: "But at first it was ambition rather than avarice that drove men's minds, a vice that was nevertheless closer to virtue. For the good man and the worthless man alike desire glory, honor and command for themselves; but the former," he says, "strives by the true way, while the latter, because he lacks good arts, contends by tricks and deceits."[18] These are the good arts: to arrive at honor, glory and command through virtue, that is, not through deceitful ambition. Yet these are things that the good man and the worthless man alike desire for themselves; but the former, that is, the good man, strives by the true way. The way is virtue, by which he strives as toward the goal he means to possess, namely glory, honor and command. That the Romans had this ingrained in them is shown also by the temples of their gods, those of Virtue and Honor, which they built closely joined together, treating as gods things that are given by God. From this we can understand what end they wanted virtue to serve and to what those who were good referred it, namely, to honor. For the wicked did not even have virtue, though they longed to have honor and tried to obtain it by bad arts, that is, by tricks and deceits.[19]

Cato was given better praise. For of him Sallust says: "The less he sought glory, the more it followed him." Indeed, glory, which they burned to possess, is the judgment of people who think well of other people. And so that virtue is better which is content not with human testimony but only with that of its own conscience. Hence the apostle says: "For this is our glory: the testimony of our conscience." And in another place: "Let each one test his own work, and then he will have glory in himself alone and not in another." Virtue, then, ought not to follow glory, honor and command, which they desired for themselves and which the good strove to reach by good arts. Rather, these ought to follow virtue. For there is no true virtue except that which

18 Sallust, *Catiline* 11.1–2.

19 The joint temple of Honor and Virtue stood near the Capene Gate in Rome.

tends toward the end where man's good lies, than which there is nothing better.[20]

CATO'S SPEECH

Sallust's Cato says early Rome grew great through industry and justice, not arms.

So the honors Cato sought, he ought not to have sought. Rather, the city should have given them to him for his virtue without his asking. But since, within that memory, there were two Romans great in virtue, Caesar and Cato, the virtue of Cato seems to have been far closer to the truth than Caesar's. So let us see what the city was like at that time, and what it had been before, from Cato's own speech: "Do not think," he says, "that our ancestors made the commonwealth great from small by arms. If that were so, we would have it far more splendid. For we have a greater supply of allies and citizens, and of arms and horses besides, than they did. But there were other things that made them great, and we have none of them: industry at home, just rule abroad, and a mind free in deliberation, enslaved neither to wrongdoing nor to passion."[21] "In their place we have luxury and greed, public poverty and private wealth. We praise riches and pursue idleness. Between good and bad there is no distinction; ambition possesses all the rewards of virtue. And no wonder: when each of you makes his plans separately for himself, when at home you are slaves to pleasures and here to money or influence, the result is that an attack is made on a commonwealth left defenseless."

Anyone who hears these words of Cato, or of Sallust, supposes that all the Romans of old, or most of them, were the kind of men they are praised as being. It is not so. Otherwise what Sallust himself also writes would not be true, the passage I mentioned in the second book of this work. There he says that the injuries done by the stronger, the resulting secession of the

20 Sallust, *Catiline* 54.6; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Galatians 6:4.
21 Cato's speech in Sallust, *Catiline* 52.19–23.

plebs from the patricians and other dissensions at home existed right from the beginning. He also says that affairs were conducted with fair and moderate justice after the kings were expelled only as long as fear of Tarquin lasted, until the grievous war undertaken with Etruria on his account was finished. Afterward, he says, the patricians treated the plebs like slaves, flogged them in the manner of kings, drove them from their land, and held power alone, excluding everyone else. One side wanted to dominate and the other refused to be enslaved, and these discords came to an end only with the Second Punic War. For then a heavy fear once again began to press on them. With another, greater concern, it held their restless minds back from those disturbances and called them back to civic concord.[22] Yet great things were accomplished through a few men who were good after their own fashion. Once those evils were tolerated and tempered, the state grew through the foresight of a few good men. The same historian says as much. As he read and heard of the many glorious deeds the Roman people had done at home and in war, by sea and by land, he was moved to consider what above all had sustained such great undertakings. For he knew that the Romans had often fought with a small band against great legions of enemies, and he had learned that they had waged wars with slender forces against wealthy kings. After much reflection, he says, it became clear to him that the outstanding virtue of a few citizens had accomplished everything. This was how poverty overcame riches and the few overcame the many. "But after the city was corrupted by luxury and sloth," he says, "the commonwealth in its turn, by its own greatness, sustained the vices of its generals and magistrates."[23] So it was the virtue of the few, who strove for glory, honor and command by the true way, that is, by virtue itself, that Cato too praised. This was the source of the industry at home that Cato mentioned, so that the treasury was rich while private means were

22 From Sallust's *Histories*, quoted in 2.18. The Second Punic War (218–201 BC) was Rome's war against Hannibal of Carthage.
23 Sallust, *Catiline* 53.2–5.

slender. Hence, when morals were corrupted, he set down the opposite vice: public poverty, private wealth.

THE LOVE OF PRAISE, WHICH, THOUGH A VICE, IS THOUGHT A VIRTUE BECAUSE GREATER VICES ARE HELD IN CHECK BY IT

Love of praise is a vice, but it restrained worse vices in the Romans.

5.13 So, after the kingdoms of the East had been illustrious for a long time, God willed that a Western empire should also arise. It came later in time, but it was more illustrious in the breadth and greatness of its rule. He granted this above all to men of a particular kind, so that they might subdue the grievous evils of many nations. These were men who, for the sake of honor, praise and glory, devoted themselves to their country, in which they sought that very glory, and who did not hesitate to put its safety before their own. For the sake of this one vice, the love of praise, they held down the craving for money and many other vices. For he sees more soundly who recognizes that even the love of praise is a vice. This did not escape the poet Horace either, who says: "Are you swelling with love of praise? There are sure rites of atonement that can restore you, once you have read the little book three times with a pure heart."[24] And in a lyric poem, to curb the lust for domination, the same poet sang: "You would rule a wider realm by taming a greedy spirit than if you joined Libya to distant Gades, and the Carthaginians of both shores served you alone." Yet some people do not restrain their baser lusts by the faith of godliness, having received the Holy Spirit, and by love of intelligible beauty. For them it is at least better to be restrained by the craving for human praise and glory. They are not holy as a result, but they are less base. Even Cicero could not conceal this in those same books he wrote *On the Commonwealth*. There he speaks of educating the leading man of the state, who, he says, must be nourished on glory, and he goes on to recall that his ancestors did many wonderful and splendid things out of a

24 Horace, *Epistles* 1.1.36–37.

craving for glory. So far from resisting this vice, then, they actually thought it should be roused and kindled, believing it useful to the commonwealth.[25] Indeed, even in his philosophical books Cicero does not disguise this plague; there he admits it, clearer than daylight. When he was speaking of studies that should certainly be pursued for the sake of the end of true good, not out of the vanity of human praise, he brought in this universal, general maxim: "Honor nourishes the arts; all are fired to study by glory; and those pursuits always lie neglected which are frowned upon by people."[26]

CUTTING BACK THE LOVE OF HUMAN PRAISE, SINCE ALL THE GLORY OF THE JUST IS IN GOD

Christians must resist the love of human praise, as the apostles and martyrs did.

5.14 Beyond doubt, then, it is better to resist this craving than to give in to it. For the cleaner anyone is of this uncleanness, the more like God he is. In this life it is not torn out of the heart by the roots, since it does not cease to tempt even souls that are making good progress. But at least let the craving for glory be overcome by love of justice. Then, if somewhere "those pursuits lie neglected which are frowned upon by people," and if they are good and right, the very love of human praise will blush and give way to the love of truth. For this vice is so hostile to devout faith, when the craving for glory is greater in the heart than the fear or love of God, that the Lord said: "How can you believe, when you expect glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from God alone?"[27] Likewise, of certain people who had believed in him but were afraid to confess it openly, the evangelist says: "They loved human glory more than the glory of God." This the holy apostles did not do. They preached the name of Christ in places where it was not only frowned upon (as that

25 Horace, *Odes* 2.2.9–12; Gades is modern Cádiz in Spain.
26 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.2.4.
27 John 5:44.

writer says, "those pursuits always lie neglected which are frowned upon by people") but actually regarded with the utmost loathing. They held fast to what they had heard from their good master, who was also the physician of minds: "Whoever denies me before people, I will deny him before my Father who is in heaven," or "before the angels of God." And so, amid curses and reproaches, amid the most severe persecutions and cruel punishments, they were not deterred from preaching human salvation, though human offense raged against it so loudly.[28] As they did and spoke divine things and lived divine lives, hard hearts were in a way conquered and the peace of justice was brought in, and great glory followed them in the Church of Christ. Yet they did not rest in that glory as though it were the goal of their virtue. Instead, they referred this glory too to the glory of God, by whose grace they were what they were; and with this kindling as well they fired those they cared for with love of him by whom they too might become such. For their master had taught them not to be good for the sake of human glory, saying: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before people in order to be seen by them; otherwise you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."[29] But again, so that they would not misunderstand this, become afraid of pleasing people, and do less good by hiding the fact that they were good, he showed them for what purpose they should make themselves known: "Let your works shine before people," he said, "so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Not, then, "in order to be seen by them"—that is, with the intention of wanting them to turn to you, since you are nothing of yourselves—but "so that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven," so that, turning to him, they may become what you are. The martyrs followed the apostles, and they surpassed the Scaevolas, the Curtiuses and the Deciuses—not by inflicting suffering on themselves but by bearing the suffering inflicted on them—both by true virtue, because by true godliness, and by their

28 John 12:43; Matthew 10:33 and Luke 12:9.
29 Matthew 6:1.

countless numbers.[30] But those Romans belonged to the earthly city. The end set before them in all their duties toward it was its safety, and a kingdom not in heaven but on earth—not in eternal life, but in the passing away of the dying and the succession of those who would die in their turn. What else were they to love, then, but glory, by which they wished to live on, as it were, even after death, on the lips of those who praised them?

THE TEMPORAL REWARD GOD GAVE TO THE GOOD MORALS OF THE ROMANS

Earthly glory was the Romans' reward for their virtues, since they would not have eternal life.

5.15 God was not going to give these men eternal life with his holy angels in his heavenly city. True godliness leads to the fellowship of that city, and it offers the service of religion, which the Greeks call λατρεία [*latreia*: service due to God alone], to none but the one true God. If, then, he had not granted them even this earthly glory of a most excellent empire, no reward would have been paid to their good arts—that is, to the virtues by which they strove to attain such glory. For of such people, who seem to do something good in order to be glorified by others, the Lord too says: "Truly I tell you, they have received their reward."[31] So these men too disregarded their private wealth for the sake of the common wealth—that is, the commonwealth—and its treasury. They resisted greed. They took counsel for their country with free deliberation, enslaved neither to wrongdoing, by their own laws, nor to passion. By all these arts, as by the true way, they strove for honors, power and glory. They were honored among almost all nations; they imposed the laws of their rule on many nations; and to this day they are celebrated in literature and history among nearly all nations. They have no grounds to

30 Matthew 5:16. Mucius Scaevola, Curtius and the Decii were Roman heroes who maimed or sacrificed themselves for Rome; their stories are told in chapter 18.
31 Matthew 6:2.

complain of the justice of the supreme and true God: "they have received their reward."[32]

THE REWARD OF THE HOLY CITIZENS OF THE ETERNAL CITY, TO WHOM THE ROMANS' EXAMPLES OF VIRTUE ARE USEFUL

The saints' reward is the eternal city, and Rome's example teaches them how to love it.

5.16 But the reward of the saints is far different—of those who even here endure reproaches for the sake of God's truth, which is hateful to those who love this world. That city is everlasting. There no one is born, because no one dies. There is true and full happiness—not a goddess, but a gift of God. From there we have received the pledge of faith, for as long as, wandering as pilgrims, we sigh for its beauty. There the sun does not rise on the good and the evil alike; the sun of justice shelters the good alone. There it will take no great effort to enrich the public treasury while private means are slender, for there the treasury of truth is held in common.[33] Accordingly, the Roman Empire was expanded to human glory not only so that such men might receive such a reward, but also so that the citizens of that eternal city, as long as they are pilgrims here, might look carefully and soberly at those examples. Then they will see how much love is owed to the heavenly homeland for the sake of eternal life, if the earthly homeland was so loved by its citizens for the sake of human glory.

32 Augustine echoes Sallust: Cato's speech in *The War with Catiline* 52.21 and the "true way" of 11.2.

33 Felicity (Felicitas) was worshiped at Rome as a goddess (see Book 4). The sun rising "on the good and the evil" echoes Matthew 5:45; "the sun of justice" recalls Malachi 4:2.

WHAT THE ROMANS GAINED BY THEIR WARS, AND HOW MUCH THEY GAVE THOSE THEY CONQUERED

Under whose rule a mortal lives matters little; conquest brought the Romans only empty glory.

5.17 For as far as this mortal life is concerned, which is lived out and ended in a few days, what does it matter under whose rule a man who is going to die lives, provided those who rule do not force him into impious and unjust acts? Or did the Romans do any harm to the nations they subjugated and on whom they imposed their laws—except that it was done with enormous slaughter in war? Had it been done by agreement, the same result would have been achieved with better success—but there would have been no glory for those who celebrated triumphs. For the Romans too lived under the laws they imposed on others. If this had been done without Mars and Bellona, so that Victory too had no place, since no one conquers where no one has fought, would not the Romans and the other nations have been in one and the same condition?[34] All the more so if what was later done, most graciously and humanely, had been done at once: that all who belonged to the Roman Empire received the fellowship of citizenship and became Roman citizens, so that what had once belonged to a few belonged to all. The only difference would have been that the common people who had no land of their own would live at public expense; and this provision for them would have been supplied more pleasantly by good administrators of the commonwealth from people living in harmony than if it were extorted from the conquered.[35]

For I do not see at all what difference it makes to safety and good morals—or, certainly, to people's actual standing—that some conquered and others were conquered. The only difference is that utterly empty pride of human glory, in which those

34 Bellona was the Roman goddess of war; Victory too was worshiped as a goddess.

35 Roman citizenship was extended to nearly all free inhabitants of the empire by the emperor Caracalla in AD 212.

who burned with an enormous craving for it and waged burning wars "have received their reward." Do their lands not pay taxes? Are they allowed to learn what others are not? Are there not many senators in other lands who do not even know Rome by sight? Take away boasting, and what are all human beings but human beings? Even if the perversity of this age allowed the better people always to be the more honored, not even then should human honor have been held to be anything great, for smoke has no weight. But let us make use of the kindness of the Lord our God even in these things. Let us consider how much they despised, what they endured, what desires they subdued for the sake of human glory—these men who earned that glory as the reward of such virtues. And let this too serve us to crush our pride. That city in which we are promised to reign is as far from this one as heaven is from earth, eternal life from temporal joy, solid glory from empty praise, the fellowship of angels from the fellowship of mortals, the light of him who made the sun and moon from the light of the sun and moon. So the citizens of so great a homeland should not think they have done anything great if, to obtain it, they have done some good work or endured some evils, when those men did so much and suffered so much for this earthly homeland, which they already possessed. This is all the more true because the forgiveness of sins, which gathers citizens into the eternal homeland, has something to which that asylum of Romulus bore a kind of shadowy likeness: there impunity for crimes of every kind gathered the multitude by which that city was to be founded.[36]

36 Romulus was said to have opened a sanctuary on the Capitoline Hill where fugitives of every sort could find refuge and become citizens of his new city (Livy 1.8).

HOW FAR FROM BOASTING CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE IF THEY DO SOMETHING FOR LOVE OF THE ETERNAL COUNTRY, WHEN THE ROMANS DID SO MUCH FOR HUMAN GLORY AND AN EARTHLY CITY

Roman heroes sacrificed everything for earthly glory, so Christians have no cause to boast of their sacrifices.

5.18 What great thing is it, then, to despise all the allurements of this world, however pleasant, for the sake of that eternal and heavenly homeland, if for the sake of this temporal and earthly one Brutus could even kill his sons—something the heavenly homeland compels no one to do? But surely it is harder to put one's sons to death than to do what must be done for the heavenly homeland: either to give to the poor the things that seemed to need gathering and saving for one's sons, or to lose them, if a trial arises that forces this for the sake of faith and justice. For it is not earthly riches that make us or our sons happy—riches that we must either lose while we live or that, when we are dead, will be possessed by we know not whom, or perhaps by people we would not want. It is God who makes us happy, for he is the true wealth of minds. As for Brutus, because he killed his sons, even the poet who praises him bears witness to his unhappiness.[37] For he says: "The father, for the sake of fair liberty, will summon to punishment his sons who stir up new wars—unhappy man, however later generations judge those deeds." But in the next line he consoled the unhappy man: "Love of country prevails, and the boundless craving for praise." These are the two things—liberty and the craving for human praise—that drove the Romans to wondrous deeds. If, then, for the liberty of people who were going to die, and out of a craving for praise sought from mortals, a father could kill his sons, what great thing is it if we act for the true liberty that makes us free from the domination of iniquity, death and the devil? We act not out of a craving

37 Lucius Junius Brutus, who expelled the kings and became one of the first consuls (509 BC), had his sons executed for plotting to restore the Tarquins.

for human praise but out of love for setting people free—not from King Tarquin, but from demons and the prince of demons. And sons are not killed; rather, Christ's poor are counted among one's sons.[38]

Another Roman leader, surnamed Torquatus, killed his son—not because the son had fought against his country; indeed, he had fought for it. But, challenged by an enemy, he had fought with youthful ardor against his father's command, that is, against what his father, the commander, had commanded. Though he had won, his father killed him, lest there be more harm in the example of a command disregarded than good in the glory of an enemy slain. If so, why should those boast who, for the laws of an immortal homeland, despise all earthly goods, which are loved far less than sons?[39] Furius Camillus had thrown off from his country's neck the yoke of its fiercest enemies, the people of Veii, and had then been condemned by his rivals; yet he freed that ungrateful country a second time, from the Gauls, because he had no better one where he could live more gloriously. If so, why should anyone be extolled as if he had done something great who, having perhaps suffered in the Church the grievous injury of disgrace at the hands of carnal enemies, did not go over to her enemies the heretics or found some heresy against her himself, but rather defended her as best he could from the ruinous perversity of the heretics? For there is no other Church—not one in which to live in human glory, but one in which to gain eternal life.[40] King Porsenna was pressing the Romans hard in a very grievous war. Mucius, in order to bring about peace with him, had tried to kill Porsenna himself but failed, and by mistake killed another man in his place. He then stretched out his right hand into a burning altar before the king's eyes, telling him that many men like the one he saw had sworn together to destroy him. Porsenna, shuddering at

38 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.820–823.

39 Titus Manlius Torquatus, consul in 340 BC, executed his son for engaging in single combat against orders (Livy 8.7).

40 Camillus captured Veii in 396 BC, was later exiled, and was recalled to save Rome from the Gauls around 390 BC.

his courage and at a conspiracy of such men, without any hesitation made peace and withdrew from that war. If so, who will present his merits as a claim on the kingdom of heaven if, for its sake, he gives up not one hand, and does not do it to himself of his own accord, but, under persecution, suffers his whole body to be given over to the flames?[41] Curtius, in full armor, spurred his horse and flung himself headlong into a sheer chasm in the earth, obeying the oracles of his gods. They had ordered that the best thing the Romans had should be thrown in there, and the Romans could understand this only to mean that they excelled in men and arms. Hence, evidently, an armed man had to be hurled into that death at the gods' command. If so, what great thing will anyone say he has done for the eternal homeland who has suffered some enemy of his faith and died—not by throwing himself into such a death of his own accord, but by being sent to it by that enemy? After all, he has received from his Lord, who is also the king of his homeland, a surer oracle: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."[42] The Decii devoted themselves to death, consecrating themselves, as it were, with set words, so that by their falling and appeasing the wrath of the gods with their blood the Roman army might be saved. If so, the holy martyrs will by no means grow proud, as though they had done something worthy of a share in that homeland where happiness is eternal and true. For they contended even to the shedding of their own blood, loving—as they were commanded—not only their brothers, for whom it was shed, but also their very enemies, by whom it was shed, with the faith of love and the love of faith.[43] When Marcus Pulvillus was dedicating the temple of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, jealous rivals falsely reported to him that his son had died, so that he would be upset by the news and withdraw, and his colleague would win the glory of the dedication. But he so disregarded it that he even ordered the body

41 Gaius Mucius, afterward called Scaevola ("Lefty"), c. 508 BC (Livy 2.12–13).
42 Matthew 10:28. Marcus Curtius was said to have ridden into a chasm in the Forum in 362 BC (Livy 7.6).
43 Publius Decius Mus and his son of the same name ritually "devoted" themselves to death in battle, in 340 and 295 BC.

to be thrown out unburied—so completely had the craving for glory overcome in his heart the grief of losing a child. If so, what great thing will anyone claim to have done for the preaching of the holy gospel, by which the citizens of the heavenly homeland are set free from their various errors and gathered together? For the Lord said to one who was anxious about his father's burial: "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."[44] Marcus Regulus, so as not to break the oath he had sworn to his most cruel enemies, returned to them from Rome itself. As he is said to have answered the Romans who wanted to keep him, after being a slave of the Africans he could not hold the standing of an honorable citizen there. And the Carthaginians, because he had argued against them in the Roman senate, put him to death with the most severe tortures. If so, what tortures are not to be despised for faith toward that homeland to whose happiness faith itself leads? Or what "shall be repaid to the Lord for all that he has repaid," if a man suffers for the faith he owes to him such things as Regulus suffered for the faith he owed to his deadliest enemies?[45]

ROMAN POVERTY

Valerius, Cincinnatus and Fabricius stayed poor while enriching Rome, shaming Christian boasting.

How will a Christian dare to pride himself on voluntary poverty, embraced so that on the pilgrimage of this life he may walk more unencumbered on the way that leads to the homeland where God himself is the true wealth? He hears or reads that Lucius Valerius, who died during his consulship, was so poor that his funeral was paid for with money collected by the people. He hears or reads that Quintius Cincinnatus, who owned four *iugera* of land and farmed them with his own hands, was

44 Matthew 8:22. Marcus Horatius Pulvillus, consul in 509 BC, dedicated the temple on the Capitol (Livy 2.8).

45 Marcus Atilius Regulus, a consul captured by Carthage in the First Punic War (255 BC); see 1.15. The quotation is Psalm 115:12 (116:12 in most English Bibles).

brought from the plow to be made dictator—an office surely greater in honor than consul—and that after defeating the enemy and winning immense glory he remained in the same poverty.[46] Or what great thing will anyone boast of having done if no reward of this world has lured him away from the fellowship of that eternal homeland? He has learned that Fabricius could not be torn away from the Roman state by all the great gifts of Pyrrhus, king of the Epirotes—even with the promise of a quarter of his kingdom—and that he preferred to remain there in his poverty as a private citizen.[47] Then there is this. They possessed a commonwealth—that is, the people's wealth, the country's wealth, the common wealth—that was most opulent and rich, yet they themselves were so poor in their own homes that one of them, who had already been consul twice, was expelled from that senate of poor men by the censor's mark because he was found to own ten pounds of silver plate. So poor were the very men whose triumphs enriched the public treasury. Christians, with a more excellent purpose, make their wealth common property, in keeping with what is written in the Acts of the Apostles: that distribution was made to each as each had need, and no one called anything his own, but they had everything in common. Do they not all understand, then, that they ought not to be puffed up with any boasting on this account, since they do this to gain the fellowship of angels, when those men did almost the same thing to preserve the glory of the Romans?[48]

When would these deeds, and any others of this kind found in their literature, have become so well known, when would they have been proclaimed with such fame, if the Roman Empire had not been extended far and wide and enlarged by magnificent successes? Accordingly, through that empire—so wide and so

46 Valerius is probably Publius Valerius Publicola, who died in 503 BC; Cincinnatus was called from his farm of about two and a half acres to be dictator in 458 BC.

47 Gaius Fabricius Luscinus negotiated with Pyrrhus of Epirus, who invaded Italy in 280 BC.

48 The expelled senator was Publius Cornelius Rufinus, removed by the censors in 275 BC. The scriptural reference is Acts 4:32–35.

lasting, so illustrious and glorious through the virtues of such great men—their aims received the reward they sought. And examples were set before us as a necessary warning. The virtues they held for the glory of the earthly city bear some sort of likeness to true virtues. If we do not hold those true virtues for the most glorious city of God, we should be stung with shame; if we do hold them, we should not be lifted up with pride. For, as the apostle says, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of the glory to come that will be revealed in us." But for human glory, the glory of this present time, their life was judged quite worthy.[49] Hence the Jews too, who killed Christ, were most justly given over to the glory of these Romans. For the New Testament revealed what had been veiled in the Old: that the one true God is to be worshiped not for earthly and temporal benefits, which divine providence grants to good and bad alike, but for eternal life, for everlasting gifts, and for fellowship in the heavenly city itself. So it was right that those who sought and gained earthly glory by virtues of whatever kind should conquer those who, with great vices, killed and rejected the giver of true glory and of the eternal city.

HOW THE DESIRE FOR GLORY DIFFERS FROM THE DESIRE FOR DOMINATION

The craving for glory differs from the craving for domination, which stops at no crime.

5.19 There is certainly a difference between the craving for human glory and the craving for domination. It is an easy slide for someone who delights too much in human glory to aspire ardently to domination as well. Still, those who crave true glory, even if it is only the glory of human praise, take pains not to displease those who judge well. For there are many good qualities of character that many people judge rightly, even though many do not possess them. It is by these good qualities of character that men strive toward glory, empire or domination, the men of

49 Romans 8:18.

whom Sallust says: "But he strives by the true way." But whoever desires to dominate and command without the craving for glory, which makes a man afraid to displease those who judge well, usually seeks to get what he loves even by the most open crimes. So the one who craves glory either strives by the true way or at least contends "by tricks and deceits," wanting to seem good when he is not.[50] And so, for one who has the virtues, it is a great virtue to despise glory, because his contempt for it is seen by God but is not laid open to human judgment. Whatever he does before people's eyes to show that he despises glory, if he is believed to be doing it for greater praise, that is, for greater glory, he has no way of proving to the minds of those who suspect him that he is other than they suspect. But one who despises the judgments of those who praise him also despises the rashness of those who suspect him. Yet if he is truly good, he does not despise their salvation. For one who has his virtues from the Spirit of God is so just that he loves even his enemies. He loves them in such a way that he wants those who hate or disparage him to be corrected and to become his companions, not in the earthly homeland but in the one above. As for those who praise him, he sets little value on their praising him, but he does not set little value on their loving him. Nor does he want to mislead them when they praise him, lest he deceive those who love him. And so he presses ardently for the praise to go instead to the one from whom a man has whatever is rightly praised in him. But one who despises glory yet is greedy for domination outdoes the beasts in the vices of cruelty or of self-indulgence. Some Romans were like this. They had lost all concern for their reputation, but they were not without the craving for domination. History records that there were many such men. But the summit, the citadel as it were, of this vice was first held by the emperor Nero. His self-indulgence was so great that no one would have thought there was anything manly in him to fear. His cruelty was so great that, had his self-indulgence not been known, he would have been thought to have nothing soft in him

50 Sallust, *Catiline* 11.2.

at all. Yet even to such men the power to rule is given only by the providence of the supreme God, when he judges that human affairs deserve such masters. The divine voice is clear on this point, where the Wisdom of God says: "By me kings reign, and through me tyrants hold the land." Someone might think that "tyrants" here means not the worst and most wicked kings but, in the old sense of the word, strong men. Hence Virgil says: "It will be part of the peace for me to have touched the tyrant's right hand." But lest anyone think so, another passage says of God quite plainly: "For he makes a hypocrite reign because of the perversity of the people."[51] Therefore I have explained, as well as I could, why the one true and just God helped the Romans, who were good by a certain standard of the earthly city, to attain the glory of so great an empire. Yet there may also be another, more hidden reason, owing to the varied merits of the human race, better known to God than to us. Only let this be agreed among all who are truly devout: that no one can have true virtue without true piety, that is, without the true worship of the true God; and that virtue is not true when it serves human glory. Even so, those who are not citizens of the eternal city, which our sacred Scriptures call the city of God, are more useful to the earthly city when they have at least that sort of virtue than if they had not even that. But if those who live good lives, endowed with true piety, have the skill of governing peoples, nothing is happier for human affairs than that they should hold power by God's mercy. Such men attribute their virtues, however great these can be in this life, to nothing but the grace of God, because he gave them these virtues when they willed, believed and asked. At the same time they understand how far they fall short of the perfection of righteousness found in the fellowship of the holy angels, for which they strive to make themselves fit. However much the virtue that serves human glory without true piety may be praised and proclaimed, it can in no way be compared with even the slight beginnings of the

51 Proverbs 8:15; Job 34:30. The Virgil line is *Aeneid* 7.266, where King Latinus speaks of Aeneas.

saints, whose hope is placed in the grace and mercy of the true God.

THAT IT IS AS SHAMEFUL FOR THE VIRTUES TO SERVE HUMAN GLORY AS TO SERVE BODILY PLEASURE

Virtues serving human glory are as degraded as virtues serving pleasure.

5.20 Some philosophers place the end of human good in virtue itself. Other philosophers approve of the virtues but measure them by the end of bodily pleasure: they think pleasure is to be sought for its own sake, and the virtues for the sake of pleasure. To shame these, the first group often paint a kind of picture in words. In it Pleasure sits on a royal throne like some pampered queen, and the virtues are set beneath her as her maidservants, watching for her nod so as to do whatever she commands. She orders Prudence to inquire vigilantly how Pleasure may reign and be kept safe. She orders Justice to grant what favors she can to win the friendships needed for bodily comforts, and to wrong no one, lest the laws be offended and Pleasure be unable to live securely. She orders Courage, if pain should come upon the body without driving it to death, to hold her mistress, that is, Pleasure, firmly in the mind's thoughts, so that by recalling her former delights she may soften the stings of present pain. She orders Temperance to take only so much food, even of what is delightful, that nothing harmful may upset the health through excess, and that Pleasure, which the Epicureans also locate chiefly in the health of the body, may not be gravely offended.[52] So the virtues, with all the glory of their dignity, will be slaves to Pleasure, as if she were some imperious and disreputable little woman. They say that nothing is more disgraceful and ugly than this picture, nothing the eyes of good men could less bear; and they speak the truth. But I do not think the picture would be

52 The image goes back to the Stoic Cleanthes, as reported by Cicero, *On Ends* 2.69. The Epicureans followed Epicurus (341–270 BC), who made pleasure the goal of life.

decent enough either if another were drawn in which the virtues serve human glory. For although Glory herself is not a pampered woman, she is puffed up and full of emptiness. So it is not fitting for the solidity and firmness of the virtues to serve her, with Prudence providing for nothing, Justice distributing nothing, Courage enduring nothing, Temperance moderating nothing, except what will please people and serve windy glory. Nor can they clear themselves of this ugliness who scorn others' judgments as though they despised glory, but seem wise to themselves and are pleased with themselves. For their virtue, if it is virtue at all, is subjected to human praise in another way, since the man who pleases himself is still a human being. But one who believes and hopes in God, whom he loves, with true piety, pays more attention to the things in himself that displease him than to those, if there are any, that please not so much himself as the truth. And whatever now enables him to please, he attributes only to the mercy of the one he fears to displease, giving thanks for what has been healed and pouring out prayers for what is yet to be healed.

THAT THE ROMAN KINGDOM WAS ORDERED BY THE TRUE GOD, FROM WHOM IS ALL POWER AND BY WHOSE PROVIDENCE ALL THINGS ARE RULED

The one true God gives kingdoms to good and bad rulers alike, as he wills.

5.21 Since this is so, let us attribute the power of granting kingdom and empire only to the true God. He gives happiness in the kingdom of heaven to the godly alone, but earthly kingdom to the godly and the ungodly alike, as it pleases him, and nothing pleases him unjustly. We have said something of what he willed to make plain to us. Still, it is too much for us, far beyond our powers, to examine the hidden things of human beings and to decide with clear scrutiny what kingdoms deserve. So that one true God, who never abandons the human race either in judgment or in help, gave kingdom to the Romans when he willed and as far as he willed. He gave it to the Assyrians, and to the

Persians too, who, as our opponents' own writings record, worship only two gods, one good and the other evil. I say nothing of the Hebrew people, of whom I have already said as much as seemed enough, who worshiped none but the one God even when they had a kingdom. He gave the Persians crops without the worship of the goddess Segetia. He gave them the other gifts of the earth without the worship of all those gods whom these people set, one each over individual things, or even several over each. So he too, and no other, gave them kingdom without the worship of those gods through whose worship these people believed they had reigned.[53] It is the same with individual men. He who gave power to Marius gave it to Gaius Caesar. He who gave it to Augustus gave it also to Nero. He who gave it to the Vespasians, father and son, most agreeable emperors, gave it also to the most cruel Domitian. And not to go through them one by one: he who gave it to Constantine the Christian gave it also to Julian the Apostate. Julian's fine natural gifts were led astray, through his love of domination, by a sacrilegious and detestable curiosity. He was devoted to its empty oracles when, confident of victory, he burned the ships that carried the provisions his army needed. Then, pressing on hotly in reckless ventures, he was soon killed in enemy territory, as his rashness deserved, and left his army destitute. It could not escape from there except by moving the boundaries of the Roman Empire, contrary to that omen of the god Terminus of which we spoke in the previous book. For the god Terminus yielded to necessity, though he had not yielded to Jupiter.[54] Plainly the one true God rules and governs these things as he pleases. And if his reasons are hidden, does that make them unjust?

53 Segetia was the Roman goddess of standing crops, among the many minor deities mocked in Book 4.

54 Gaius Caesar is Julius Caesar. Julian (emperor AD 361–363) died in Persia, and his successor ceded Roman territory to save the army; Terminus, god of boundaries, had refused to make way even for Jupiter on the Capitol (4.23, 4.29).

THAT THE LENGTH AND OUTCOME OF WARS DEPEND ON GOD'S JUDGMENT

God decides how long wars last; Rome's pre-Christian wars were often very long.

5.22 So too with the very length of wars. It lies in his choice, by his just judgment and mercy, to wear down the human race or to console it, so that some wars end sooner and others later. The war against the pirates was finished by Pompey, and the Third Punic War by Scipio, with incredible speed and in a short time. The war of the runaway gladiators, too, defeated many Roman commanders and two consuls and ground down and devastated Italy dreadfully. Yet in its third year, after consuming much, it was itself consumed.[55] The Picentes, Marsi and Paeligni, peoples not foreign but Italian, after long and most devoted servitude under the Roman yoke, tried to raise their heads toward freedom. By then many nations had already been subjected to Roman rule, and Carthage had been destroyed. In this Italian war the Romans were very often defeated, and two consuls and other senators of the highest nobility perished. Yet this evil was not drawn out for long, for the fifth year ended it. But the Second Punic War, with very great losses and calamity for the commonwealth, wore down Roman strength for eighteen years and almost used it up; in two battles nearly seventy thousand Romans fell. The First Punic War was waged for twenty-three years, the Mithridatic war for forty.[56] And lest anyone think that the Romans in their early days, those earlier times so highly praised for every virtue, were more vigorous in finishing wars quickly: the Samnite war dragged on for nearly fifty years. In that war the Romans were so badly beaten that they were even

55 Pompey cleared the Mediterranean of pirates in 67 BC; Scipio Aemilianus destroyed Carthage in 146 BC; the gladiators' revolt led by Spartacus lasted from 73 to 71 BC.

56 The "Italian war" is the Social War of 91–88 BC. The two battles of the Second Punic War are Lake Trasimene (217 BC) and Cannae (216 BC); the wars with Mithridates VI of Pontus ran from 89 to 63 BC.

sent under the yoke. But because they did not love glory for the sake of justice, but seemed to love justice for the sake of glory, they broke the peace and the treaty that had been made. I mention these things because many people who are ignorant of the past, and some who also conceal what they know, see some war in Christian times dragged out a little longer and at once leap most insolently upon our religion. They cry out that if it did not exist, and the deities were worshiped in the old way, then by that Roman courage which, with the help of Mars and Bellona, finished such great wars so quickly, this war too would be ended very quickly.[57] Let those who have read history recall, then, how long the wars waged by the Romans of old were, how varied in outcome, how grievous in their disasters. For the world, like a most storm-tossed sea, is regularly buffeted by a shifting tempest of such evils. Let them at last admit what they do not want to admit, and stop destroying themselves with tongues raving against God and deceiving the unlearned.

THE WAR IN WHICH RADAGAISUS, KING OF THE GOTHS AND A WORSHIPER OF DEMONS, WAS DEFEATED IN ONE DAY WITH HIS HUGE FORCES

God crushed the pagan Radagaisus without a Roman casualty, then let Christian Goths take Rome mercifully.

5.23 Yet there is something God did, wonderfully and mercifully, within our own memory and very recently. They do not recall it with thanksgiving; rather, as far as lies in them, they try to bury it, if possible, in the forgetfulness of all mankind. If we keep silent about it, we shall be just as ungrateful. Radagaisus, king of the Goths, was already encamped near the City with a huge and savage host and hung over the necks of the Romans. Yet he was defeated in a single day, and so swiftly that, without a single Roman being—I will not say killed, but even wounded—his army of far more than a hundred thousand was laid low, and he him-

57 At the Caudine Forks (321 BC) a trapped Roman army was made to pass under a yoke of spears in token of surrender. Bellona was the Roman goddess of war.

self was soon captured and put to death with the punishment he deserved. For if a man so ungodly had entered Rome with forces so great and so ungodly, whom would he have spared? What shrines of the martyrs would he have honored? In whose person would he have feared God? Whose blood would he have wished unshed, whose chastity untouched?[58] And what cries these people would have raised for their gods! How insultingly they would have boasted that he had conquered and been so powerful because he appeased and invited the gods with daily sacrifices, which the Christian religion would not let the Romans do! For when he was already approaching the region where he was crushed at the nod of the supreme Majesty, and reports of him were spreading everywhere, we were told at Carthage that the pagans believed, spread and boasted that, with the gods as his friends protecting and helping him (for he was said to sacrifice to them every day), he could not possibly be defeated by those who performed no such rites to the Roman gods and allowed no one else to perform them. And the wretches do not give thanks for such great mercy from God. He had resolved to chastise, by a foreign invasion, the morals of men who deserved to suffer worse. Yet he tempered his indignation with such gentleness that first he caused that king to be wonderfully defeated, lest glory be given to the demons he was known to pray to, and the minds of the weak be overthrown. Then he caused Rome to be taken by these invaders, who, contrary to every custom of earlier wars, protected out of reverence for the Christian religion those who fled to the holy places. As Christians they so opposed the demons themselves and the rites of ungodly sacrifice on which that other king had relied, that they seemed to be waging a far fiercer war on them than on men. Thus the true Lord and Governor of all things both scourged the Romans with mercy and, by the incredible defeat of those who prayed to demons, showed that those sacrifices were not necessary even for safety in present things. So those who do not stubbornly con-

58 Radagaisus, a Gothic leader, invaded Italy and was defeated near Florence in AD 406.

tend but wisely attend may not abandon true religion because of present needs, but may hold to it all the more in most faithful expectation of eternal life.[59]

WHAT THE HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIAN EMPERORS IS, AND HOW TRUE IT IS

Christian emperors are happy not for success but if they rule justly, humbly and for eternal life.

5.24 For we do not call certain Christian emperors happy because they reigned longer, or died a peaceful death leaving sons to reign after them, or subdued the enemies of the commonwealth, or were able both to guard against and to crush hostile citizens who rose against them. These and other gifts or consolations of this troubled life even some worshipers of demons have deserved to receive, though they do not belong to the kingdom of God, to which these emperors belong. And this was done by his mercy, so that those who believe in him should not desire such things from him as though they were the supreme goods. But we call them happy if they rule justly; if, amid the tongues of those who honor them loftily and the fawning of those who greet them too humbly, they are not puffed up but remember that they are men; if they make their power the handmaid of his majesty, to spread his worship as widely as possible; if they fear, love and worship God; if they love more that kingdom where they are not afraid to have partners; if they are slow to punish and quick to pardon; if they use punishment out of the need to govern and defend the commonwealth, not to glut the hatred of their enmities; if they grant pardon not so that wrongdoing may go unpunished but in the hope of correction; if, when they are often compelled to decree something harsh, they offset it with the gentleness of mercy and the generosity of benefits; if their self-indulgence is the more restrained the freer it could be; if they would rather rule their evil desires than any nations whatever; and if they do all these things not out of ardor for

59 The invaders who took Rome were the Goths under Alaric, in AD 410.

empty glory but out of love of eternal happiness; if they do not neglect to offer to their true God, for their sins, the sacrifice of humility, compassion and prayer. Such Christian emperors we call happy—for now in hope, and afterward in reality, when what we are waiting for has come.

THE PROSPERITY GOD GRANTED TO CONSTANTINE, THE CHRISTIAN EMPEROR

God gave Constantine, who did not pray to demons, a long, victorious reign.

5.25 For the good God did not want people who believed that he should be worshiped for the sake of eternal life to suppose that no one could attain these high positions and earthly kingdoms without praying to demons, as if these spirits had great power in such matters. So he filled the emperor Constantine, who did not pray to demons but worshiped the true God himself, with earthly gifts so great that no one would dare to wish for them. He even granted him the founding of a city allied with the Roman Empire, a daughter, as it were, of Rome herself, but without a single temple or image of the demons. Constantine reigned a long time. As sole Augustus he held and defended the whole Roman world. In directing and waging wars he was supremely victorious, and in putting down usurpers he prospered at every turn. He died of illness and old age at a great age, and left his sons as emperors.[60] But again, God did not want any emperor to become a Christian in order to earn the happiness of Constantine, since everyone ought to be a Christian for the sake of eternal life. So he took Jovian away much sooner than Julian. He allowed Gratian to be cut down by a usurper's sword, though far more gently than the great Pompey, who worshiped what passed for the Roman gods. For Pompey could not be avenged by Cato, whom he had left as a kind of heir to the civil war. Gratian, though pious souls do not seek such consola-

60 Constantine the Great (reigned AD 306–337), the first Christian emperor. The city is Constantinople, dedicated in AD 330.

tions, was avenged by Theodosius. Gratian had made Theodosius a partner in his rule even though he had a little brother of his own, for he was more eager for a faithful partnership than for excessive power.[61]

THE FAITH AND PIETY OF THE EMPEROR THEODOSIUS

Theodosius's faith, mercy and penance made him a model Christian emperor.

5.26 Theodosius, then, not only kept the faith he owed Gratian while he lived. After Gratian's death, when his little brother Valentinian had been driven out by Maximus, Gratian's murderer, Theodosius took the boy into his own part of the empire as his ward, as a Christian would, and guarded him with a father's affection. He could have done away with him without any trouble, stripped as the boy was of all resources, had he burned more with the desire to rule more widely than with the love of doing good. Instead, he took him in, preserved his imperial rank, and comforted him by that very kindness and favor. Then, when this success had made Maximus formidable, Theodosius, in the straits of his anxiety, did not slip into sacrilegious and unlawful occult inquiries. Instead, he sent to John, who lived in the desert of Egypt and who, as his fame spread, Theodosius had learned was a servant of God endowed with the spirit of prophecy. From him he received a most certain message of victory.[62] Soon, having destroyed the usurper Maximus, he restored the boy Valentinian, with the most compassionate respect, to the parts of the empire from which he had been driven. Shortly afterward Valentinian died, whether through treachery or by some other means or accident. Theodosius then received another prophetic answer and, sure in his faith,

61 Jovian, a Christian, reigned only months (AD 363–364), less than the pagan Julian (361–363). Gratian was killed in AD 383 by agents of the usurper Maximus. Pompey was murdered in Egypt in 48 BC, and Cato the Younger carried on the war against Caesar. Theodosius I became Gratian's co-emperor in AD 379.

62 Valentinian II, driven from Italy by Maximus in AD 387. John of Lycopolis was a celebrated Egyptian hermit (died c. AD 394).

crushed a second usurper, Eugenius, who had been set up illegitimately in that emperor's place. Against Eugenius' very powerful army he fought more by praying than by striking. Soldiers who were there have told us that whatever they hurled was wrenched from their hands. A violent wind was blowing from Theodosius' side against the enemy. It not only snatched away with tremendous force everything thrown at them, but even turned the enemy's own missiles back against their bodies. That is why even the poet Claudian, though a stranger to the name of Christ, said in praise of Theodosius: "O you whom God loves exceedingly, for whom the sky goes to war, and the winds, sworn allies, come at the trumpet's call!"[63] As victor, just as he had believed and foretold, he threw down the statues of Jupiter that had been set up against him in the Alps, consecrated by who knows what rites. Their thunderbolts were made of gold, so he gave them away cheerfully and kindly to his couriers. They joked, as the joy of the moment allowed, that they would gladly be struck by such thunderbolts. His enemies had been swept away by the onrush of battle, not by his own command, and their sons, though not yet Christians, fled to the church. He wanted them to become Christians on this occasion, and he loved them with Christian love. He did not strip them of their property, and he even advanced them in honors. After the victory he allowed no private grudge to prevail against anyone. Cinna, Marius, Sulla and others like them would not end civil wars even when the wars were over. Theodosius was different: he grieved more that civil wars had broken out than he wished to harm anyone once they had ended.[64] Amid all this, from the very beginning of his reign he never ceased to help the Church in its struggle against the impious, through laws that were both just and merciful. Valens, a heretic who favored the Arians, had afflicted the Church severely. Theodosius rejoiced more to be a

63 This was the battle of the Frigidus River (AD 394). Claudian (died c. AD 404) was a pagan court poet; the lines come from his *Panegyric on the Third Consulship of Honorius* (96–98), quoted with a gap.

64 Cinna, Marius and Sulla led the factions in Rome's civil wars of the 80s BC. They were notorious for massacres and reprisals after their victories.

member of this Church than to reign on earth. He ordered the images of the pagans to be overthrown everywhere, for he understood well that even earthly gifts lie in the power not of demons but of the true God. And what was more wonderful than his religious humility? The people of Thessalonica had committed a very grave crime, and at the bishops' intercession he had already promised them pardon. Yet he was driven by the clamor of some of his close associates to punish it. Then, constrained by the discipline of the Church, he did penance in such a way that the people praying for him wept more at the sight of the imperial majesty laid low than they had feared its anger when they sinned.[65] These good works, and others like them that would take too long to recount, he took with him out of that passing vapor of human power and eminence, however lofty. The reward of such works is eternal happiness, and God gives it only to the truly pious. But the other things of this life, whether its heights or its supports, he bestows on good and bad alike. These include the world itself, light and air, lands, waters and crops, and a human being's own soul and body, senses, mind and life. Among them too is any greatness of empire, which he dispenses according to his governance of the ages.[66]

I see, then, that I must now also reply to those who have been refuted and convicted by the clearest proofs. These proofs show that the multitude of false gods is of no use for these temporal things, which alone fools crave to possess. Yet they try to maintain that the gods should be worshiped not for the benefit of this present life but for the sake of the life that is to come after death. To those who want to worship empty things for the sake of friendship with this world, and who complain that they are not allowed to indulge their childish notions, I think these five books have given answer enough. When I had published the first three and they had begun to pass through many hands, I heard

65 Valens (reigned AD 364–378) supported the Arians, who denied that the Son is equal to the Father. After the massacre at Thessalonica in AD 390, Ambrose, bishop of Milan, required Theodosius to do public penance.

66 The "vapor" echoes James 4:14: "What is your life? You are a vapor that appears for a little while."

that certain people were preparing some sort of written reply to them. Later word was brought to me that they had already written it but were waiting for a time when they could publish it without danger. I advise them not to wish for what is not to their advantage. For it is easy for anyone who refuses to keep quiet to seem to have replied. Or what is more talkative than empty folly? Yet it cannot do what truth can just because, if it wants, it can shout even louder than truth. But let them consider everything carefully. If, judging without partisanship, they happen to see that these arguments can be jeered at but not overthrown by the most shameless chatter and the flippancy of satire or farce, let them restrain their trifling and choose to be corrected by the wise rather than praised by the shameless. For if they are waiting for an opportunity not for freedom to speak the truth but for license to speak abuse, God forbid that what Cicero said of a certain man should happen to them. That man was called happy because he had license to sin, and Cicero said: "O wretched man, who was permitted to sin!" So whoever thinks himself happy because he has license to speak abuse will be much happier if he is not permitted it at all. For he could lay aside his empty boasting and, even in these times, raise whatever objection he likes, as if seeking advice. Then, in friendly discussion, he would hear from those he consults, as far as they are able to give it, what he ought to hear—honorably, seriously and freely.

Book VI

Varro's three theologies
The gods of mythical and civil theology cannot give eternal life.

PREFACE

Five books have answered those who worship many gods for this life's sake.

6.pr In the five preceding books I think I have argued enough against those who hold that many false gods should be venerated and worshiped for the benefit of this mortal life and of earthly things. They would honor them with the rite and service called in Greek λατρεία [*latreia*: service due to God alone], which is owed to the one true God. Yet Christian truth proves these gods to be useless images, or unclean spirits and harmful demons, or at any rate creatures and not the Creator. But who does not know that neither these five books nor any others, however many, could ever be enough for excessive folly or stubbornness? For vanity counts it glory to yield to no strength of truth, and this certainly ruins the one over whom so monstrous a vice holds sway. Against all the efforts of the one treating it, the disease remains unconquered. The fault lies not with the doctor but with the patient, who is incurable. But some readers weigh what they read after understanding and considering it, and cling to their old error either not at all or not with great and excessive obstinacy. These will more readily judge that in these five finished volumes we have discussed more than the question itself required, rather than less. Nor will they be able to doubt that the whole odium the ignorant try to stir up against the Christian

religion over the disasters of this life and the ruin and upheaval of earthly things is utterly empty of right thinking and reason. It is full of the most frivolous rashness and the most destructive animosity. And the learned, possessed by a mad impiety, not only pretend not to notice it but even encourage it, against their own conscience.

THOSE WHO SAY THEY WORSHIP THE GODS NOT FOR THE SAKE OF THIS PRESENT LIFE BUT FOR THE SAKE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Augustine now turns to those who worship the gods for the sake of eternal life.

6.1 Now, then, as the promised order requires, we must next refute and instruct those who maintain that the gods of the nations, which the Christian religion destroys, are to be worshiped not for the sake of this life but for the sake of the life that is to come after death. I would like to take the opening of my argument from the truthful oracle of the holy psalm: "Happy is the one whose hope is the Lord God, and who has not looked to vanities and lying follies." Still, among all these vanities and lying follies, the philosophers are by far the more tolerable to listen to. They disliked these opinions and errors of the peoples. For the peoples set up images of their deities, and about those they call immortal gods they either invented many false and unworthy things or believed them once invented, and having believed them, they mixed them into their worship and the rituals of their rites.[1] These men have testified that they disapprove of such things. They did so not by proclaiming it freely, but at least by muttering it somehow in their discussions. With them it is not so very unfitting to take up this question: for the sake of the life that is to come after death, ought we to worship not the one God who made every creature, spiritual and bodily, but many gods? Some of these same philosophers, more excel-

1 Psalm 39:5 (40:4 in most English Bibles).

lent and noble than the rest, held that these gods were made by that one God and placed on high.

But who could bear to hear it said and argued that those gods grant eternal life to anyone? I mentioned some of them in the fourth book, gods to whom one small task each is assigned. Then there are those most expert and most acute men who boast that they did a great service by writing down and teaching why each god should be supplicated and what should be asked of each. Their aim was that no one, out of the most disgraceful absurdity of the kind usually played for laughs in a mime, would ask water of Liber and wine of the Lymphs. Will they advise someone praying to the immortal gods on what to do when he has asked the Lymphs for wine and they answer, "We have water; ask Liber for that"? Will they say he may properly reply, "If you have no wine, at least give me eternal life"? What could be more monstrous than this absurdity?[2] Unless they were trying to deceive like demons, would those goddesses not burst out laughing (for they are usually quick to laugh) and answer the suppliant: "Man, do you think we have life in our power, when you hear that we do not even have the vine?" It is therefore the most shameless folly to ask or hope for eternal life from such gods. They are said to protect the individual little parts of this most wretched and most brief life, and whatever serves to support and prop it up. Yet they do so in such a way that if what lies under the guardianship and power of one is asked of another, it is so incongruous and absurd that it looks very like the buffoonery of a mime. When mimes do this knowing what they are doing, they are deservedly laughed at in the theater; but when fools do it without knowing, they are more deservedly laughed to scorn in the world.[3] So, as far as concerns the gods whom the cities established, the learned have ingeniously worked out and recorded which god or goddess should be supplicated for what. They set down what should be asked of Liber, for example, what of the Lymphs, what of Vulcan, and so on with the rest. Some of

2 Liber was the Italian god of wine; the Lymphs were goddesses of water.
3 A pun in the Latin: *vitam* (life) and *vitem* (vine).

these I mentioned in the fourth book; others I thought should be passed over. Further, if it is an error to ask wine of Ceres, bread of Liber, water of Vulcan, or fire of the Lymphs, how much greater a madness must it be thought to supplicate any of them for eternal life!

When we were inquiring about earthly rule, we asked which gods or goddesses one should believe could confer it on human beings. After examining them all, we showed that it is far from the truth to think that any of these many false deities establishes even earthly kingdoms. Is it not, then, the most insane impiety to believe that any of them can give anyone eternal life, which without any doubt or comparison must be preferred to all earthly kingdoms? For such gods were not judged unable to give even an earthly kingdom on the grounds that they are great and exalted, while this is something small and lowly that they would not deign to care for from such a height. Anyone who considers human frailty may justly despise the perishable summits of earthly rule. Even so, those gods have shown themselves to be so utterly unworthy that they seemed unfit to be entrusted with giving and preserving even these. And so, as the matters treated in the two preceding books have taught, no god from that crowd, whether from the commoners among the gods, so to speak, or from their nobility, is fit to give mortal kingdoms to mortals. How much less can any of them make immortals out of mortals!

Add to this a further point. We are now dealing with those who think the gods should be worshiped not for the sake of this life but for the life that is to come after death. Yet these gods are not to be worshiped at all, not even for the things assigned to their power as their own parceled-out share—an assignment that rests not on the reckoning of truth but on the opinion of vanity. Only those who maintain that worshiping these gods is necessary for the benefits of this mortal life believe they should be worshiped for such things. Against them I have already argued enough, as far as I could, in the five preceding volumes. This being so, suppose that those who worshiped the goddess

Juventas flourished more remarkably in their youth, while those who scorned her either died within the years of youth or grew cold in it, as if numbed by old age. Suppose that Bearded Fortune clothed the cheeks of her worshipers more handsomely and gracefully, while we saw those who spurned her beardless or poorly bearded. Even then we would be quite right to say that each of these goddesses has power only this far, limited as it were to her own function. We would conclude that eternal life ought not to be asked of Juventas, who could not give a beard. Nor should anything good after this life be hoped for from Bearded Fortune, who in this life would have no power to grant even the age at which the beard appears.[4] But in fact their worship is not necessary even for the very things thought to be subject to them. Many who worshiped the goddess Juventas did not thrive at all at that age, and many who do not worship her rejoice in the vigor of youth. Likewise, many who prayed to Bearded Fortune managed to grow no beard at all, or an ugly one, and anyone who venerates her to obtain a beard is laughed at by bearded men who scorn her. Is the human heart so foolish, then? It recognizes that the worship of these gods is empty and ridiculous for the very temporal and quickly passing gifts over which each is said to preside. Will it still believe that this worship bears fruit for eternal life? Not even those who assigned the gods these temporal tasks dared to say they could give eternal life. They wanted the gods to be worshiped by unwise peoples, and because they thought the gods were very many, they divided these tasks into tiny pieces so that none of them would sit idle.

4 Juventas was the Roman goddess of youth; Fortuna Barbata ("Bearded Fortune") was invoked when young men grew their first beard.

WHAT WE SHOULD BELIEVE VARRO THOUGHT OF THE GODS OF THE NATIONS, WHOSE KINDS AND RITES HE EXPOSED IN SUCH A WAY THAT HE WOULD HAVE TREATED THEM MORE RESPECTFULLY BY SAYING NOTHING ABOUT THEM AT ALL

Varro, the most learned Roman, recorded the gods in a way that exposes them.

6.2 Who has investigated these things more carefully than Marcus Varro? Who has discovered them more learnedly? Who has considered them more attentively? Who has distinguished them more acutely? Who has written about them more diligently and more fully? He is less pleasing in style. Yet he is so full of learning and ideas that in every branch of learning, which we call secular and they call liberal, he teaches the student of things as much as Cicero delights the student of words. Indeed, Cicero himself bears him such witness in his *Academics* that he says the discussion recorded there was held with Marcus Varro, "a man," he says, "easily the most acute of all and without any doubt the most learned." He does not say "most eloquent" or "most fluent," since in truth Varro is far from his equal in this faculty. Rather, he says, "easily the most acute of all." And in those very books, the *Academics*, where he argues that everything should be doubted, he added "without any doubt the most learned."[5] Clearly he was so certain on this point that he dropped the doubt he habitually applies to everything. It was as if, on this one matter, though about to argue for the doubt of the Academics, he had forgotten that he was an Academic. In the first book, praising the literary works of this same Varro, he says: "We were wandering and straying in our own city like strangers, and your books brought us home, as it were, so that at last we could recognize who and where we were. You have revealed the age of our country and the divisions of its chronology. You have revealed the laws of its rites and of its priests, its domestic and

5 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) was the most learned Roman scholar of his age. Cicero's *Academics* (45 BC) set out the skeptical philosophy of the Academy.

public institutions, and the location of its regions and places. You have revealed the names, kinds, functions, and causes of all things divine and human." Terentianus, in a most elegant little verse, sums up this man of such distinguished and outstanding expertise: "Varro, a man most learned in every field." He read so much that we wonder he had time to write anything. He wrote so much that we can hardly believe anyone could have read it all. Suppose this man, I say, so great in talent and so great in learning, had been an opponent and destroyer of the so-called divine things he writes about. Suppose he had said they belonged not to religion but to superstition. Even then, I do not know whether he would have recorded so many things in them that deserve to be laughed at, despised, and detested.[6] But in fact he so worshiped these same gods, and held that they should be worshiped, that in this very work he says he fears they may perish, not from enemy attack but from the neglect of the citizens. He says he is rescuing them from this neglect as if from a collapse. Through books of this kind he is storing them away and preserving them in the memory of good men. He claims that his care is more useful than that of Metellus, who is celebrated for rescuing the sacred objects of Vesta from the fire, or of Aeneas, who rescued the household gods from the destruction of Troy. And yet he hands down for the ages to read things that the wise and the unwise alike would rightly judge must be rejected as most hostile to the truth of religion. What should we think, then? This most acute and learned man was not set free by the Holy Spirit, and so he was oppressed by the custom and laws of his city. Yet, under the pretext of commending religion, he was unwilling to keep silent about the things that troubled him.[7]

6 Terentianus Maurus was a Latin grammarian and poet who wrote a verse treatise on meter (late 2nd or 3rd century AD).

7 Lucius Caecilius Metellus, chief priest, saved the sacred objects from the burning temple of Vesta in 241 BC. Aeneas, in legend, carried Troy's household gods (the Penates) to Italy.

HOW VARRO DIVIDED HIS BOOKS ON THE ANTIQUITIES OF HUMAN AND DIVINE THINGS

Varro's Antiquities treated human matters before divine ones, in forty-one books.

6.3 He wrote forty-one books of *Antiquities*. He divided them into human and divine matters, assigning twenty-five books to human matters and sixteen to divine. In this division he followed a plan: he gave six books to each of four parts of human matters, because he attends to who acts, where they act, when they act, and what they do. So he wrote about people in the first six books and about places in the second six. He devoted the third six to times and the fourth and last six to things. Four times six makes twenty-four. But at the head he placed a single separate book, which would first speak about all of them in general. In the divine matters he kept the same form of division, as far as it concerns what is to be offered to the gods. For rites are offered by human beings, in places and at times.[8] He covered these four things I have mentioned in three books each. He wrote the first three about people, the next three about places, the third set about times, and the fourth about rites. Here too, with the most subtle distinction, he set out who offers, where they offer, when they offer, and what they offer. But he also had to say, and this was most expected, to whom they offer. So he wrote the last three about the gods themselves, which made five times three, or fifteen. Yet there are sixteen in all, as we said, because at the start of these too he placed a single separate book that would first speak about all of them. Having finished this, he went on to subdivide that fivefold arrangement. The first three books, which concern people, he divided so that the first is on the pontiffs, the second on the augurs, and the third on the Board of Fifteen for sacred rites. The second three, which concern places, he arranged so that one deals with shrines, another

8 Varro's *Antiquities of Human and Divine Things*, now lost, survives largely through Augustine's quotations.

with sacred temples, and the third with religious places. The three that follow concern times, that is, feast days. Of these he made one on holidays, another on the circus games, and the third on theatrical shows. Of the fourth three, which concern rites, he gave one to consecrations, another to private rites, and the last to public ones. In the three that remain, the gods themselves come last, following this procession of observances, as it were, for all this worship was offered to them. The first deals with the certain gods, the second with the uncertain gods, and the third and last of all with the principal and select gods.[9]

THAT FROM VARRO'S ACCOUNT, AMONG THE WORSHIPERS OF THE GODS, HUMAN THINGS ARE FOUND TO BE OLDER THAN DIVINE THINGS

Varro put human things first because the divine things he described were human inventions.

6.4 Anyone who has not become his own enemy through an obstinate heart can easily see what follows from what we have already said and what is still to be said. In this entire series, with its most beautiful and subtle arrangement and distinction, eternal life is sought in vain, and only the most shameless would hope for it or even desire it. For these are the institutions either of human beings or of demons. By demons I do not mean the kind they call good. To speak more plainly, I mean unclean spirits that are beyond dispute evil. With astonishing envy these spirits secretly plant harmful opinions in the thoughts of the impious, and sometimes openly thrust them upon their senses. Through these opinions the human soul grows more and more empty and cannot be fitted to the unchangeable and eternal truth or cling to it. The spirits confirm such opinions with deceptive testimony wherever they can. This same Varro testifies that he wrote first about human matters and afterward

9 The Board of Fifteen (*quindecimviri*) kept and consulted the Sibylline Books. Varro's "certain" gods were those whose nature and functions were known; the "uncertain" were those he was unsure about.

about divine ones because cities came into being first, and then these things were instituted by them. But the true religion was not instituted by some earthly city. On the contrary, it is the true religion that instituted the heavenly city. And it is the true God, the giver of eternal life, who inspires it in his true worshipers and teaches it to them.

Varro, then, admits that he wrote first about human matters and later about divine ones because these divine matters were instituted by human beings. This is his reasoning: "Just as the painter comes before the painted panel," he says, "and the builder before the building, so cities come before the things instituted by cities." He also says that he would have written first about the gods and afterward about human beings if he were writing about the whole nature of the gods. This implies that here he is writing about some of it and not the whole. Or it implies that even some part of the nature of the gods, though not the whole, ought not to come before that of human beings. And what about the fact that in those last three books, carefully explaining the certain, uncertain, and select gods, he seems to leave out no nature of the gods at all? What, then, does he mean when he says: "If we were writing about the whole nature of gods and men, we would have finished with the divine before touching on the human"? He writes about the whole nature of the gods, or about some of it, or about none at all. If he writes about the whole, it must certainly be placed before human matters. If about some, why should that part not also precede human matters? Or is some part of the gods unworthy to be preferred even to the entire nature of human beings? And if it is too much for some divine part to be placed before all human matters, at least it is worthy to be placed before Roman ones. For he wrote his books on human matters as they concern Rome alone, not the whole world. Yet he said he had rightly placed them before the books on divine matters in the order of writing, as the painter comes before the painted panel and the builder before the building. In this he most openly admits that these divine matters too were instituted by human beings, like a painting or

a structure. It remains, then, to conclude that he wrote about no nature of the gods at all. He did not wish to say this openly but left it for those who understand. For "not the whole" is usually understood to mean "some," but it can also mean "none." After all, what is none is neither the whole nor some. As he himself says, if it were the whole nature of the gods he was writing about, it would have to come before human matters in the order of writing. And as truth cries out even though he is silent, it would certainly have to come before Roman matters even if it were not the whole but at least some of it. But it is rightly placed after them; therefore it is none. So he did not wish to put human things before divine things; rather, he refused to put false things before true ones. In what he wrote about human matters he followed the history of actual events. But in what he wrote about the matters he calls divine, what did he follow but opinions about empty things? This, no doubt, is what he wished to show by a subtle hint. He not only wrote about the one after the other but also gave the reason why he did so. Had he kept silent about that reason, others might perhaps have defended what he did in some other way. But in the very reason he gave, he left others nothing to conjecture as they pleased. He showed clearly enough that what he placed first was human beings ahead of human institutions, not human nature ahead of the nature of the gods. He thus admitted that he wrote his books on divine matters about the falsehood that belongs to error, not about the truth that belongs to nature. He said this more openly elsewhere, as I mentioned in the fourth book. There he said he would have written according to the pattern of nature if he were founding a new city himself. But since he had found an old one already in place, he could only follow its custom.

THE THREE KINDS OF THEOLOGY ACCORDING TO VARRO: THE MYTHICAL, THE NATURAL, AND THE CIVIL

Varro distinguishes mythical, natural and civil theology, faulting only the mythical.

6.5 Next, what are we to make of his claim that there are three kinds of theology, that is, of the account given of the gods? One of them, he says, is called *mythicon*, the second *physicon*, the third civil. If Latin usage allowed it, we would call the kind he put first *fabularis* [fabular]; but let us say *fabulosum* [mythical]. For *mythicon* takes its name from fables, since μῦθος [*mythos*] is the Greek for a fable. That the second should be called "natural" is something ordinary speech already allows. The third, called civil, he himself expressed in Latin. Then he says: "They call 'mythical' the kind that the poets chiefly use, 'physical' the kind the philosophers use, 'civil' the kind the peoples use. In the first kind I mentioned," he says, "there are many fictions contrary to the dignity and nature of the immortals. For in it we find that one god was born from a head, another from a thigh, another from drops of blood. In it we find that gods stole, committed adultery and were slaves to a human being. In short, in it everything is attributed to the gods that can happen not only to a human being but even to the most despised human being." Here at least, where he could, where he dared, where he thought he could do it with impunity, he stated without the fog of any ambiguity how great a wrong was done to the nature of the gods by utterly lying fables. For he was speaking not of natural theology, nor of civil theology, but of mythical theology, which he thought he was free to criticize.[10]

Let us see what he says about the second kind. "The second kind I have pointed out," he says, "is the one on which the philosophers have left many books. In them is discussed who the

10 Minerva sprang from Jupiter's head and Bacchus from his thigh; in Greek myth the Furies and the Giants were born from drops of the blood of the castrated Uranus.

gods are, where they are, of what kind and of what character they are. Have the gods existed from a certain time or from eternity? Are they made of fire, as Heraclitus believes, or of numbers, as Pythagoras does, or of atoms, as Epicurus says? And so with other questions, which ears can bear more easily inside the walls of a school than outside in the forum." He found no fault with this kind, which they call physical and which belongs to the philosophers. He only mentioned their controversies with one another, which have produced a multitude of dissenting sects. Yet he removed this kind from the forum, that is, from the peoples, and shut it up within schools and their walls.[11] But that first kind, utterly lying and utterly shameful, he did not remove from the cities. Oh, the religious ears of the populace—the Roman ones among them! What the philosophers argue about the immortal gods they cannot bear. But what the poets sing and the actors perform—things that are fictions contrary to the dignity and nature of the immortals, things that can happen not only to a human being but even to the most despised human being—these they not only bear but even listen to gladly. And not only that: they also decree that these things please the gods themselves, and that it is by these things that the gods must be appeased.

Someone may say: "Let us separate these two kinds, the *mythicon* and the *physicon*, that is, the mythical and the natural, from this civil kind that is now our subject, just as he himself separated them; and now let us see how he explains the civil kind itself." I do see why the mythical kind should be separated: because it is false, because it is shameful, because it is unworthy. But to want to separate the natural from the civil—what is that but to admit that the civil itself is faulty? For if the former is natural, what is there to blame in it, that it should be excluded? And if this one, called civil, is not natural, what merit does it have, that it should be admitted? This, of course, is the very reason why he wrote first about human things and after-

11 Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Epicurus were Greek philosophers of the sixth to third centuries BC.

ward about divine things: in divine things he followed not nature but the institutions of human beings. Still, let us take a look at civil theology too. "The third kind," he says, "is the one that citizens in cities, and above all priests, ought to know and administer. It covers which gods are to be worshiped publicly, and which rites and sacrifices it is proper for each person to perform." Let us also attend to what follows. "The first theology," he says, "is especially suited to the theater, the second to the world, the third to the city." Who does not see to which he has given the palm? To the second, of course, which he said above belongs to the philosophers. For he testifies that it pertains to the world, and these people think that nothing in existence is more excellent than the world. But those two theologies, the first and the third—that is, of the theater and of the city—did he distinguish them or join them? For we see that what belongs to the city cannot automatically pertain to the world as well, even though we see that cities are in the world. It can happen, after all, that in a city, following false opinions, things are worshiped and believed whose nature exists nowhere, either in the world or outside it. But where is the theater, if not in the city? Who established the theater, if not the city? For what purpose did it establish it, if not for theatrical shows? And where do theatrical shows belong, if not among the divine things about which these books are written with such great skill?

MYTHICAL (THAT IS, FABULOUS) THEOLOGY, AND CIVIL THEOLOGY, AGAINST VARRO

Mythical and civil theology are equally shameful, and neither can give eternal life.

6.6 Marcus Varro, you are the sharpest of all men and, beyond any doubt, the most learned. Yet you are a man, not God, and you have not been lifted up by the Spirit of God into truth and freedom to see and proclaim divine things. You do see how necessary it is to separate divine things from human trifles and lies. But you are afraid to offend the thoroughly corrupt opinions and customs of the peoples in their public superstitions.

You yourself feel, whenever you examine them from every side, that they are utterly at odds with the nature of the gods—even of such gods as the weakness of the human mind imagines to be in the elements of this world—and all your literature resounds with it. What can human genius, however outstanding, do here? What help is your human learning, however varied and vast, to you in these straits? You long to worship the natural gods; you are forced to worship the civil ones. You have found other gods, the mythical ones, at whom you can more freely spew out what you think—and with it, willing or not, you drench these civil gods too. For you say that the mythical gods are suited to the theater, the natural to the world, the civil to the city. Yet the world is a divine work, while cities and theaters are human works. And the gods laughed at in the theaters are no other than those adored in the temples, and you put on games for no other gods than those to whom you sacrifice victims. How much more freely and more subtly you would have divided these things if you had said that some gods are natural and others established by human beings! You could have added that, concerning the established gods, the writings of the poets say one thing and those of the priests another, yet both are so friendly with each other in their partnership in falsehood that both are pleasing to the demons, to whom the teaching of truth is hostile. Setting aside for a little, then, the theology they call natural, which must be discussed later, do we really accept that eternal life is to be sought or hoped for from the gods of poetry and theater, of games and the stage? Far from it! Rather, may the true God avert such monstrous and sacrilegious madness. What? Is eternal life to be asked of those gods whom these things please and whom these things appease, when their crimes are rehearsed there again and again? No one, I think, is so insane as to plunge to such a precipice of raving impiety. So neither by mythical nor by civil theology does anyone attain everlasting life. For the one sows by inventing shameful things about the gods; the other reaps by approving them. The one scatters lies; the other gathers them up. The one assails divine things with false crimes; the

other embraces the shows of those crimes among its divine things. The one makes human songs ring with wicked fictions about the gods; the other consecrates those fictions in the festivals of the gods themselves. The one sings the crimes and outrages of the deities; the other loves them. The one reveals or invents them; the other either bears witness to them if true or takes delight in them even if false. Both are shameful and both are damnable. But the theatrical one openly professes public shamefulness, while the urban one decks itself out with the other's shamefulness. Is eternal life to be hoped for from the very source that pollutes this brief and temporal life? Or does association with wicked men pollute our life if they worm their way into our affections and our assent, while fellowship with demons, who are worshiped with their own crimes, does not pollute it? If the crimes are real, how bad the demons! If invented, how badly they are worshiped!

When we say this, it may perhaps seem to someone quite ignorant of these matters that the only things celebrated about such gods that are unworthy of divine majesty, ridiculous and detestable, are those sung in the poets' songs and acted out in theatrical shows, while the rites performed not by actors but by priests are purified of and free from all disgrace. If that were so, no one would ever have decided that theatrical obscenities should be celebrated in their honor, and the gods themselves would never have commanded that these be put on for them. But people feel no shame at doing such things in the theaters in deference to the gods precisely because similar things are done in the temples. In short, when the author I have mentioned tried to distinguish civil theology as a third kind of its own, apart from the mythical and the natural, he wanted it to be understood as a blend of both rather than as separate from both. For he says that what the poets write is less than the peoples ought to follow, while what the philosophers write is more than it is expedient for the common people to investigate. "These are so much at odds," he says, "that nevertheless not a few things have been taken from both kinds into civil doctrine. Therefore we

shall write about what they have in common together with what is properly civil; and in this our fellowship ought to be greater with the philosophers than with the poets." So there is to be none with the poets. And yet elsewhere he says that, as regards the generations of the gods, the peoples have been more inclined toward the poets than toward the natural philosophers. Here he said what ought to happen; there, what does happen. He said that the natural philosophers wrote for the sake of usefulness, the poets for the sake of delight. Consequently, what the poets have written and the peoples ought not to follow are the crimes of the gods—which nevertheless delight both the peoples and the gods. For the poets write, as he says, for the sake of delight, not of usefulness; yet what they write is what the gods demand and the peoples put on.

THE LIKENESS AND AGREEMENT OF MYTHICAL AND CIVIL THEOLOGY

The mythical theology of the theater is part of Rome's civil theology.

6.7 So mythical theology—theatrical, made for the stage, full of indignity and shamefulness—is brought back into civil theology. And this whole theology, which is rightly judged to deserve censure and rejection, is part of the one that is deemed worthy of worship and observance. Nor is it, as I have set out to show, an incongruous part, alien to the whole body and awkwardly attached and hung onto it. Rather, it is entirely in harmony with it and joined to it most fittingly, like a limb of the same body. For what else do those images show, with the forms, ages, sexes and dress of the gods? Do the poets have a bearded Jupiter and a beardless Mercury, and the pontiffs not? Was it the mimes who gave Priapus enormous genitals, and not the priests as well? Does he stand to be worshiped in holy places any differently from how he comes on to be laughed at in the theaters? Are old Saturn and the youthful Apollo characters played by actors in such a way that they are not also statues in the shrines? Why are Forculus, who presides over doors (*fores*), and Limentinus, who

presides over the threshold (*limen*), male gods, while between them Cardea, who guards the hinge (*cardo*), is female? Are not these things, which serious poets judged unworthy of their verses, found in the books on divine things? Does the Diana of the theater carry weapons, while the Diana of the city is simply a virgin? Is the Apollo of the stage a lyre player, while the Apollo of Delphi has nothing to do with that art? But these things are respectable compared with the more shameful ones. What did they think of Jupiter himself, those who set up his nurse on the Capitol? Did they not bear witness in favor of Euhemerus, who wrote, not with the chatter of fable but with the diligence of history, that all such gods had been human beings and mortals? And those who placed gods at Jupiter's table as banqueters (*epulones*), his hangers-on (*parasiti*)—what else did they intend than that the rites be a farce? For if a mime had said that Jupiter's hangers-on were invited to his banquet, he would certainly seem to have been angling for a laugh. Varro said it![12] And he said it not when mocking the gods but when commending them. The books on divine, not human, things testify that he wrote this, and not where he was describing theatrical shows, but where he was setting out the laws of the Capitol. In short, he is overcome by such facts and admits that, just as they made the gods in human form, so they believed that the gods took delight in human pleasures.

For the evil spirits, too, did not fail to do their part, confirming these harmful opinions by making sport of human minds. Hence comes that story about the temple keeper of Hercules. Idle and on holiday, he played dice by himself, alternating hands, assigning Hercules to one hand and himself to the other. The condition was that if he won, he would buy himself a dinner from the temple funds and hire a mistress; but if the victory went to Hercules, he would provide the same, out of his own money, for Hercules' pleasure. Then, when he had been beaten

12 Euhemerus (c. 300 BC) was a Greek writer who held that the gods were deified human beings. The Epulones were the Roman priestly board that prepared Jupiter's sacred banquet; the "parasite," or hanger-on, was a stock comic character.

by himself as if by Hercules, he gave the god Hercules the dinner he owed and the most celebrated courtesan, Larentina. She slept in the temple and saw in a dream that Hercules had had intercourse with her. He told her that when she left, she would find her payment with the first young man she met, and that she should believe it had been paid to her by Hercules.[13] So as she was leaving, the first to meet her was a very rich young man, Tarutius. He fell in love with her and kept her with him for a long time, and when he died he left her as his heir. Having come into a very large fortune, she did not want to seem ungrateful for the divine payment. So she did what she thought would be most acceptable to the deities: she in turn made the Roman people her heir. When she disappeared, the will was found. For these services, they say, she even earned divine honors.

If the poets invented these things, if the mimes acted them, they would undoubtedly be said to belong to mythical theology and would be judged fit to be kept apart from the dignity of civil theology. But these disgraceful things are reported by so great an author as belonging not to the poets but to the peoples, not to the mimes but to the rites, not to the theaters but to the temples —that is, not to mythical but to civil theology. So it is not in vain that the actors, with their playful arts, portray the shamefulness of the gods, which is so great; but it is plainly in vain that the priests, with supposedly sacred rites, try to portray a respectability in the gods that does not exist. There are the rites of Juno, and these used to be celebrated on her beloved island of Samos, where she was given in marriage to Jupiter. There are the rites of Ceres, in which Proserpina, carried off by Pluto, is searched for. There are the rites of Venus, in which her lover Adonis, a most beautiful young man killed by a boar's tusk, is mourned. There are the rites of the Mother of the gods, in which Attis, a handsome youth whom she loved and castrated out of a woman's jealousy, is lamented—even through the misery of castrated men, whom they call Galli. Since these things are more hideous than

13 Larentina is Acca Larentia, a figure of early Roman legend honored with a festival, the Larentalia.

any foulness of the stage, why do they strive to separate the poets' fictions about the gods, which supposedly belong to the theater, from civil theology, which they would have belong to the city—as though separating the unworthy and shameful from the honorable and worthy? There is rather reason to be grateful to the actors, who have spared people's eyes and have not laid bare in their shows everything that is hidden within the walls of the sacred buildings.[14] What good is to be thought of their rites that are covered in darkness, when those brought out into the light are so detestable? Certainly, what they do in secret through the castrated priests is their own affair. But these same men, wretchedly and shamefully unmanned and corrupted, they have been quite unable to hide. Let them persuade whom they can that they do something holy through such men, who, as they cannot deny, are counted among their holy things and move among them. We do not know what they do, but we know through whom they do it. For we know what is done on the stage, where no castrated priest has ever entered, not even in a chorus of prostitutes. And yet even those things are performed by shameful and disreputable people—for they ought not to be performed by respectable ones. What, then, are those rites, for whose performance holiness has chosen men such as not even the obscenity of the stage has admitted?

THE INTERPRETATIONS FROM NATURAL SCIENCE THAT PAGAN TEACHERS TRY TO OFFER ON BEHALF OF THEIR GODS

Allegorical explanations from nature cannot excuse the obscene rites of the Great Mother.

6.8 But, they say, these things have certain "physiological" interpretations, that is, explanations in terms of nature. As if in this discussion we were looking for *physiologia* [the science of nature] and not *theologia*, that is, an account not of nature but of

14 The Mother of the gods is Cybele, the Great Mother, whose priests, the Galli, castrated themselves in imitation of Attis.

God! For although the one who is the true God is God not by opinion but by nature, still not every nature is a god. A human being, an animal, a tree and a stone certainly each have a nature, and none of them is a god. But if, when the rites of the Mother of the gods are in question, the chief point of this interpretation is that the Mother of the gods is the earth, what more are we looking for? Why investigate the rest? What lends stronger support to those who say that all these gods were human beings? For in this way they are earth-born; in this way the earth is their mother. But in true theology the earth is the work of God, not a mother. Yet however they may interpret her rites and refer them to the nature of things, for men to be used sexually as women is not according to nature but against nature. This disease, this crime, this disgrace is openly professed among those rites, whereas among the vicious morals of mankind it is scarcely confessed even under torture. Again, these rites are proved to be fouler than the shameful things of the stage. If they are excused and purified on the ground that they have their own interpretations, which show that they signify the nature of things, why should not the poets' works likewise be excused and purified? For many have interpreted these too in the same way. They go so far that what is called the most monstrous and unspeakable thing in the poets—that Saturn devoured his own children—some interpret to mean that the length of time, which is signified by the name of Saturn, consumes whatever it itself begets; or, as the same Varro thinks, that Saturn pertains to seeds, which fall back again into the earth from which they spring. Others interpret it in other ways, and so likewise with the rest.

And yet it is called mythical theology, and with all its interpretations of this kind it is censured, cast off and condemned. Not only by natural theology, which belongs to the philosophers, but also by this civil theology we are discussing, which is claimed to pertain to cities and peoples, it is set apart as deserving rejection, on the ground that it has made up things unworthy of the gods. The purpose, no doubt, was this. The very

acute and very learned men who wrote these things understood that both were to be condemned, both the mythical one and the civil one; but while they dared to condemn the former, they did not dare to condemn the latter. So they put forward the former to be censured, and set out the latter, which is like it, to be compared with it—not so that this one should be chosen and held in preference to that one, but so that it should be understood to deserve rejection along with it. And thus, without danger to those who were afraid to censure civil theology, both would be despised, and the one they call natural would find a place among better minds. For the civil and the mythical are both mythical and both civil. Anyone who wisely examines the vanities and obscenities of both will find both mythical. Anyone who notices that the theatrical shows belonging to the mythical kind are part of the festivals of the civil gods and of the divine things of the cities will find both civil. How, then, can the power to give eternal life be attributed to any of these gods, when their own images and rites prove them most like the mythical gods, who are so openly rejected—in forms, ages, sex and dress, in marriages, generations and rituals? In all of these it is evident either that they were human beings, and that rites and solemnities were established for them according to each one's life or death, with demons insinuating and confirming this error; or at any rate that the most unclean spirits crept in, seizing on any opportunity, to deceive human minds.

THE DUTIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL GODS

The gods' petty and indecent duties, from childbirth to the wedding night, are fit only for farce.

6.9 What, then? Take the very functions of the deities, chopped up so cheaply and into such tiny pieces that, they say, each must be supplicated according to its own particular office. We have already said much about this, though not everything. Do these things not suit the buffoonery of a mime better than divine dignity? Suppose someone hired two nurses for an infant, one to

give it nothing but food and the other nothing but drink, just as these people have brought in two goddesses for the purpose, Educa and Potina. He would surely seem to be out of his mind and to be staging something like a mime in his own house. They will have it that Liber is named from "liberation," because through his kindness males are "liberated" in intercourse by the release of their seed. Libera, whom they also take to be Venus, does the same in women, because they claim that she too emits seed. For this reason, they say, the male part of the body is placed in Liber's temple, and the female part in Libera's. To this they add that women and wine were assigned to Liber for arousing lust.[15] That is how the Bacchanalia used to be celebrated, with the utmost madness. Varro himself admits that the Bacchants could not have done such things unless their minds were deranged. Later, however, these rites displeased a saner Senate, and it ordered them abolished. Here at least, perhaps, they finally perceived what unclean spirits can do in human minds while they are taken for gods. Such things certainly would not happen in the theaters. There, after all, people play; they do not rave. Yet to have gods who are delighted even by such plays is itself something like madness.[16]

And what are we to make of this? He distinguishes the religious person from the superstitious one by saying that the superstitious man fears the gods, while the religious man only reveres them as parents and does not fear them as enemies. He also says that they are all so good that it is easier for them to spare the guilty than to harm anyone innocent. Yet he records that after childbirth three gods are brought in as guardians for the new mother, to prevent the god Silvanus from coming in at night and molesting her. To signify these guardians, three men go round the threshold of the house at night. First they strike the threshold with an ax, then with a pestle, and third they sweep it with brooms. By these signs of cultivation the god Sil-

15 Educa and Potina were Roman goddesses of a child's eating and drinking. Liber and Libera were Italian fertility deities, Liber being identified with Bacchus.
16 The Roman Senate suppressed the Bacchanalia, the rites of Bacchus, in 186 BC.

vanus is kept from entering, because trees are not cut down or pruned without iron, grain is not prepared without a pestle, and crops are not heaped up without brooms. From these three things, he says, three gods were named: Intercidona from the cutting of the ax, Pilumnus from the pestle, and Deverra from the brooms. By these guardian gods the new mother was protected against the violence of the god Silvanus.[17] So the guardianship of the good gods would not prevail against the savagery of a harmful god unless they were many against one. They had to resist him, rough, frightful and uncultivated as a woodland god is, with signs of cultivation, which are his opposites. Is this, then, the innocence of the gods? Is this their harmony? Are these the health-giving deities of cities, more laughable than the farces of the theaters?

THE WEDDING-NIGHT GODS

A crowd of gods supposedly attends the bridal chamber, which Augustine finds indecent and absurd.

When male and female are joined, the god Jugatinus is brought in. Let that be tolerated. But the bride must be led home, so the god Domiducus is brought in too. To keep her in the home, the god Domitius is brought in. To make her stay with her husband, the goddess Manturna is added. What more is wanted? Let human modesty be spared. Let the desire of flesh and blood finish the rest, once the privacy that decency requires has been secured. Why is the bedroom filled with a crowd of deities, when even the bridal attendants leave it? And it is filled not so that the thought of their presence may increase the concern for chastity. It is filled so that, with their help, the woman, weak in her sex and frightened by the novelty, may be deprived of her virginity without any difficulty. For present are the goddess Virginensis, the god Father Subigus, the goddess Mother Prema, the

17 Silvanus was the Roman god of woods and untilled land. The guardians' names come from Latin *intercidere* (to cut), *pilum* (pestle) and *deverrere* (to sweep away).

goddess Pertunda, and Venus, and Priapus. What is this?[18] If the husband laboring at that task really had to be helped by the gods, would not some one god or one goddess be enough? Would Venus alone be too little? She is even said to be named for this very thing, that without force a woman does not cease to be a virgin. Human beings have some sense of shame, even if the deities have none. So when a married couple believe that so many gods of both sexes are present and intent on this task, are they not so overcome with shame that he is less aroused and she resists more? And certainly the goddess Virginensis is there to untie the virgin's girdle. The god Subigus is there so that she may be subdued to her husband. The goddess Prema is there so that, once subdued, she may be held down and not move. What, then, is the goddess Pertunda doing there? Let her blush and go outside. Let the husband do something too. It is utterly indecent for anyone but him to accomplish what her name means.[19] But perhaps she is tolerated because she is said to be a goddess and not a god. For if she were believed to be male and called Pertundus, the husband would demand more help against him, for the sake of his wife's chastity, than the new mother needs against Silvanus. But why do I say this, when Priapus too is there, all too male? The new bride was required to sit on his monstrous and most obscene phallus, according to the most decent and most religious custom of matrons!

Let them go on, then, and try with whatever subtlety they can muster to distinguish civil theology from mythical theology. Let them distinguish cities from theaters, temples from stages, and the rites of the pontiffs from the songs of the poets, as if they were separating honorable things from shameful, truthful from deceitful, serious from frivolous, earnest from playful, things to be sought from things to be rejected. We understand what they are doing. They know that this theatrical and mythical theology

18 The names are formed from Latin words: *iugare* (to join), *domum ducere* (to lead home), *manere* (to stay), *virgo* (virgin), *subigere* (to subdue), *premere* (to press down), *pertundere* (to pierce); Priapus was a phallic fertility god.

19 Augustine plays on *Venus* and *vi*, "by force."

depends on the civil kind and reflects it, as in a mirror, through the songs of the poets. And so, having set out the civil theology, which they dare not condemn, they attack and censure its image more freely. They do this so that those who recognize what they mean may also detest the very face of which that is the image. Yet the gods themselves, gazing at themselves as if in that same mirror, love it so much that who and what they are can be seen better in both together. That is why they have even compelled their worshipers by terrifying commands to dedicate the filth of mythical theology to them, to put it into their festivals, and to count it among divine matters. In this way they have shown more plainly that they themselves are utterly unclean spirits. And they have made that theatrical theology, cast off and rejected as it is, a member and part of this urban theology, chosen and approved as that supposedly is. So, though the whole is shameful and false and contains fictitious gods, one part of it is in the books of the priests and the other in the songs of the poets. Whether it has other parts as well is another question. For now, following Varro's division, I have shown sufficiently, I think, that both the urban and the theatrical theology belong to a single civil theology. Both, then, are alike in shamefulness and absurdity, in indignity and falsehood. Far be it from the truly religious, therefore, to hope for eternal life from either the one or the other.

Finally, Varro himself began recording and listing the gods from the moment of a human being's conception. He began their number with Janus and carried the series down to the death of a man in extreme old age. He closed the list of gods that concern the human being himself with the goddess Nenia, who is sung at the funerals of the old. Then he began to set out other gods, who concerned not the human being himself but the things that belong to him, such as food and clothing and whatever else is necessary for this life. In every case he showed what each one's function is and what each must be supplicated for. Yet in all this thoroughness he pointed out or named no gods from whom eternal life is to be sought. And that is the one thing

for whose sake, properly speaking, we are Christians.[20] Who, then, could be so slow as not to understand what this man is doing? He sets out and lays bare civil theology so carefully. He shows that it is like that unworthy and disgraceful mythical theology. And he teaches quite plainly that the mythical is itself a part of it. All this is meant to make room in people's minds only for the natural theology, which he says belongs to the philosophers. He goes about it with such subtlety that he censures the mythical but does not dare to censure the civil, though by exposing it he shows it to be censurable. In this way both are rejected by the judgment of those who understand rightly, and the natural alone remains to be chosen. That must be discussed more carefully in its proper place, with the help of the true God.

THE FRANKNESS OF SENECA, WHO ATTACKED CIVIL THEOLOGY MORE VEHEMENTLY THAN VARRO ATTACKED THE MYTHICAL

Seneca attacked civil theology more boldly than Varro, though he still practiced it.

6.10 Varro lacked the freedom to censure this urban theology openly, as he did the other, even though it so closely resembles the theatrical. That freedom was not lacking to Annaeus Seneca, though he had it only in part, not wholly. As some indications show, Seneca flourished in the time of our apostles. He had that freedom when he wrote; he lacked it in how he lived. For in the book he composed against superstitions, he censures this civil and urban theology far more fully and vehemently than Varro censures the theatrical and mythical. When dealing with images, he says: "They dedicate the sacred, immortal, inviolable gods in the cheapest and most lifeless matter. They clothe them in the shapes of human beings, wild beasts and fish, and some with mixed sex and bodies of different kinds. They call them deities. But if these things suddenly received breath and came to

20 Janus was the Roman god of beginnings and doorways; Nenia was the goddess of the funeral dirge (*nenia*).

meet us, they would be taken for monsters."[21] Then, a little later, after setting out the opinions of certain philosophers in commending natural theology, he raises an objection against himself and says: "At this point someone says: 'Am I to believe that the sky and the earth are gods, and that some are above the moon and others below it? Am I to put up with either Plato or the Peripatetic Strato, one of whom made God without a body, the other without a mind?'" And replying to this he says: "Well then, do the dreams of Titus Tatius or Romulus or Tullus Hostilius seem truer to you? Tatius dedicated the goddess Cloacina. Romulus dedicated Picus and Tiberinus. Hostilius dedicated Fear and Pallor, the most hideous of human feelings. One of these is an agitation of a frightened mind; the other is not even a disease of the body, but a color. Will you rather believe in these deities and receive them into heaven?" And how freely he wrote about the rites themselves, cruel and shameful as they are! "One man," he says, "cuts off his male parts; another slashes his arms.[22] "What do they fear from the gods when they are angry, if this is how they win their favor? Gods ought not to be worshiped in any way at all if this is what they want. So great is the frenzy of a mind disturbed and driven from its seat that gods are appeased in a way in which not even the most hideous men rage, men whose cruelty has passed into legend. Tyrants have torn the limbs of some people; they have ordered no one to tear his own. Some have been castrated for the pleasure of a king's lust. But no one, at a master's command, has laid hands on himself to stop being a man. These people butcher themselves in temples; they make their supplications with their own wounds and blood. If anyone has leisure to look at what they do and what they suffer, he will find things so unseemly for honorable people, so unworthy of the free, so unlike the sane, that no one would have doubted they were mad if they were mad in smaller

21 Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65) was a Stoic philosopher and statesman. His treatise *On Superstition* is lost and known chiefly from Augustine.

22 Titus Tatius, Romulus and Tullus Hostilius were legendary early kings of Rome. Cloacina was the goddess of Rome's Great Sewer, the Cloaca Maxima.

numbers. As it is, the crowd of the insane is the defense of their sanity."

Then there are the things he records as customary on the Capitol itself, and fearlessly exposes. Who would believe they were done by anyone but people mocking or raving? He had ridiculed the Egyptian rites, in which Osiris is mourned as lost and soon afterward found with great joy. His loss and his finding are a fiction, yet the grief and the joy are genuinely expressed by people who have lost nothing and found nothing. Then he says: "Yet this frenzy has a fixed time. It is tolerable to go mad once a year. Go up to the Capitol: you will be ashamed of the madness on public display, of the duties an empty frenzy has assigned itself. One man prompts the god with names; another announces the hours to Jupiter. One is his reader, another his anointer, who imitates someone applying ointment with empty movements of the arms.[23] "There are women who arrange the hair of Juno and Minerva: standing far from the temple, let alone the statue, they move their fingers like hairdressers. There are women who hold a mirror. There are men who summon the gods to stand by them at their court appearances, and men who present them with petitions and instruct them in their case. A learned leading mime, by now a decrepit old man, used to perform a mime on the Capitol every day, as if the gods enjoyed watching someone whom men had stopped watching. Every kind of craftsman sits there idle, working for the immortal gods." And a little later: "Yet these people," he says, "though they offer the god a superfluous service, do not offer a shameful or disgraceful one. There are women who sit on the Capitol and think they are loved by Jupiter. They are not even frightened by the thought of Juno, who, if you choose to believe the poets, is very quick to anger."

Varro did not have this freedom. He dared to censure only poetic theology, not the civil, which Seneca cut to pieces. But if

23 Osiris was an Egyptian god whose death and rediscovery were mourned and celebrated each year. The Capitol was the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in Rome.

we look at the truth, the temples where these things are done are worse than the theaters where they are only feigned. Hence, regarding these rites of civil theology, Seneca chose this role for the wise man: not to hold them in the religion of his mind, but to feign them in his actions. For he says: "All these things the wise man will observe as commanded by the laws, not as pleasing to the gods." And a little later he says: "What of the fact that we even join the gods in marriage, and not even piously, brothers with sisters! We give Bellona to Mars, Venus to Vulcan, Salacia to Neptune. Some, however, we leave unmarried, as if no match could be found. This is all the stranger since certain goddesses are widows, such as Populonia or Fulgora and the divine Rumina. I am not surprised that these have lacked a suitor. "All this ignoble crowd of gods, which a long superstition has piled up over long ages, we shall worship," he says, "in such a way as to remember that their worship has more to do with custom than with reality." So neither those laws nor custom established anything in civil theology that pleased the gods or had to do with reality. Yet this man, whom philosophers had made free, so to speak, was an illustrious senator of the Roman people. Because of this he worshiped what he censured, did what he condemned, and adored what he blamed. Philosophy, evidently, had taught him something great: not to be superstitious in the world, but, for the sake of the citizens' laws and human customs, to play the actor. He was not to play a feigning actor in the theater; he was to imitate one in a temple. This was all the more damnable because the things he did falsely he did in such a way that the people thought he was doing them genuinely. The actor, by contrast, gives delight by playing rather than deceiving by trickery.

WHAT SENECA THOUGHT OF THE JEWS

Seneca mocked the Sabbath and called the Jews a nation that gave laws to its conquerors.

6.11 Among other superstitions of civil theology, Seneca also censures the sacred rites of the Jews, and especially the Sabbaths. He claims that they keep them to no purpose. By setting aside one day in every seven, they lose almost a seventh part of their lives in idleness, and by not acting they suffer harm in many urgent matters. The Christians, however, already then bitterly opposed to the Jews, he did not dare to mention one way or the other. He would not praise them against the ancient custom of his country, nor censure them, perhaps, against his own wish. Speaking of the Jews, he says: "Meanwhile the custom of this most wicked nation has gained such strength that it has now been received throughout all lands: the conquered have given laws to their conquerors." He marveled as he said this. And, not knowing what was being done by God, he added a statement that plainly showed what he thought of the rationale behind their rites. For he says: "They, at least, know the reasons for their rite; but the greater part of the people do what they do without knowing why." As for the Jewish rites, there are several questions: why they were instituted by divine authority, and to what extent, and how afterward, at the appropriate time, the same authority removed them from the people of God, to whom the mystery of eternal life has been revealed. We have spoken of this elsewhere, especially when arguing against the Manichaeans, and it will be discussed in a more suitable place in this work.[24]

24 The Manichaeans were a dualist sect to which Augustine belonged before his conversion. He later wrote extensively against them.

THAT ONCE THE EMPTINESS OF THE GODS OF THE NATIONS IS EXPOSED, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT THEY CANNOT GIVE ANYONE ETERNAL LIFE, SINCE THEY CANNOT EVEN HELP TEMPORAL LIFE

Since these gods cannot help even this life, they cannot give eternal life.

6.12 Now consider the three theologies which the Greeks call *mythikē*, *physikē* and *politikē*, and which in Latin can be called *fabulosa*, *naturalis* and *civilis*—mythical, natural and civil. Eternal life is not to be hoped for from the mythical theology, which even the worshipers of many false gods have themselves censured most freely. Nor is it to be hoped for from the civil theology, of which the mythical is proven to be a part, and which is found to be very like it or even worse. If what has been said in this volume is not enough for anyone, let him add the many arguments in the earlier books, especially the fourth, about God as the giver of happiness. For if happiness were a goddess, to whom but Happiness alone would people have to be consecrated for the sake of eternal life? But happiness is not a goddess; it is a gift of God. To what God, then, should we be consecrated but to the giver of happiness? For we love with devoted love the eternal life in which true and full happiness is found. These gods are worshiped with such shamefulness, and unless they are worshiped so, they grow angry still more shamefully. By this they confess themselves to be utterly unclean spirits. From what has been said, I think, no one ought to doubt that none of them is the giver of happiness. Further, how could one who does not give happiness give eternal life? For we call that life eternal in which there is happiness without end. If the soul lives in eternal punishments, with which the unclean spirits themselves will also be tormented, that is eternal death rather than life. Indeed, there is no greater or worse death than where death does not die. But the nature of the soul, being created immortal, cannot exist without some kind of life. Its ultimate death, therefore, is alienation from the life of God in an eternity of punishment.

Eternal life, then—that is, life happy without any end—is given only by the one who gives true happiness. Those whom this civil theology worships have been proven unable to give it. Therefore they are not to be worshiped. That holds not only for the sake of these temporal and earthly things, as we showed in the five preceding books. It holds much more for the sake of eternal life, which will come after death, and this is what we have argued in this single book, with the earlier books contributing as well. But the force of inveterate habit has its roots very deep. So if anyone thinks I have argued too little for rejecting and avoiding this civil theology, let him turn his attention to another volume, which, with God's help, is to be joined to this one.

Book VII

The select gods
Even Rome's chief gods and the philosophers' natural explanations of them cannot give eternal life.

PREFACE

Augustine asks patient readers to bear with him as he uproots old errors about the gods.

7.pr I am trying with some care to pluck out and uproot perverse and ancient opinions that are hostile to the truth of true religion, opinions which the long-standing error of the human race has driven deep and fast into darkened minds. In my small measure I am also working together with the grace of him who, as the true God, is able to do this, and I rely on his help. Quicker and better minds, for whom the earlier books are more than enough for this purpose, will have to bear with me patiently and calmly. For the sake of others, they should not think superfluous what they feel is no longer necessary for themselves. A very great matter is at stake when the true and truly holy divinity is proclaimed as the one to be sought and worshiped. It is true that this divinity also supplies the help we need for the frailty we now carry. Yet it is to be sought and worshiped not for the sake of the passing vapor of mortal life, but for the sake of the happy life, which can only be eternal.

WHETHER, SINCE IT IS CLEAR THAT DIVINITY IS NOT FOUND IN CIVIL THEOLOGY, WE SHOULD BELIEVE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE SELECT GODS

Having refuted civil theology, Augustine turns to Varro's select gods, the chief deities of Rome.

7.1 This divinity, or deity, if I may put it so, is what we are concerned with. Our writers no longer hesitate to use this word too, so as to render more exactly what the Greeks call θεότητα [*theotēta*, godhead]. This divinity or deity, then, is not to be found in the theology they call civil, which Marcus Varro set out in sixteen books. That is, the happiness of eternal life is not reached by worshiping such gods as cities established for worship, in the way they established it. Someone may not yet have been persuaded of this by the sixth book, which I have just finished. Once he has read this one, perhaps he will have nothing further to ask for in settling the question. For it is possible that someone may think that at least the select and principal gods ought to be worshiped for the sake of the happy life, which can only be eternal. Varro covered these gods in his last book, and so far we have said little about them.[1] On this point I do not repeat what Tertullian said, perhaps more wittily than truly: "If gods are selected like onions, then surely the rest are judged rejects." I do not say this, because I see that even from among the select, some are selected for something greater and more excellent. So in the army, when recruits have been chosen, some of them are chosen again for some greater feat of arms. And when men are chosen in the Church to become its leaders, the rest are certainly not rejected, since all good believers are rightly called the elect. In a building, cornerstones are chosen, but the other stones, which are assigned to other parts of the structure, are not rejected. Grapes are chosen for eating, and the others, which

1 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), the most learned Roman scholar of antiquities. The last sixteen books of his *Antiquities of Human and Divine Things* dealt with the gods and are Augustine's main source here.

we leave for drinking, are not rejected. There is no need to run through many examples, since the point is plain.[2] So the mere fact that certain gods were selected from among many is no reason to fault the man who wrote about them, or their worshipers, or the gods themselves. We should rather notice who these gods are, and for what purpose they appear to have been selected.

WHO THE SELECT GODS ARE, AND WHETHER THEY ARE EXEMPT FROM THE DUTIES OF THE LESSER GODS

Varro's twenty select gods turn out to share the petty tasks of conception and birth.

7.2 These, at any rate, are the select gods whom Varro presents in a single book: Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, the Sun, Orcus, Father Liber, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, the Moon, Diana, Minerva, Venus and Vesta. Of all these, twenty in all, twelve are male and eight female. Are these deities said to have been selected because they have greater roles in governing the world, or because they became better known to the peoples and received greater worship? If it is because greater works in the world are managed by them, we ought not to have found them among that plebeian crowd of deities, so to speak, which is assigned to petty little tasks. Yet Janus himself comes first, when a child is conceived. This is the starting point of all those tasks parceled out bit by bit among the petty deities, and Janus opens the way to receive the seed.[3] Saturn is there too, because of the seed itself. Liber is there, who "liberates" the male by the release of seed. Libera is there, whom they also identify with Venus, and who confers the same benefit on the female, so that she too is freed by the emission of seed. All of these are among those called select. But the goddess Mena is there too, who presides over menstrual flow. She is a

2 Tertullian (c. AD 160–225), Christian writer of Carthage; the quip is from his *To the Nations* 2.9.

3 Orcus was the god of the underworld; Tellus was the goddess of the earth.

daughter of Jupiter, yet she is of no account. And in his book on the select gods, the same author assigns this province of menstrual flow to Juno herself, who is queen even among the select gods. Here, as Juno Lucina, she presides over that same blood together with Mena, her stepdaughter. Two very obscure gods are there too, whoever they may be, Vitumnus and Sentinus. One of them bestows life on the unborn child, the other the senses. And surely these two, the lowliest of all, provide far more than all those grandees, the select.[4] For without life and sensation, what is all that is carried in a woman's womb but some utterly worthless thing, comparable to mud and dust?

THAT NO REASON CAN BE GIVEN FOR THE SELECTION OF CERTAIN GODS, SINCE A MORE IMPORTANT FUNCTION IS ASSIGNED TO MANY LOWER ONES

Obscure gods like Vitumnus and Sentinus give more than the select ones; selection must be mere fame or fortune.

7.3 What reason, then, drove so many select gods to these tiniest of tasks? In the sharing out of this bounty they are outdone by Vitumnus and Sentinus, whom obscurity keeps hidden. The select Janus provides the entrance, the "door," as it were, for the seed. The select Saturn provides the seed itself. The select Liber provides men with the emission of that seed. Libera, who is Ceres or Venus, provides the same for women. The select Juno provides menstrual flow for the growth of what has been conceived, and she does not do it alone, but with Mena, the daughter of Jupiter. Vitumnus, obscure and of no account, provides life. Sentinus, obscure and of no account, provides sensation. These two gifts surpass those other things by as much as they themselves are surpassed by intellect and reason. Beings that reason and understand are certainly superior to those that live and feel without intellect and reason, as cattle do. In the same way, things endowed with life and sensation are rightly ranked above things that neither live nor feel. So Vitumnus the life-

4 Lucina, "she who brings to light," was Juno's title as goddess of childbirth.

giver and Sentinus the sense-giver ought to have been counted among the select gods. They have a better claim than Janus the admitter of seed, Saturn the giver or sower of seed, and Liber and Libera the movers or emitters of seed. Those seeds are not even worth thinking about unless they come to life and sensation. Yet these select gifts are given not by the select gods, but by certain unknown gods who are neglected in comparison with the dignity of the others. Suppose the answer is this. Janus has power over all beginnings, and so the opening for conception is fittingly attributed to him. Saturn has power over all seeds, and so the sowing of a human being cannot be separated from his work either. Liber and Libera have power over the emission of all seeds, and so they also preside over what concerns the replacement of one human generation by the next. Juno has power over all purifications and all births, and so she is present at women's purgations and at the births of human beings. Then let them find an answer about Vitumnus and Sentinus. Do they want these two also to have power over all things that live and feel? If they grant this, let them notice how much higher they will be placing them. For to be born from seeds happens on the earth and from the earth, while to live and to feel, they believe, belongs even to the gods of the stars. But suppose they say that only the things which come alive in the flesh and are sustained by the senses are attributed to Vitumnus and Sentinus. Then why does the god who makes all things live and feel not also give life and sensation to the flesh, bestowing this gift on unborn children too by his universal operation? And what need is there of Vitumnus and Sentinus? Perhaps these fleshly matters, as the farthest and lowest, were entrusted to them as household servants by the one who presides over life and sensation universally. In that case, are those select gods so short of servants that they could not find anyone to whom they too might entrust these tasks? For all the nobility that seemed to qualify them for selection, were they forced to work alongside the lowly? Juno is select, she is queen, and she is both sister and wife of Jupiter. Yet she is Iterduca, the guide of children on their way, and she

works alongside the lowliest goddesses, Abeona and Adeona.[5] There they also placed the goddess Mind, who gives children a good mind. She is not placed among the select, as though anything greater could be given to a human being. But Juno is placed there, because she is Iterduca and Domiduca, the one who guides on the way and the one who leads home. As if there were any use in making a journey and being led home when the mind is not good! These selectors by no means placed the goddess of that gift among the select deities. She surely ought to have been ranked above Minerva too, to whom, among these petty tasks, they assigned children's memory. Who would doubt that it is far better to have a good mind than any memory, however vast? No one who has a good mind is wicked. But some of the very worst people have an amazing memory, and they are all the worse because they are less able to forget the evil they plan. And yet Minerva is among the select gods, while the goddess Mind lies buried in the worthless crowd. What shall I say of Virtue? What of Felicity? I have already said a good deal about them in the fourth book. Though they held these two to be goddesses, they chose to give them no place among the select gods. Yet they gave a place there to Mars and Orcus, the one the maker of deaths, the other their receiver.

In these petty tasks, parceled out bit by bit among many gods, we see even the select gods working side by side with the rest, like a senate with the common people. We also find that certain gods who were never thought worth selecting manage many greater and better things than those called select. It remains to conclude that the select gods were called select and principal not because of more excellent roles in the world, but because they happened to become better known to the peoples. Hence Varro himself says that obscurity had befallen some father gods and mother goddesses, just as it befalls human beings. Perhaps, then, Felicity ought not to be among the select gods, since they reached that eminence not by merit but by chance. In that case

5 Abeona and Adeona were minor goddesses of a child's going away and coming back.

Fortune at least should have been placed among them, or rather ahead of them. For they say that this goddess bestows her gifts on each person not by any rational plan, but as it happens, at random. She should have held the top place among the select gods, for it is in them above all that she showed what she could do. We see that they were selected not for outstanding virtue, nor by a happiness grounded in reason, but by the random power of Fortune, as her worshipers think of her. That most eloquent man Sallust perhaps had the gods themselves in view when he said: "But surely fortune rules in everything; it makes all things famous or obscure according to whim rather than truth." For they cannot find a reason why Venus was made famous and Virtue left obscure, since they consecrated both as deities and their merits do not bear comparison. Or suppose fame was earned by whatever more people seek, and more people seek Venus than Virtue. Then why was the goddess Minerva made famous and the goddess Money left obscure?[6] After all, greed attracts more of humankind than skill does. Even among the skilled, you will rarely find anyone who does not offer his art for sale at a price in money. And the thing for which something is done is always valued more highly than what is done for the sake of something else. So if this selection of gods was made by the judgment of the foolish multitude, why was the goddess Money not ranked above Minerva, since many people are craftsmen for the sake of money? But if this distinction was made by the wise few, why was Virtue not ranked above Venus, when reason ranks her far above? At the very least, as I said, Fortune herself should have had the chief place among the select. Those who credit her most believe that she "rules in everything" and "makes all things famous or obscure according to whim rather than truth." If she had so much power even over the gods that by her random judgment she made famous whom she pleased and obscure whom she pleased, she should have held that chief place, since she has such supreme power over the gods them-

6 Sallust (86–c. 35 BC), Roman historian; the quotation is from *The War with Catiline* 8.1.

selves. Or are we to suppose that she could not be there for no other reason than that Fortune herself had bad fortune? Then she was her own adversary, for she made others eminent and did not become eminent herself.

THAT THE LESSER GODS, WHO ARE NOT DISGRACED BY ANY SCANDALS, FARED BETTER THAN THE SELECT GODS, WHOSE GREAT OBSCENITIES ARE CELEBRATED

The lesser gods are free of scandal, while the select gods are famous for their crimes.

7.4 Someone hungry for rank and renown might congratulate these select gods and call them fortunate, if he did not see that they were selected more for insults than for honors. For that lowest crowd was shielded by its very obscurity from being buried under disgrace. We laugh, indeed, when we see the gods divided up by the fictions of human opinion, with the tasks shared out among them. They are like petty tax-farmers, or like the workmen in the silversmiths' street, where a single little vessel passes through many craftsmen before it comes out complete, though one complete craftsman could complete it. But the only way thought to serve the interests of the mass of workers was for each to learn a single part of the craft quickly and easily. That way they would not all be forced to master a whole craft slowly and with difficulty. Yet hardly one of the unselected gods is found who has brought infamy on his name by some crime. On the other hand, hardly one of the select has not been branded with some notable disgrace. The select came down to the humble tasks of the lowly, but the lowly did not rise to the lofty crimes of the select. About Janus, indeed, nothing that amounts to a scandal readily comes to my mind. Perhaps he really was like that, and lived more innocently and further removed from crimes and vices. He kindly received Saturn when Saturn was in flight, and he shared his kingdom with his guest, so that each even founded his own city: Janus the Janiculum, Saturn Saturnia. But in worshiping the gods these people hungered for every kind of disgrace. So, finding his life

less shameful than the others', they disfigured him with the monstrous ugliness of his statue. They made him now two-faced, now even four-faced, as though he were a double.[7] Or perhaps they wanted this: since most of the select gods had lost face by committing shameful deeds, the more innocent Janus was, the more faces he should show?[8]

THE MORE SECRET DOCTRINE OF THE PAGANS AND THEIR EXPLANATIONS FROM NATURAL SCIENCE

Varro claims images of the gods are symbols of the world soul and its parts.

7.5 But let us rather hear their own natural interpretations, by which they try to color the ugliness of their most wretched error with an appearance of deeper learning. First, Varro recommends these interpretations by saying that the ancients fashioned images of the gods, with their emblems and adornments, for a purpose. Those who had approached the mysteries of the doctrine would see these things with their eyes, and so be able to see with their minds the soul of the world and its parts, that is, the true gods. Those who made the images in human form, he says, seem to have followed this idea: the mind of mortals, which is in the human body, is very like the immortal mind. It is as if vessels were set up to signify gods, and a wine jar were placed in the temple of Liber to signify wine, so that the container stands for what it contains. In the same way, he says, an image in human form signifies the rational soul, because that nature is usually contained in the human form as in a vessel. And it is of that nature that they hold a god, or the gods, to consist. These are the mysteries of doctrine which this most learned man had penetrated, so that he could bring these things out into the light. But, you most acute of men, did you lose in these mysteries of doctrine that good sense by which you soberly judged

7 The Janiculum is a hill across the Tiber from Rome; Saturnia was said to be an ancient settlement on the Capitol.

8 Augustine puns on *frons*, "forehead, face," which also stood for a sense of shame.

two things? You judged that those who first set up images for the peoples both took away fear from their fellow citizens and added error. You also judged that the ancient Romans worshiped the gods more purely without images. It was those ancient Romans who gave you the authority to dare to say this against the later Romans. For if those most ancient Romans had also worshiped images, perhaps you would have suppressed in fearful silence that whole view about not setting up images, true as it was. And you would have proclaimed these mysteries of doctrine, embodied in such pernicious and empty fictions, all the more loquaciously and loftily.[9] Yet your soul, so learned and so gifted, could by no means reach its God through these mysteries of doctrine, and for this we grieve for you greatly. That God is the one by whom your soul was made, not with whom it was made. Your soul is not a portion of him, but his creation. He is not the soul of all things, but the one who made every soul. By his illumination alone the soul becomes happy, if it is not ungrateful for his grace. What kind of mysteries of doctrine these are, and how highly they should be valued, what follows will show. Meanwhile, this most learned man admits that the soul of the world and its parts are the true gods. From this we understand that his whole theology could extend only as far as the nature of the rational soul. This includes the natural theology itself, to which he attributes the most. For he says very little about natural theology, by way of preface, in this last book, the one he wrote on the select gods. In it we shall see whether, through interpretations drawn from natural philosophy, he can trace civil theology back to this natural theology. If he can, it will be wholly natural, and then what need was there to separate civil theology from it with such careful distinction? But suppose it was rightly kept separate. Even this natural theology that he favors is not true, for it reaches as far as the soul, not as far as the true God who made the soul too. How much more abject and false, then, is this civil theology, which is mostly occupied with the nature of bodies! Its own interpretations will show this,

9 Varro's remark about images was quoted by Augustine earlier, at 4.31.

though they have sought them out and explained them with such great diligence. I must mention some of these interpretations, as is necessary.

VARRO'S OPINION THAT GOD IS THE SOUL OF THE WORLD, WHICH NEVERTHELESS HAS IN ITS PARTS MANY SOULS WHOSE NATURE IS DIVINE

Varro calls god the soul of the world and fills its four regions with divine souls.

7.6 So Varro, still speaking of natural theology in his preface, says that he thinks god is the soul of the world, which the Greeks call κόσμον [*kosmos*, world], and that this world itself is god. Just as a wise man, though he consists of body and mind, is nevertheless called wise because of his mind, so the world is called god because of its mind, though it consists of mind and body. Here he seems in some fashion to acknowledge one God. But in order to bring in more gods as well, he adds that the world is divided into two parts, heaven and earth. Heaven is divided in two, into ether and air, and earth into water and land. Of these the highest is ether, the second air, the third water, and the lowest earth. All four parts, he says, are full of souls: immortal ones in the ether and the air, mortal ones in the water and the earth. From the highest circuit of the heaven down to the circle of the moon, the souls of the ether are the constellations and the stars. These heavenly gods are not only understood to exist but can actually be seen. Between the moon's orbit and the tops of the clouds and winds are the souls of the air. These are seen with the mind, not with the eyes, and they are called heroes, Lares and Genii. This, then, is the natural theology briefly set out in that preface. It pleased not only Varro but many philosophers. It will have to be discussed more thoroughly once I have finished, with the help of the true God, what remains to be said about civil theology as it concerns the select gods.[10]

10 The Lares were Roman guardian spirits of the household and the crossroads; a Genius was the guardian spirit of a person or a place.

WHETHER IT WAS REASONABLE TO MAKE JANUS AND TERMINUS TWO SEPARATE GODS

Why should beginnings belong to Janus and ends to Terminus, if Janus is the world?

7.7 Janus, then, with whom Varro began: who is he, I ask? The answer comes back: "He is the world." That is certainly a short and plain answer. Why, then, are the beginnings of things said to belong to him, but their ends to another god, whom they call Terminus? For they say that, because of beginnings and ends, two months were dedicated to these two gods, besides the ten months running from March, their head, to December: January to Janus and February to Terminus. That, they say, is why the Terminalia is celebrated in this same month of February, when the purification rite called the Februum is performed, from which the month took its name. So do the beginnings of things belong to the world, which is Janus, while their ends do not, so that another god had to be put in charge of them? Do they not admit that everything they say comes about in this world also comes to its end in this world? What folly is this, to give him half the power in his work and a double face in his image?[11] Would they not interpret this two-faced god far more elegantly if they said he was both Janus and Terminus, and gave one face to beginnings and the other to ends? For whoever is at work must keep both in view. In every movement of his activity, the one who does not look back to the beginning does not look ahead to the end. So the intention that looks forward must be linked to the memory that looks back, for someone who has forgotten what he began will not find a way to finish it. Now if they thought that the happy life begins in this world and is completed beyond it, and for that reason assigned to Janus, that is, to the world, only the power over beginnings, then surely they would rank Terminus above him and would not shut him out of

11 Terminus was the Roman god of boundary stones; his festival, the Terminalia, fell on February 23.

the select gods. And yet even as things are, with the beginnings and ends of temporal things handled by these two gods, more honor ought to have been given to Terminus. For there is greater joy when anything is completed, whereas undertakings are full of anxiety until they are brought to their end. That end is what anyone who begins something most seeks and aims at, awaits and longs for, and he does not rejoice over something begun unless it is finished.

WHY THE WORSHIPERS OF JANUS MADE HIS IMAGE WITH TWO FACES, THOUGH THEY ALSO WANT IT SEEN WITH FOUR

Janus's two faces are explained by the human mouth; his four faces by the world's quarters.

7.8 But now let us bring out the interpretation of the two-faced image. They say he has two faces, one in front and one behind, because the opening of our mouth, when we open it, looks like the world. That is why the Greeks call the palate οὐρανόν [*ouranos*, sky], and why some Latin poets, Varro says, have called the sky the palate. From this opening of the mouth there is a way out toward the teeth and a way in toward the throat. See what the world has been brought down to, all because of a word for our palate, whether Greek or poetic! But what has this to do with the soul, or with eternal life? Let this god be worshiped for the sake of saliva alone, since it is for saliva, partly to be swallowed and partly to be spat out, that both doors open beneath the sky of the palate.[12] Besides, what could be more absurd than this? In the world itself they find no two doors set opposite each other through which it might let anything in or send anything out. Yet from our mouth and throat, which the world does not resemble, they want to make up an image of the world in Janus, and all for the sake of the palate alone, which Janus does not resemble either. And when they make him four-faced and call him Janus

12 Latin *ianua*, "door," was connected with the name of Janus, the god of doorways and gates.

Geminus, "Twin Janus," they interpret this as referring to the four quarters of the world, as if the world looked out at something the way Janus does with all his faces.[13] Then again, if Janus is the world and the world consists of four parts, the image of two-faced Janus is false. Or if it is true because the whole world is commonly meant by the names East and West, then when we name the other two parts, North and South, will anyone call the world "twin," as they call the four-faced Janus "Twin"? They have nothing at all by which to interpret four doors, open to those going in and out, as a likeness of the world, in the way that for the two-faced image they found at least something to say in the human mouth. Unless perhaps Neptune comes to the rescue and offers them a fish, which besides the opening of mouth and throat also has gills opening on the right and the left! And yet from this folly, with all its doors, no soul escapes except the one that hears the Truth saying, "I am the door."[14]

THE POWER OF JUPITER, AND A COMPARISON OF HIM WITH JANUS

Jupiter is said to hold the causes of things, yet Janus is ranked before him.

7.9 Next, let them explain whom they want us to understand by Jove, who is also called Jupiter. "He is the god," they say, "who has power over the causes by which anything comes about in the world." How great a thing this is, that most famous line of Virgil bears witness: "Happy the one who could learn the causes of things." But why is Janus placed before him? Let that most acute and learned man answer us. "Because," he says, "first things are in the power of Janus, highest things in the power of Jupiter. So Jupiter is rightly held to be the king of all. For first things are surpassed by highest things, since, although first things come before in time, highest things excel in dignity." That

13 Janus Geminus was the name of Janus's shrine in the Roman Forum, whose doors were closed in time of peace.
14 John 10:9.

would be rightly said if what is first and what is highest were being distinguished in things done. For example, the beginning of an act is setting out, its highest point arriving; the beginning is starting to learn, the highest point acquiring knowledge. And so in all things the first things are beginnings and the highest things are ends. But this question has already been settled between Janus and Terminus.[15] But the causes assigned to Jupiter are causes that produce, not things produced, and there is no way they can be preceded in time by the things made or by the beginnings of the things made. For the thing that makes is always prior to the thing that is made. So if the beginnings of things made belong to Janus, they are not for that reason prior to the efficient causes they attribute to Jupiter. For just as nothing is made, so nothing is even begun in order to be made, unless an efficient cause has gone before it. Now this god holds in his power all the causes of all natures that have been made and of all natural things. If the peoples call him Jupiter and worship him with such insults and such wicked accusations, they bind themselves with a fouler sacrilege than if they thought there was no god at all. It would therefore be better for them to give the name of Jupiter to some other being, one worthy of shameful and disgraceful honors. They could substitute an empty fiction for them to blaspheme instead, just as a stone is said to have been substituted for Saturn to swallow in place of his son. That would be better than calling this god both the Thunderer and an adulterer, both the ruler of the whole world and one dissipated in so many debaucheries, both the holder of the supreme causes of all natures and natural things and one who has no good cause of his own.[16]

Next I ask what place they now give this Jupiter among the gods, if Janus is the world. For Varro defined the true gods as the soul of the world and its parts, and so whatever is not that is certainly not a true god by their account. Will they then say that

15 Virgil, *Georgics* 2.490.

16 In the myth, Saturn swallowed his children at birth; to save Jupiter, his mother Rhea gave Saturn a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes instead.

Jupiter is the soul of the world, so that Janus is its body, that is, this visible world? If they say this, they will have no way of calling Janus a god, since even on their own account the body of the world is not a god; only the soul of the world and its parts are. That is why Varro says quite plainly that he thinks god is the soul of the world and that this world itself is god. Just as a wise man, though he consists of mind and body, is nevertheless called wise because of his mind, so the world is called god because of its mind, though it consists of mind and body. So the body of the world alone is not god. Either its soul alone is god, or body and mind together, but in such a way that it is god because of the mind, not the body. If, then, Janus is the world and Janus is a god, will they say that Jupiter, in order to be a god at all, is some part of Janus? On the contrary, they usually attribute the whole universe to Jupiter, which is where the saying comes from, "All things are full of Jove." So if Jupiter is to be a god, and above all the king of the gods, they can think of him as nothing other than the world, so that, on their view, he reigns over the other gods as his own parts. In support of this view the same Varro also explains some lines of Valerius Soranus, in a book he wrote on the worship of the gods, separate from these. The lines are these: "Almighty Jupiter, of kings and things and gods the begetter, and the mother of the gods, god one and all."[17] In the same book they are explained as follows. They held that the male is the one who emits seed and the female the one who receives it, and that Jupiter is the world, emitting all seeds from himself and receiving them back into himself. So, Varro says, Soranus had good reason to write "Jupiter begetter and mother," and no less reason to say that one and all are the same, for the world is one, and in that one are all things.

17 "All things are full of Jove" is from Virgil, *Eclogues* 3.60. Quintus Valerius Soranus was a Roman scholar and poet of the early first century BC.

WHETHER THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN JANUS AND JUPITER IS SOUND

If Janus and Jupiter are both the world, why are they two gods with separate temples?

7.10 So, since Janus is the world and Jupiter is the world, and there is only one world, why are Janus and Jupiter two gods? Why do they have separate temples and separate altars, different rites and dissimilar images? Suppose it is because the power of first beginnings is one thing and the power of causes another, and the one has received the name of Janus, the other the name of Jupiter. If one man has two powers or two skills in different matters, is he then called two judges or two craftsmen because each power has a different force? So too with the one God: if he himself has power over first beginnings and he himself over causes, must he therefore be thought of as two gods, just because beginnings and causes are two things? If they think this is right, let them also say that Jupiter himself is as many gods as the surnames they have given him for his many powers. For all the things from which those surnames were drawn are many and diverse. I mention a few of them.

THE SURNAMES OF JUPITER, WHICH REFER NOT TO MANY GODS BUT TO ONE AND THE SAME

Jupiter's many surnames show that many powers need not mean many gods.

7.11 They have called him Victor, Invictus [Unconquered], Opitulus [Helper], Impulsor [Driver], Stator [Stayer], Centumpeda [Hundred-Foot], Supinalis [Overturner], Tigillus [Beam], Almus [Nourisher], Ruminus [Suckler], and other names that would take too long to go through. They gave these surnames to one god for different causes and powers, yet they did not force him to be as many gods as there are things. The names were given because he conquered all things; because he was conquered by no one; because he brought help to the needy; because he had

the power of driving, of stopping, of making steady, and of laying flat on the back; because like a beam he held the world together and held it up; because he nourished all things; because by the *ruma*, that is, the breast, he nourished living creatures. Among these, as we notice, some are great and some trivial, and yet one being is said to do both. I think the causes of things and their first beginnings, for whose sake they wanted the one world to be two gods, Jupiter and Janus, are closer to each other than holding the world together and giving the breast to animals. Yet they did not feel compelled to have two gods for these two works, so far apart in power and dignity. Instead the one Jupiter was called Tigillus for the first and Ruminus for the second. I will not say that offering the breast to suckling animals might have suited Juno better than Jupiter, especially since there was also a goddess Rumina to lend him her help or service in this work. For I suspect the reply could be that Juno herself is nothing other than Jupiter, according to those lines of Valerius Soranus where it is said: "Almighty Jupiter, of kings and things and gods the begetter, and the mother of the gods." Why, then, was he also called Ruminus, when perhaps, for those who look into it more carefully, he will turn out to be that goddess Rumina as well? For if it rightly seemed unworthy of the majesty of the gods that, in a single ear of grain, one god should look after the joint of the stalk and a goddess after the husk, how much more unworthy is it that one very lowly matter, the feeding of animals at the breast, should be looked after by the power of two gods! One of them is Jupiter, the king of all himself, and he does this not even with his own wife but with some obscure Rumina or other, unless he himself is also Rumina herself: Ruminus, perhaps, for suckling males and Rumina for females! I would indeed say that they did not want to give Jupiter a feminine name, were he not called "begetter and mother" in those lines, and did I not read that among his other surnames he was also called Pecunia [Money], a goddess we found among those

petty deities and mentioned in the fourth book.[18] But since both men and women have money, why he was not called both Pecunia and Pecunius, like Rumina and Ruminus, is their business.

THAT JUPITER IS ALSO CALLED PECUNIA

Calling the king of the gods Money is an insult; Wisdom would have been a better name.

7.12 And how elegantly they have explained the reason for this name! He is called Pecunia, they say, he is called that because all things are his. What a grand reason for a divine name! On the contrary, the one to whom all things belong is given a most cheap and insulting name when he is called Pecunia. For compared with all the things contained in heaven and earth, what is money, taking all the things whatsoever that people possess under the name of money? But no doubt it was avarice that gave Jupiter this name, so that whoever loves money might seem to himself to love not just any god, but the king of all himself. It would be quite another thing if he were called Riches. For riches are one thing and money another.[19] For we call the wise, the just and the good rich, even when they have no money or very little, since they are richer in virtues, and through these, even in the necessities of the body, what they have is enough for them. The greedy, on the other hand, we call poor, always gaping after more and always in need. They can possess sums of money however great, but in any abundance of it, however large, they cannot help being in need. And we rightly call the true God himself rich, not in money, however, but in omnipotence. So those with money are called rich, but they are inwardly needy if they are greedy; likewise those without money are called poor, but they are inwardly rich if they are wise. What, then, should a wise man think of this theology, in which the king of the gods has

18 See Book 4.8 and 4.21, where Augustine mocks the multitude of minor Roman gods, each in charge of a tiny task.

19 Latin *pecunia* means money, but in older usage it could mean property of any kind.

taken the name of a thing that no wise man has ever craved? If anything that pertained to eternal life were being learned to good effect from this teaching, how much more readily would they have called the god who rules the world not Money but Wisdom, the love of which cleanses us from the filth of avarice, that is, from the love of money!

THAT IN EXPLAINING WHAT SATURN IS AND WHAT GENIUS IS, BOTH ARE SHOWN TO BE THE ONE JUPITER

Saturn and Genius both turn out, on Varro's explanations, to be Jupiter himself.

7.13 But why say more about this Jupiter? Perhaps all the others should be referred to him, so that the belief in many gods is left empty, since he himself is all of them. This holds whether they are thought to be his parts or powers, or whether the force of the soul, which they think is spread through all things, has taken the names of many gods, as it were, from the parts of this mass out of which this visible world rises, and from the manifold workings of nature. For what is Saturn, too? "One of the chief gods," he says, "who holds dominion over all sowing." But does not the explanation of those lines of Valerius Soranus run like this: that Jupiter is the world, and that he sends out all seeds from himself and takes them back into himself? So he is the one who holds dominion over all sowing. What is Genius? "The god," he says, "who is in charge of, and has power over, the begetting of all things." Whom else do they believe has this power but the world, to which it was said: "Jupiter, begetter and mother"? And in another passage he says that a genius is each person's rational soul, and that therefore each individual has his own, but that such a soul of the world is god. In saying this he certainly brings us back to the same point: that the soul of the world itself is to be believed to be the universal genius, so to speak. This, then, is the one they call Jupiter. For if every genius is a god, and every man's soul is a genius, it follows that every man's soul is a god. And if sheer absurdity forces even them to recoil from this, it remains that they call him uniquely and preeminently the god

Genius whom they call the soul of the world, and therefore Jupiter.

THE FUNCTIONS OF MERCURY AND MARS

Mercury is speech and Mars is war, so neither is a part of the world or a god.

7.14 As for Mercury and Mars, they could find no way to refer them to any parts of the world or to the works of God that are in the elements. So they put them in charge at least of human works, as ministers of speech and of warfare. Now if Mercury also holds power over the speech of the gods, he rules even the king of the gods himself—if Jupiter speaks as Mercury wills, or has received the faculty of speech from him—which is certainly absurd. But if the power attributed to him is said to be only over human speech, it is not credible that Jupiter was willing to stoop to suckling at the breast not only children but even livestock—which is why he was surnamed Ruminus—and yet unwilling to have the care of our speech, by which we excel the livestock, belong to him. And therefore Jupiter and Mercury are one and the same. Suppose speech itself is said to be Mercury, as their interpretations of him show. For they say that he is called Mercury as if *medius currens* [running in the middle], because speech runs between people as a go-between; that he is called Ἑρμῆς [Hermes] in Greek because speech, or interpretation, which certainly belongs to speech, is called ἑρμηνεία [interpretation]; that he also presides over goods (*merces*) because speech becomes the go-between for sellers and buyers; that his wings on his head and feet signify that speech is borne through the air like a bird; that he is called the messenger (*nuntius*) because through speech all our thoughts are announced (*enuntiantur*). If, then, Mercury is speech itself, he is not a god, even by their own admission. But when they make into gods for themselves beings who are not even demons, then by praying to unclean spirits they are possessed by those who are not gods but demons. Likewise, since they could not find for Mars either any element or

part of the world where he might perform works of nature of any kind, they said he was the god of war—which is a work of human beings, and not a desirable one. So if Felicity granted perpetual peace, Mars would have nothing to do. But if Mars is war itself, as Mercury is speech, then I wish that, just as it is plain that he is not a god, so there were no war either, to be called a god even falsely.

CERTAIN STARS THAT THE PAGANS NAMED AFTER THEIR GODS

The planets named after the gods expose contradictions in their ranking.

7.15 Unless perhaps these gods are the stars which they have called by their names. For they call one star Mercury, and another likewise Mars. But up there too is the one they call Jupiter, and yet for them the world is Jupiter. There is the one they call Saturn, and yet they give him besides no small substance—namely, that of all seeds. There too is the brightest of them all, which they call Venus, and yet they want this same Venus to be the Moon as well—although among them Juno and Venus contend over that most brilliant star as if over the golden apple. For some say Lucifer, the morning star, belongs to Venus, some to Juno; but, as usual, Venus wins. Far more people assign that star to Venus, so that hardly any of them can be found who thinks otherwise.[20] And who would not laugh when they call Jupiter the king of all, since his star is so far outshone by the star of Venus? It ought to have been as much brighter than the others as he himself is more powerful. They reply that it only seems so because the one thought dimmer is higher and much farther removed from the earth. If, then, greater dignity has earned the higher place, why is Saturn higher than Jupiter up there? Or could the emptiness of the myth that makes Jupiter king not reach as far as the stars? Was Saturn allowed to hold at

20 The golden apple marked "for the fairest," which Paris awarded to Venus over Juno and Minerva.

least in heaven what he could not hold in his own kingdom or on the Capitol? And why did Janus not receive any star? If it is because he is the world and all things are in him—Jupiter too is the world, and yet he has one. Or did Janus settle his case as best he could, and in return for the one star he lacks among the heavenly bodies, receive so many faces on earth? Next, they consider Mercury and Mars parts of the world only because of their stars, so that they can have them as gods, since speech and war are certainly not parts of the world but human activities. If so, why have they made no altars, no rites, no temples for the Ram, the Bull, the Crab, the Scorpion and the rest of this kind, which they count as heavenly signs? These consist not of single stars, but each of many, and they say they are set higher than those others, in the highest heaven, where a steadier motion gives the stars an unwandering course. Why have they not held them to be gods—I do not say among these select gods, but not even among those plebeian ones, so to speak?

APOLLO, DIANA, AND THE OTHER SELECT GODS WHOM THEY HELD TO BE PARTS OF THE WORLD

Apollo, Diana, Vulcan, Neptune and others are made into parts of the world, often overlapping.

7.16 Although they would have Apollo be a diviner and a physician, still, in order to place him in some part of the world, they said that he is also the sun. Likewise they said that Diana, his sister, is the moon and the guardian of roads—which is also why they want her to be a virgin, because a road gives birth to nothing!—and that both carry arrows because these two heavenly bodies send their rays from the sky all the way to the earth. Vulcan they want to be the fire of the world, Neptune the waters of the world, Father Dis, that is, Orcus, the earthy and lowest part of the world. Liber and Ceres they set over seeds—either him over male seeds and her over female, or him over the moisture of seeds and her over their dryness. And all this, of course, is referred to the world, that is, to Jupiter, who was called "begetter and mother" for the reason that he sends out all seeds from him-

self and takes them back into himself. Indeed, they also want the Great Mother to be the same as Ceres, whom they say is nothing other than the earth, and they declare that she is Juno too; and so they assign to her the secondary causes of things—although it was to Jupiter that "begetter and mother of the gods" was said, since according to them the whole world itself is Jupiter. Minerva, too, they set over human arts, and because they could not find even a star in which to place her, they said that she was either the highest ether or else the moon. Vesta herself they thought the greatest of the goddesses for the reason that she is the earth, although they believed that the gentler fire of the world, which serves the easy uses of human life, should be assigned to her—not the more violent kind, such as belongs to Vulcan.[21] And so they want all these select gods to be this world—some of them the whole, some its parts: the whole, as Jupiter; its parts, as Genius, as the Great Mother, as the Sun, as the Moon, or rather Apollo and Diana. Sometimes they make one god many things, sometimes one thing many gods. For one god is many things, as Jupiter himself is: the whole world is held and called Jupiter, and the sky alone is Jupiter, and a single star is Jupiter. Likewise Juno is mistress of secondary causes, and Juno is the air, and Juno is the earth, and, if she could beat Venus, Juno would be a star. Similarly Minerva is the highest ether, and Minerva again is the moon, which they think lies at the lowest boundary of the ether. And they make one thing many gods in this way: Janus is the world, and so is Jupiter; Juno, too, is the earth, and so are the Great Mother and Ceres.

THAT EVEN VARRO HIMSELF DECLARED HIS OPINIONS ABOUT THE GODS UNCERTAIN

Varro admits that he writes only opinions about the gods, not certain knowledge.

7.17 And as with these things, which I have mentioned by way of example, so with the rest: they do not unravel them but tangle

them up. Wherever the impulse of their wandering opinion drives them, there they leap, this way and that, here and there, jumping forward and jumping back—so much so that Varro himself preferred to doubt everything rather than affirm anything. For when he had finished the first of the last three books, on the certain gods, and was beginning to speak in the second about the uncertain gods, he says: "I ought not to be blamed if in this little book I set out doubtful opinions about the gods. For whoever thinks that judgment should and can be made will make it himself when he has heard them. As for me, I could sooner be brought to call into doubt what I said in the first book than to bring everything I shall write in this one to any definite conclusion." Thus he made not only this book on the uncertain gods uncertain, but also the one on the certain gods. Then in the third of these, on the select gods, he first set out by way of preface what he thought needed to be said beforehand from natural theology. He was about to enter on the follies and lying madness of this civil theology, where not only did the truth of things fail to guide him, but the authority of the ancestors also weighed upon him. There he says: "In this book I shall write about the public gods of the Roman people, to whom they have dedicated temples and whom they have marked out with many images; but, as Xenophanes of Colophon writes, I shall set down what I think, not what I would maintain. For it belongs to man to have opinions about these things, to god to know." So, as he is about to speak of what was instituted by human beings, he nervously promises an account of things not grasped and not firmly believed, but matters of opinion and doubt.[22] For he knew that the world exists, that heaven and earth exist, heaven shining with stars and earth fertile with seeds, and other things of this kind; and he believed with steady conviction of mind that this whole mass and nature is ruled and governed by some invisible

21 The Great Mother is Cybele, the Phrygian mother goddess whose cult was brought to Rome in 204 BC.

22 Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 570–475 BC) was a Greek poet and philosopher who criticized human-shaped gods and stressed the limits of human knowledge.

and all-powerful force. But he could not in the same way affirm of Janus that he was the world itself, or discover about Saturn how he could be both Jupiter's father and made subject to Jupiter's reign, and other things of that sort.

WHAT THE MORE CREDIBLE CAUSE IS BY WHICH PAGAN ERROR GREW UP

The gods were more probably men, honored by flatterers and later exploited by demons.

7.18 About these gods a more credible account is given when they are said to have been men. On this account, rites and solemn festivals were established for each of them by those who, in flattery, wanted them to be gods, according to each one's talents, character, deeds and fortunes. Then, creeping little by little into human souls that are like demons and eager for frivolous amusements, these rites spread far and wide, while the lies of the poets embellished them and deceitful spirits lured people toward them. For it could more easily have happened that an impious young man, or one afraid of being killed by an impious father, and eager for the throne, drove his father from it, than what this man's interpretation says: that father Saturn was overcome by his son Jupiter because the cause, which belongs to Jupiter, comes before the seed, which belongs to Saturn. For if this were so, Saturn would never have come first, nor would he be Jupiter's father. For the cause always precedes the seed and is never generated from the seed. But when they try to honor utterly empty myths or the deeds of men with what pass for interpretations drawn from nature, even the sharpest men get into such straits that we cannot help grieving over their emptiness too.

THE INTERPRETATIONS BY WHICH THE REASON FOR WORSHIPING SATURN IS PIECED TOGETHER

Varro's explanations of Saturn devouring his children and holding a sickle contradict themselves.

7.19 "They said," he says, "that Saturn used to devour whatever was born of him, because seeds return to the place from which they were born. And the fact that a clod was thrown to him to devour in place of Jupiter," he says, "signifies that, before the usefulness of plowing was discovered, crops began to be covered over by human hands in sowing." So Saturn ought to have been called the earth itself, not seeds; for it is the earth that in a sense devours what it has brought forth, when the seeds born from it return to it to be received again. And as for his being said to have received a clod in place of Jupiter, what has that to do with the seed being covered with a clod by human hands? Is the seed not devoured, like the rest, just because it is covered with a clod? For this is said as if the one who put the clod there had taken the seed away—just as they claim Jupiter was taken away from Saturn when the clod was offered—and not rather that the clod, by covering the seed, made it be devoured all the more thoroughly. Then, on this view Jupiter is the seed, not the cause of the seed, as was said a little earlier. But what are people to do who, when they interpret foolish things, cannot find anything wise to say? "He has a sickle," he says, "because of agriculture." Surely there was no agriculture yet while he reigned, and that is why his times are called the earlier ones—as the same man interprets the little myths—because the first humans lived on the seeds the earth produced of its own accord. Or did he take up the sickle when he lost his scepter, so that he who in the earliest times had been a king at leisure became a toiling laborer under his son's reign? Next he says that some peoples used to sacrifice children to him, as the Carthaginians did, and some even adults, as the Gauls did, because of all seeds the best is the human race. What need is there to say more about this most cruel folly? Let us rather notice and hold on to this:

these interpretations do not refer to the true God—a living, incorporeal and unchangeable nature—from whom the life that is happy forever is to be sought; rather, their ends lie in things bodily, temporal, changeable and mortal. "The fact that Saturn is said in the myths to have castrated his father Heaven," he says, "means that the divine seed is in Saturn's keeping, not Heaven's." This is so, as far as one can understand, because nothing in heaven is born from seeds. But look: if Saturn is the son of Heaven, he is the son of Jupiter. For they affirm countless times and insistently that Heaven is Jupiter. So these things, which do not come from the truth, generally overturn themselves even with no one pushing them. He says Saturn is called Chronos, a Greek word meaning a span of time, without which, he says, seed cannot be fruitful.[23] These and many other things are said about Saturn, and all of them are referred to seed. But surely Saturn, with such great power, would at least be enough for seeds. Why are other gods required for this—especially Liber and Libera, that is, Ceres? About them, in turn, he says so much concerning seed that you would think he had said nothing about Saturn.

THE RITES OF CERES AT ELEUSIS

Varro explains the Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres and Proserpina only in terms of grain.

7.20 Among the rites of Ceres, the Eleusinian mysteries are especially celebrated, and among the Athenians they were the most renowned of all. Of these he offers no interpretation except what concerns grain, which Ceres discovered, and Proserpina, whom she lost when Orcus carried her off. This Proserpina, he says, stands for the fertility of seeds. At a certain time this fertility failed, and the earth mourned in its barrenness. From this arose the belief that Orcus had carried off Ceres' daughter—that is, fertility itself, called Proserpina from its "creeping forth"

23 Heaven (*Caelus*) is the Latin counterpart of the Greek Uranus, the sky-god castrated by his son Kronos, whom the Romans identified with Saturn.

(*proserpere*)—and kept her in the underworld. The event was marked by public mourning. Then, because fertility returned, joy arose at Proserpina's return, and the solemn festivals were established. He then says that many things are taught in her mysteries which relate only to the discovery of crops.[24]

THE OBSCENITY OF THE RITES CELEBRATED FOR LIBER

The phallic rites of Liber at Italian crossroads and at Lavinium are described.

7.21 Now as for the rites of Liber, whom they put in charge of liquid seeds—and so not only of the juices of fruits, among which wine holds a kind of primacy, but also of the seeds of animals—I am loath to say what depths of obscenity they reached, because it would take too long; but because of these people's proud dullness, I am not loath. Among other things I am forced to pass over, since there are so many, he says that at the crossroads of Italy certain rites of Liber were celebrated with such unbridled obscenity that the male genitals were worshiped in his honor—not even in some slightly more modest privacy, but in the open, with wickedness exulting. During Liber's festival this obscene member was placed with great honor on little carts and paraded, first at the crossroads in the countryside and afterward all the way into the city. In the town of Lavinium a whole month was given to Liber alone, and during its days everyone used the most shameful language, until that member had been carried across the forum and come to rest in its place. On this disreputable member a most reputable matron was required to place a garland in public. So, it seems, the god Liber had to be appeased for the success of the seeds; so the evil eye had to be driven from the fields—by forcing a married woman to do in public what not even a prostitute should have been allowed to do in a theater if married women were watching. This is why Saturn alone was not believed to be enough for

24 The Eleusinian mysteries, held at Eleusis near Athens, honored Demeter (Ceres) and her daughter Persephone (Proserpina).

the seeds: so that the unclean soul might find occasions for multiplying gods. Deservedly abandoned by the one true God for its uncleanness, and prostituted to many false gods by its greed for greater uncleanness, it called these sacrileges sacred rites, and offered itself to be violated and polluted by crowds of filthy demons.[25]

NEPTUNE, SALACIA, AND VENILIA

Two goddesses for the incoming and outgoing wave multiply demons, not meaning.

7.22 Neptune, of course, already had a wife, Salacia, who they said was the lower water of the sea. Why, then, was Venilia also joined to him? Was it not so that, with no reason of necessary rites, simply through the lust of a prostituted soul, the invitation to demons might be multiplied? But let us hear the interpretation of this splendid theology, which may give its reason and so silence our criticism. "Venilia," he says, "is the wave that comes (*uenit*) to the shore; Salacia, the one that returns to the open sea (*salum*)." Why then do they become two goddesses, when it is one wave that comes and returns? Plainly it is that insane lust itself, boiling over into many deities. For although the water that goes and returns is not doubled, yet on the occasion of this folly two demons are invited, and the soul is further defiled—the soul that goes and does not return. I beg you, Varro—or you who have read such writings of such learned men and boast that you have learned something great—interpret this. I will not say, in terms of that eternal and unchangeable nature which alone is God, but at least in terms of the world soul and its parts, which you consider to be true gods. That you have made Neptune a god for yourselves out of the part of the world soul that pervades the sea is, after a fashion, a more tolerable error. But are the wave coming to the shore and the wave returning to the open sea two parts of the world, or two parts of the world soul? Who among

25 Lavinium was an ancient town in Latium, south of Rome, linked in legend with Aeneas.

you is so foolish as to find wisdom in that? Why then did they make two goddesses for you? Was it not because your wise ancestors provided, not that more gods should rule you, but that more demons—the kind that delight in such follies and falsehoods—should possess you? And why, by this interpretation, has Salacia lost the lower part of the sea, where she lay beneath her husband? For just now, by declaring her to be the ebbing wave, you have put her on the surface. Or was she angry because he took Venilia as a mistress, and so shut her husband out of the upper sea?

EARTH, WHOM VARRO AFFIRMS TO BE A GODDESS BECAUSE THE SOUL OF THE WORLD, WHICH HE THINKS IS GOD, ALSO PASSES THROUGH THIS LOWEST PART OF ITS BODY AND IMPARTS DIVINE POWER TO IT

Varro's three grades of soul and his splitting of the earth into several gods are examined.

7.23 The earth, surely, is one, and we see it full of its own living creatures. Yet it is a great body among the elements and the lowest part of the world—so why do they want it to be a goddess? Because it is fertile? Why then are human beings not gods instead, since they make it more fertile by cultivating it—though when they plow it, not when they bow down to it? "But," they say, "the part of the world soul that pervades it makes it a goddess." As if the soul were not more evident in human beings, where no one even questions whether it exists! And yet human beings are not considered gods, and—what is deeply to be lamented—by an error as wondrous as it is woeful they subject themselves to worshiping and adoring beings that are not gods and are inferior to themselves. And certainly this same Varro, in the same book on the select gods, asserts that there are three grades of soul in all nature as a whole. The first passes through all the living parts of the body and has no sensation, only the strength to live. In our body, he says, this power flows into the bones, nails and hair—just as in the world trees are nourished and grow without sensation and live in a manner of their own.

The second grade of soul is the one in which there is sensation; this power reaches the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and touch. The third grade of soul is the highest, called mind (*animus*), in which intelligence predominates; all mortal beings except man lack it. This part of the world soul, he says, is called god, while in us it is called the genius.[26] In the world, he says, there are stones and the earth that we see, into which sensation does not flow; these are, as it were, god's bones and nails. The sun, moon and stars, which we perceive and through which he himself perceives, are his senses; and the ether is his mind. Its power, reaching the stars, also makes them gods; what flows through them into the earth is the goddess Tellus; and what flows from there into the sea and the ocean is the god Neptune.

So let him come back from this, which he takes to be natural theology—where he went out, wearied by all those windings and twists, as if to rest. Let him come back, I say, come back to civil theology. This is where I am still holding him, and for the moment I am dealing with this. I do not yet say that if earth and stones are like our bones and nails, they likewise lack intelligence, just as they lack sensation. Nor do I yet say that if our bones and nails are said to have intelligence because they belong to a man who has intelligence, then whoever calls these things gods in the world is as foolish as whoever calls our bones and nails men. But perhaps these matters should be taken up with the philosophers; for now I still want him as a civil theologian. For it may be that, although he seems to have wanted to raise his head a little into what one might call the freedom of natural theology, he was still turning over this book and thinking himself engaged in it, and so looked back at it even from there. He may have said this so that his ancestors, or other cities, should not be thought to have worshiped Tellus and Neptune in vain. But this is what I say: since the earth is one, why did the part of the world mind that pervades the earth not also make one goddess, the one he says is Tellus? And if it did, where will Orcus be, the brother of Jupiter and Neptune, whom they call

26 In Roman belief the genius was a person's guardian spirit or divine double.

Father Dis? Where will his wife Proserpina be, who, according to another opinion set down in the same books, is said to be not the fertility of the earth but its lower part?[27] But if they say that the part of the world mind, when it pervades the upper part of the earth, makes the god Father Dis, and when it pervades the lower part, the goddess Proserpina, what will Tellus be? For the whole of what she was has been so divided into these two parts and gods that she herself, the third, cannot be found—neither what she is nor where she is. Unless, that is, someone says that these gods, Orcus and Proserpina, together are the one goddess Tellus, and that they are no longer three, but either one or two. And yet they are called three, considered three, worshiped as three, with their own altars, their own shrines, rites, images and priests—and through these also with their own deceitful demons, who violate the prostituted soul. Let them answer this as well: what part of the earth does the part of the world mind pervade so as to make the god Tellumo?[28] "No," he says, "but one and the same earth has a twofold power: masculine, in that it produces seeds, and feminine, in that it receives and nourishes them. Hence from the feminine power it is called Tellus, from the masculine Tellumo." Why then do the pontiffs, as he himself points out, add two others and offer sacrifice to four gods—Tellus, Tellumo, Altor and Rusor? About Tellus and Tellumo enough has been said. Why to Altor? "Because," he says, "all things that are born are nourished (*aluntur*) from the earth." Why to Rusor? "Because," he says, "all things return back (*rursus*) to the same place."[29]

27 Father Dis (Dis Pater), also called Orcus, was the Roman god of the underworld, equated with the Greek Pluto.

28 Tellumo was a male earth deity, counterpart of Tellus.

29 The pontiffs were Rome's chief college of priests, in charge of the state cult.

THE SURNAMES OF TELLUS AND THEIR MEANINGS, WHICH, EVEN IF THEY INDICATED MANY THINGS, SHOULD NOT HAVE ESTABLISHED BELIEF IN MANY GODS

Tellus is identified with the Great Mother; the self-castrating Galli serve her.

7.24 So the one earth, on account of this fourfold power, ought to have had four surnames, not to have made four gods—just as there is one Jupiter with so many surnames, and one Juno with so many surnames. In all these, a manifold power is said to belong to one god or one goddess, without the multitude of surnames also producing a multitude of gods. But surely, just as even the most degraded women sometimes grow weary of the crowds they sought out in lust and regret them, so the soul, degraded and prostituted to unclean spirits, which once took great pleasure in multiplying gods for itself before whom it might lie down to be defiled, has at times also felt disgust. For Varro himself, as if ashamed of that very crowd, wants Tellus to be one goddess. They say, he tells us, that she is also the Great Mother; that her holding a drum signifies that she is the globe of the earth; her towers on her head, the towns; and her being represented seated, that while everything moves around her, she herself does not move. That they made the Galli serve this goddess signifies that those who lack seed should follow the earth, since everything is to be found in it. That they fling themselves about before her teaches, he says, that those who cultivate the earth should not sit still, for there is always something for them to do. The sound of the cymbals signifies the clatter of iron tools being wielded, and of hands, and of all that noise made in tilling a field; they are of bronze because the ancients tilled the earth with bronze before iron was discovered. A lion, he says, is added, unbound and tame, to show that there is no kind of land so remote and so fiercely wild that it should not be subdued and cultivated. Then he goes on to say that because they named Mother Tellus with several names and surnames, she was

thought to be a number of gods.[30] They think, he says, that Tellus is Ops, because she is made better by work (*opus*); Mother, because she bears very many things; Great, because she bears food; Proserpina, because crops creep forth (*proserpere*) from her; Vesta, because she is clothed (*uestiri*) with grass. In this way, he says, they not unreasonably refer other goddesses back to her. If, then, she is one goddess—though, if truth is consulted, she is not even that—why meanwhile go off into many? Let these be many names of one goddess: not so much many goddesses as many names. But the authority of his erring ancestors weighs him down and forces this same Varro to waver after this statement. For he goes on to say: "With which the opinion of our ancestors about these goddesses, who thought them to be several, does not conflict." How does it not conflict, when it is one thing for one goddess to have many names and quite another for there to be many goddesses? "But it can happen," he says, "that the same thing is one, and yet that there are several things in it." I grant that there are several things in one man; does that make him several men as well? So there are several things in one goddess; does that make her several goddesses as well? But let them do as they please: divide and fuse, multiply, fold back and tangle up.

These are the splendid mysteries of Tellus and the Great Mother, in which everything is referred to mortal seeds and the practice of agriculture. Is it really true that the drum, the towers, the Galli, the frenzied tossing of limbs, the clashing of cymbals, the fiction of the lions—referred to these things and having this as their goal—promise anyone eternal life? Is it really for this reason that the castrated Galli serve this Great Goddess—to signify that those who lack seed should follow the earth? As if that very service did not rather make them lack seed! For do they acquire seed by following this goddess when they lack it, or rather lose seed by following this goddess when they have it? Is this interpreting, or execrating? Nor do people notice how far

30 The Galli were the eunuch priests of Cybele, who castrated themselves in her service.

the evil demons have prevailed, who did not dare to promise anything great through these rites, and yet were able to demand things so cruel. If the earth were not a goddess, men would lay hands on it in labor, to obtain seeds through it, and would not lay savage hands on themselves, to lose their seed for its sake. If she were not a goddess, she would become fertile through the hands of others, and would not force a man to become sterile by his own hands. As for the rites of Liber, in which a respectable matron garlanded the male genitals while a crowd looked on—where perhaps her husband too stood by, blushing and sweating, if there is any shame left in human faces—and the custom at weddings by which the new bride was ordered to sit on the shaft of Priapus: these are far more contemptible and trivial compared with this most cruel obscenity, or most obscene cruelty, in which by demonic rites both sexes are so mocked that neither perishes by its own wound. There the bewitchment of the fields is feared; here the cutting off of members is not feared.[31] There the new bride's modesty is dishonored in such a way that neither her fertility nor even her virginity is taken away; here manhood is cut off in such a way that the man is neither turned into a woman nor left a man.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CASTRATION OF ATTIS THAT THE LEARNING OF THE GREEK SAGES CAME UP WITH

Porphyry's reading of Attis as flowers explains nothing about his castration.

7.25 Nor has he mentioned that Attis, or looked for an interpretation of him—the Attis in memory of whose love the Gallus is castrated. But the learned and wise Greeks have by no means kept silent about so holy and splendid an explanation. Because of the face of the earth in spring, which is more beautiful than in other seasons, Porphyry, the famous philosopher, declared that Attis signifies flowers, and that he was castrated because the flower falls before the fruit. So it is not the man himself, or the semb-

31 Priapus was a fertility god represented with an enormous phallus.

lance of a man, called Attis, but his genitals that they compared to a flower. And these indeed fell while he was still alive—or rather, they did not fall, nor were they plucked, but were plainly torn away. Nor, once that flower was lost, did any fruit follow, but rather sterility. What, then, of the rest of him, whatever remained after he was castrated? What is it said to signify? To what is it referred? What interpretation is brought forward from it?[32] Or, by laboring at these things in vain and finding nothing, do they persuade us that we should rather believe what rumor spread about a castrated man and what was committed to writing? Our Varro rightly turned away from this and did not want to speak of it; for it did not escape so learned a man.

THE OBSCENITY OF THE RITES OF THE GREAT MOTHER

The Great Mother's eunuch priests and their rites outdo even Jupiter's disgraces.

7.26 Likewise, Varro chose to say nothing about the eunuch priests consecrated to that same Great Mother in defiance of all decency of men and women, nor do I remember reading anything about them anywhere. Until only yesterday these men went through the streets and squares of Carthage with their hair drenched in perfume, their faces whitened, their limbs loose and their gait like a woman's, demanding even from shopkeepers the means to keep up their shameful way of life. Here explanation failed, reason blushed, speech fell silent. The Great Mother outdid all the gods, her sons, not by the greatness of her divinity but by the greatness of her crime. Not even the monstrosity of Janus compares with this monster. He had only ugliness in his images; she has ugly cruelty in her rites. He had limbs added in stone; she has limbs destroyed in human beings. Not even the many great sexual crimes of Jupiter himself surpass this disgrace. Among all his seductions of women, he dis-

32 Attis was a Phrygian youth beloved by Cybele who castrated himself; his myth underlay the rites of her priests. Porphyry (c. AD 234–305) was a Neoplatonist philosopher, pupil of Plotinus.

graced heaven with only one Ganymede; she, with so many avowed and public eunuch priests, has both defiled the earth and done injury to heaven.[33] Perhaps in this kind of utterly shameful cruelty we could compare Saturn with her, or even rank him above her, since he is said to have castrated his father. But in Saturn's rites men could be killed by the hands of others; they were not mutilated by their own. He devoured his sons, as the poets say, and the natural philosophers interpret this however they please; but as history reports, he killed them. Yet the Romans did not adopt the Carthaginian practice of sacrificing their sons to him. This Great Mother of the gods, however, brought eunuchs even into Roman temples and kept up this savage custom, believed to strengthen the manly might of the Romans by cutting away the manhood of men. Compared with this evil, what are the thefts of Mercury, the wantonness of Venus, the sexual crimes and obscenities of the rest? We would cite them from books if they were not sung and danced every day in the theaters. But what are these beside so great an evil, whose greatness befitted only the Great Mother? This is all the more so because those other stories are said to have been invented by the poets—as if the poets had also invented the fact that such things are pleasing and acceptable to the gods. Granted, then, that their being sung or written down is due to the boldness or impudence of the poets. But their being added to sacred rites and honors at the command and insistence of those very deities—what is that but a crime of the gods, or rather a confession of demons and a deception of the wretched? This, however—that the Mother of the gods earned her worship by the consecration of castrated men—was not invented by the poets; they preferred to shudder at it rather than sing of it. Is anyone to be consecrated to these select gods in order to live happily after death, when, once consecrated to them, he cannot live decently before death, subjected to such foul superstitions and bound over to unclean demons? "But all these things," he says, "refer to

33 Ganymede was the Trojan youth whom Jupiter carried off to heaven to be his cupbearer and lover.

the world." Let him see whether they do not rather refer to the unclean. And what cannot be referred to the world, when it is shown to exist in the world?[34] We, however, are looking for a mind that, trusting in true religion, does not worship the world as its god, but praises the world as the work of God, for God's sake, and, cleansed of the world's filth, comes clean to God, who founded the world.

THE FICTIONS OF THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS, WHO NEITHER WORSHIP THE TRUE DIVINITY NOR WORSHIP IT WITH THE WORSHIP DUE TO THE TRUE DIVINITY

Natural explanations reduce the gods to changeable bodies, and the rites themselves are shameful.

7.27 As for these select gods, we see that they have indeed become better known than the others—yet not so that their merits might be brought to light, but so that their disgraces might not stay hidden. This makes it all the more credible that they were human beings, as not only poetic but also historical writings have handed down. Take what Virgil says: "First came Saturn from heavenly Olympus, fleeing the arms of Jupiter, an exile stripped of his kingdom," and what follows on this subject. Euhemerus sets out the whole of it as history, and Ennius translated his account into Latin. Since those who wrote against errors of this kind before us, in Greek or in Latin, have said a great deal about it, I have decided not to dwell on it.[35]

When I consider the natural explanations themselves, by which learned and clever men try to turn these human matters into divine ones, I see that nothing could be traced back to anything except temporal and earthly operations and bodily nature—or a nature that, even if invisible, is still changeable. And that is in no way the true God. If this were at least done through sym-

34 A pun: Latin *mundus* means both "world" and "clean," and *inmundus* means "unclean."

35 Euhemerus (around 300 BC) was a Greek writer who argued that the gods were deified human beings; Ennius (239–169 BC) was an early Roman poet who translated his work.

bols befitting religious devotion, it would still be a matter for grief that the true God was not proclaimed and preached through them; yet it would be bearable, in a way, if such foul and shameful things were not done or commanded. But as it is, since it is wicked to worship either a body or a soul in place of the true God, by whose indwelling alone the soul becomes happy, how much more wicked it is to worship them in such a way that neither the body nor the soul of the worshiper keeps its well-being or its human dignity! So if some element of the world, or some created spirit—even one that is not unclean and evil—is worshiped with temple, priest and sacrifice, which are owed to the true God, this is wrong not because the means by which it is worshiped are evil, but because they are the kind of means by which he alone should be worshiped to whom such worship and service are due. If, on the other hand, anyone claims to worship the one true God, the creator of every soul and body, with stupid or monstrous images, with sacrifices that are murders, with the crowning of male private parts, with the wages of prostitution, with the cutting of limbs, the severing of genitals, the consecration of eunuch priests, and festivals of impure and obscene shows, he sins not because the one he worships ought not to be worshiped, but because he worships the one who ought to be worshiped in a way he ought not to be worshiped. But whoever worships with such things—shameful and criminal things—and worships not the true God, the maker of soul and body, but a creature, even one that is not corrupt, whether it be a soul or a body or a soul and body together, sins twice against God. He worships in God's place what is not God, and he worships with things by which neither God nor anything that is not God should be worshiped. Now how these people worshiped—that is, how shamefully and wickedly—is plain to see. But what or whom they worshiped would be obscure, were it not that their history testifies that the very things they admit to be foul and shameful were rendered at the terrifying demand of the deities. From this it is clear, all evasions set aside, that wicked demons and utterly unclean spirits were invited by this

whole civil theology to haunt senseless images and, through them, to take possession of foolish hearts as well.

THAT VARRO'S TEACHING ON THEOLOGY IS CONSISTENT IN NO PART

Varro's scheme of male gods for heaven and goddesses for earth falls apart.

7.28 What good is it, then, that Varro, a most learned and acute man, tries by what looks like subtle argument to reduce all these gods to heaven and earth and to refer them to these? He cannot do it. They slip through his fingers, spring back, slide away and fall. When he is about to speak of the female deities, that is, the goddesses, he says: "Since, as I said in the first book, on places, two origins of the gods have been observed, from heaven and from earth—which is why some gods are called heavenly and others earthly—just as in the earlier books we began with heaven, when we spoke of Janus, whom some have said is heaven and others the world, so in writing about the female deities we begin with Tellus." I can feel how much trouble so fine and so great an intellect is going through. For he is led by a plausible line of reasoning: that heaven is what acts and earth what is acted upon. So he attributes masculine power to the one and feminine power to the other, and he does not notice that the one who does these things is rather he who made both. On this basis he also interprets, in an earlier book, the famous mysteries of Samothrace, and promises, as if with the utmost religious devotion, that he will set out in writing and send to the Samothracians things not known even to them. He says that he gathered there from many indications that among the images one signifies heaven, another earth, and another the patterns of things, which Plato calls Ideas. He wants Jupiter to be understood as heaven, Juno as earth, Minerva as the Ideas: heaven as that by which something is made, earth as that from which it is made, the pattern as that according to which it is made. Here I pass over the fact that Plato says these Ideas have such power that it was not heaven that made anything according to them;

rather, heaven itself was made according to them.[36] What I do say is this: in this book on the select gods he has lost track of that scheme of three gods in which he had, so to speak, embraced everything. For he assigns the male gods to heaven and the female to earth, and among the latter he has placed Minerva, whom he had earlier placed above heaven itself. Then Neptune, a male god, is in the sea, which belongs to earth rather than to heaven. Finally, Father Dis, called Πλούτων [*Ploutōn*, Pluto] in Greek, himself male and brother of both, is said to be an earthly god, holding the upper earth, while his wife Proserpina holds the lower. How, then, do they try to refer the gods to heaven and the goddesses to earth? What is there in this argument that is solid or consistent, sober or precise? And this Tellus, the beginning of the goddesses, is of course the Great Mother, around whom resounds the frenzied disgrace of eunuch priests, of castrated men, of men who cut themselves and fling themselves about. What does it mean, then, to say that Janus is the head of the gods and Tellus the head of the goddesses? There error does not make a single head, nor here does madness make a sane one. Why do they struggle in vain to refer these things to the world? Even if they could, no devout person worships the world in place of the true God; and yet plain truth proves that they cannot even do this. Let them refer these things rather to dead human beings and to the worst of demons, and no question will remain.

THAT EVERYTHING THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS REFERRED TO THE WORLD AND ITS PARTS THEY SHOULD HAVE REFERRED TO THE ONE TRUE GOD

Everything Varro ascribes to the gods belongs rightly to the one true God.

7.29 For all the things that they refer to the world from the theology of these gods, by supposedly natural explanations, can be

36 Samothrace is an island in the northern Aegean, home of a famous mystery cult of the "Great Gods."

attributed instead—without any qualm of sacrilegious opinion—to the true God, who made the world, the founder of every soul and every body. Let us observe how, in this way: We worship God—not heaven and earth, the two parts of which this world consists, nor a soul or souls diffused through all living things, but God, who made heaven and earth and all that is in them; who made every soul, whether it merely lives in some way and lacks sensation and reason, or also has sensation, or also has understanding.

WITH WHAT PIETY THE CREATOR IS DISTINGUISHED FROM HIS CREATURES, SO THAT NOT AS MANY GODS ARE WORSHIPED IN PLACE OF THE ONE AS THERE ARE WORKS OF THE ONE MAKER

Augustine lists the works of the one God that pagans parceled out among many gods.

7.30 And now let me begin to run through those works of the one true God on account of which these people, while trying to give a respectable-seeming interpretation of the most shameful and criminal sacred rites, have made for themselves many false gods. We worship that God who has established for the natures he created both the beginnings and the ends of their existing and moving; who holds, knows and arranges the causes of things; who founded the power of seeds; who placed a rational soul, which is called mind, in the living beings he chose; who gave the faculty and use of speech; who granted the gift of foretelling the future to the spirits he pleased, and through whomever he pleases himself foretells the future, and through whomever he pleases drives away illnesses; who governs even wars—their beginnings, their courses and their ends—when the human race must be corrected and chastised in this way; who both created and rules the fire of this world, most vehement and violent, to keep the vastness of nature in balance; who is creator and governor of all the waters; who made the sun, the brightest of bodily lights, and gave it suitable power and motion; who does not withdraw his dominion and power even from the

underworld; who has provided for mortals seeds and foods, both dry and liquid, assigned to the natures fitted for them; who grounds the earth and makes it fruitful; who lavishes its fruits on animals and human beings; who knows and orders not only first causes but also those that follow from them; who set for the moon its measure; who provides paths in heaven and on earth for movement from place to place; who also granted to the human minds he created knowledge of the various arts, to aid life and nature; who instituted the union of male and female as an aid to the propagation of offspring; who granted to human communities the gift of earthly fire, to use on their hearths and in their lamps for the most convenient purposes. These, surely, are the things that Varro, a most acute and learned man, labored to distribute among the select gods through some sort of natural interpretations, whether he took them from elsewhere or guessed at them himself. But it is the one true God who makes and does these things—and he does them as God: wholly present everywhere, enclosed by no places, bound by no chains, divisible into no parts, changeable in no part, filling heaven and earth with his present power, not with a nature in need of anything. He governs all that he has created in such a way that he also lets them put forth and carry out their own movements. For although they can be nothing without him, they are not what he is. He also does many things through angels; but he makes the angels happy only from himself. So, although for certain reasons he sends angels to human beings, he makes human beings happy not from angels but from himself, just as he does the angels. From this one true God we hope for eternal life.

THE PARTICULAR BENEFITS OF GOD, BEYOND HIS GENERAL BOUNTY, THAT THE FOLLOWERS OF TRUTH ENJOY

Beyond the gifts of nature, God sent his Son to cleanse humanity from sin.

7.31 For besides benefits of this kind, which he bestows on good and bad alike through this governance of nature (of which we have said something), we have from him a great sign of great

love, one that belongs to the good alone. We can in no way give adequate thanks that we exist, that we live, that we behold heaven and earth, that we have a mind and reason with which to seek him who founded all these things. Yet consider this: when we were weighed down and buried under sins, turned away from the contemplation of his light and blinded by love of darkness, that is, of wickedness, he did not abandon us altogether. He sent us his Word, who is his only Son, so that, when the Word had taken on flesh, been born and suffered for us, we might learn how highly God valued humanity; that we might be cleansed of all our sins by that unique sacrifice; and that, with love poured into our hearts by his Spirit, we might overcome every difficulty and come to eternal rest and the indescribable sweetness of contemplating him. For this, what hearts, how many tongues, would claim to be enough to give him thanks?

THAT THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION WAS LACKING IN NO PAST AGE AND WAS ALWAYS PROCLAIMED BY VARIOUS SIGNS

The mystery of eternal life was foretold from the beginning, above all through the Hebrew people.

7.32 This mystery of eternal life was proclaimed through angels from the very beginning of the human race, to those to whom it was fitting, by means of certain signs and sacred symbols suited to the times. Then the Hebrew people was gathered into a single commonwealth, as it were, to enact this sacred sign. There, through some who understood and some who did not, it was foretold as something to come: what has been taking place from the coming of Christ until now and will go on taking place. Later that same nation was also scattered among the nations, to bear witness to the Scriptures in which eternal salvation in Christ was foretold. For it was not only all the prophecies expressed in words, and not only the rules of life that shape conduct and devotion and are contained in those writings, but also the rites, the priesthoods, the tabernacle or temple, the altars, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the feast days and whatever else belongs

to the service that is due to God—properly called in Greek *latreia* [service due to God alone]—that signified and foretold the things which, for the sake of the eternal life of the faithful in Christ, we believe have been fulfilled, see being fulfilled, and trust will be fulfilled.

THAT ONLY THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION COULD THE DECEIT OF EVIL SPIRITS, WHO DELIGHT IN HUMAN ERROR, BE EXPOSED

True religion exposes the pagan gods as demons; Varro's natural explanations fail.

7.33 Through this one true religion, then, it could be revealed that the gods of the nations are the most unclean demons. Using the souls of the dead as their pretext, or taking on the appearance of creatures of this world, they long to be thought gods; with proud impurity they delight in so-called divine honors, which are at the same time criminal and shameful; and they begrudge human souls their conversion to the true God. From their most savage and most impious domination a person is set free when he believes in him who, to help us rise, gave an example of humility as great as the pride by which they fell. Of this kind are not only those of whom we have already said much, and many others like them among the other nations and lands, but also these whom we are now dealing with, selected, as it were, into a senate of gods—selected indeed, but for the nobility of their crimes, not the dignity of their virtues. When Varro tries to refer their rites to natural explanations, seeking to make shameful things respectable, he cannot find a way to make the explanations fit and agree with the rites, because these are not the real causes of those rites, which he thinks they are—or rather wants them to be thought. For if these were the causes, or any others of this kind, then, although they would have nothing to do with the true God and eternal life, which is what religion must seek, they would still somewhat soften, by giving some sort of account drawn from the nature of things, the offense caused by some apparent shamefulness or absurdity in the rites that was not

understood. That is what he tried to do with certain theatrical stories and temple mysteries. There he did not acquit the theaters by their likeness to the temples; rather, he condemned the temples by their likeness to the theaters. Still, he tried in whatever way he could to soothe the sensibilities offended by horrible things by giving an account of supposed natural causes.

THE BOOKS OF NUMA POMPILIUS, WHICH THE SENATE ORDERED BURNED SO THAT THE REASONS FOR THE RITES CONTAINED IN THEM WOULD NOT BECOME KNOWN

A plow turned up Numa's books on the causes of the rites, and the senate burned them.

7.34 But on the contrary we find, as that most learned man himself reported, that the causes of the rites set out in the books of Numa Pompilius could not be tolerated at all. They were judged unworthy not only of becoming known to the devout by being read, but even of being kept in writing, hidden away in darkness. I will now tell what I promised in the third book of this work to tell in its proper place. As we read in the same Varro, in his book *On the Worship of the Gods*, a certain Terentius had a farm near the Janiculum. His ox-driver, drawing the plow near the tomb of Numa Pompilius, turned up out of the ground Numa's books, in which the causes of the rites he had instituted were written down, and Terentius took them into the City to the praetor. When the praetor had looked at the opening pages, he referred so serious a matter to the senate.[37] There, when the leading senators had read some of the causes explaining why each thing in the rites had been instituted, the senate sided with the dead Numa, and the senators, religious men that they were, decreed that the praetor should burn the books. Let everyone believe what he thinks; or rather, let any distinguished defender of such great impiety say whatever his mad contentiousness suggests to him. It is enough for me to point out that the causes

37 Numa Pompilius was the legendary second king of Rome, credited with founding its religious institutions.

of the rites, written down by King Pompilius, the founder of the Roman rites, were not supposed to become known to the people, or to the senate, or even to the priests themselves. Numa Pompilius himself, through unlawful curiosity, came upon those secrets of the demons, and he did write them down so as to have something to read as a reminder. Yet although he was a king who had no reason to fear anyone, he dared neither to teach them to anyone nor to destroy them by erasing them or doing away with them in any other way. So what he wanted no one to know, lest he teach people wicked things, but was afraid to destroy, lest he anger the demons, he buried where he thought it would be safe, not believing that a plow could come near his tomb. The senate, for its part, was afraid to condemn the religious practices of their ancestors and so was forced to agree with Numa. Yet it judged those books so harmful that it did not order them to be buried again, lest human curiosity seek out all the more eagerly a matter already brought to light; instead it ordered those abominable records to be destroyed by fire. Since they thought it was by now necessary to perform those rites, it would be more bearable to err in ignorance of their causes than for the city to be thrown into turmoil by knowing them.

HYDROMANCY, BY WHICH NUMA WAS DECEIVED THROUGH CERTAIN IMAGES OF DEMONS THAT HE SAW

Numa learned the rites through hydromancy from demons and hid their causes.

7.35 For Numa himself, to whom no prophet of God, no holy angel was sent, was driven to practice hydromancy [divination by water], so that he might see in water images of the gods—or rather the mockeries of demons—and hear from them what he ought to establish and observe in the rites. Varro says that this kind of divination was brought from the Persians, and he mentions that both Numa himself and later the philosopher Pythagoras used it. He says that in it, when blood is used, the dead in the underworld are also consulted, and that this is called in Greek *nekyomanteia* [divination through the dead].

Whether it is called that or necromancy, it is the same thing: a practice in which the dead seem to divine. By what arts these things are done is their concern. For I do not wish to say that even before the coming of our Savior these arts were commonly forbidden by law in the very cities of the pagans and punished with the severest penalty. I do not wish, I say, to say this—for perhaps such things were permitted then. It was by these arts, at any rate, that Pompilius learned those rites. He made public what was done in them but buried their causes (so afraid was he himself of what he had learned), and when the books containing those causes came to light, the senate burned them. Why, then, does Varro offer me some other supposedly natural causes for those rites? If those books had contained causes of that sort, they would certainly not have been burned—or else the senators would likewise have burned these books of Varro's, written and published for Caesar as pontiff. It is because Numa Pompilius "carried out" water (*egesserit*), that is, brought it out, to perform hydromancy, that he is said to have had the nymph Egeria as his wife, as is explained in the book of Varro mentioned above. This is how actual events are commonly turned into myths by a sprinkling of lies. So it was in that hydromancy that this most curious Roman king learned both the rites, which the pontiffs were to keep in their books, and their causes, which he wanted no one but himself to know.[38] And so he wrote them down separately and made them die with him, in a sense, when he saw to it that they were withdrawn from human knowledge and buried in this way. Either, then, the cravings of the demons recorded there were so filthy and harmful that they would have made that whole civil theology appear detestable even to men like these, who had accepted so many shameful things in the rites themselves; or else all those gods were exposed as nothing but dead men, whom almost all the peoples of the nations had come to believe, over so long a stretch of time, were immortal gods. Meanwhile those same demons took delight in such rites, slip-

38 Varro dedicated his *Antiquities* to Julius Caesar as chief pontiff; the name Egeria is here derived from *egerere*, "to carry out."

ping themselves in as objects of worship in place of the dead whom they had caused to be thought gods, backed by the testimony of certain deceptive miracles. But by the hidden providence of the true God it came about that the demons, won over by the arts through which hydromancy could be performed, were allowed to confess all these things to Pompilius, their friend, and yet were not allowed to warn him to burn them rather than bury them before he died. Nor could they keep them from becoming known by standing in the way of the plow that turned them up, or of the pen of Varro, through which the events surrounding this matter have come down to our memory. For they cannot accomplish what they are not permitted to; and they are permitted by the deep and just judgment of the supreme God, according to the deserts of those whom it is just for them merely to afflict, or even to subjugate and deceive. How harmful those writings were judged to be, and how foreign to the worship of the true divinity, can be understood from this: the senate preferred to burn what Pompilius had hidden rather than fear what he feared, he who could not bring himself to dare this. Let anyone, then, who does not want to lead a devout life even now, seek eternal life through such rites. But let anyone who does not want fellowship with evil demons not be terrified of the harmful superstition by which they are worshiped, but acknowledge the true religion by which they are exposed and conquered.

Book VIII

The Platonists
The Platonists come closest to the truth, but err in worshiping demons as go-betweens.

THAT THE QUESTION OF NATURAL THEOLOGY MUST BE DISCUSSED WITH PHILOSOPHERS OF SUPERIOR LEARNING

Natural theology must be debated with the philosophers, the lovers of wisdom.

8.1 We now need much closer attention than was needed in solving the earlier questions and setting out the earlier books. The theology they call natural is not to be discussed with just anyone. It is not mythical or civil theology, that is, the theology of the theater or of the city: the first parades the crimes of the gods, the second reveals the gods' still more criminal desires, and so shows them to be evil demons rather than gods. This discussion must be held with the philosophers. Their very name, if we render it in Latin, professes love of wisdom. Now if wisdom is God, through whom all things were made, as divine authority and truth have shown, then the true philosopher is a lover of God.[1] But the reality that this name stands for is not found in everyone who glories in the name, for not everyone called a philosopher is thereby a lover of true wisdom. So from all those whose views we have been able to learn from their writings, we must choose those with whom this question can be discussed in a way worthy of it. In this work I have not undertaken to refute

1 "Through whom all things were made" echoes John 1:3; Augustine identifies God's Wisdom with the Word.

all the empty opinions of all the philosophers. I take on only those that concern theology, a Greek word which we understand to mean reasoning or discourse about the divine. Nor do I take on the opinions of all of them on this, but only of those who agree that divinity exists and cares for human affairs. Even so, they think that the worship of the one unchangeable God is not enough to attain a life that is happy even after death. In their view many gods, created and appointed by that one God, must be worshiped for that purpose. These philosophers already surpass even Varro's view by coming closer to the truth. He could extend natural theology as a whole only as far as this world or its soul. They, however, acknowledge a God above every kind of soul. This God made not only this visible world, often called by the name "heaven and earth," but absolutely every soul as well. He also makes the rational and intellectual soul, the kind of soul the human soul is, happy by participation in his own unchangeable and incorporeal light. No one who has heard even a little about these things is unaware that these philosophers are called Platonists, a name derived from their teacher Plato. I shall therefore touch briefly on what I judge necessary about Plato for the present question. First I shall recall those who came before him in time in the same field of writing.[2]

THE TWO SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHERS, THE ITALIAN AND THE IONIAN, AND THEIR FOUNDERS

Augustine surveys the Italian and Ionian schools from Pythagoras and Thales to Socrates.

8.2 As far as Greek literature is concerned, Greek being reckoned the most distinguished of the languages of the nations, tradition speaks of two schools of philosophers. One is the Italian school, from the part of Italy once called Magna Graecia, "Great Greece." The other is the Ionian school, in the lands that are still called Greece. The Italian school had as its founder Pythagoras of

2 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), the Roman scholar whose account of the gods Augustine attacked in Books 6–7.

Samos, from whom, they say, the very name "philosophy" arose. Before him, those who seemed to excel others by a praiseworthy way of life were called "wise men." But when he was asked what he professed, he answered that he was a philosopher, that is, a student or lover of wisdom, since to profess to be wise seemed the height of arrogance. The founder of the Ionian school was Thales of Miletus, one of the seven who were called the Wise Men.[3] But the other six were distinguished by their way of life and by certain precepts suited to living well. This Thales, however, wanted to leave successors as well. So he investigated the nature of things and committed his arguments to writing, and in this way he stood out. He was especially admired because he had mastered the calculations of astronomy and could even predict eclipses of the sun and moon. Yet he held that water is the first principle of things. From it, he thought, come all the elements of the world, the world itself and whatever is produced in it. Over this work, which we behold with such wonder when we consider the world, he set nothing from a divine mind. He was succeeded by Anaximander, his pupil, who changed the view about the nature of things. Anaximander did not think that all things are born from one thing, as Thales thought they came from moisture. He thought instead that each thing is born from its own particular principles.[4] He believed that these principles of individual things are infinite in number, and that they generate innumerable worlds and whatever arises in them. He thought that these worlds are now dissolved, now generated again, each lasting as long as its own lifespan allows. He too attributed nothing in these works of nature to a divine mind. He left as his pupil and successor Anaximenes, who assigned all the causes of things to infinite air. Anaximenes did not deny the gods or pass over them in silence. But he believed that the gods did not make the air; rather, they themselves arose from air.

3 Magna Graecia was the region of Greek colonies in southern Italy. Pythagoras and Thales both lived in the 6th century BC; Thales was counted among the Seven Sages of Greece.

4 Anaximander of Miletus (6th century BC), Ionian philosopher and pupil of Thales.

Anaxagoras, his pupil, held that the maker of all the things we see is a divine mind. He said that there is an infinite matter, made up of particles of all things, unlike one another. From this matter each thing is made out of the particles similar and proper to it, but it is a divine mind that does the making.[5] Diogenes too, another pupil of Anaximenes, said that air is the matter from which all things are made. But he said it possesses divine reason, without which nothing could be made from it. Anaxagoras was succeeded by his pupil Archelaus. He too thought that all things consist of particles similar to one another, from which each individual thing is made. But he also said that a mind is present in them, which accomplishes everything by joining and separating the eternal bodies, that is, those particles. Socrates is said to have been his disciple. Socrates was the teacher of Plato, and it is for Plato's sake that I have briefly gone over all this.[6]

THE TEACHING OF SOCRATES

Socrates turned philosophy to ethics; after his death his followers disagreed about the supreme good.

8.3 Socrates, then, is recorded as the first to turn the whole of philosophy toward correcting and ordering conduct. Before him, everyone had devoted their chief effort to investigating physical, that is, natural, matters. I do not think it can be clearly determined why Socrates did this. Perhaps he grew weary of obscure and uncertain matters and set his mind on finding something open and certain that would be necessary for the happy life. That one goal seems to be what all philosophers have worked and stayed awake for. Or perhaps, as some suspect of him more charitably, he did not want minds unclean with earthly cravings to try to stretch themselves toward divine

5 Anaximenes of Miletus (6th century BC) and Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (5th century BC), who taught at Athens.

6 Diogenes of Apollonia (5th century BC), not the Cynic. Archelaus of Athens (5th century BC) was traditionally Socrates' teacher.

things. For he saw that they were inquiring into the causes of things, and he believed that the first and highest causes lay only in the will of the one supreme God. So he thought these causes could be grasped only by a cleansed mind. Therefore he held that one must press on with purifying one's life by good conduct. Then the mind, freed from the lusts that weigh it down, might raise itself by its natural vigor to eternal things. With the purity of understanding it might behold the nature of the incorporeal and unchangeable light, where the causes of all created natures live in unchanging stability. It is agreed, however, that even in the moral questions to which he seemed to devote his whole mind, he harassed the folly of ignorant people who thought they knew something, and turned it this way and that. He did this either by confessing his own ignorance or by concealing his knowledge, with wonderful charm in argument and the keenest wit. As a result enmities were stirred up against him, and he was condemned on a slanderous charge and punished with death. But afterward the very city of Athens that had publicly condemned him publicly mourned him. The people's anger turned so fiercely against his two accusers that one of them was overwhelmed by the violence of the crowd and died. The other escaped a similar penalty only by going into voluntary and permanent exile. With so glorious a reputation in life and death, Socrates left behind a great many followers of his philosophy. They competed with one another in devoting themselves to the debate of moral questions, where the issue is the supreme good, by which a human being can become happy. This did not clearly appear in Socrates' discussions, since he raised, asserted and demolished everything. So each of them took from those discussions what pleased him, and each set the end of good where he saw fit. Now "the end of good" is the name for that which makes a person happy once he has reached it.[7] The Socratics held such different views about this end that it is scarcely believable that followers of a single master could have done so. Some said the supreme good is pleasure, as Aristippus

7 Socrates was tried and executed at Athens in 399 BC.

did; others said it is virtue, as Antisthenes did. In this way one held one opinion and another held another, and it would take too long to list them all.[8]

PLATO, THE FOREMOST OF SOCRATES' DISCIPLES, WHO DIVIDED ALL PHILOSOPHY INTO THREE PARTS

Plato combined action and contemplation and divided philosophy into natural, rational and moral parts.

8.4 But among the disciples of Socrates, one shone with the most outstanding glory, and not undeservedly, so that he entirely eclipsed the rest: Plato. He was an Athenian, born into a respectable family, and he far surpassed his fellow pupils in remarkable genius. Yet he thought that he himself and the teaching of Socrates were not enough to bring philosophy to completion. So he traveled as far and wide as he could, wherever the fame of some celebrated branch of knowledge drew him. In Egypt he learned whatever was considered great and was taught there. From there he came to those parts of Italy where the Pythagoreans were renowned, and by listening to its more eminent teachers he very readily mastered whatever Italian philosophy then flourished. And because he had a singular love for his teacher Socrates, he made Socrates the speaker in nearly all his dialogues. Into Socrates' charm and moral discussions he blended what he had learned from others, as well as what he himself had seen with all the understanding he could muster.[9] The pursuit of wisdom is concerned with action and contemplation, and so one part of it can be called active and the other contemplative. The active part concerns the conduct of life, that is, the forming of character. The contemplative part concerns the study of the causes of nature and of the purest truth. Socrates is recorded as having excelled in the active part. Pythagoras, on the other hand, applied himself more to the contemplative, with

8 Aristippus of Cyrene founded the pleasure-centered Cyrenaic school; Antisthenes of Athens was regarded as the forerunner of the Cynics.

9 Plato (c. 428–348 BC), Athenian philosopher whose works are written mostly as dialogues.

all the powers of understanding he had. Plato is therefore praised for having perfected philosophy by joining the two. He divided it into three parts. The first is moral, which is concerned chiefly with action. The second is natural, which is assigned to contemplation. The third is rational, by which the true is distinguished from the false. This third part is necessary to both action and contemplation, yet it is above all contemplation that claims insight into the truth for itself. So this threefold division does not contradict the distinction by which all pursuit of wisdom is understood to consist in action and contemplation.[10] But what did Plato think in or about each of these parts? Where did he know or believe the end of all actions, the cause of all natures and the light of all reasonings to be? I think it would take a long time to set this out in full, and I do not think it should be asserted rashly. Plato aims to keep the well-known habit of his teacher Socrates, whom he makes the speaker in his books, of concealing his own knowledge or opinion. He keeps it because that habit pleased him too. As a result, even Plato's own views on great matters cannot easily be discerned. Still, we should recall some of what we read in him and include it in this work. This includes both what he said himself and what he reported and wrote down as said by others, when it seemed to meet with his approval. We should do so where he supports the true religion, which our faith embraces and defends, and also where he seems opposed to it. We confine ourselves to the question of the one God and many gods, as it bears on the life after death that will be truly happy. Plato has been ranked far above the other philosophers of the nations, and rightly so. Perhaps those who are praised more widely for having understood and followed him more acutely and more truly hold some such view of God as this: that in him are found the cause of existing, the reason of understanding and the order of living. Of these three, the first is understood to belong to the natural part, the second to the rational part and the third to the moral part. Suppose man was created so that, through what is most excellent in him, he might

10 The "rational" part corresponds to what was later called logic or dialectic.

attain to what excels all things. That is the one, true, supremely good God, without whom no nature subsists, no teaching instructs and no practice profits. If so, then let him be sought, in whom all things have weight for us. Let him be discerned, in whom all things are certain for us. Let him be loved, in whom all things are right for us.

THAT THEOLOGY IS BEST DEBATED WITH THE PLATONISTS, WHOSE OPINION SHOULD BE RANKED ABOVE THE DOCTRINES OF ALL OTHER PHILOSOPHERS

Mythical and civil theology and all materialist philosophers must give way to the Platonists.

8.5 If, then, Plato said that the wise man is one who imitates, knows and loves this God, by participation in whom he is happy, what need is there to examine the rest? No one has come closer to us than these philosophers. So let these things give way to them. First, the mythical theology, which delights the minds of the impious with the crimes of the gods. Second, the civil theology too. In it, unclean demons seduced peoples given over to earthly pleasures under the name of gods, and wanted human errors to be held as divine honors paid to themselves. They stirred up their worshipers with the filthiest enthusiasm to watch shows of the demons' own crimes, as though these were acts of worship to them. They also put on for themselves an even more delightful show out of the spectators themselves. In this civil theology, if anything seemingly decent is done in the temples, it is defiled by the obscenity of the theaters joined to it; and whatever shameful things are done in the theaters are praised by comparison with the foulness of the temples. And third, the meanings that Varro drew from these rites, as though they referred to heaven and earth and to the seeds and workings of mortal things. (Those rites do not signify what he tries to suggest, and so the truth does not follow his attempt; and even if they did signify those things, the rational soul still ought not to worship as its god things placed beneath it in the order of nature. Nor should it have ranked above itself, as gods, things

that the true God ranked below it.) Let this also give way: the writings that Numa Pompilius had buried with him to keep them hidden, which really did concern rites of this kind, and which the senate ordered to be burned when the plow turned them up.[11] (To take a more lenient view of Numa, the same sort of thing is found in what Alexander of Macedon writes to his mother, which he says was revealed to him by a certain Leo, a great high priest of the Egyptian rites. That letter discloses that certain gods were human beings. These include Picus, Faunus, Aeneas and Romulus, and even Hercules, Aesculapius, Liber son of Semele, the twin sons of Tyndareus and any other mortals they regard as gods. But they also include the gods of the greater clans themselves, whom Cicero seems to touch on in the *Tusculan Disputations* without naming them. These are Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Vulcan, Vesta and very many others, whom Varro tries to transfer to the parts or elements of the world. Leo too was afraid, as though the mysteries had been betrayed. So he urged Alexander, once he had made these things known to his mother in writing, to order the letter burned.)[12] So let not only the contents of the two theologies, mythical and civil, give way to the Platonist philosophers, who have said that the true God is the author of things, the illuminator of truth and the giver of happiness. Let the other philosophers also give way to these great men, who knew so great a God. These others, with minds given over to the body, supposed that the first principles of nature are bodily. Thales placed that principle in moisture, Anaximenes in air, the Stoics in fire, and Epicurus in atoms, that is, extremely tiny particles that can neither be divided nor perceived. Any others there may be, whom there is no need to list at length, likewise said that bodies are the cause and first principle of things, whether those bodies are simple or compound, lifeless

11 Numa Pompilius, legendary second king of Rome, credited with founding Roman religious institutions; the story of his buried books is told in 7.34.
12 Alexander the Great's supposed letter to his mother Olympias. The sons of Tyndareus are Castor and Pollux. "Gods of the greater clans" borrows the name of Rome's oldest noble families; Cicero alludes to them in *Tusculan Disputations* 1.29.

or living, but bodies all the same.[13] Some of them believed that living things could come from non-living things, as the Epicureans did. Others believed that both living and non-living things come from something living, but still bodies from a body. The Stoics, for instance, thought that fire is both living and wise, and that it is the maker of the world itself and of everything in it. This fire is one body, one of the four elements of which this visible world consists, and they held that this fire was in fact god. These philosophers, and others like them, could think only what their hearts, bound fast to the senses of the flesh, made up as stories for them. For they had within themselves something they did not see. They pictured inwardly what they had seen outside, even when they were not seeing it but only thinking of it. But what appears before such thought is no longer a body; it is the likeness of a body. That by which this likeness of a body is seen in the mind is neither a body nor the likeness of a body. And that by which it is seen and judged to be beautiful or ugly is surely better than the thing it judges. This is the human mind, the nature of the rational soul. It is certainly not a body, since even the likeness of a body is not itself a body when it is seen and judged in the mind of the one who thinks. So it is not earth or water, air or fire. These are the four bodies, called the four elements, of which we see the bodily world composed. Furthermore, if our mind is not a body, how can God, the creator of the mind, be a body? So, as has been said, let these too give way to the Platonists. Let those also give way who were indeed ashamed to say that God is a body, yet thought that our souls are of the same nature as he is. They were not troubled by the great changeability of the soul, though it is an impiety to attribute changeability to the nature of God. But they say: "The nature of the soul is changed by the body; in itself it is unchangeable." They might as well say: "Flesh is wounded by some body; in itself it cannot be wounded." Quite simply, what cannot be changed cannot be changed by anything. So what can be

13 Epicurus (341–270 BC), Athenian philosopher who taught that the world is made of atoms moving in the void.

changed by a body can be changed by something, and therefore it cannot rightly be called unchangeable.

THE VIEW OF THE PLATONISTS IN THE PART OF PHILOSOPHY CALLED PHYSICS

The Platonists saw that God is neither body nor changeable soul but the source of all form.

8.6 These philosophers, then, whom we see deservedly ranked above the rest in fame and glory, saw that no body is God, and so in seeking God they went beyond all bodies. They saw that whatever is changeable is not the supreme God, and so in seeking the supreme God they went beyond every soul and all changeable spirits. Next they saw that in any changeable thing whatever, the form by which it is what it is, in whatever way it exists and whatever its nature, can exist only from him who truly is, because he is unchangeably. And so they saw that two things could exist only from him who simply is. The first is the body of the whole world, with its shapes, its qualities, its ordered motion, the elements arranged from heaven down to earth, and whatever bodies are in them. The second is every kind of life: the life that nourishes and holds together, as in trees; the life that has this and also senses, as in animals; the life that has these and also understands, as in human beings; and the life that needs no help from nourishment but only holds together, senses and understands, as in angels. For in him, to be is not one thing and to live another, as though he could be without living. Nor is to live one thing and to understand another, as though he could live without understanding. Nor is to understand one thing and to be happy another, as though he could understand without being happy. Rather, for him, to live, to understand and to be happy is simply to be. Because of this unchangeableness and simplicity, they understood that he made all these things and that he himself could not have been made by anyone. For they considered that whatever exists is either body or life. They saw that life is something better than body, and that the form of body is perceptible to the senses, while the

form of life is intelligible. Accordingly they ranked intelligible form above sensible form. We call sensible the things that can be perceived by the body's sight and touch, and intelligible the things that can be understood by the gaze of the mind. For there is no bodily beauty on which the mind does not pass judgment, whether it lies in a body at rest, such as a shape, or in motion, such as a melody. And the mind certainly could not do this unless this form existed in it in a better way: without the swelling of bulk, without the noise of sound, without extension in either space or time. But even there, if this form were not changeable, one person would not judge sensible form better than another. Yet the more gifted judge it better than the slower, the more skilled better than the less skilled, the more practiced better than the less practiced, and one and the same person, as he makes progress, certainly judges it better later than before. Now whatever admits of more and less is without doubt changeable. Hence gifted and learned men, practiced in these matters, easily concluded that the primary form is not in those things where it is shown to be changeable. In their view, then, both body and mind possessed form to a greater or lesser degree, and if they could lack all form, they would be nothing at all. So they saw that there is something in which the primary form exists unchangeably, and therefore beyond comparison. And there, most rightly, they believed the first principle of things to be: something that was not made, and from which all things were made. Thus what can be known of God he himself made plain to them, when they understood and perceived his invisible attributes through the things that have been made, and also his eternal power and divinity. By him, too, all things visible and temporal were created. Let this suffice concerning the part they call *physica*, that is, natural philosophy.[14]

14 Augustine is echoing Romans 1:19–20.

HOW FAR THE PLATONISTS SHOULD BE THOUGHT TO EXCEL THE REST IN LOGIC, THAT IS, RATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Unlike the Epicureans and Stoics, the Platonists made God the light of minds.

8.7 Next comes teaching, the concern of the second part, which they call *logica*, that is, rational philosophy. Far be it from us to think that anyone should be compared with these philosophers who placed the criterion of truth in the senses of the body and held that everything learned must be measured by the senses' unreliable and deceptive rules. Such were the Epicureans and any others of that kind, and even the Stoics themselves. The Stoics were passionately fond of skill in argument, which they call dialectic, yet they thought it must be derived from the bodily senses. From the senses, they asserted, the mind forms the notions they call ἐννοίας [concepts], that is, notions of the things they explain by definition. From there, they said, the whole method of learning and teaching is propagated and linked together. Here I am always greatly amazed. They say that no one is beautiful except the wise. Then by which bodily senses did they see that beauty? With what eyes of flesh did they behold the form and grace of wisdom? But those whom we rightly rank above the rest distinguished what is perceived by the mind from what is reached by the senses. They neither took from the senses what the senses can do, nor granted them more than they can do. And they said that the light of minds, by which all things are learned, is that very same God by whom all things were made.

THAT THE PLATONISTS HOLD FIRST PLACE IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY AS WELL

For the Platonists the supreme good is to enjoy God; the philosopher is a lover of God.

8.8 There remains the moral part, which they call by the Greek word *ethica*. Here the question concerns the supreme good. It is

that to which we refer all that we do, and which we seek not for the sake of something else but for its own sake. Once we attain it, we look for nothing further to make us happy. That is precisely why it is called the end: we want other things for its sake, but we want it only for its own sake. Some said that this good, which makes people happy, comes to a human being from the body, others from the soul, others from both. For they saw that a human being consists of soul and body. So they believed that their well-being could come from one or the other of these two, or from both. This would be a kind of final good by which they would be happy. To it they would refer all that they did, and beyond it they would look for nothing further to which it should be referred. Hence some are said to have added a third kind of goods, called external, such as honor, glory, wealth and anything of the sort. But they did not add it as something final, that is, to be sought for its own sake, but as something sought for the sake of something else. They held that this kind of good is good for the good and bad for the bad. Thus those who sought the human good from the soul, or from the body, or from both, thought it was to be sought from nothing other than the human being. Those who sought it from the body sought it from the inferior part of a human being; those who sought it from the soul, from the better part; and those who sought it from both, from the whole human being. Whether from some part, then, or from the whole, they sought it only from the human being. These distinctions are three in number, yet they produced not just three but many disagreements and schools among philosophers. Different people held different opinions about the good of the body, the good of the soul and the good of both. Let all of them, then, yield to those philosophers who said that a human being is happy not in enjoying the body, nor in enjoying the soul, but in enjoying God. And this is not the way the soul enjoys the body or itself, or a friend enjoys a friend, but the way the eye enjoys light, if some likeness may be drawn from these things to those. What sort of likeness that is will become clear elsewhere, as far as I am able, if God himself helps me. For now it is enough

to recall what Plato determined. The end of good, he said, is to live according to virtue, and this can happen only to one who has knowledge of God and imitates him; there is no other reason for being happy. And so he does not hesitate to say that to philosophize is to love God, whose nature is incorporeal. From this it surely follows that the lover of wisdom (for that is what a philosopher is) will be happy when he has begun to enjoy God. A person who enjoys what he loves is not automatically happy, for many are miserable because they love what ought not to be loved, and more miserable when they enjoy it. Still, no one is happy who does not enjoy what he loves. Even those who love things that ought not to be loved think themselves happy not in loving them but in enjoying them. Suppose, then, that someone enjoys what he loves, and loves the true and supreme good. Who but the most miserable of men would deny that he is happy? Now Plato says that this true and supreme good is God. That is why he wants the philosopher to be a lover of God. Since philosophy aims at the happy life, the one who has loved God will be happy in enjoying God.

THE PHILOSOPHY THAT HAS COME CLOSEST TO THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Any philosophers, of any nation, who hold such views about God are ranked above the rest.

8.9 Some philosophers, then, have held these views about the supreme and true God. They hold that he is the maker of created things, the light by which things are known and the good for which things are done. They hold that from him we have the origin of our nature, the truth of our teaching and the happiness of our life. They may be more suitably called Platonists, or they may give their school some other name. Perhaps only the leading members of the Ionian school held these views, such as Plato himself and those who understood him well. Perhaps the Italian school held them too, on account of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans and any others of the same opinion from that region. Or perhaps some who saw and taught this are found

among other nations too, people reckoned wise men or philosophers: Atlantic Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Gauls, Spaniards. Whoever they are, we rank them all above the rest and acknowledge them to be closer to us.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS CHRISTIAN AMONG THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCIPLINES

Paul warns against worldly philosophy yet says some philosophers knew God through creation.

8.10 A Christian educated only in the Church's writings may perhaps not know the name of the Platonists. He may not know whether there were two kinds of philosophers in the Greek language, the Ionian and the Italian. Yet he is not so deaf to human affairs as not to know that philosophers profess either the pursuit of wisdom or wisdom itself. He is wary, though, of those who philosophize according to the elements of this world, and not according to God, by whom the world itself was made. For he is warned by the apostle's precept and faithfully listens to what was said: "Take care that no one deceives you through philosophy and empty seduction, according to the elements of the world." Then, so that he may not suppose that all philosophers are like this, he hears the same apostle say of certain people: "For what can be known of God is plain to them; for God has made it plain to them.[15] For his invisible attributes, from the creation of the world, are understood and seen through the things that have been made—his eternal power also and divinity." The Christian hears him also when he speaks to the Athenians. There the apostle said something great about God, something few can understand: that "in him we live and move and have our being." And then he added, "as some of your own have also said." Yet the Christian knows well to be wary of these philosophers too, in the points where they go wrong. For the passage that says God made his invisible attributes plain to

15 Colossians 2:8; Romans 1:19–20.

them, to be seen by the understanding through the things that have been made, also says that they did not worship God himself rightly. They paid the divine honors due to him alone to other things as well, to which they should not have been paid: "For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.[16] For claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed animals and serpents." Here the apostle gives us to understand that he means the Romans, the Greeks and the Egyptians, who prided themselves on the name of wisdom. But we will argue with them about this later. They agree with us, however, about the one God, the author of this universe, who is not only incorporeal and above all bodies, but also incorruptible and above all souls—our origin, our light, our good. In this respect we rank them above the rest. A Christian who does not know their writings may not use in debate words he has not learned. He may not call "natural" in Latin, or "physical" in Greek, the part that deals with the investigation of nature. He may not call "rational" or "logical" the part that asks how truth can be grasped. And he may not call "moral" or "ethical" the part that deals with conduct and with the ends of good to be pursued and of evil to be avoided. But it does not follow that he does not know that we have all three from the one true and supremely good God: the nature by which we were made in his image, the teaching by which we know him and ourselves, and the grace by which we are happy in clinging to him. This, then, is the reason we prefer these philosophers to the rest. Other philosophers have worn out their minds and their efforts in searching for the causes of things and for the right way of learning and living. These philosophers, by knowing God, found where lies the cause of the universe's constitution, the light by which truth is perceived and the fountain from which happiness is drunk. So whether these Platonists or any other philosophers of any

16 Acts 17:28; Romans 1:21–23.

nation hold these views about God, they agree with us. But I have chosen to argue this case chiefly with the Platonists because their writings are better known. For the Greeks, whose language is preeminent among the nations, have celebrated these writings with great acclaim. And the Latins, moved by either their excellence or their fame, have studied them more readily than others, and by translating them into our language have made them more renowned and more illustrious.

WHERE PLATO COULD HAVE ACQUIRED THE UNDERSTANDING BY WHICH HE CAME CLOSE TO CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

Plato could not have met Jeremiah, though his views echo Genesis and God's name, I am who I am.

8.11 Some who are joined with us in the grace of Christ are amazed when they hear or read that Plato held these views about God, for they recognize that these views agree closely with the truth of our religion. That is why some have thought that when Plato went to Egypt he heard the prophet Jeremiah, or read the prophetic Scriptures on that same journey. I have in fact recorded their opinion in some of my books. But a careful reckoning of dates, as contained in chronological history, shows that Plato was born about a hundred years after the time when Jeremiah prophesied. Plato lived eighty-one years. Ptolemy, king of Egypt, later requested the prophetic Scriptures of the Hebrew people from Judea, and he had them translated and kept by seventy Hebrew men who also knew Greek. From the year of Plato's death to that time, about sixty years are found to have passed.[17] So on that journey Plato could not have seen Jeremiah, who had died so long before. Nor could he have read those Scriptures, which had not yet been translated into Greek, the language in which he excelled. Unless perhaps, since he was a man of the

17 Augustine had floated this idea in *On Christian Teaching* 2.28.43. The king is Ptolemy II Philadelphus (reigned 285–246 BC), traditionally credited with commissioning the Greek translation of Scripture known as the Septuagint.

keenest curiosity, he learned them through an interpreter, as he did the Egyptian writings. He would not have done so in order to translate them in writing. Ptolemy is said to have obtained that as an immense favor, though as king he could even have made himself feared. Plato would have done so to learn in conversation what they contained, as far as he could grasp it. Certain indications seem to support this view. The book of Genesis begins thus: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth. But the earth was invisible and without form, and darkness was over the abyss, and the Spirit of God was borne above the water." And in the *Timaeus*, the book he wrote on the formation of the world, Plato says that in that work God first joined earth and fire.[18] Now it is clear that he assigns to fire the place of heaven. So this statement bears some resemblance to the words, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." Next he says that the two middle elements, placed between these extremes so that they might be joined to each other, are water and air. Hence he is thought to have understood in this way what is written: "the Spirit of God was borne above the water." For he paid little attention to how that Scripture usually uses the term "spirit of God," and since air too is called spirit, he may seem to have supposed that the four elements are mentioned in that passage. Then there is Plato's statement that the philosopher is a lover of God, and nothing glows so brightly in those sacred writings. Above all there is the following, which more than anything leads me almost to agree that Plato was not unacquainted with those books. The words of God were conveyed to holy Moses through an angel. Moses asked the name of the one who was commanding him to go and set the Hebrew people free from Egypt. And the answer was: "I am who I am; and you shall say to the children of Israel, 'He who is has sent me to you.'" It is as though, in comparison with him who truly is because he is unchangeable, the things that were made changeable do not exist. Plato held this firmly and com-

18 Genesis 1:1–2. The *Timaeus* is Plato's dialogue on the origin and structure of the universe.

mended it most diligently.[19] And I do not know whether this is found anywhere in the books of those who lived before Plato, except where it was said: "I am who I am; and you shall say to them, 'He who is has sent me to you.'"

THAT EVEN THE PLATONISTS, THOUGH THEY THOUGHT RIGHTLY ABOUT THE ONE TRUE GOD, HELD THAT SACRIFICE SHOULD BE OFFERED TO MANY GODS

The Platonists are the right opponents, but all of them worshiped many gods.

8.12 But wherever he learned these things, whether from the books of the ancients who came before him or, more likely, in the way the apostle describes: "For what can be known of God is plain to them; for God has made it plain to them. For his invisible attributes, from the creation of the world, are understood and seen through the things that have been made—his eternal power also and divinity." However that may be, I think I have now shown well enough that I was right to choose the Platonist philosophers as the ones to argue with. The question we have just taken up concerns natural theology: whether, for the sake of the happiness that is to come after death, sacred rites should be performed for one God or for many. I chose these above all because the better their understanding of the one God who made heaven and earth, the more glorious and illustrious they are held to be than the rest. Later generations have ranked them so far above the others that the most distinguished recent philosophers who chose to follow Plato did not want to be called Peripatetics or Academics, but Platonists. They chose this even though Aristotle, Plato's disciple, a man of outstanding intellect, Plato's inferior in eloquence but easily the superior of many, had founded the Peripatetic school, so called because he was in the habit of debating while walking about. His brilliant reputation had also gathered a great many disciples into his own sect while his teacher was still alive. And after Plato's death, Speusippus,

19 Exodus 3:14.

his sister's son, and Xenocrates, his beloved disciple, had succeeded him in his school, which was called the Academy, so that both they and their successors were called Academics.[20] Among these, the Greeks Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry are especially renowned, and in both languages, Greek and Latin, Apuleius the African stood out as a renowned Platonist. But all of these, and others of the same kind, and Plato himself, thought that sacred rites should be performed for many gods.[21]

PLATO'S VIEW THAT GODS ARE ONLY GOOD AND FRIENDS OF VIRTUE

Plato held all gods good and banished poets, yet the gods demanded shameful shows.

8.13 So although they disagree with us on many other matters, and important ones, there is the point I have just raised. It is no small matter, and it is the question now before us. On it I ask them first: to which gods do they think this worship should be offered? To good gods, to bad ones, or to both good and bad? But we have Plato's view: he says that all the gods are good and that there is no bad god at all. It follows, then, that these rites must be understood as offered to good gods. Only then are they offered to gods at all, since they will not be gods if they are not good. If this is so (and what else is it fitting to believe about gods?), then the opinion held by some is surely emptied of force: that bad gods must be appeased with rites so that they do no harm, while good gods are to be invoked so that they help. For there are no bad gods. And it is to the good gods, as they say, that the honor of rites they are due must be paid. Who, then, are those who love theatrical shows and demand that they be joined to divine worship and performed in their honor? Their power shows that they are not nonexistent, but this taste of theirs

20 Aristotle (384–322 BC) founded the Lyceum in Athens; Speusippus and Xenocrates headed Plato's Academy in turn after his death in 347 BC.
21 Plotinus (c. AD 205–270), Iamblichus (c. AD 245–325) and Porphyry (c. AD 234–305) were leading Neoplatonists; Apuleius of Madauros (2nd century AD) was a North African writer and philosopher.

surely shows that they are bad. What Plato thought about theatrical shows is well known: he holds that the poets themselves should be banished from the city for composing poems so unworthy of the majesty and goodness of the gods. Who, then, are these gods who contend with Plato himself over theatrical shows? He will not allow the gods to be defamed with false accusations; they command that their honors be celebrated with those very accusations. In the end, when they ordered these same shows to be restored, they not only demanded what was shameful but also did what was malicious. They took away Titus Latinius's son and struck him with a disease because he had refused their command, and then withdrew the disease once he had carried out their orders. Plato, however, did not think them worth fearing, bad as they were. Holding to his judgment with unwavering firmness, he does not hesitate to remove from a well-ordered people all the sacrilegious trifles of the poets, in which those gods delight because they share in their filth. Yet this same Plato, as I mentioned in the second book, is placed by Labeo among the demigods. And this Labeo thinks that evil deities are appeased by bloody victims and supplications of that kind, but good ones by shows and similar things that belong, so to speak, to merriment. Why is it, then, that the demigod Plato so steadfastly dares to take away those amusements, because he judges them shameful, not from demigods but from gods, and good gods at that?[22] These gods, in fact, refute Labeo's opinion, for in the case of Latinius they showed themselves not only wanton and playful but also cruel and terrifying. So let the Platonists explain this to us, since, following the view of their founder, they hold that all the gods are good and honorable and partners with the wise in virtue, and consider it impious to think otherwise of any of the gods. "We will explain it," they say. Then let us listen attentively.

22 Titus Latinius was a Roman commoner who, Livy reports, was punished for failing to report a dream ordering games to be repeated; Augustine tells the story in 4.26. Cornelius Labeo was a Roman writer on religion, probably of the third century AD.

THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO SAID THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF RATIONAL SOULS: IN THE GODS OF HEAVEN, IN THE DEMONS OF THE AIR, AND IN HUMAN BEINGS ON EARTH

The Platonists divide rational beings into gods, demons and humans; Apuleius praises the demons.

8.14 "All living beings that have a rational soul," they say, "are divided into three kinds: gods, humans and demons. The gods hold the highest place, humans the lowest, demons the middle. The gods dwell in heaven, humans on earth, demons in the air. Just as their places differ in rank, so do their natures. Accordingly, the gods are superior to humans and demons, while humans are set below gods and demons, differing in merit just as they do in the order of the elements. The demons, then, being in the middle, must be ranked below the gods, beneath whom they dwell, and above humans, above whom they dwell. For they share with the gods the immortality of their bodies, but with humans the passions of their souls. So it is no wonder," they say, "if they also delight in the obscenities of the shows and the fictions of the poets, since they are captivated by human emotions, from which the gods are far removed and to which they are wholly foreign." From this it follows that when Plato detested and prohibited the poets' fictions, it was not the gods, who are all good and exalted, but the demons whom he deprived of the pleasure of theatrical shows.

If this is so (these ideas are found in other writers too, but the Platonist Apuleius of Madauros wrote a whole book on this one subject, which he chose to title *On the God of Socrates*. In it he discusses and explains to what class of divine beings belonged the one Socrates had attached to himself and bound by a kind of friendship, and by whom he is said to have been regularly warned to stop whenever what he wanted to do was not going to turn out well. He says quite plainly, and argues at great length, that it was not a god but a demon, carefully working through Plato's view of the loftiness of the gods, the lowliness of humans

and the middle position of demons)—if this, then, is so, how did Plato dare, by banishing the poets from the city, to take away theatrical pleasures from the demons themselves, even if not from the gods, whom he set apart from all human contamination? Unless it was that in this way he was warning the human mind, though still housed in these dying limbs, to despise the impure commands of demons for the sake of shining integrity, and to detest their filth.[23] For if Plato acted most honorably in censuring and prohibiting these things, the demons certainly acted most shamefully in demanding and commanding them. So either Apuleius is mistaken, and Socrates' friend did not belong to this class of divine beings; or Plato contradicts himself, now honoring demons, now removing their delights from a well-governed city; or Socrates is not to be congratulated on the friendship of a demon. Apuleius himself was so ashamed of that friendship that he titled his book *On the God of Socrates*. Yet by his own argument, in which he distinguishes gods from demons so carefully and at such length, he ought to have called it not *On the God* but *On the Demon of Socrates*. But he preferred to put this in the argument itself rather than in the title of the book. For thanks to the sound teaching that has shone upon human affairs, all people, or nearly all, so shudder at the name of demons that anyone who read the title *On the Demon of Socrates* before reading Apuleius's argument commending the dignity of demons would think that man was not in his right mind at all. And what did even Apuleius himself find to praise in demons, apart from the fineness and durability of their bodies and the higher place where they dwell? For about their character, when he spoke of them all in general, he said not only nothing good but a great deal that was bad. In short, after reading that book, no one at all is surprised that they wanted even the shamefulness of the stage to be part of divine worship; that, though they wish to be thought gods, they could take delight in the crimes of

23 Apuleius's *On the God of Socrates* discusses demons as beings between gods and humans, taking as its starting point the inner "divine sign" that Socrates claimed warned him.

the gods; and that whatever in their rites provokes laughter or horror, through obscene ceremony or shameful cruelty, suits their passions.

THAT DEMONS ARE NOT SUPERIOR TO HUMAN BEINGS EITHER BECAUSE OF THEIR AIRY BODIES OR BECAUSE OF THEIR HIGHER DWELLING PLACES

Better bodies and a higher dwelling do not make demons better than human beings.

8.15 Therefore, when a truly religious mind, subject to the true God, considers these things, God forbid that it should think demons better than itself because they have better bodies. Otherwise it will have to rank many beasts above itself as well, for they surpass us in keenness of senses, in ease and speed of movement, in strength, and in the long-lasting vigor of their bodies. What human being will equal eagles and vultures in sight? Or dogs in smell? Or hares, stags and all birds in speed? Or lions and elephants in strength? Or serpents in length of life—serpents that are even said to shed old age along with their skin and return to youth? But just as we are better than all these by reasoning and understanding, so too we ought to be better than demons by living good and honorable lives. This is why divine providence also gave certain superior bodily gifts to those beings we are known to surpass: so that this too might teach us that the faculty by which we are set above them must be cultivated with much greater care than the body, and so that we might learn to despise the bodily excellence we know demons possess, compared with the goodness of life by which we are ranked above them. For we too shall have immortal bodies—not an immortality racked by eternal punishment, but one preceded by purity of soul.

As for the height of their dwelling place—that demons live in the air while we live on the earth—to be so impressed by this as to think they should be ranked above us is utterly ridiculous. On that reasoning we would also rank all flying creatures above us. "But," they say, "when flying creatures grow tired from flying or

need to refresh their bodies with food, they come back to earth to rest or to feed, and demons do not do this." Do they want, then, flying creatures to excel us, and demons to excel even flying creatures? If that is an utterly insane idea, there is no reason for us to think that, because they dwell in a higher element, demons deserve to have us submit to them in religious devotion. Birds of the air are not only not ranked above us earth-dwellers, but are even subject to us, because of the dignity of the rational soul within us. In the same way, demons, though more airy than we are, are not better than us earth-dwellers just because air is higher than earth. Rather, humans must be ranked above them, since their despair is in no way to be compared with the hope of godly people. Indeed, Plato's theory itself sufficiently warns us not to judge the merits of living beings by the ranks of the elements. By that theory he links and orders the four elements in proportion, inserting the two middle ones, air and water, between the two extremes, fire, the most mobile, and earth, the immobile, so that, as air is higher than water and fire than air, so water is higher than earth. And indeed Apuleius himself, with the rest, calls the human being a land animal, and yet humans are ranked far above water creatures, even though Plato ranks water itself above earth. Let them understand from this that the order to be kept when it is a question of the merits of souls is not the same as the order that appears to hold among the ranks of bodies. It is possible for a better soul to inhabit a lower body, and a worse soul a higher one.

WHAT THE PLATONIST APULEIUS THOUGHT ABOUT THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE DEMONS

Apuleius defines demons as rational, passionate, airy and eternal; none of this deserves worship.

8.16 When this same Platonist spoke of the character of demons, then, he said that they are stirred by the same disturbances of mind as humans: provoked by injuries, appeased by services and gifts, pleased by honors, delighted by various sacred rites, and upset if anything in those rites is neglected. Among other

things, he also says that the divinations of augurs, entrail-readers and prophets, and of dreams, belong to them, and that the wonders worked by magicians come from them as well. Defining them briefly, he says that demons are by kind living beings, in soul subject to passion, in mind rational, in body made of air, in duration eternal. Of these five, the first three they have in common with us, the fourth is their own, and the fifth they share with the gods. But I see that of the first three, which they share with us, they also share two with the gods. For he says that the gods too are living beings. Assigning to each kind its own element, he placed us among the land animals, along with the other creatures that live and feel on earth; among the water animals, fish and other swimming creatures; among the creatures of the air, demons; among those of the ether, the gods. So being living beings by kind is something demons share not only with humans but also with the gods and the beasts; being rational in mind, with gods and humans; being eternal in duration, with the gods alone; being subject to passion in soul, with humans alone; being made of air in body is theirs alone. Accordingly, being living beings by kind is no great thing, since beasts are that too. Being rational in mind does not raise them above us, since we are that too. Being eternal in duration—what good is that, if they are not happy? For temporal happiness is better than eternal misery. Being subject to passion in soul—how does that raise them above us, when we are that too, and would not be if we were not miserable? Being made of air in body—how highly should that be valued, when the nature of any soul whatever is ranked above every body, and therefore the worship of religion, which is owed from the soul, is by no means owed to anything inferior to the soul? Moreover, if among the attributes he says belong to demons he had counted virtue, wisdom and happiness, and said that they have these eternally and in common with the gods, he would surely be saying something to be desired and highly valued. Even then we ought not to worship them as God on that account, but rather him from whom we knew they had received these things. How much less, as things

are, do these living beings of the air deserve divine honor—rational so that they can be miserable, subject to passion so that they are miserable, eternal so that they cannot end their misery!

WHETHER IT IS RIGHT FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO WORSHIP SPIRITS FROM WHOSE VICES THEY OUGHT TO BE FREED

Demons are tossed by passions that true religion commands us to overcome.

8.17 Therefore, to pass over the rest and deal only with what he said demons have in common with us—that is, passions of the soul—if all four elements are full of their own living beings, fire and air of immortal ones, water and earth of mortal ones, I ask why the souls of demons are tossed by the squalls and storms of passions. For a disturbance is what in Greek is called πάθος [*pathos*, passion]. That is why he chose to call them "subject to passion in soul," since the word *passio*, a word-for-word rendering of πάθος, would mean a motion of the mind contrary to reason. Why, then, are these things found in the souls of demons, when they are not found in beasts? For if anything similar appears in a beast, it is not a disturbance, because it is not contrary to reason, which beasts lack. In humans, however, it is folly or misery that brings about these disturbances, for we are not yet happy in that perfection of wisdom which is promised to us at the end, when we have been freed from this mortality. The gods, they say, do not suffer these disturbances because they are not only eternal but also happy. For they claim that the gods too have the same rational souls, but utterly pure of every stain and plague. So if the gods are not disturbed because they are living beings that are happy, not miserable, and beasts are not disturbed because they are living beings that can be neither happy nor miserable, it remains that demons, like humans, are disturbed because they are living beings that are not happy but miserable.

By what folly, then, or rather madness, do we subject ourselves to demons through some religion, when through the true religion we are freed from the very corruption in which we

resemble them? Demons are spurred on by anger—as even this Apuleius, though he spares them a great deal and judges them worthy of divine honors, is forced to admit—but true religion commands us not to be spurred on by anger, but rather to resist it. Demons are won over by gifts, but true religion commands us not to favor anyone because we have accepted gifts. Demons are soothed by honors, but true religion commands us not to be moved by such things in any way. Demons hate some people and love others, not by prudent and calm judgment but by a soul that is, as he himself calls it, subject to passion; but true religion commands us to love even our enemies.[24] Finally, every agitation of the heart, every tossing of the mind, all the squalls and storms of the soul, in which he says demons seethe and surge, true religion bids us put away. What reason can there be, then, other than folly and astonishing error, for you to humble yourself in veneration before one you would wish to be unlike in the way you live, and to worship in religion one you would not want to imitate, when the sum of religion is to imitate the one you worship?

WHAT KIND OF RELIGION IT IS THAT TEACHES THAT HUMAN BEINGS MUST USE DEMONS AS ADVOCATES TO COMMEND THEMSELVES TO THE GOOD GODS

Making demons go-betweens forces the chaste to rely on lovers of obscenity and magic.

8.18 In vain, then, did Apuleius, and anyone else who thinks this way, confer this honor on them. He placed them in the air, midway between the ethereal heaven and the earth, so that, since "no god mingles with a human being," as Plato is reported to have said, they might carry the prayers of human beings to the gods and bring back from there to human beings what they have asked for and obtained. For those who believed these things thought it unworthy for human beings to mingle with gods and gods with human beings, but worthy for demons to mingle with

24 Compare Matthew 5:44.

both gods and human beings, presenting petitions from here and bringing back grants from there. So, evidently, a chaste man, a stranger to the crimes of the magic arts, must employ as his patrons the very beings through whom the gods are to hear him. Yet these beings love the things whose rejection makes him more worthy to be heard by the gods more readily and more willingly. For they love the obscenities of the stage, which chastity does not love. They love the thousand arts of doing harm in the evil practices of magicians, which innocence does not love.[25] So if chastity and innocence wish to obtain anything from the gods, they cannot do so by their own merits, but only through the intervention of their own enemies. There is no reason for this man to try to justify the fictions of the poets and the mockeries of the theater. Against these things we have their own master, Plato, whose authority among them is so great. We need him if human modesty does itself such a disservice that it not only loves what is shameful but even thinks it pleasing to the divine.

THE IMPIETY OF THE MAGIC ARTS, WHICH RELY ON THE PATRONAGE OF EVIL SPIRITS

Roman law and Apuleius's own defense show that magic is condemned as harmful.

8.19 Further, against the magic arts, in which some people, far too unhappy and far too impious, even like to glory, shall I not call the full light of public life itself as my witness? For why are these things punished so heavily by the severity of the laws, if they are the works of divinities who deserve worship? Or did the Christians, perhaps, establish these laws by which the magic arts are punished? The most celebrated of poets says: "I call the gods to witness, dear sister, and you, and your dear life, that I arm myself with the magic arts against my will." In what other sense does he say this, except that these evil practices are undoubtedly harmful to the human race? Elsewhere he says of

25 The saying is from Plato, *Symposium* 203a.

these arts: "And I have seen him lead sown crops away to another field." He says this because by this pestilent and wicked teaching the crops of others are said to be transferred to other lands. Does not Cicero record that this was written in the Twelve Tables, the most ancient laws of the Romans, and that a punishment was laid down for anyone who did it?[26] Finally, was Apuleius himself accused of practicing the magic arts before Christian judges? If he knew that the arts with which he was charged were divine and holy, and in keeping with the works of divine powers, he ought not only to have admitted them but even to have professed them openly. He should have blamed instead the laws by which such things were forbidden and judged worthy of condemnation, when they ought to be held worthy of wonder and veneration. For in that way he would either have won the judges over to his opinion, or else, if they followed the unjust laws and punished him with death for proclaiming and praising such things, the demons would have repaid his soul with gifts worthy of it, since he would not have feared to lose his human life for proclaiming their divine works. Our martyrs did exactly that. When the Christian religion was charged against them as a crime, the religion by which they knew they would be saved and made most glorious forever, they did not choose to escape temporal punishment by denying it. Instead they confessed it, professed it and proclaimed it. They endured everything for its sake faithfully and bravely, and they died with holy confidence. In this way they compelled the laws that forbade it to blush with shame, and caused them to be changed. Yet there survives a very full and very eloquent speech by this Platonist philosopher, in which he defends himself against the charge of practicing the magic arts. He does not wish to appear innocent in any other way than by denying the very things that an innocent man cannot commit.[27] Yet all the won-

26 Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.492–493 (Dido to her sister Anna), and *Eclogues* 8.99. The Twelve Tables (c. 450 BC) were Rome's earliest written law code.

27 Apuleius' *Apology* (*Defense on a Charge of Magic*), delivered in North Africa around AD 158–159 before the Roman proconsul.

ders of the magicians, whom he rightly thinks should be condemned, are performed through the teachings and works of demons. Why he thinks these demons should be honored is his own affair. He claims they are necessary for carrying our prayers to the gods, when in fact we ought to avoid their works if we want our prayers to reach the true God. Next I ask: what kind of human prayers does he think are presented to the good gods through demons, magical or lawful? If magical, the gods do not want such prayers; if lawful, they do not want them through such agents. And if a repentant sinner pours out prayers, especially if he has committed some act of magic, does he really receive pardon through the intercession of the very beings at whose urging or with whose encouragement, as he laments, he fell into sin? Or do the demons themselves first do penance for having deceived the penitents, so that they can obtain forgiveness for them? No one has ever said this of demons. If it were so, beings who longed to attain the grace of pardon by repenting would never dare to claim divine honors for themselves. In the one case there is a pride to be detested; in the other, a humility deserving of mercy.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT THE GOOD GODS WOULD RATHER MIX WITH DEMONS THAN WITH HUMAN BEINGS

The Platonist maxim that no god mingles with humans makes the gods consort with demons instead.

8.20 "But," they say, "a pressing and most compelling reason forces the demons to act as intermediaries between gods and human beings, bringing from human beings what they desire and bringing back from the gods what has been granted." What, pray, is this reason, and how great is this necessity? "Because," they say, "no god mingles with a human being." What a splendid holiness, then, in a god! He does not mingle with a human being who prays to him, yet he mingles with an arrogant demon. He does not mingle with a human being who repents, yet he mingles with a demon who deceives. He does not mingle with a

human being who takes refuge in the divine, yet he mingles with a demon who feigns divinity. He does not mingle with a human being who asks for pardon, yet he mingles with a demon who urges wickedness. He does not mingle with a human being who, in books of philosophy, banishes the poets from a well-ordered city, yet he mingles with a demon who demands the mockeries of the poets from the city's leaders and pontiffs through theatrical shows. He does not mingle with a human being who forbids the invention of crimes of the gods, yet he mingles with a demon who delights in false crimes of the gods. He does not mingle with a human being who punishes the crimes of magicians by just laws, yet he mingles with a demon who teaches and practices the magic arts. He does not mingle with a human being who shuns imitating a demon, yet he mingles with a demon who lies in wait to deceive a human being.[28]

WHETHER THE GODS USE DEMONS AS MESSENGERS AND INTERPRETERS, AND WHETHER THEY DO NOT KNOW OR DO NOT MIND THAT THEY ARE DECEIVED BY THEM

Augustine shows that every account of demons as messengers to the gods dishonors the gods.

8.21 But no doubt there is a great necessity behind such absurdity and indignity. It is this: the ethereal gods, who care for human affairs, would surely not know what earthly human beings were doing unless the airy demons reported it, since the ether is far from the earth and hangs high above it, while the air touches both ether and earth. What marvelous wisdom! What else do these people think about the gods, whom they want to be all supremely good? They want them to care for human affairs, so that they may not seem unworthy of worship. And they want them, because of the distance between the elements, not to know human affairs, so that demons may be believed necessary and on that account may themselves be thought worthy of wor-

28 The human being who banishes the poets is Plato, in his *Republic*.

ship, since through them the gods can learn what is happening in human affairs and where they ought to come to the aid of human beings. If this is so, a demon is better known to these good gods through the nearness of its body than a human being is through the goodness of his mind. What a lamentable necessity! Or rather, what a ridiculous or detestable vanity, devised so that divinity should not be in vain! For if the gods, with a mind free from the obstacle of the body, can see our mind, they do not need demons as messengers for this. But suppose the ethereal gods perceive the bodily signs of minds, such as speech, facial expression and movement, through their own bodies, and from these gather what the demons too report. Then they can also be deceived by the demons' lies. Again, if the divinity of the gods cannot be deceived by demons, then neither can what we do remain unknown to that same divinity.

But I should like these people to tell me which of the following happened. Did the demons report to the gods that the poets' fictions about the gods' crimes displeased Plato, while concealing that they themselves enjoyed them? Or did they hide both, preferring the gods to be ignorant of this whole affair? Or did they disclose both, Plato's reverent prudence toward the gods and their own lust that does the gods injury? Or did they want Plato's opinion to remain unknown to the gods, the opinion by which he refused to let the gods be defamed with false crimes through the impious license of the poets, while they were neither ashamed nor afraid to reveal their own wickedness, by which they love the theatrical shows that celebrate those disgraces of the gods? Of these four options, which I have put forward as questions, let them choose whichever they like. And whichever it is, let them notice how much evil they are thinking of the good gods. For if they choose the first, they will have to confess that the good gods were not permitted to dwell with the good Plato, when he was forbidding the injuries done to them, but did dwell with the evil demons, when these were exulting in those injuries. For the good gods knew the good man, placed far from them, only through the evil demons, while they could not

know the demons themselves, near as they were. But if they choose the second, and say that both things were concealed by the demons, so that the gods knew nothing at all either of Plato's most reverent law or of the demons' sacrilegious delight, what can the gods usefully know of human affairs through demons as go-betweens? They do not know even the measures decreed by the religion of good men in honor of the good gods against the lust of evil demons. If, however, they choose the third, they will reply that through these same demons as messengers the gods were informed both of Plato's opinion forbidding injuries to the gods and of the demons' wickedness exulting in those injuries. But is this reporting, or insulting? And do the gods hear both and know both in such a way that they not only fail to keep these malignant demons from their presence, who desire and do things contrary to the gods' dignity and to Plato's reverence, but even send gifts to the good Plato, far away, through those wicked neighbors? For a kind of chain of the elements has bound them in such a way that they can be joined to those who slander them, but not to the one who defends them. They know both, yet they cannot shift the weight of air and earth. Now, as for what remains: if they choose the fourth, it is worse than the others. For who could bear the following? The demons reported to the gods the poets' slanderous fictions about the immortal gods, the shameful mockeries of the theaters, and their own most ardent craving and sweetest pleasure in all these things. But they kept silent about the fact that Plato, with philosophical seriousness, judged that all these things should be removed from the best commonwealth. So the good gods are compelled to learn, through such messengers, the evils of the very worst beings, and these are not someone else's evils but those of the messengers themselves. Yet they are not allowed to learn the opposite goods of the philosophers, though the former are an injury, and the latter an honor, to the gods themselves.

REJECTING THE WORSHIP OF DEMONS, AGAINST APULEIUS

Demons are not mediators but proud, envious spirits cast down into the air.

8.22 Since, then, none of these four should be chosen, for each would lead to so bad an opinion of the gods, it remains that we must in no way believe what Apuleius, and any other philosophers of the same view, strive to persuade us. They claim that demons stand between gods and human beings as go-betweens and interpreters, carrying our petitions from here and bringing back the gods' help from there. On the contrary, they are spirits most eager to do harm, utterly alien to justice, swollen with pride, livid with envy, cunning in deceit. They do indeed dwell in this air, because they were cast down from the heights of the higher heaven. As they deserved for a transgression from which there is no return, they have been condemned in advance to this region as to a prison suited to them. Yet the air lies above land and water, and it does not follow from this that they are superior in merit to human beings. For human beings overcome them with the greatest ease, not by an earthly body, but by a devout mind, once they have chosen the true God as their helper. But they plainly rule, as over captives and subjects, many who are unworthy of sharing in the true religion. The greater part of these they have persuaded that they are gods, by wondrous and deceptive signs, whether deeds or predictions. Some people, however, examined their vices somewhat more attentively and carefully, and these the demons could not persuade that they are gods. So they pretended to be go-betweens between gods and human beings, and obtainers of benefits. Unless, indeed, it was these people themselves who thought that this honor, at least, should be paid to them. They did not believe the demons to be gods, because they saw that they were evil, and they wanted all gods to be good. Yet they did not dare to call them altogether unworthy of divine honor, chiefly so as not to offend

the peoples, who, as they saw, served the demons with so many rites and temples out of long-ingrained superstition.

WHAT HERMES TRISMEGISTUS THOUGHT ABOUT IDOLATRY, AND HOW HE COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE SUPERSTITIONS OF EGYPT WOULD BE ABOLISHED

Hermes Trismegistus says humans make gods by binding spirits to statues, and laments their coming end.

8.23 For Hermes the Egyptian, whom they call Trismegistus, thought and wrote differently about them. Apuleius, to be sure, denies that they are gods. But when he says that they occupy a kind of middle position between gods and human beings, so that human beings seem to need them before the gods themselves, he does not separate their worship from the religion of the gods above. That Egyptian, however, says that some gods were made by the supreme God and others by human beings. Anyone who hears this, as I have stated it, supposes it is said of images, because they are the works of human hands. But he asserts that visible and tangible images are, as it were, the bodies of gods. Within them, he says, dwell certain spirits who have been invited in. These spirits have some power, either to do harm or to fulfill some of the desires of those who pay them divine honors and the services of worship.[29] So, by a certain art, human beings join these invisible spirits to visible things of bodily matter, so that the images dedicated and subjected to these spirits become, as it were, animated bodies. This, he says, is making gods, and human beings have received this great and wonderful power of making gods. I will set down this Egyptian's words as they have been translated into our language. "And since," he says, "we are called upon to speak of the kinship and fellowship of human beings and gods, learn, Asclepius, the power and strength of man. Just as the Lord and Father," he says, "or God, the highest, is the maker of the heavenly gods, so man

29 Hermes Trismegistus ("thrice-greatest") was a legendary Egyptian sage. Augustine quotes the *Asclepius*, a Latin dialogue attributed to him.

is the fashioner of the gods who dwell in temples, content to be near to human beings."[30] And a little later: "So humanity," he says, "ever mindful of its nature and origin, persists in that imitation of divinity. Just as the Father and Lord made the gods eternal, so that they might be like him, so humanity fashioned its own gods in the likeness of its own features." Here Asclepius, to whom he was chiefly speaking, answered him and said, "Do you mean statues, Trismegistus?" Then Hermes said: "Statues, Asclepius? See how far even you lack faith! I mean statues alive with sense and full of spirit, which do such great and such marvelous things. I mean statues that foreknow the future and predict it by lot, by a seer, by dreams and by many other means. They cause illnesses in human beings and cure them, and they bring sorrow and joy according to what people deserve. Do you not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven? Or, to speak more truly, it is a transfer or descent of everything that is governed and carried out in heaven. And if it must be said more truly still, our land is the temple of the whole world. And yet, since a wise man ought to know all things in advance, it is not right for you to be ignorant of this: a time is coming when it will be seen that the Egyptians kept up the worship of the divine with devout minds and diligent religion, and all in vain."

Hermes then pursues this passage at great length. In it he seems to foretell this present time, when the Christian religion, the truer and holier it is, the more forcefully and freely it overturns all deceitful fictions. So, by the grace of the truest Savior, it frees man from the gods that man makes and subjects him to the God who made man. But when Hermes foretells these things, he speaks as a friend of those same mockeries of the demons, and he does not plainly mention the Christian name. Instead, he laments these future events as though the things whose observance preserved the likeness of heaven in Egypt were being taken away and destroyed. So he bears witness to them in a kind of mournful prophecy. For he was one of those of whom the apostle says that, "although they knew God, they did

30 *Asclepius* 23. Asclepius is Hermes' disciple and partner in the dialogue.

not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man," and the rest, which would take too long to recount. For he says many things about the one true God, maker of the world, which agree with the truth. Yet somehow, through that darkening of the heart, he slides into these errors. He wants human beings always to be subject to gods that he admits are made by human beings, and he laments that these will be taken away at a future time. It is as if anything could be more unhappy than a human being ruled by his own fictions. In fact, it is easier for a man who worships as gods the things he has made to cease to be a man himself than for the things man has made to become gods through his worship. For it happens more quickly that "man, placed in honor, without understanding, is compared to the beasts" than that the work of man should be preferred to the work of God made in his image, that is, to man himself. So man rightly falls away from the one who made him when he places over himself what he himself has made.[31]

These empty, deceptive, pernicious, sacrilegious things Hermes the Egyptian lamented, because he knew that a time was coming when they would be taken away. But his lament was as shameless as his knowledge was unwise. For the Holy Spirit had not revealed these things to him as he had to the holy prophets. They foresaw them and spoke of them with exultation: "If a man makes gods, behold, they are not gods." And in another place: "It shall be in that day, says the Lord, I will wipe out the names of the idols from the earth, and there shall be no more memory of them." And on Egypt in particular, as concerns this matter, the holy Isaiah prophesies thus: "And the things made by hand in Egypt shall be shaken at his presence, and their heart shall be overcome within them," and other things of this kind.[32] Of this kind too were those who rejoiced that what they knew was com-

31 Psalm 48:13 (49:12 in most English Bibles).
32 Jeremiah 16:20; Zechariah 13:2; Isaiah 19:1.

ing had come. Simeon and Anna were such people, for they recognized Jesus as soon as he was born. So was Elizabeth, who recognized him in the Spirit when he had only been conceived. So was Peter, who said, by the Father's revelation, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But to this Egyptian the times of their destruction had been revealed by those spirits who trembled before the Lord when he was present in the flesh and said: "Why have you come before the time to destroy us?"[33] They said this either because it came on them suddenly, since they thought it would indeed happen, but later, or because they called this very thing their destruction: that once they were recognized, they would be despised. And this was "before the time," that is, before the time of judgment, when they are to be punished with eternal damnation together with all the human beings who are held fast in their fellowship. So speaks religion, which neither deceives nor is deceived. This man does not speak so. Blown about this way and that by every wind of doctrine, and mixing the true with the false, he laments as a religion about to perish what he later confesses to be error.[34]

HOW HERMES OPENLY ADMITTED THE ERROR OF HIS FOREFATHERS, YET LAMENTED THAT IT WOULD BE DESTROYED

Hermes admits that gods were made through his ancestors' great error and unbelief.

8.24 After much else, he comes back to this very point and speaks again of the gods whom human beings have made. He puts it this way: "But enough has now been said about such matters. Let us return," he says, "to man and to reason, the divine gift on account of which man has been called a rational animal. The things that have been said about man are less wonderful, though they are wonderful. What surpasses the wonder of all

33 Luke 2:25–38 (Simeon and Anna); Luke 1:41–45 (Elizabeth); Matthew 16:16–17 (Peter); Matthew 8:29 (the demons).
34 "Every wind of doctrine" echoes Ephesians 4:14.

marvels is that man has been able to discover the divine nature and to produce it. Our forefathers were greatly in error about the nature of the gods. They were unbelieving and paid no attention to worship and divine religion. Therefore they discovered an art by which to make gods." "To this discovery they joined a power drawn from the nature of the world and suited to it. Mixing this in, since they could not make souls, they called up the souls of demons or of angels and placed them in sacred images and divine mysteries, so that through these souls the idols might have the power both to do good and to do harm." I do not know whether the demons themselves, if they were adjured, would confess as much as he has confessed. "Since," he says, "our forefathers were greatly in error about the nature of the gods, unbelieving and paying no attention to worship and divine religion, they discovered an art by which to make gods." Did he say that they erred only moderately when they discovered this art of making gods? Or was he content to say "They were in error," without adding "They were greatly in error"? So it was this great error, and the unbelief of people paying no attention to worship and divine religion, that discovered the art by which to make gods. And yet this was discovered by great error and unbelief and the mind's turning away from worship and divine religion: that man should make gods by art. This is what the wise man laments, as though divine religion were going to be taken away at a fixed time to come. See whether he is not compelled by divine power to reveal the past error of his ancestors, and by diabolical power to lament the future punishment of the demons. Suppose their forefathers, by erring greatly about the nature of the gods, through unbelief and the mind's turning away from worship and divine religion, discovered an art by which to make gods. Then what wonder is it if whatever this detestable art produced, in its turning away from divine religion, is taken away by divine religion? For truth corrects error, faith refutes unbelief, and turning back sets right the turning away.

Suppose he had said that his forefathers discovered an art by which to make gods, and had kept silent about the causes. Then it would surely have been our task, if we had any sense of what is right and godly, to take note and see the following. They would never have arrived at this art by which man makes gods if they had not strayed from the truth, if they had believed what is worthy of God, if they had paid attention to worship and divine religion. And yet if it were *we* who named the causes of this art as the great error of human beings, and unbelief, and the turning away of an erring and faithless mind from divine religion, the impudence of those who resist the truth would have to be endured somehow. But the facts are these. This same man admires the power of this art in man above all else, the power by which man has been granted to make gods. He laments that a time will come when all these fictitious gods set up by human beings will even be ordered by law to be removed. Yet he confesses and states plainly the causes that led to all this. He says that his forefathers discovered this art of making gods through great error and unbelief, and by paying no attention to worship and divine religion. What, then, ought we to say? Or rather, what ought we to do, except give all the thanks we can to the Lord our God, who has removed these things by causes contrary to those by which they were established? What the abundance of error established, the way of truth removed. What unbelief established, faith removed. What the turning away from the worship of divine religion established, the turning toward the one true and holy God removed. And this happened not only in Egypt, the only land that the spirit of demons laments through him, but in all the earth, which sings to the Lord a new song. So the truly sacred and truly prophetic writings foretold, where it is written: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth." Indeed the title of this psalm is: "When the house was being built after the captivity." For a house is being built for the Lord in all the earth: the city of God, which is the holy Church. It is built after that captivity in which demons held captive and pos-

sessed the very people of whom, as they believe in God, the house is built as of living stones.[35]

IDOLS AND THE DEMONS IN THEM

Worshipers of man-made gods fell captive to demons, from whom the Church is now set free.

For it was not the case that the man who made the gods was not himself possessed by them, simply because he had made them. By worshiping them he was drawn into fellowship with them: fellowship, I mean, not with stupid idols but with cunning demons. For what are idols but what the same Scripture says: "They have eyes, and they will not see"? Whatever else of that kind had to be said of materials which, however skillfully shaped, still lack life and sensation. But the unclean spirits, bound to those same images by that wicked art, had wretchedly taken captive the souls of their worshipers by drawing them into fellowship with themselves. Hence the apostle says: "We know that an idol is nothing; but what the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to become partners with demons."[36] So it is after this captivity, in which human beings were held by evil demons, that the house of God is being built in all the earth. That is where the psalm got its title, the psalm in which it is said: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; proclaim the good news of his salvation day after day. Announce his glory among the nations, his wonders among all peoples. For the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens."

The man who lamented that a time was going to come when the worship of idols would be taken away, together with the demons' domination over their worshipers, was prompted by an

35 Psalm 95:1 (96:1 in most English Bibles). The title appears in the Greek and Latin versions. "Living stones" echoes 1 Peter 2:5.
36 Psalm 113 (115:5 in most English Bibles); 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 10:19–20.

evil spirit. He wanted this captivity to last forever, the captivity at whose end, as the psalm sings, the house is built in all the earth. Hermes foretold the one with lamentation; the prophet foretold the other with rejoicing. And the Spirit who sang these things through the holy prophets is the victor. So even Hermes himself was compelled, in wonderful ways, to confess something about the things he did not want taken away and lamented to see removed. They had been established, he admitted, not by the prudent, the faithful and the religious, but by people who were in error, unbelieving and turned away from the worship of divine religion. He calls them gods. Yet he says they were made by the kind of people we certainly ought not to be. In saying so he shows, whether he likes it or not, that they are not to be worshiped by those who are unlike the people who made them, that is, by the prudent, the faithful and the religious. At the same time he also shows that the very people who made them brought it on themselves to have as gods beings that were not gods. For that prophetic saying is true: "If man makes gods, look, they are not gods."[37] So Hermes called such gods, the gods of such people, made by art by such people, gods made by human beings. That is, he gave that name to demons bound to idols, by some art or other, with the chains of their own cravings. Yet he did not grant them what the Platonist Apuleius granted. We have already said enough about him and shown how unfitting and absurd his view is. Apuleius made them interpreters and intercessors between the gods whom God made and the human beings whom the same God made, carrying prayers from one side and bringing back gifts from the other. It is utterly foolish to believe that gods whom human beings made have more influence with the gods whom God made than human beings themselves have, whom the same God made. A demon bound to an image by an impious art has indeed been made a god by a man, but a god for such a man, not for every man. What sort of god, then, is this, whom no man would make unless he were in error, unbelieving and turned away from the true God?

37 Jeremiah 16:20.

Consider the demons worshiped in temples. By some art or other they were placed in images, that is, in visible statues, by the people who made gods by this art when they had strayed and turned away from worship and divine religion. Suppose these demons are not messengers or interpreters between human beings and gods. There are two reasons for this. One is their wicked and utterly shameful character. The other is that human beings, even in error, unbelieving and turned away from worship and divine religion, are without doubt better than those whom they themselves made gods by art. Then it remains that whatever power they have, they have as demons. They may do more harm by seeming to bestow benefits, because they deceive more. Or they may do harm openly. Yet they can do neither of these except when permitted by the deep and secret providence of God. But they do not have great influence with human beings as intermediaries between human beings and gods through friendship with the gods. For they cannot possibly be friends of the good gods. These we call holy angels, rational creatures of the holy heavenly dwelling, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. The demons are as far from them in the disposition of their minds as vices are from virtues and malice from goodness.[38]

WHAT THE HOLY ANGELS AND GOOD HUMAN BEINGS CAN HAVE IN COMMON

We draw near the good angels by likeness of will, not through demons.

8.25 In no way, therefore, should we seek the goodwill or kindness of the gods, or rather of the good angels, through the supposed mediation of demons. We should seek it through likeness of good will. By this we are with them, we live with them, and with them we worship the God whom they worship, even though we cannot see them with the eyes of the flesh. But insofar as we are wretched through unlikeness of will and the frailty of our weakness, to that extent we are far from them. The distance lies in

38 The list of angelic ranks echoes Colossians 1:16.

the merit of our life, not the location of our body. It is not because we dwell on earth by the condition of the flesh that we are not joined to them. It is because, through impurity of heart, we set our minds on earthly things. But when we are being healed so as to become what they are, we draw near to them meanwhile by faith. We do so if we believe, with their own approval, that we are made happy by the one by whom they too were made happy.

THAT THE WHOLE RELIGION OF THE PAGANS WAS BOUND UP WITH DEAD HUMAN BEINGS

Hermes's lament about tombs reveals that Egypt's gods were dead human beings.

8.26 We should certainly notice what this Egyptian says. He laments that a time would come when certain things would be taken away from Egypt, things which he admits were established by people greatly in error, unbelieving and turned away from the worship of divine religion. Among other things he says: "Then this land, the most holy seat of shrines and temples, will be completely full of tombs and of the dead." As if, had those things not been taken away, people would not have died, or the dead would have to be laid somewhere other than in the earth! And surely, the more time and days rolled on, the greater the number of tombs would be, because of the greater number of the dead. But what he seems to lament is that the memorial shrines of our martyrs would take the place of their temples and sanctuaries. Those who read this with minds turned away from us and perverse would then, of course, think that the pagans worshiped gods in temples, whereas we worship the dead in tombs.[39] For impious people are so blind that they stumble, as it were, over mountains, and refuse to see things that strike their very eyes. They do not notice that in all the literature of the pagans there are either no gods, or hardly any, who were not once human beings and were given divine honors after death. I

39 Memorial shrines (*memoriae*) were chapels built over the relics of martyrs.

pass over Varro's statement that they regard all the dead as gods, the Manes. He proves it from the rites performed for nearly all the dead. There he also mentions funeral games, as though this were the strongest proof of divinity, since games are usually celebrated only for deities.[40]

Hermes himself, whom we are now discussing, testifies that the gods of Egypt are dead human beings. He does so in the very same book in which, lamenting as though foretelling the future, he says: "Then this land, the most holy seat of shrines and temples, will be completely full of tombs and of the dead." He had said that his forefathers, greatly in error about the nature of the gods, unbelieving and paying no attention to worship and divine religion, discovered an art by which to make gods. Then he says: "To this discovery they joined a power drawn from the nature of the world and suited to it. Mixing this in, since they could not make souls, they called up the souls of demons or of angels and placed them in sacred images and divine mysteries, so that through these souls the idols might have the power both to do good and to do harm." Then he goes on, as though he meant to prove this with examples, and says: "For your grandfather, Asclepius, the first discoverer of medicine, has a temple consecrated to him on a mountain of Libya near the shore of the crocodiles. In it lies his worldly man, that is, his body. The rest of him, or rather the whole of him, if the whole man consists in the consciousness of life, has returned to heaven in a better state. Even now, by his own divine power, he gives sick people all the help that the art of medicine usually provides." See, he has said that a dead man is worshiped as a god in the place where he had his tomb. In saying that he returned to heaven, he is deceived and deceiving. Then he adds another: "Hermes," he says, "whose name I bear from my grandfather, dwells in the native city that bears his name. Does he not help and preserve all mortals who come to him from every side?"[41] This elder Her-

40 The Manes were the spirits of the dead.

41 Asclepius, Hermes' partner in the dialogue, is presented as the grandson of the healing god Asclepius (Latin Aesculapius).

mes, that is, Mercury, whom he says was his grandfather, is said to reside at Hermopolis, that is, in the city named after him. See, he says that two gods were human beings: Aesculapius and Mercury. About Aesculapius, the Greeks and the Latins think the same. But many do not believe that Mercury was a mortal, and yet this man testifies that Mercury was his grandfather. "But that one is one person and this is another," they say, "though they are called by the same name." I will not argue much. Let that one be one person and this another. Still, this one too, like Aesculapius, became a god from a man. So testifies a man of great standing among his own people: this Trismegistus, his grandson.[42]

He adds further and says: "As for Isis, wife of Osiris, we know how many good things she bestows when she is well disposed, and how many people she harms when she is angry!" He wanted to show that the gods whom human beings make by that art are of this kind. From this he lets it be understood that he thinks demons arose from the souls of dead human beings. These demons, he says, were placed in images through the art discovered by people greatly in error, unbelieving and irreligious, since those who made such gods could certainly not make souls. So, after saying of Isis what I have quoted, "how many she harms when she is angry," he went on to add: ("For earthly and worldly gods are easily angered, since they have been made and composed by human beings out of both natures." By "both natures" he means soul and body, so that the demon stands in place of the soul and the image in place of the body. "Hence it came about," he says, "that these were called sacred animals by the Egyptians. Throughout their various cities the souls of those men are worshiped to whom these animals were consecrated while they were alive. So the cities live under their laws and are called by their names.") Where now is that mournful complaint, as it were, that the land of Egypt, the most holy seat of shrines and temples, would be completely full of tombs and of the dead?

42 Hermopolis was a city in Middle Egypt sacred to Thoth, whom the Greeks identified with Hermes.

Clearly the deceitful spirit, at whose prompting Hermes said these things, was forced through Hermes himself to confess something. Even then that land was completely full of tombs and of the dead whom they worshiped as gods. But it was the grief of the demons that spoke through him. They mourned the punishments awaiting them at the memorial shrines of the holy martyrs. For in many such places they are tortured and confess and are cast out of the human bodies they have possessed.

THE KIND OF HONOR THAT CHRISTIANS PAY TO THE MARTYRS

Christians honor martyrs' memorials but offer sacrifice only to God, never to the martyrs.

8.27 And yet we do not establish temples, priesthoods, rites and sacrifices for these martyrs, because it is not they but their God who is our God. We do indeed honor their memorials as those of holy people of God. They fought for the truth even to the death of their bodies, so that true religion might become known and false and invented religions be exposed. Even if some people had held this view before, they kept it down out of fear. Who among the faithful has ever heard a priest standing at the altar say in his prayers, "I offer you sacrifice, Peter, or Paul, or Cyprian"? This holds even for an altar built over the holy body of a martyr for the honor and worship of God. At their memorials sacrifice is offered to God, who made them both human beings and martyrs and joined them in heavenly honor with his holy angels. By that celebration we give thanks to the true God for their victories. And by renewing their memory, calling on that same God for help, we urge ourselves on to imitate such crowns and palms. So whatever acts of devotion religious people perform at the martyrs' places are adornments of their memorials. They are not rites or sacrifices offered to the dead as to gods.[43] There are also those who bring their own meals there. The better Christians do not do this, and in most parts of the world

43 Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was martyred in AD 258.

there is no such custom. Yet whoever do so set the food down, pray, and then take it away, either to eat it or to give some of it to the needy as well. They want it sanctified for them through the merits of the martyrs, in the name of the Lord of the martyrs. But these are not sacrifices to the martyrs, as anyone knows who knows the one sacrifice of Christians, which is offered there too.

So we do not honor our martyrs with divine honors or with human crimes, as they honor their gods. We neither offer sacrifices to them nor turn their disgraces into their rites. Take Isis, the wife of Osiris, an Egyptian goddess, and their parents, all of whom are recorded to have been kings. While she was sacrificing to these parents of hers, she found a crop of barley and showed some of its ears to her husband the king and to his counselor Mercury, which is why they also want to identify her with Ceres. What evils, and how great, were committed to memory about them, not by the poets but by their own mystical writings? Alexander writes of this to his mother Olympias, as disclosed to him by the priest Leo. Let those who wish to, or are able to, read it. Let those who have read it recall it. And let them see for what dead human beings, or on account of what deeds of theirs, rites were established as though for gods.[44] Far be it from them to dare to compare these, though they hold them to be gods, in any respect with our holy martyrs, whom nevertheless we do not hold to be gods. We do not appoint priests or offer sacrifices to our martyrs, because that is unfitting, undue and unlawful, and is owed to the one God alone. In the same way we do not entertain them with their own crimes or with the most shameful games. In these games such people celebrate either the misdeeds of their gods, if they committed such things when they were human, or the made-up delights of harmful demons, if they were never human. Socrates would not have had a god from this kind of demon, if he had a god at all. But perhaps those who wished to excel in that same art imposed such a god

44 A letter of Alexander the Great to his mother Olympias, circulated in antiquity, reported the Egyptian priest Leo's claim that the gods had once been human beings.

on a man who had nothing to do with the art of making gods and was innocent of it. Why say more? No one even moderately sensible doubts that these spirits are not to be worshiped for the sake of the happy life that is to come after death. But perhaps they will say that the gods are all good, while among the demons some are bad and some good. They will then hold that the demons through whom we may reach the life that is happy forever should be worshiped, namely those they consider good. What that amounts to must be examined in the next book.

Book IX

Demons and the true mediator
Demons cannot mediate between God and humanity; only Christ can.

WHAT POINT THE DISCUSSION HAS REACHED, AND WHAT REMAINS OF THE QUESTION TO BE DISCUSSED

Augustine recalls his argument so far and turns to whether some demons are good.

9.1 Some have held that there are both good and evil gods. Others, thinking better of the gods, have given them so much honor and praise that they did not dare to believe that any god was evil. But those who said that some gods are good and some evil also called demons by the name of gods. They also called gods by the name of demons, though more rarely, so that they admit that Jupiter himself, whom they hold to be king and chief of all the rest, was called a demon by Homer.[1] Those, however, who assert that all the gods are good, and far superior to the human beings who are reckoned good, are rightly troubled by the deeds of demons, which they cannot deny. Since they judge that such deeds could in no way be committed by the gods, all of whom they hold to be good, they are forced to draw a distinction between gods and demons. Whatever rightly displeases them in the depraved works or emotions by which hidden spirits display their power, they believe belongs to the demons, not to the gods. But they think that these same demons are placed midway

1 Homer sometimes uses the Greek word *daimōn* of the gods, including Zeus (Jupiter).

between humans and gods, as though no god had dealings with a human being. On this view the demons carry up our requests from one side and bring back from the other what has been granted. This is the view of the Platonists, the foremost and most distinguished of the philosophers. Because they are the most excellent, I chose to examine with them the question whether the worship of many gods helps us attain the happy life that is to come after death. So in the previous book I asked how the demons could win the friendship of the good gods for good people, as though they were nearer to the gods and on friendlier terms with them. These demons delight in what good and wise people turn away from and condemn. They delight in the sacrilegious, shameful and criminal fictions of the poets, told not about just any human being but about the gods themselves, and in the wicked and punishable violence of the magic arts. We found that the demons can in no way do this.

WHETHER AMONG THE DEMONS, TO WHOM THE GODS ARE SUPERIOR, THERE IS ANY GOOD KIND BY WHOSE PROTECTION THE HUMAN SOUL COULD REACH TRUE HAPPINESS

Book 9 will examine the difference between good and evil demons.

9.2 Accordingly, as I promised at the end of that book, this one must contain a discussion of a difference. It is not the difference among the gods themselves, if they want there to be any, since they call all the gods good. Nor is it the difference between gods and demons, though they set the gods far and high apart from humans and place the demons between gods and humans. It is the difference among the demons themselves, which is what bears on the present question. For many people commonly speak of some demons as good and others as evil. Whether this is also the opinion of the Platonists or of anyone else, it must by no means go unexamined. Otherwise someone might think he ought to follow supposedly good demons. Through them, as intermediaries, he aims and strives to be reconciled to the gods, all of whom he believes to be good, so that he may be with them,

as it were, after death. Meanwhile he may be ensnared and deceived by the trickery of evil spirits and stray far from the true God. It is with him alone, in him alone and from him alone that the human soul, that is, the rational and intellectual soul, is happy.

WHAT APULEIUS ATTRIBUTES TO THE DEMONS, TO WHOM HE ASSIGNS NO VIRTUE THOUGH HE DOES NOT DENY THEM REASON

Apuleius grants the demons reason but no virtue; their minds are tossed by passions.

9.3 What, then, is the difference between good and evil demons? The Platonist Apuleius, discussing them in general, says a great deal about their airy bodies. Yet he says nothing about the virtues of soul they would possess if they were good. So he was silent about the cause of happiness, but he could not be silent about the sign of misery. He admits that their mind, by which he declared them rational, is not even steeped in virtue and fortified by it enough to resist the irrational passions of the soul. Instead their mind itself, as is the way with foolish minds, is tossed about by what one might call stormy disturbances.[2] His words on this subject are these: "It is from roughly this class of demons," he says, "that the poets, not at all far from the truth, are accustomed to invent gods who hate and love certain people. These they prosper and advance; those, on the contrary, they oppose and afflict. So they feel pity and indignation, anguish and joy, and undergo every aspect of the human mind. With a like agitation of heart and a swell of mind they are tossed upon all the surging tides of thought. All these turmoils and storms are banished far from the tranquillity of the heavenly gods." Can there be any doubt in these words? He said that it is not some lower parts of their souls but the very minds of the demons, by which they are rational beings, that are churned by a storm of

2 Apuleius of Madauros (2nd century AD), Platonist philosopher and novelist. Augustine is drawing on his treatise *On the God of Socrates*.

passions like a stormy sea. So they are not even to be compared with wise human beings. Human weakness is not immune from disturbances of the soul of this kind. Yet even when the wise suffer them under the conditions of this life, they resist them with an undisturbed mind. They do not yield to them so as to approve or do anything that strays from the path of wisdom and the law of justice. The demons are like foolish and unjust mortals, not in body but in character. I will not say they are worse, inasmuch as they are older and made incurable by deserved punishment. They too are tossed on the swell of the mind itself, as Apuleius called it. In no part of their soul do they stand firm in the truth and virtue by which turbulent and depraved emotions are resisted.

THE OPINION OF THE PERIPATETICS AND THE STOICS ABOUT THE PASSIONS THAT BEFALL THE MIND

Augustine argues the Stoics and Peripatetics differ only in words about passions, citing Gellius's shipwreck story.

9.4 There are two views among philosophers about these motions of the soul. The Greeks call them πάθη [*pathē*, passions]. Some of our own writers, such as Cicero, call them disturbances; others call them affections or feelings; others again, such as Apuleius, more literally from the Greek, call them passions. Some philosophers say that these disturbances, affections or passions befall even the wise man. In him, however, they are moderated and subject to reason, so that the rule of the mind imposes laws on them, as it were, by which they are brought back within due measure. Those who think this are the Platonists or Aristotelians, for Aristotle, who founded the Peripatetic school, was a disciple of Plato. Others, however, such as the Stoics, do not accept that any passions of this kind befall the wise man at all. Cicero, in his books *On the Ends of Good and Evil*, proves that the Stoics contend against the Platonists or Peripatetics in words rather than in substance. The Stoics refuse to call bodily and external things *goods*; they call them *advantages*. This is because they hold that there is no good for a human being except virtue, as

the art of living well, which exists only in the soul. The others call these things goods, simply and in keeping with ordinary usage, but small and slight in comparison with virtue, by which one lives rightly. The result is that, whatever each side calls them, goods or advantages, both weigh them at equal value. In this question the Stoics take pleasure in nothing but novel terminology.[3] It seems to me, then, that in this question too their dispute is about words rather than things. The question is whether passions of the soul befall the wise man, or whether he is wholly free of them. I judge that on this point the Stoics think nothing different from the Platonists and Peripatetics, as far as the substance of things is concerned and not the sound of the terms.

There are other things by which I might show this, but I will pass over them so as not to be long, and I will mention one point that is perfectly evident. In the books entitled *Attic Nights*, Aulus Gellius, a man of most elegant style and wide learning gathered from every quarter, writes that he once sailed with a distinguished Stoic philosopher. Aulus Gellius tells the story more fully and at greater length; I will touch on it briefly. Under a terrible sky and sea the ship was tossed about in great danger, and the philosopher turned pale from the force of fear. Those present noticed this. Even though death was near, they were watching very curiously to see whether the philosopher was disturbed in mind. Then the storm passed, and as soon as safety gave room for conversation or even chatter, one of the passengers spoke up. He was a rich, pleasure-loving man from Asia, and he mocked the philosopher for having been afraid and turning pale, while he himself had remained fearless in the face of the destruction that threatened them.[4] The philosopher answered with the reply of Aristippus the Socratic. In a similar situation Aristippus had heard the same words from a similar

3 Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (45 BC), a dialogue examining the ethical theories of the Epicureans, Stoics and Academics.

4 Aulus Gellius (2nd century AD), Roman author of the miscellany *Attic Nights*, which tells this story in Book 19, chapter 1.

man. He replied that the other had rightly not been anxious for the soul of a worthless good-for-nothing, but that he himself had good reason to fear for the soul of Aristippus. When the rich man had been rebuffed by this reply, Aulus Gellius afterward asked the philosopher what the reason for his fear had been. He asked not to provoke him but to learn. To instruct a man so keenly fired with the desire to know, the philosopher at once brought out of his little bag a book by the Stoic Epictetus. It contained writings in agreement with the doctrines of Zeno and Chrysippus, who, as we know, were the leading Stoics. In that book, Aulus[5] Gellius says he read that the Stoics held the following view. The mind's impressions, which they call *phantasiai*, strike the mind, and it is not in our power whether or when they do so. When they arise from terrible and fearsome things, they necessarily move even the wise man's mind. For a little while it trembles with fear or is contracted by sorrow, as though these passions got ahead of the work of mind and reason. Yet this does not mean that an opinion of evil forms in the mind, or that these impressions are approved or consented to. This, they hold, is in our power. They judge that this is the difference between the mind of the wise man and that of the fool. The fool's mind yields to these passions and adapts the mind's assent to them. The wise undergo them of necessity, but with an unshaken mind they still keep a true and steady judgment about what they ought rationally to seek or to shun. I have set this out as best I could, not indeed more elegantly than Aulus Gellius, but certainly more briefly and, I think, more plainly. This is what he records reading in Epictetus's book, as what Epictetus said and held on the basis of the doctrines of the Stoics.

If this is so, there is no difference, or almost none, between the opinion of the Stoics and that of the other philosophers about the passions and disturbances of souls. Both defend the mind and reason of the wise man from their domination. And

5 Aristippus of Cyrene, a pupil of Socrates, founded the pleasure-centered Cyrenaic school. Epictetus (c. AD 50–135) was a Stoic teacher; Zeno of Citium founded Stoicism and Chrysippus systematized it.

perhaps the Stoics say that the passions do not befall the wise man because they in no way cloud his wisdom, by which he is wise, with any error, or overthrow it with any fall. Yet they do befall the soul of the wise man, while the calm of his wisdom remains unimpaired. They arise on account of the things the Stoics call advantages or disadvantages, though they refuse to call them goods or evils. For surely, if that philosopher had considered worthless the things he felt he was about to lose in a shipwreck, such as this life and the safety of his body, he would not have dreaded that danger so much that even his pallor gave him away. Yet he could both suffer that agitation and keep a judgment fixed in his mind. He could hold that life and bodily safety, whose loss the savage storm threatened, are not goods that make those who possess them good, as justice does. As for their saying that these things should not even be called goods but advantages, that must be put down to a contest over words, not an examination of things. What does it matter whether they are more aptly called goods or advantages, so long as the Stoic trembles and turns pale at the prospect of losing them no less than the Peripatetic? They do not call them by the same name, but they value them equally. Suppose both were pressed toward some shameful act or crime by threats to these goods or advantages, so that they could not keep them otherwise. Both, certainly, say that they would rather lose the things by which the body's nature is kept safe and sound than commit the deeds by which justice is violated. Thus a mind in which this judgment is fixed allows no disturbances to prevail within it against reason, even if they occur in the lower parts of the soul. On the contrary, the mind itself rules over them. By not consenting to them and rather resisting them, it exercises the reign of virtue. Virgil too describes Aeneas in this way when he says: "His mind stays unmoved; the tears roll down in vain."[6]

6 Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.449, where Aeneas resists Dido's pleas that he stay in Carthage.

THAT THE PASSIONS THAT AFFECT CHRISTIAN SOULS DO NOT DRAW THEM INTO VICE BUT EXERCISE VIRTUE

Scripture asks not whether we feel anger, sorrow or fear, but why.

9.5 There is no need now to show at length and in detail what divine Scripture, which contains Christian learning, teaches about these passions. Scripture subjects the mind itself to God, to be ruled and helped by him. It subjects the passions to the mind, to be moderated and bridled so that they are turned to the service of justice. In short, in our teaching the question is not so much whether a devout soul is angry, but why it is angry. It is not whether it is sad, but what makes it sad; not whether it is afraid, but what it fears. We may be angry with a sinner so that he may be corrected, grieve for someone afflicted so that he may be set free, or fear for someone in danger lest he perish. I doubt that anyone who considers the matter soundly would find fault with these feelings. The Stoics, it is true, are in the habit of censuring even mercy. But how much more honorable it would have been for that Stoic to be disturbed by mercy for a man who needed rescuing than by fear of shipwreck! Cicero spoke far better, more humanely and more in keeping with the feelings of the devout in his praise of Caesar, when he said: "Of all your virtues none is more admirable or more pleasing than your mercy." What is mercy but a kind of fellow-feeling in our heart for another's misery, which compels us to help if we can? This emotion serves reason when mercy is shown in such a way that justice is preserved, whether something is given to the needy or the penitent is pardoned. Cicero, that outstanding speaker, did not hesitate to call mercy a virtue. The Stoics are not ashamed to count it among the vices. Yet the Stoics, as the book of Epictetus, a most distinguished Stoic, has shown on the basis of the doctrines of Zeno and Chrysippus, the leaders of this school, admit passions of this kind into the soul of the wise man. And they hold that the wise man is free of all vices.[7] It follows that they do

7 Cicero, *For Ligarius* 37, a speech delivered before Julius Caesar in 46 BC.

not regard these passions as vices when they befall the wise man in such a way that they have no power against the virtue and reason of his mind. It follows too that the opinion of the Peripatetics, or even of the Platonists, and that of the Stoics themselves is one and the same. But, as Cicero says, a dispute over a word has long tormented these Greeks, who are keener on contention than on truth. Still, it may rightly be asked whether undergoing emotions of this kind, even in the performance of good duties, belongs to the weakness of the present life. Perhaps the holy angels punish without anger those whom the eternal law of God hands over to them for punishment. Perhaps they help the miserable without sharing their misery, and come to the aid of those they love in danger without fear. The names of these passions would still be applied to them by the custom of human speech, because of a certain likeness in their works, not because of any weakness in their feelings. In the same way God himself, according to the Scriptures, is angry, and yet is not disturbed by any passion. For the word is used of the effect of his vengeance, not of any turbulent feeling in him.

THE PASSIONS BY WHICH, AS APULEIUS ADMITS, THE DEMONS ARE TROUBLED, THOUGH HE CLAIMS THEY HELP HUMAN BEINGS WITH THE GODS

By Apuleius's own account, the demons' very minds are ruled by passion.

9.6 Let us postpone this question about the holy angels for the present. Let us see how the Platonists say that the demons placed midway between gods and humans are tossed on these surging tides of passion. If the demons underwent such emotions with a mind that was free of them and ruled over them, Apuleius would not say that they are tossed "with a like agitation of heart and a swell of mind upon all the surging tides of thought." Their mind is the higher part of the soul, by which they are rational. In it virtue and wisdom, if they had any, would rule over the turbulent passions of the lower parts of the soul, governing and moderating them. Yet that very mind of theirs—

their mind itself, I say—is tossed on a swell of disturbances, as this Platonist admits. The mind of the demons, then, is subject to the passions of lust, fear, anger and the like. What part of them, then, is free and in possession of wisdom, so that they might please the gods and counsel human beings toward good conduct like their own? Their mind is subjugated and oppressed by the vices of passion. Whatever reason it naturally has, it bends all the more keenly to deceiving and misleading, the more it is possessed by the craving to do harm.

THAT THE PLATONISTS CLAIM THE GODS ARE SLANDERED BY THE POETS' FICTIONS ABOUT THEIR CONTENDING FACTIONS, WHEN THESE FACTIONS BELONG TO DEMONS, NOT GODS

Apuleius blames demons, not gods, for the partisan quarrels the poets describe.

9.7 Suppose someone says that the poets, not far from the truth, invent gods who hate and love certain people not from the whole number of demons but from the evil ones only. For these are the ones Apuleius said are tossed "by a swell of mind upon all the surging tides of thought." How can we understand him this way? When he said this, he was describing the intermediate position between gods and humans that belongs, because of their airy bodies, not to some demons, the evil ones, but to all of them. What he says the poets invent is this. They make gods out of the number of these demons and give them the names of gods. Then, with the unchecked license of fictional verse, they assign them as friends and enemies to whatever human beings they please. Yet Apuleius declares that the gods are far removed from such demonic conduct, both by their heavenly abode and by the wealth of their happiness. This, then, is the fiction of the poets: they call gods those who are not gods, and show them, under the names of gods, fighting among themselves over human beings whom they love or hate out of partisan zeal. But he says this fiction is not far from the truth. The demons are called by the names of gods when they are not gods, but they are

nonetheless described just as they are. Finally, he says that this is the origin of Homer's Minerva, who intervened in the midst of the assembled Greeks to restrain Achilles.[8] So he wants it to be a poetic invention that this was Minerva, because he thinks Minerva a goddess. He places her among the gods, all of whom he believes to be good and happy, in a lofty ethereal abode, far from contact with mortals. But he admitted that the poets spoke not far from the truth in another respect. There was some demon who favored the Greeks and opposed the Trojans, just as there was another who helped the Trojans against the Greeks, whom the same poet mentions by the name of Venus or Mars. Apuleius places these gods in the heavenly dwellings, where they do no such things. And these demons fought among themselves for those they loved against those they hated. For the poets said these things about beings who, as he testifies, are tossed like humans "with a like agitation of heart and a swell of mind upon all the surging tides of thought." So they can exercise their loves and hatreds, not for the sake of justice, but for some against others according to their partisan enthusiasms. In this they are like the populace, which resembles them in its devotion to the hunters of the arena and the charioteers. The Platonist philosopher seems to have taken care that, when the poets sang of these things, people should not believe they were done by the gods themselves, whose names the poets assign in their fictions, rather than by the intermediate demons.

APULEIUS THE PLATONIST'S DEFINITION OF THE GODS OF HEAVEN, THE DEMONS OF THE AIR, AND HUMAN BEINGS ON EARTH

Apuleius's definition of demons includes nothing that marks any of them as good.

9.8 What then? Is his very definition of demons not worth a closer look? In it, of course, he took in all of them by defining them. He

8 In *Iliad* 1, Athena (the Roman Minerva) stops Achilles from drawing his sword against Agamemnon.

says that demons are living beings in kind, subject to passions in soul, rational in mind, airy in body, and eternal in duration. Among these five features he said nothing at all that would make demons appear to share with good people, at least, anything that is not also found in bad people. He gave a somewhat fuller description that took in human beings themselves. He spoke of them in their proper place as the lowest and earthly beings, after first speaking of the heavenly gods, so that, having set out the two extreme parts, the highest and the lowest, he could speak in third place of the demons in between. "Humans, then," he says, "distinguished by reason, powerful in speech, with immortal souls and dying limbs, fickle and anxious minds, dull and vulnerable bodies; unlike in character, alike in error; stubborn in daring, persistent in hope, futile in toil, frail in fortune; mortal one by one, yet everlasting all together as a race, changing in turn as offspring take their place; their time fleeting, their wisdom slow, their death swift, their life a lament—humans inhabit the earth." He said so many things here that apply to most people. Did he keep silent even about what he knew belonged to few, when he says "their wisdom slow"? Had he left that out, he would by no means have defined the human race correctly with the careful precision of this description. When he extolled the excellence of the gods, he declared that happiness itself, which humans want to reach through wisdom, is preeminent in them. Accordingly, if he had wanted some demons to be understood as good, he would also have put something into their description from which they might be thought to share either some part of happiness with the gods or some kind of wisdom with humans. As it is, he mentioned no good of theirs by which the good are distinguished from the bad. He refrained from expressing their wickedness more freely. He did so not so much to avoid offending the demons themselves as to avoid offending their worshipers, to whom he was speaking. Even so, he showed the discerning what they ought to think of them. He completely separated the gods, whom he wanted everyone to believe good and happy, from the passions and, as

he himself puts it, the "turmoils" of the demons. He linked the two only by the eternity of their bodies, while making it perfectly plain that in soul demons are like not the gods but humans. And that likeness lay not in the good of wisdom, in which humans too can share, but in the disturbance of the passions. That disturbance dominates the foolish and the wicked. The wise and the good govern it in such a way that they would rather not have it than have to overcome it. For if he had wanted us to understand that demons share with the gods the eternity not of bodies but of souls, he would certainly not have excluded humans from a share in this, since, as a Platonist, he undoubtedly holds that humans too have eternal souls. That is why, when he described this kind of living being, he said that humans have "immortal souls and dying limbs." And so, if humans do not share eternity with the gods because they are mortal in body, then demons do share it because they are immortal in body.

WHETHER THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE GODS OF HEAVEN CAN BE SECURED FOR HUMAN BEINGS THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF DEMONS

Demons share the better body with gods and the worse soul with humans.

9.9 What sort of mediators between humans and gods are these, then, through whom humans are to court the friendship of the gods? They share with humans, in its worse condition, what is the better part of a living being, namely the soul. And they share with the gods, in its better condition, what is the worse part of a living being, namely the body. A living being, that is, an animal, consists of soul and body. Of these two the soul is certainly the better. Even when it is vicious and weak, it is surely better than even the healthiest and strongest body, because its nature is more excellent and is not ranked below the body even by the stain of vices. In the same way, gold, even when tarnished, is valued more highly than silver or lead, however pure. Yet these mediators between gods and humans, whose intervention is

supposed to join human things to divine, have an eternal body in common with the gods and a vicious soul in common with humans. It is as if the religion by which they want humans to be joined to the gods through demons were located in the body, not in the soul. What wickedness, then, or what punishment has hung these false and deceitful mediators upside down, as it were? They have the lower part of a living being, the body, in common with the higher beings, and the higher part, the soul, in common with the lower. They are joined to the heavenly gods in the part that serves, yet share the misery of earthly humans in the part that rules. For the body is a slave, as Sallust too says: "We use the soul more to command, the body to serve." And he added: "The one we share with the gods, the other with the beasts," since he was speaking of humans, who, like beasts, have a mortal body.[9] But these beings, whom the philosophers have provided for us as mediators between us and the gods, can indeed say of soul and body: "The one we share with the gods, the other with humans." Yet, as I said, they are bound and hung the wrong way up. They have a slave body in common with the happy gods and a master soul in common with miserable humans, so that they are exalted in their lower part and cast down in their higher. So someone may think that they share eternity with the gods because no death releases their souls from the body, as happens with earthly animals. Even so, their body must not be regarded as the eternal vehicle of the honored but as the eternal chain of the condemned.

THAT, ACCORDING TO PLOTINUS, HUMAN BEINGS ARE LESS WRETCHED IN A MORTAL BODY THAN DEMONS IN AN ETERNAL ONE

Plotinus calls mortal bodies a mercy; demons are denied it and bound to eternal bodies.

9.10 Plotinus, certainly, who lived in times close to our own memory, is praised for having understood Plato better than any-

one else. Discussing human souls, he says: "The merciful Father made mortal bonds for them." He therefore held that the very fact that humans are mortal in body belongs to the mercy of God the Father, so that they would not be held forever in the misery of this life. The wickedness of the demons was judged unworthy of this mercy. In the misery of a soul subject to passions, it received not a mortal body, as humans did, but an eternal one. They would indeed be happier than humans if they had a mortal body in common with humans and a happy soul in common with the gods. And they would be equal to humans if, along with a miserable soul, they had at least deserved to have a mortal body like theirs. That holds only if they also acquired some piety, so that they might at least find rest from their troubles in death. As it is, they are not only no happier than humans, given their miserable soul, but even more miserable, because of the perpetual chain of the body.[10] He did not mean us to understand that demons become gods by making progress in some discipline of piety and wisdom, since he said quite plainly that demons are eternal.

THE OPINION OF THE PLATONISTS THAT HUMAN SOULS BECOME DEMONS AFTER LEAVING THEIR BODIES

Apuleius says human souls become lares, lemures or manes after death.

9.11 He does say, it is true, that human souls too are demons. Humans become lares if their merits are good, and lemures, or larvae, if they are bad. They are called manes gods if it is uncertain whether their merits are good or bad. Who would not see, if he paid even slight attention, what an abyss this opinion opens for the pursuit of depraved conduct? However wicked people may have been, while they suppose that they will become larvae, or manes gods, they become all the worse the more eager

9 Sallust (86–35 BC), Roman historian; the quotation is from *The War with Catiline* 1.2.

10 Plotinus (AD 205–270), founder of Neoplatonism; the quotation is from his *Enneads* (4.3.12).

they are to do harm. They even suppose that after death they will be invited by certain sacrifices, as if by divine honors, to do harm. For he says that larvae are harmful demons who come from humans. But that is another question. He further states that this is why the happy are called in Greek εὐδαίμονας [*eudaimonas*, "having a good spirit"]: because they are good souls, that is, good demons. In this way he confirms that human souls too are demons.[11]

THE THREE CONTRARIES BY WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE PLATONISTS, THE NATURE OF DEMONS IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THAT OF HUMAN BEINGS

Apuleius contrasts gods and humans in place, length of life and happiness.

9.12 But now we are dealing with the beings he described, in their own nature, as standing between gods and humans: living beings in kind, rational in mind, subject to passions in soul, airy in body, eternal in duration. First he set the gods apart in the lofty heaven and humans on the lowest earth, separated by place and by the dignity of their nature. Then he concluded: "You have, then, for the moment, two kinds of living beings. The gods differ greatly from humans in loftiness of place, perpetuity of life, and perfection of nature, with no close communication between them. So great a gap in height divides the highest dwellings from the lowest. Life there is eternal and unfailing, here perishable and precarious. Those minds are raised up to happiness, these brought low to miseries." Here I see three contrasts named between the two extreme parts of nature, the highest and the lowest. He took the three praiseworthy things he had first stated about the gods and repeated them in other words, so as to set against them three opposites drawn from humans. The three that belong to the gods are these: loftiness of

11 Lares were household guardian spirits, lemures and larvae malevolent ghosts, and the manes the spirits of the dead in Roman religion. Augustine is drawing on Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates* 15.

place, perpetuity of life, perfection of nature. These he repeated in other words, so as to oppose to them three contrary features of the human condition. "So great a gap in height," he says, "divides the highest dwellings from the lowest"—because he had said loftiness of place. "Life there," he says, "is eternal and unfailing, here perishable and precarious"—because he had said perpetuity of life. "Those minds," he says, "are raised up to happiness, these brought low to miseries"—because he had said perfection of nature. So he assigned three things to the gods: a lofty place, eternity, and happiness. And he assigned their three opposites to humans: the lowest place, mortality, and misery.

HOW DEMONS, IF THEY ARE NEITHER HAPPY WITH THE GODS NOR WRETCHED WITH HUMAN BEINGS, CAN BE IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN THE TWO WITHOUT SHARING IN EITHER

Demons in the middle must have eternity from the gods and misery from humans.

9.13 He placed the demons in the middle between these three attributes of the gods and the three of humans. About place there is no dispute, since a place between the lofty and the lowest is very fittingly regarded and described as the middle. The other two pairs remain, and they call for closer attention. Either it must be shown that they do not belong to demons at all, or, if they do, how they are distributed to them, as their middle position seems to demand. But they cannot fail to belong to them. We may say that a middle place is neither highest nor lowest. But we cannot in the same way rightly say that demons, being rational living beings, are neither happy nor miserable, as trees or cattle are, which lack sensation or reason. Beings whose minds possess reason must be either miserable or happy. Likewise, we cannot rightly say that demons are neither mortal nor eternal. For all living things either live forever or end their life in death. Now, he has said that demons are eternal in duration. What remains, then, but that these middle beings have one of the two attributes of the highest and the other of the two of the

lowest? If they have both from the lowest, or both from the highest, they will not be in the middle, but will either spring up or sink down to one side or the other. As has been shown, they cannot lack both members of either pair. They will therefore be in the middle by taking one attribute from each side. And so, since they cannot have eternity from the lowest, where it is not found, this one they have from the highest. To complete their middle position, then, there is nothing left for them to have from the lowest except misery.

According to the Platonists, then, the lofty gods have either a happy eternity or an eternal happiness. Humans, the lowest, have either a mortal misery or a miserable mortality. And the demons in the middle have either a miserable eternity or an eternal misery. Indeed, even with the five features he put into his definition of demons, he did not show that they are in the middle, as he promised. He said they have three things in common with us: they are living beings in kind, rational in mind, and subject to passions in soul. They have one in common with the gods: they are eternal in duration. And they have one of their own: they are airy in body. How, then, are they in the middle, when they have one thing in common with the highest and three with the lowest? Who does not see how far they abandon the middle and lean and are pressed down toward the lowest? But clearly they can be found to be in the middle even there, in the following way. They have one attribute of their own, the airy body, just as the highest and the lowest each have one of their own: the gods an ethereal body and humans an earthly one. Two attributes, however, are common to all: being living beings in kind and rational in mind. For he himself, speaking of gods and humans, said: "You have two kinds of living beings," and these people do not usually describe the gods as anything but rational in mind. Two remain: being subject to passions in soul and eternal in duration. Of these, demons have one in common with the lowest and the other with the highest, so that their middle position, balanced in due proportion, is neither raised to the highest nor pressed down to the lowest. And this is precisely

that miserable eternity, or eternal misery, of the demons. For the man who said "subject to passions in soul" would also have said "miserable," had he not been ashamed before their worshipers. Moreover, since the world is governed by the providence of the supreme God, as they themselves admit, and not by random chance, the misery of these beings would never be eternal unless their wickedness were great.

If, then, the happy are rightly called *eudaemones*, the demons whom these people have placed in the middle between humans and gods are not *eudaemones*. What place is there, then, for good demons, who, being above humans and below gods, are supposed to give help to the former and service to the latter? If they are good and eternal, they are certainly also happy. But eternal happiness does not allow them to be in the middle, since it puts them very close to the gods and separates them far from humans. These people will therefore try in vain to show how good demons, if they are both immortal and happy, can rightly be placed in the middle between immortal, happy gods and mortal, miserable humans. They have both things in common with the gods, namely happiness and immortality, and neither in common with humans, who are miserable and mortal. How, then, are they not removed from humans and joined to the gods, rather than set in the middle between the two? They would be in the middle only if they too had two attributes of their own, shared not with both attributes of one side or the other, but with one attribute of each side. A human being, for instance, is something in the middle, but between beasts and angels. A beast is a living being that is irrational and mortal, and an angel one that is rational and immortal. So a human being is in the middle, lower than the angels and higher than the beasts, having mortality in common with the beasts and reason in common with the angels: a rational, mortal living being. So when we look for a mean between the happy immortals and the miserable mortals, what we must find is something that is either mortal and happy or immortal and miserable.

WHETHER HUMAN BEINGS, BEING MORTAL, CAN BE HAPPY WITH TRUE HAPPINESS

Whether a human being can be both mortal and happy is an open question.

9.14 Whether a human being can be both happy and mortal is a great question among humans. Some have viewed their condition more humbly and denied that a human being can be capable of happiness as long as he lives a mortal life. Others have exalted themselves and dared to say that mortals who possess wisdom can be happy. If that is so, why are these people not set as mediators between miserable mortals and happy immortals instead, since they have happiness in common with the happy immortals and mortality in common with the miserable mortals? Surely, if they are happy, they envy no one (for what is more miserable than envy?). So they help miserable mortals as much as they can to attain happiness, so that after death they too may be immortal and be joined to the immortal and happy angels.

THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

Christ, mortal for a time and happy forever, is the one true mediator.

9.15 But it is argued, much more credibly and plausibly, that all humans must also be miserable as long as they are mortal. If so, we must look for a mediator who is not only human but also God. The happy mortality of this mediator, by its intervention, could then lead humans from mortal misery to happy immortality. It was not fitting that he should fail to become mortal, nor that he should remain mortal. He became mortal, not by any weakening of the divinity of the Word, but by taking on the weakness of the flesh. But he did not remain mortal in that flesh, which he raised from the dead. For this is the very fruit of his mediation: that those for whose liberation he became mediator should not remain in perpetual death, not even the death of the

flesh. The mediator between us and God therefore had to have both a passing mortality and an abiding happiness. Through what passes he could be like those who were to die, and from the dead he could bring them over to what abides.[12] The good angels, then, cannot be in the middle between miserable mortals and happy immortals, since they too are both happy and immortal. The evil angels, however, can be in the middle, since they are immortal like the one and miserable like the other. Opposed to them is the good mediator. Against their immortality and misery, he chose to be mortal for a time and was able to remain happy in eternity. The demons are proud immortals and harmful wretches, and he did not let them use their boast of immortality to lead people into misery. By the humility of his death and the kindness of his happiness he overthrew them in those whose hearts he cleansed through faith in him and freed from the demons' most unclean domination.

A human being, then, mortal and miserable and far removed from the immortal and happy, must choose a mediator through whom to be united to immortality and happiness. Which should he choose? Whatever might attract us in the demons' immortality is miserable. Whatever might have offended us in Christ's mortality no longer exists. There, then, we must beware of everlasting misery. Here we need not fear death, which could not be everlasting, and we must love an everlasting happiness. The immortal and miserable mediator puts himself in between in order to keep us from passing over to happy immortality, since the obstacle, misery itself, persists. But the mortal and happy one put himself in between so that, once his mortality had been passed through, he might make the dead immortal, as he showed in himself by rising again, and the miserable happy, a state he himself never left. So there is an evil mediator, who separates friends, and a good one, who reconciles enemies. And that is why the separating mediators are many. The multitude of the happy is made happy by participation in the one God. The

12 Augustine echoes 1 Timothy 2:5: "one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus."

multitude of evil angels is miserable because it is deprived of that participation. It sets itself in the way to obstruct us rather than setting itself between to help us toward happiness. By its very numbers it raises a kind of clamor to keep us from reaching that one good that makes us happy. To be led to that good we needed not many mediators but one, and that one the very one by participation in whom we are happy: the Word of God, not made, through whom all things were made.[13] Yet he is not mediator because he is the Word. The Word, supremely immortal and supremely happy, is far from miserable mortals. He is mediator because he is human. By this very fact he shows that, to reach that good which is not only happy but also makes us happy, we need not seek other mediators through whom we might think we must build steps of ascent. For the happy God, who makes us happy, by becoming a partaker of our humanity, has given us a shortcut to partaking of his divinity. In freeing us from mortality and misery, he does not lead us to the immortal and happy angels, so that by participation in them we too might be immortal and happy. He leads us to that Trinity by participation in which the angels too are happy. So when, in the form of a servant, he chose to be lower than the angels in order to be mediator, in the form of God he remained above the angels. He is the way of life among the lower, the same one who is life itself among the higher.[14]

WHETHER THE PLATONISTS WERE REASONABLE IN HOLDING THAT THE GODS OF HEAVEN AVOID EARTHLY CONTAMINATION AND DO NOT MIX WITH HUMAN BEINGS, WHOM THE DEMONS HELP TOWARD THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE GODS

The idea that gods avoid human contact to stay undefiled leads to absurdities.

9.16 For it is not true, as that same Platonist says Plato said, that "no god mingles with a human being." He even says that the

13 Allusion to John 1:3: "All things were made through him."

chief proof of their sublimity is that they are not defiled by any contact with human beings. So he admits that demons are defiled. Then they cannot cleanse those who defile them, and all alike become unclean: the demons by contact with human beings, and human beings by the worship of demons. Or else demons can be touched by human beings and mingle with them without being defiled. In that case they are certainly better than the gods, since the gods would be defiled if they mingled. For this is said to be the special distinction of the gods: that, set apart on high, they cannot be defiled by human contact.[15] He asserts that Plato proclaims the supreme God, the creator of all things, whom we call the true God, to be the only one who cannot be grasped even moderately by any discourse, because human speech is so poor. Even wise men, he says, when by the vigor of the mind they have withdrawn from the body as far as they can, barely attain an understanding of this God. Even that comes only at times, like a bright light flashing with a swift gleam through the deepest darkness. So the truly supreme God, above all things, is present to the minds of the wise by an intelligible and ineffable presence when they have withdrawn from the body as far as they can. That presence comes only at times, like a bright light flashing with a swift gleam, but it comes, and he cannot be defiled by them. Why, then, are these gods placed far off in a lofty region so that they will not be defiled by human contact? As if anything more were needed than simply to see those ethereal bodies, whose light illuminates the earth as much as it needs! Further, he calls the stars all visible gods. If they are not defiled when they are seen, then neither are demons defiled by being seen by human beings, even though they are seen at close range. Or would the gods perhaps be defiled by human voices, though not by the gaze of human eyes? Is that why they have demons as intermediaries to report to them the voices of human beings, from whom they keep far away, so that they may

14 The "form of a servant" and "form of God" come from Philippians 2:6–7; "way" and "life" echo John 14:6.

15 The saying comes from Plato's *Symposium* 203a.

remain utterly undefiled? What shall I say now of the other senses? Smell could not defile the gods if they were present. Nor, when the demons are present, can the vapors of living human bodies defile them, if they are not defiled by the great reek of carcasses from the sacrifices. As for taste, they are under no necessity of sustaining a mortal frame, so hunger does not drive them to seek food from human beings. Touch, finally, is within their control. For although *contrectatio*, "contact," seems to take its name chiefly from that sense, they could still, if they wished, mingle with human beings to the extent of seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard. But what need is there to touch? Human beings would not dare to desire it while they enjoyed the sight or the conversation of gods or good demons. And even if curiosity went so far as to want it, how could anyone touch a god or a demon against his will, when he cannot touch even a sparrow unless he has caught it?

By seeing and letting themselves be seen, then, and by speaking and hearing, the gods could mingle bodily with human beings. Now suppose, as I said, that demons mingle in this way and are not defiled, while the gods would be defiled if they mingled. Then they are calling the demons undefilable and the gods defilable. But if the demons too are defiled, what do they contribute to human beings toward a happy life after death? Being defiled, they cannot cleanse them, and so cannot join them, once cleansed, to the undefiled gods, between whom and human beings they have been placed as intermediaries. And if they do not confer this benefit, what good is the friendly mediation of demons to human beings? Is it so that after death human beings will not pass to the gods through the demons, but both will live together, defiled, and therefore neither will be happy? Unless perhaps someone says that the demons cleanse their friends the way sponges and such things do, so that they themselves become dirtier in proportion as human beings become cleaner by their wiping, as it were. If that is so, then the gods mingle with demons who are more defiled than human beings, though the gods avoided nearness to human beings and

contact with them precisely so as not to be defiled. Or perhaps the gods can cleanse demons defiled by human beings without being defiled by them, yet could not do the same for human beings? Who could believe such things, except someone deceived by those most deceitful demons? And there is more. If seeing and being seen defile, then the gods he calls visible, the brightest lights of the world and the other stars, are seen by human beings. The demons, meanwhile, who cannot be seen unless they wish to be, are safer from this human defilement. Or if it is not being seen but seeing that defiles, then let them deny that human beings are seen by those brightest lights of the world, which they suppose to be gods, although these stretch their rays all the way to the earth. Their rays spread over all sorts of unclean things without being defiled. Would the gods, then, be defiled if they mingled with human beings, even if contact were needed to help them? For the rays of the sun and moon touch the earth, and the earth does not defile that light.

THAT TO ATTAIN THE HAPPY LIFE, WHICH CONSISTS IN SHARING THE SUPREME GOOD, A HUMAN BEING NEEDS NOT SUCH A MEDIATOR AS A DEMON IS, BUT SUCH AS CHRIST ALONE IS

We need a mediator like Christ, who shares our mortality but not our sin.

9.17 I am utterly amazed that such learned men should mention bodily contact when the question is the happy life. These are men who judged that all bodily and sensible things must be ranked below incorporeal and intelligible ones. What has become of that saying of Plotinus: "We must flee, then, to our most beloved fatherland. There is the Father, and there is everything. What fleet, then, or what flight? To become like God." If, then, the more like God one becomes, the nearer one comes to him, there is no other distance from him than unlikeness to him. And the human soul is unlike that incorporeal, eternal and unchangeable being in proportion as it craves tem-

poral and changeable things.[16] Mortal and unclean things at the bottom cannot be united with the immortal purity at the top, so a mediator is indeed needed to heal this unlikeness. But not a mediator who has an immortal body close to the highest beings and a diseased mind like the lowest, for that disease would make him begrudge our healing rather than help us to be healed. We need one who is fitted to us in our lowliness by the mortality of his body. Yet he must remain among the highest by the immortal righteousness of his spirit, through excellence of likeness rather than distance of place. Such a mediator can give us truly divine help in cleansing and freeing us. And since he is God and cannot be defiled, far be it from him to fear defilement from the man he put on, or from the human beings among whom he lived as a man. Meanwhile, two things that he showed for our salvation by his incarnation are no small matter. True divinity cannot be defiled by flesh, and demons must not be thought better than we are because they have no flesh. This is he who, as holy Scripture proclaims, is "the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus." This is not the place to speak as adequately as our ability allows about his divinity, by which he is always equal to the Father, and his humanity, by which he became like us.[17]

THAT THE DECEIT OF THE DEMONS, WHILE PROMISING A WAY TO GOD BY THEIR INTERCESSION, AIMS TO TURN HUMAN BEINGS AWAY FROM THE WAY OF TRUTH

The demons' bodily ladder of elements is a false way that blocks the way to God.

9.18 But the demons are false and deceitful mediators. They are wretched and malicious through uncleanness of spirit, though many striking effects make them conspicuous. By the distances of bodily places and the lightness of their airy bodies they try to call us away and turn us aside from the progress of the soul.

16 The quotation combines passages from Plotinus's *Enneads* (1.6.8 and 1.2.3).
17 1 Timothy 2:5.

They do not offer a way to God; they prevent us from keeping to the way. Their way is a bodily one, utterly false and full of error, and righteousness does not travel along it. For we must ascend to God not by bodily height but by spiritual, that is, incorporeal, likeness. On this bodily way the friends of the demons arrange the ranks of the elements, with ethereal gods above, earthly human beings below, and airy demons set in the middle. Yet even there they suppose that the gods' chief distinction is that this distance of place keeps them from being defiled by human contact. So they believe that demons are defiled by human beings rather than that human beings are cleansed by demons, and that the gods themselves could have been defiled had the height of their place not protected them. On this way human beings are proclaimed defiling, demons defiled and gods defilable. Who is so unhappy as to think that he will be cleansed on such a way? Who would not choose instead the way on which the demons, the real defilers, are avoided? On that way the undefilable God cleanses human beings of defilement so that they may enter the fellowship of the undefiled angels.

THAT EVEN AMONG THEIR WORSHIPERS THE NAME "DEMON" IS NO LONGER USED TO MEAN ANYTHING GOOD

Scripture never speaks of good demons, so the good spirits should be called angels.

9.19 But we too must not seem to be quarreling over words. Some of these demon-worshipers, if I may call them that, Labeo among them, assert that the beings they themselves call demons are called angels by others. So I see that I must now say something about the good angels. These people do not deny that they exist, but they prefer to call them good demons rather than angels. We, however, follow the usage of the Scripture by which we are Christians. There we read of angels, some good and some bad, but never of good demons. Wherever this name is found in those writings, whether as *daemones* or as *daemonia*, it means

nothing but evil spirits.[18] People everywhere have followed this way of speaking so widely that even among those called pagans, who contend that many gods and demons should be worshiped, there is scarcely anyone so well read and learned that he would dare to say, by way of praise, even to his own slave, "You have a demon." Anyone who chose to say it could not doubt that he would be understood as meaning an insult. So many ears, almost all ears by now, are used to hearing this word only in a bad sense. Why, then, should we offend them and then be forced to explain what we meant, when by using the name "angels" we can avoid the offense that the name "demons" could cause?

THE KIND OF KNOWLEDGE THAT MAKES THE DEMONS PROUD

The name demon comes from knowledge, and the demons' knowledge without love makes them proud.

9.20 And yet even the origin of this name, if we look at the divine books, offers something well worth knowing. Demons are so called (the word is Greek) because of their knowledge. Now the Apostle, speaking by the Holy Spirit, says: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." The only right way to understand this is that knowledge is beneficial when love is present, but without love it puffs up, that is, it inflates a person with the pride of a most empty windiness. In demons, then, there is knowledge without love. That is why they are so puffed up, that is, so proud. They have striven hard to have divine honors and religious service paid to themselves, though they know these are owed to the true God, and they still strive for this wherever they can, among whomever they can.[19] Against this pride of the demons, which held the human race in its possession as it deserved, stands the humility of God that appeared in Christ. The souls of human beings do not know how great its power is, for they are puffed

18 Cornelius Labeo was a pagan writer on Roman religion, probably of the 3rd century AD.

19 Augustine follows the ancient derivation of *daimōn* from *daēmōn*, "knowing." The quotation is 1 Corinthians 8:1.

up with the uncleanness of conceit and are like the demons, not in knowledge, but in pride.

TO WHAT EXTENT THE LORD WAS WILLING TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE DEMONS

Christ made himself known to the demons through his power, enough to terrify them.

9.21 The demons themselves know even this, so much so that they said to this same Lord, clothed in the weakness of the flesh: "What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" These words make it clear that there was great knowledge in them, and no love. They dreaded the punishment he would bring them; they did not love the righteousness in him. He made himself known to them as far as he willed, and he willed as far as was fitting. But he did not make himself known to them as he does to the holy angels, who share in his eternity as the Word of God and enjoy it fully. He made himself known as he had to be known to those he meant to terrify. For he was going to free from their tyrannical power, so to speak, those predestined for his kingdom and his glory, ever true and truly everlasting.[20] So he made himself known to the demons not as what he is, eternal life and the unchangeable light that illuminates the pious, which hearts are cleansed to see through faith in him. He made himself known through certain temporal effects of his power and signs of his most hidden presence, which could be more evident to the angelic senses, even of evil spirits, than to human weakness. Indeed, when he judged that these should be held back a little and he hid himself somewhat more deeply, the prince of demons was in doubt about him. He tempted him to find out whether he was the Christ, but only as far as Christ allowed himself to be tempted, in order to shape the man he bore into an example for us to imitate. But after that temptation, "angels," as it is written, "ministered to him." These were good and holy angels, and therefore beings that unclean

20 Mark 1:24.

spirits must fear and tremble before. After that it became more and more known to the demons how great he was. None of them dared to resist his commands, though the weakness of his flesh seemed contemptible.[21]

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ANGELS AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEMONS

Holy angels know temporal things in the Word of God; demons only guess from signs.

9.22 To these good angels, then, all knowledge of bodily and temporal things, the knowledge that puffs up the demons, is cheap. This is not because they are ignorant of such things. It is because the love of God, by which they are made holy, is dear to them. They burn with a holy love for God's beauty, which is not only incorporeal but also unchangeable and ineffable. Compared with it they despise everything that is beneath it and is not what it is, and themselves among those things, so that with all the good that they are they may enjoy the Good from which they have their goodness. That is why they know even these temporal and changeable things more surely than the demons do. They behold the principal causes of these things in the Word of God, through whom the world was made, and by these causes some things are approved, some rejected, and all are set in order. The demons, by contrast, do not contemplate in the wisdom of God the eternal and, so to speak, cardinal causes of the times. But they have greater experience of certain signs hidden from us, and so they foresee many more future events than human beings do. Sometimes, too, they announce their own plans in advance. In short, the demons are often mistaken; the angels never are. It is one thing to conjecture temporal things from temporal things and changeable things from changeable things, and to insert into them the temporal and changeable measure of one's own will and power. This is permitted to the demons, for a definite reason. It is another thing to foresee the

21 Matthew 4:11.

changes of the times in the eternal and unchangeable laws of God, which live in his wisdom, and to know God's will, the most certain and most powerful of all wills, by sharing in his Spirit. By a just distinction this has been granted to the holy angels. So they are not only eternal but also happy. And the Good that makes them happy is God, by whom they were created. For they enjoy him, without ever swerving, by sharing in him and contemplating him.

THAT THE NAME "GODS" IS FALSELY GIVEN TO THE GODS OF THE NATIONS, THOUGH ON THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IT IS SHARED BY THE HOLY ANGELS AND BY RIGHTEOUS HUMAN BEINGS

Scripture calls angels and even humans gods, but only the one God is to be worshiped.

9.23 If the Platonists prefer to call these beings gods rather than demons, and to count them among the gods that their founder and teacher Plato writes were created by the supreme God, let them say what they like. We need not labor with them over a dispute about words. If they say that these beings are immortal yet made by the supreme God, and happy not through themselves but by clinging to the one who made them, then they are saying what we say, whatever name they give them. That this is the view of the Platonists, either of all of them or of the better ones, can be found in their writings.[22] As for the name itself, their calling such an immortal and happy creature a god, there is hardly any disagreement between us and them. In our sacred writings too we read: "The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken." Elsewhere we read: "Give thanks to the God of gods." And elsewhere: "A great king above all gods." But where it is written, "He is fearsome above all gods," the reason is shown at once, for the text continues: "For all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens." So it says "above all gods," but the gods of the nations, that is, the beings the nations take for gods,

22 In Plato's *Timaeus* (40–41), the maker of the world creates the lesser gods.

which are demons. That is why he is "fearsome": it was in this fear that they said to the Lord, "Have you come to destroy us?" But "the God of gods" cannot be understood as the god of demons. And far be it from us to take "a great king above all gods" to mean a great king above all demons.[23] But the same Scripture also calls human beings among the people of God gods: "I said," it says, "you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High." So the one called the God of gods can be understood as the God of these gods, and the one called a great king above all gods as a great king above these gods.[24]

Yet someone may ask us: human beings have been called gods because they belong to the people of God, whom God addresses through angels or through human beings; how much more, then, are those immortals worthy of that name who already enjoy the happiness that human beings long to reach by worshiping God? What shall we answer? Only this: it is not without reason that holy Scripture calls human beings gods more explicitly than it does those immortal and happy beings, to whom we are promised to be equal in the resurrection. It does so to keep faithless weakness from daring, because of their excellence, to set up one of them as a god for us. In the case of a human being, this danger is easy to avoid. Human beings among the people of God had to be called gods more plainly, so that they might be sure and confident that their God is the one called the God of gods. For although those immortal and happy beings in heaven may be called gods, they have not been called gods of gods, that is, gods of the human beings established among the people of God, to whom it was said: "I said, you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High." Hence the Apostle says: "Even if there are beings called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and

23 Psalms 49:1 (50:1 in most English Bibles), 135:2 (136:2), 94:3 (95:3) and 95:4–5 (96:4–5).
24 Psalm 81:6 (82:6 in most English Bibles).

we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him."[25]

So there is no need to argue much about the name, since the matter itself is so clear that it leaves no trace of doubt. But they do not accept what we say about the angels sent to announce God's will to human beings, namely, that these come from the number of those immortal and happy beings. They believe that this ministry is carried out not by the beings they call gods, that is, the immortal and happy ones, but by demons. These demons they dare to call only immortal, not happy as well, or at any rate immortal and happy only as good demons, not as gods set on high and removed from human contact. This may look like a dispute about a name. Even so, the name "demons" is so detestable that we must by all means keep it away from the holy angels. Let this book close, then, on this understanding. Immortal and happy beings, whatever they are called, were still made and created. They are not intermediaries for bringing wretched mortals to immortal happiness, since they are separated from those mortals by both differences. Those who really are intermediaries share immortality with the beings above them and wretchedness with the beings below. They are wretched because their wickedness deserves it, and so they are more likely to begrudge us the happiness they lack than to provide it. Hence the friends of the demons can offer us no worthy reason to worship as helpers those whom we ought rather to avoid as deceivers. There remain the beings they consider good, and therefore not only immortal but also happy. They think these should be worshiped under the name of gods with rites and sacrifices, in order to attain a happy life after death. Whatever these beings may be, and whatever name they deserve, we shall argue more carefully in the next book, with God's help, that they wish no one to be worshiped with such religious service except the one God, who created them and by sharing in whom they are happy.

25 1 Corinthians 8:5–6.

Book X

True worship and sacrifice
Worship belongs to God alone; Porphyry sought a way of salvation and missed it in Christ.

THAT EVEN THE PLATONISTS DEFINED TRUE HAPPINESS, WHETHER OF ANGELS OR OF HUMAN BEINGS, AS GIVEN BY THE ONE GOD; BUT IT MUST BE ASKED WHETHER THOSE THEY THINK SHOULD BE WORSHIPED FOR THIS REASON WANT SACRIFICE OFFERED ONLY TO THE ONE GOD OR ALSO TO THEMSELVES

Everyone wants to be happy; the Platonists, chosen in Book 8, agree that happiness comes from the one God.

10.1 Everyone who can use reason in any way at all holds firmly that all human beings want to be happy. But when the weakness of mortals asks who the happy are, or how they become so, many great controversies arise. On these the philosophers have spent their studies and their leisure, and to bring them forward and discuss them would take long and is not necessary. For the reader may recall what we did in the eighth book in choosing the philosophers with whom to discuss this question about the happy life that is to come after death. The question was whether we can reach that life by serving, with religion and rites, the one true God, who is also the maker of the gods, or by serving many gods. If the reader recalls this, he will not expect the same things to be repeated here as well, especially since, if he has perhaps forgotten, he can prop up his memory by rereading. We chose the Platonists, deservedly the most renowned of all philosophers, because they were able to see that the human soul,

though immortal and rational or intellectual, cannot be happy except by participating in the light of that God by whom both it and the world were made. So they deny that anyone will attain what all human beings seek—the happy life—unless he has clung with the purity of chaste love to that one supreme good, which is the unchangeable God. But they too gave way, whether to the folly and error of the peoples or, as the apostle says, by "becoming futile in their thinking." They thought, or wanted it to be thought, that many gods should be worshiped, so much so that some of them even held that divine honors of rites and sacrifices should be paid to demons; to these we have already given no small part of our answer. Now, then, we must consider and discuss, so far as God grants, a further question. Take the immortal and happy beings set in the heavenly seats—dominions, principalities, powers—whom these philosophers call gods, and some of whom they call either good demons or, as we do, angels. In what way should we believe that they want us to practice religion and piety? To put it more plainly: do they want us to perform rites and offer sacrifice, or to consecrate some of our possessions or ourselves by religious ceremonies, to themselves as well, or only to their God, who is also ours?[1]

For this is the worship due to divinity—or, to speak more precisely, to deity. I want to signify it by a single word, but no sufficiently suitable Latin word occurs to me, so where necessary I indicate what I mean by a Greek one. Our translators, wherever *latreia* [service due to God alone] occurs in the holy Scriptures, have rendered it "service." But the service owed to human beings, the kind the apostle means when he commands slaves to be subject to their masters, is usually called by another name in Greek. *Latreia*, on the other hand, in the usage of those who set down the divine oracles for us, always—or so often as to be almost always—means the service that belongs to the worship of God. So if we say simply "worship" (*cultus*), it does not seem to be owed to God alone. For we are also said to "cultivate" (*colere*) human beings whom we attend with honor, whether by remem-

1 Romans 1:21; the ranks of heavenly powers echo Colossians 1:16.

bering them or by being in their company. Nor is the word used only of those to whom we submit ourselves in religious humility. Some things that are subject to us are also said to be "cultivated" (*coli*). For from this verb come the names *agricolae* [farmers], *coloni* [tenants, settlers] and *incolae* [inhabitants]. The gods themselves are called *caelicolae* [heaven-dwellers] for no other reason than that they *colunt* heaven—not, of course, by worshiping it but by inhabiting it, as a kind of settlers of heaven. This is not the sense in which those are called *coloni* who owe their status to their native soil and are bound to farm it under the ownership of landholders. It is the sense used by a great master of Latin eloquence: "There was an ancient city, held by settlers from Tyre." He called them *coloni* from inhabiting, not from farming. Hence also cities founded by greater cities, like swarms of peoples sent out from a hive, are called colonies.[2] And so it is entirely true that, in a certain proper sense of the word, *cultus* is owed to God alone. But because *cultus* is also used of other things, the worship owed to God cannot be expressed in Latin by a single word.

Even "religion" (*religio*) seems to signify more distinctly not just any worship but the worship of God, which is why our translators used this word to render what in Greek is called *thrēskeia* [religious worship]. In Latin usage, however, not only of the uneducated but of the most learned as well, *religio* is said to be owed to human kinship, to relations by marriage and to every kind of close tie. So when the question concerns the worship of deity, this word does not avoid ambiguity. We cannot confidently say that religion is nothing but the worship of God, since it would be contrary to usage to strip the word of its sense of dutiful regard for human relations. "Piety" (*pietas*), which the Greeks call *eusebeia* [reverence], is also usually understood in its proper sense as the worship of God. Yet it is also said to be dutifully shown toward parents. In popular usage, moreover, the word is often applied to works of mercy. I think this has come about because God especially commands that these be done, and

2 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.12, describing Carthage.

declares that they please him in place of sacrifices, or more than sacrifices. From this way of speaking it has come about that God himself is called *pius*. The Greeks, however, in no usage of their language call him *eusebēs*, although among them too ordinary people use *eusebeia* for mercy. Hence in certain passages of Scripture, to make the distinction clearer, they preferred to say not *eusebeia*, which is compounded from "good" and "worship," but *theosebeia* [reverence for God], which plainly sounds compounded from "God" and "worship." We, however, cannot express either of these in a single word. So then: what is called *latreia* in Greek and rendered "service" in Latin—but the service by which we worship God; or what is called *thrēskeia* in Greek and "religion" in Latin—but the religion we have toward God; or what they call *eusebeia* and we cannot express in one word but can call "the worship of God"—this, we say, is owed only to the God who is the true God and who makes his worshipers gods. Therefore, whoever the immortal and happy beings in the heavenly dwellings may be, if they do not love us and do not want us to be happy, they certainly should not be worshiped. But if they love us and want us to be happy, then surely they want us to be happy from the same source from which they themselves are happy. Or are they happy from one source, and we from another?

WHAT PLOTINUS THE PLATONIST THOUGHT ABOUT ILLUMINATION FROM ABOVE

Plotinus holds that the soul of the universe, like ours, is happy only by a light that is God.

10.2 But on this question we have no quarrel with these more eminent philosophers. For they saw, and set down in their writings in many ways and at great length, that those beings become happy from the same source as we do. A certain intelligible light shines upon them; this light is God to them and is something other than they are. By it they are illuminated so that they shine, and by participation in it they exist perfect and happy. Plotinus, explaining Plato's meaning, asserts often and emphatically that

not even the soul they believe to be the soul of the universe is happy from any source other than ours. That source, he says, is a light which the soul is not itself, but by which it was created, and by whose intelligible illumination it shines intelligibly. He also offers a comparison for those incorporeal realities drawn from the great, visible bodies of the heavens: as if that light were the sun and the soul the moon. For they hold that the moon is lit by the sun shining upon it.[3] So that great Platonist speaks of the rational soul—or rather, it should be called intellectual. To this class he understands the souls of the immortal and happy beings to belong, whom he has no doubt dwell in the heavenly seats. He says that this soul has no nature above it except that of God, who fashioned the world and by whom the soul itself was made. He also says that those beings on high receive the happy life and the light of understanding the truth from no other source than the one from which they are given to us. In this he agrees with the Gospel, where we read: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. That was the true light, which enlightens every person coming into this world."[4] This distinction shows clearly enough that a rational or intellectual soul, such as was in John, cannot be its own light, but shines by participating in another, true light. John himself acknowledges this when, bearing witness to him, he says: "We have all received from his fullness."[5]

3 Plotinus (AD 205–270), the founder of Neoplatonism, whose teachings were edited by his pupil Porphyry.
4 John 1:6–9.
5 John 1:16.

THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD, FROM WHICH THE PLATONISTS, THOUGH THEY UNDERSTOOD THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE, STRAYED BY WORSHIPING ANGELS, GOOD OR EVIL, WITH DIVINE HONOR

Worship belongs to God alone: we are his temple, our hearts his altar, and our love the sacrifice.

10.3 Since this is so, suppose the Platonists, or any others who held these views, had known God and glorified him as God and given thanks. Suppose they had not become futile in their thinking, and had not partly become authors of the peoples' errors and partly not dared to resist them. Then they would surely acknowledge that the one God of gods, who is both our God and theirs, must be worshiped both by those immortal and happy beings and by us mortal and wretched ones, so that we may become immortal and happy.

To him we owe the service that in Greek is called *latreia*, whether in sacraments of every kind or in ourselves. For all of us together are his temple, and each of us individually is his temple, since he deigns to dwell both in the harmony of all and in each one. He is not greater in all than in each, since he is neither stretched out by bulk nor diminished by division. When our heart is lifted up to him, it is his altar. We propitiate him with his Only-begotten as our priest. We slay bloody victims to him when we fight for his truth even to the shedding of blood. We burn the sweetest incense to him when we are aflame with holy and devout love in his sight. We vow and render to him his own gifts in us, and ourselves as well. To him we dedicate and consecrate the memory of his benefits in solemn feasts and on appointed days, so that ungrateful forgetfulness may not creep in with the rolling of time. To him we sacrifice, on the altar of the heart, the offering of humility and praise, glowing with the fire of love. That we may see him as he can be seen, and cling to him, we are cleansed of every stain of sins and evil desires, and are consecrated in his name. For he is the source of our happiness; he is the goal of all our longing. We choose him (*eligentes*)—

or rather we choose him again (*religentes*), for we had lost him through neglect (*neglegentes*). Choosing him again, then—and from this, it is said, the word "religion" (*religio*) is derived—we strive toward him in love, so that by reaching him we may rest, happy because made perfect by that goal. For our good, about whose end there is great dispute among the philosophers, is nothing other than to cling to him. His embrace alone—an incorporeal embrace, if one may say so—fills the intellectual soul and makes it fruitful with true virtues. We are commanded to love this good with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength. To this good we ought to be led by those who love us, and we ought to lead those we love.[6] So those two commandments are fulfilled on which the whole law and the prophets depend: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." For in order that a human being might know how to love himself, an end was set for him to which he should refer everything he did, so that he might be happy; for one who loves himself wants nothing other than to be happy. And this end is to cling to God. So when one who already knows how to love himself is commanded to love his neighbor as himself, what else is he commanded but to commend to that neighbor, as far as he can, the love of God? This is the worship of God; this is true religion; this is right piety; this is the service owed to God alone.[7] Therefore any immortal power, however great its might, if it loves us as itself, wants us to be subject—so that we may be happy—to the one to whom it too is subject and in whom it is happy. If, then, it does not worship God, it is wretched, because it is deprived of God. But if it does worship God, it does not want to be worshiped in place of God. Rather, it supports that divine sentence and favors it with all the strength

6 Augustine plays on *eligere* (choose), *religere* (choose again) and *neglegere* (neglect); the derivation of *religio* was already debated in antiquity.
7 Matthew 22:37–40.

of its love, the sentence in which it is written: "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be rooted out, except to the Lord alone."[8]

THAT SACRIFICE IS OWED TO THE ONE TRUE GOD ALONE

Everyone grants that sacrifice is owed only to a god, as the offerings of Cain and Abel show.

10.4 For—to say nothing now of other things that belong to the religious service by which God is worshiped—there is certainly no one who would dare to say that sacrifice is owed to anyone but a god. Many things, it is true, have been borrowed from divine worship and bestowed as honors on human beings, whether out of excessive humility or pernicious flattery. Yet those who received them were still regarded as human beings. They are said to deserve honor and veneration and, if a great deal more is heaped on them, even adoration. But who ever thought that sacrifice should be offered except to one whom he knew, or supposed, or pretended to be a god? And how ancient the worship of God by sacrifice is, those two brothers Cain and Abel show clearly enough: God rejected the elder's sacrifice and looked with favor on the younger's.

THE SACRIFICES THAT GOD DOES NOT REQUIRE, BUT WISHED TO BE OFFERED AS SIGNS OF THE THINGS HE DOES REQUIRE

God needs no offerings; animal sacrifices were signs of the sacrifice he wants, a contrite heart and mercy.

10.5 But who would be so foolish as to think that the things offered in sacrifice are needed by God for some use of his? Divine Scripture testifies to this in many places, but, not to be long, it will be enough to recall this brief verse from a psalm: "I said to the Lord, 'You are my God, for you have no need of my goods.'" We must believe, then, that God has no need not only of cattle or any other corruptible and earthly thing, but not even of

8 Exodus 22:20.

a human being's righteousness. All the right worship of God benefits the human being, not God. For no one would say that he has done a favor to a spring by drinking from it, or to the light by seeing.[9] The ancient fathers offered other sacrifices, with animal victims, which God's people now read about but do not perform. This is to be understood in no other way than that those things signified the things that are done in us so that we may cling to God and help our neighbor toward the same end. A visible sacrifice, then, is the sacrament—that is, the sacred sign—of an invisible sacrifice. Hence that penitent in the prophet, or the prophet himself, seeking to have God merciful to his sins, says: "If you had wanted sacrifice, I would certainly have given it; you will not delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit; a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise." Let us observe how, in the very place where he said that God does not want sacrifice, he showed that God does want sacrifice. God does not want the sacrifice of a slaughtered animal, but he does want the sacrifice of a contrite heart.[10] So what he said God does not want signifies what he went on to say God does want. He said that God does not want those things in the sense in which fools believe he wants them—as if for the sake of his own pleasure. Suppose God had not wanted the sacrifices he does want to be signified by the sacrifices he was thought to desire as delightful to himself; one of the sacrifices he wants is this: a heart contrite and humbled by the pain of repentance. In that case he would certainly not have given commands in the old law about offering them. And that is why they had to be changed at a fitting and fixed time. Otherwise they might be believed to be desirable to God himself, or at least acceptable in us, instead of the things they signified. Hence also, in a passage of another psalm, he says: "If I am hungry, I will not tell you, for the world is mine and all that fills it. Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"[11] It is as if he said: "Surely, if I

9 Psalm 15:2 (16:2 in most English Bibles).
10 Psalm 50:18–19 (51:16–17 in most English Bibles).
11 Psalm 49:12–13 (50:12–13 in most English Bibles).

needed them, I would not ask you for what I have in my own power." Then he adds what they signify: "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me." Again, in another prophet: "With what shall I lay hold of the Lord, and take hold of my God on high? Shall I lay hold of him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with tens of thousands of fat goats? Shall I give my firstborn for my wickedness, the fruit of my womb for the sin of my soul? Has what is good been made known to you, mortal? Or what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God?"[12] In this prophet's words, too, the two kinds of sacrifice are distinguished. It is made clear enough that God does not require, for their own sake, those sacrifices which signify the sacrifices that God does require. In the letter entitled "To the Hebrews" it says: "Do not forget to do good and to share what you have, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." And so where it is written, "I desire mercy rather than sacrifice," we must understand nothing other than that one sacrifice is preferred to another sacrifice. For what everyone calls sacrifice is a sign of the true sacrifice. Mercy, moreover, is true sacrifice; hence the words I quoted a little earlier: "for with such sacrifices God is pleased." We read of many kinds of commands about sacrifices given by God for the service of the tabernacle or the temple. Whatever they may be, they all refer, by way of signification, to the love of God and of neighbor.[13] For on these two commandments, as it is written, depend the whole law and the prophets.

12 Micah 6:6–8.
13 Hebrews 13:16; Hosea 6:6.

THE TRUE AND PERFECT SACRIFICE

Every work done to cling to God is a sacrifice; the whole redeemed city is offered through Christ.

10.6 So a true sacrifice is every work done so that we may cling to God in holy fellowship, that is, every work directed to that end of good in which we can be truly happy. That is why even the mercy by which a human being is helped is not a sacrifice if it is not done for God's sake. For although a sacrifice is made or offered by a human being, a sacrifice is still a divine thing, so much so that the ancient Latins called it by this very name. Hence a human being himself, consecrated in God's name and vowed to God, is a sacrifice insofar as he dies to the world in order to live to God. For this too belongs to mercy, the mercy each person shows to himself. That is why it is written: "Have mercy on your own soul by pleasing God."[14] Again, when we discipline our body by self-control, it is a sacrifice, provided we do this for God's sake, as we ought, so as not to present our members to sin as weapons of wickedness but to God as weapons of righteousness. The apostle urges us to this when he says: "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service." The soul uses the body as something inferior to itself, like a servant or an instrument. If, then, the body is a sacrifice when its good and right use is directed to God, how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it directs itself to God! Set on fire by the flame of his love, it loses the form of worldly desire, and, made subject to him as to the unchangeable form, it is re-formed, pleasing him by what it has received from his beauty.[15] The same apostle adds this next: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be re-formed in the newness of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of

14 *Sacrificium* comes from *sacrum facere*, "to make something sacred." The quotation is Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 30:24 in the Latin Bible.
15 Romans 6:13; 12:1.

God is, what is good and well-pleasing and perfect." True sacrifices, then, are works of mercy, whether toward ourselves or toward our neighbors, that are directed to God. And works of mercy are done for no other reason than to free us from misery, and so to make us happy. This comes about only through that good of which it is said: "But for me it is good to cling to God." It follows, surely, that the whole redeemed city itself, that is, the congregation and fellowship of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice through the great priest, who in his passion also offered himself for us in the form of a servant, so that we might be the body of so great a head.[16] For it was this form that he offered, and in this form that he was offered, because it is in this form that he is mediator, in this that he is priest, in this that he is sacrifice. The apostle, then, had urged us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, our reasonable service, and not to be conformed to this world but to be reformed in the newness of our mind, so as to prove what the will of God is, what is good and well-pleasing and perfect; and that whole sacrifice is we ourselves. Then he says: "For by the grace of God given to me I say to everyone among you not to be wiser than one ought to be wise, but to be wise with moderation, as God has assigned to each the measure of faith.[17] For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another, having different gifts according to the grace given to us." This is the sacrifice of Christians: "many, one body in Christ." And this is what the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, familiar to the faithful, where it is shown to her that in the offering she makes, she herself is offered.[18]

16 Romans 12:2; Psalm 72:28 (73:28 in most English Bibles); "the form of a servant" is from Philippians 2:7.
17 Romans 12:3.
18 Romans 12:4–6.

THAT THE LOVE OF THE HOLY ANGELS FOR US IS SUCH THAT THEY WANT US TO WORSHIP NOT THEMSELVES BUT THE ONE TRUE GOD

The holy angels love us and want our sacrifice offered not to themselves but to God.

10.7 Rightly, then, do those immortal and happy beings established in the heavenly dwellings refuse to have us offered as a sacrifice to themselves. They rejoice in sharing in their Creator; through his eternity they are steadfast, through his truth certain, through his gift holy. And because they love us with mercy, mortal and wretched as we are, so that we may become immortal and happy, they want us offered not to themselves but to him whose sacrifice they know that they themselves, together with us, are. For with them we are one city of God, to which it is said in the psalm: "Most glorious things have been spoken of you, city of God." Part of this city is on pilgrimage in us; part gives help in them. For from that city above, where God's will is intelligible and unchangeable law, from that heavenly council, so to speak (for there care is taken for us), that holy Scripture came down to us, ministered by angels, in which we read: "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be rooted out, except to the Lord alone."[19] To this Scripture, this law, these commands, miracles so great have borne witness that it is clear enough to whom the immortal and happy ones want us to be offered in sacrifice—they who wish for us the same thing they have themselves.

THE MIRACLES THAT GOD HAS DEIGNED TO ADD TO HIS PROMISES, EVEN THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS, TO STRENGTHEN THE FAITH OF THE DEVOUT

Miracles for Abraham, Moses and Israel in the desert confirmed the worship of the one God.

10.8 Now if I were to recall events very far back—what miracles were performed in witness to the promises of God by which,

thousands of years beforehand, he foretold to Abraham that in his seed all nations would receive a blessing—I would seem to be going back further than is necessary. For who would not marvel at these things? A barren wife bore a son to that same Abraham at an age when even a fertile woman could no longer give birth. At a sacrifice offered by Abraham, a flame from heaven ran between the divided victims. The fire from heaven that destroyed Sodom was foretold to Abraham by angels whom he had welcomed as guests in human likeness, and through whom he had received God's promise about the offspring to come. And when that fire was already about to fall, Lot, his brother's son, was wonderfully rescued from Sodom by those same angels. Lot's wife looked back along the way and was suddenly turned into salt, and so by a great symbolic sign she warned that no one on the road of his own deliverance should long for what lies behind. And what miracles they were, how many and how great, that were wonderfully performed through Moses to rescue the people of God from the yoke of slavery in Egypt! There the magicians of Pharaoh—that is, of the king of Egypt, who was oppressing that people under his rule—were allowed to perform certain wonders only so that they might be defeated more wonderfully. For they worked by sorcery and magic spells, to which the evil angels, that is, the demons, are devoted. But Moses—the more powerfully because the more justly—defeated them easily in the name of God, who made heaven and earth, with the angels serving him. Finally, when the magicians failed at the third plague, the ten plagues were completed through Moses in a great ordering of mysteries, and before them the hard hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians gave way and let God's people go. They soon regretted it, and tried to pursue the departing Hebrews; but the sea was divided and the Hebrews crossed on dry land, while the Egyptians were covered and overwhelmed as the waters on either side flowed back together. What shall I say of the miracles that came thick and fast, with astonishing

19 Psalm 86:3 (87:3 in most English Bibles). Augustine plays on *curia* (council, senate-house) and *cura* (care).

divine power, while that same people was being led through the desert? Waters that could not be drunk lost their bitterness when, as God had commanded, a piece of wood was thrown into them, and they satisfied the thirsty. Manna came from heaven to the hungry; and though a fixed measure had been set for those gathering it, whatever anyone gathered beyond it bred worms and rotted, yet the double amount gathered on the day before the Sabbath, because gathering was not allowed on the Sabbath, was spoiled by no rot. When they craved meat, of which it seemed no amount could suffice for so large a people, the camp was filled with birds, and the heat of their craving was quenched by the disgust of surfeit. Enemies who confronted them, barred their way and gave battle were laid low while Moses prayed with his hands stretched out in the figure of a cross, and not one of the Hebrews fell. Those who rebelled among the people of God and split themselves off from the fellowship ordained by God were swallowed alive when the earth opened, a visible example of an invisible punishment. A rock struck with a rod poured out abundant streams for so vast a multitude. The deadly bites of serpents, a most just punishment for sins, were healed when people looked at a bronze serpent lifted up on a wooden pole. Thus help was given to the afflicted people, and at the same time death destroyed by death was signified by the likeness, as it were, of death crucified. This serpent was preserved in memory of the event; but when the people later went astray and began to worship it as an idol, King Hezekiah, serving God with a devout ruler's power, broke it to pieces, and was greatly praised for his piety.[20]

20 2 Kings 18:4.

THE UNLAWFUL ARTS CONNECTED WITH THE WORSHIP OF DEMONS, IN WHICH THE PLATONIST PORPHYRY WAVERS, APPROVING SOME AND SEEMING TO DISAPPROVE OTHERS

Porphyry wavers, half praising theurgy as a purification of the soul and half warning against it.

10.9 These things and many others of the kind, which it would take too long to recount in full, were done to commend the worship of the one true God and to forbid the worship of many false ones. And they were done by simple faith and the confidence of piety, not by incantations and spells composed by the art of an impious curiosity. That art they call *mageia* [magic], or by a more detestable name *goeteia* [sorcery], or by a more honorable one *theurgia* [theurgy]. Those who use these names try, as it were, to make a distinction among people devoted to illicit arts. Some they want to be regarded as damnable—those whom ordinary people call sorcerers, and who, they say, belong to *goeteia*—and others as praiseworthy, those to whom they assign theurgy. Yet both are bound by the deceitful rites of demons under the names of angels.

Even Porphyry promises a kind of purification of the soul through theurgy, though hesitantly and in an argument that is somehow ashamed of itself; but he denies that this art grants anyone a return to God. So you can see him wavering, with his opinions swinging back and forth, between the vice of sacrilegious curiosity and the profession of philosophy. At one moment he warns that this art must be avoided as deceptive, dangerous in its very practice and forbidden by law. At another, as if yielding to those who praise it, he says it is useful for purifying one part of the soul—not the intellectual part, by which we perceive the truth of intelligible things, which bear no likeness to bodies, but the spiritual part, by which the images of bodily things are grasped. This part, he says, through certain theurgic consecrations called *teletai* [rites of initiation], is made fit and ready to

receive spirits and angels and to see gods.[21] Yet he admits that these theurgic rites bring the intellectual soul no purification that would make it fit to see its God and to behold the things that truly are. From this one can understand what kind of gods, and what kind of vision, he says theurgic consecrations produce: a vision in which the things that truly are are not seen. In fact he says that the rational soul—or, as he prefers to say, the intellectual soul—can escape into its own realm even if what is spiritual in it has not been purified by any theurgic art; and further, that the spiritual soul is purified by the theurgist only so far, and not so far that it thereby attains immortality and eternity. He does distinguish angels from demons, explaining that the regions of the demons are in the air and those of the angels in the ether or the empyrean. He advises us to make use of the friendship of some demon, with whose support a person may be raised at least a little above the earth after death, while declaring that there is another way to the fellowship of the angels on high. Yet in what amounts to an explicit admission he testifies that the company of demons must be avoided, when he says that the soul, paying its penalties after death, shudders at the worship of the demons by whom it was being ensnared. And theurgy itself, which he commends as a means of winning the favor of angels and gods, he could not deny works among powers of such a kind that they either themselves begrudge the soul its purification or serve the arts of the envious. He brings forward a complaint on this subject from some Chaldean or other: "A good man in Chaldea complains," he says, "that his success in a great effort to purify a soul was thwarted, because another man, powerful in the same arts and touched by envy, had bound the powers conjured by sacred prayers, so that they would not grant what was asked. So," he says, "the one bound them, and the other did not release them." By this sign, he said, it is evident that theurgy is a discipline that brings about evil as well as good, both among gods and among humans; that the gods too suffer, and are

21 Porphyry (c. AD 234–305), Neoplatonist philosopher, pupil and editor of Plotinus, and a critic of Christianity.

brought down to those disturbances and passions which Apuleius attributes to demons and humans alike—though Apuleius separates the gods from them by the height of their ethereal dwelling and claims Plato's authority for that distinction.[22]

THEURGY, WHICH PROMISES A FALSE PURIFICATION OF SOULS BY INVOKING DEMONS

Gods that can be bound and frightened by spells are plainly deceiving demons, not good powers.

10.10 Here now is another Platonist, said to be more learned—Porphyry—who says that through some theurgic discipline or other even the gods themselves are bound by passions and disturbances. For they could be conjured and terrified by sacred prayers into not granting a soul purification; and they were so terrified by the man who commanded evil that the other, who asked for good through the same theurgic art, could not release them from that fear and set them free to grant the favor. Who does not see that all this is the invention of deceitful demons—unless he is their most wretched slave and a stranger to the grace of the true Liberator? For if these things were going on among good gods, surely the beneficent purifier of the soul would have had more power there than the malevolent obstructer. Or if the gods were just and judged the man on whose behalf this was being done unworthy of purification, then surely they ought to have refused it by free judgment—not terrified by an envious man, nor, as Porphyry himself says, hindered by fear of a stronger divinity. And it is strange that the kindly Chaldean, who wanted to purify a soul by theurgic rites, did not find some higher god, who would either terrify the terrified gods still more and compel them to do good, or restrain the one terrifying them, so that they could do good freely—unless, of course, the good theurgist lacked rites by which he might first purify the very gods he was

22 Apuleius (2nd century AD), Platonist writer whose *On the God of Socrates* Augustine discusses in Books 8–9.

invoking as purifiers of the soul from that plague of fear. For what reason is there why a more powerful god can be brought in to terrify them, but not one to purify them? Or is a god found who listens to the envious and strikes fear into the gods so that they will not do good, and no god found who listens to the benevolent and takes away the gods' fear so that they will do good? O glorious theurgy! O purification of the soul worthy of all praise, where unclean envy commands more than pure kindness obtains! No—rather, the deceit of evil spirits must be avoided and detested, and saving teaching heeded. For when those who perform these sordid purifications with sacrilegious rites see, as if with a purified spirit, certain wonderfully beautiful images of angels or of gods, as Porphyry relates (if indeed they see anything of the kind), this is what the apostle speaks of: "For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."[23] For those phantasms belong to him who longs to entangle wretched souls in the deceitful rites of many false gods and to turn them away from the true worship of the true God, by which alone they are cleansed and healed. As was said of Proteus, he "turns himself into every shape," pursuing as an enemy, helping as a deceiver, harmful either way.[24]

PORPHYRY'S LETTER TO ANEBO THE EGYPTIAN, IN WHICH HE ASKS TO BE TAUGHT ABOUT THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DEMONS

In his letter to Anebo, Porphyry raises questions that expose magic and divination as the work of demons.

10.11 This Porphyry showed better sense when he wrote to Anebo the Egyptian. There, in the guise of someone consulting and inquiring, he both exposes and overturns these sacrilegious arts. In that letter he rejects all demons, saying that through lack of wisdom they draw in moist vapor, and so dwell not in the

23 2 Corinthians 11:14.

24 Proteus was the shape-shifting sea god of myth; the phrase echoes Virgil, *Georgics* 4.411.

ether but in the air below the moon and in the very sphere of the moon. Yet he does not dare to attribute to all demons all the deceptions, malice and foolishness that rightly trouble him. For he follows the custom of others in calling some demons benevolent, although he admits that all of them, generally speaking, are unwise.[25] He wonders, moreover, that the gods are not only enticed by sacrificial victims but also compelled and forced to do what humans want. He asks: if gods are distinguished from demons as the incorporeal from the bodily, how are we to think that the sun and moon and the other visible things in heaven are gods, when he has no doubt that they are bodies? And if they are gods, how can some be called beneficent and others maleficent? And how, being bodily, are they joined to incorporeal beings? He also asks, as though in doubt, whether in those who foretell the future and perform certain wonders it is the passions of the soul that are at work, or whether some spirits come from outside through whom they have these powers. He conjectures rather that they come from outside, because by using stones and herbs such people bind certain persons, open closed doors, or perform some such wonder. So he says that others hold there is a certain kind of being whose peculiar trait is to hear prayers: deceitful by nature, taking every form, appearing in many guises, impersonating gods and demons and the souls of the dead. This, they say, is what produces all these things that seem good or bad; but it gives no help in what is truly good, indeed does not even know such things. Instead it forms wicked alliances, brings false accusations against the earnest followers of virtue, and sometimes hinders them. It is full of rashness and arrogance, delights in the fumes of sacrifice, is captured by flattery, and so on. These things about this kind of deceitful and malignant spirits, which come into the soul from outside and delude human senses whether asleep or awake, he does not affirm as his own conviction; he suspects or doubts them so faintly that he assigns them to the opinion of others. No doubt it was difficult for so

25 Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, addressed to an Egyptian priest, raised questions about theurgy and divination.

great a philosopher either to recognize or confidently to denounce the whole diabolical fellowship, whose existence any little old Christian woman does not hesitate to affirm, and which she detests with complete freedom. Unless, perhaps, he is shy of offending both Anebo himself, to whom he is writing, as a most distinguished priest of such rites, and others who admire such works as divine and as belonging to the worship of the gods.

Still, he goes on, and as though by way of inquiry he mentions things that, soberly considered, can be attributed only to malignant and deceitful powers. For he asks why beings who are invoked as the better sort are commanded as though they were the worse sort, to carry out a human being's unjust orders. Why do they not hear the prayers of someone defiled by sexual intercourse, though they themselves do not hesitate to lead anyone at all into every kind of unchaste union? Why do they declare that their priests must abstain from animal food, so as not, of course, to be polluted by bodily vapors, while they themselves are enticed by other vapors and by the fumes of sacrificial victims? And why, though the seer is forbidden to touch a corpse, are their rites often celebrated with corpses? What does it mean that a man subject to any vice whatever directs threats not at a demon or at the soul of some dead person, but at the sun and moon themselves, or any of the heavenly beings, and terrifies them with false threats in order to wring the truth from them? For he even threatens to smash the sky, and other such things impossible for a human being, so that those gods, terrified like the silliest children by false and ridiculous threats, will do what they are ordered. Porphyry says, too, that a certain Chaeremon, an expert in such rites—or rather sacrileges—wrote that the things celebrated in Egyptian lore concerning Isis or her husband Osiris have the greatest power to compel the gods to carry out orders, when the one who compels them by spells threatens to divulge or to overturn those things. He even declares, in terrible tones, that he will scatter the limbs of Osiris if they neglect

to do as they are told.[26] That a human being should utter such vain and insane threats against gods—and not just any gods, but the heavenly ones themselves, shining with starry light—and not without effect, but compelling them with violent power and driving them by these terrors to do whatever he wishes: Porphyry is right to wonder at this. Or rather, under the guise of one who wonders and asks the causes of such things, he gives us to understand that the spirits doing these things are of the kind he described above in reporting the opinion of others. They are deceivers not, as he put it, by nature, but by vice. They impersonate gods and the souls of the dead; but demons they do not, as he says, impersonate—they plainly are demons. And as for his view that by means of herbs and stones and animals, certain particular sounds and words, shapes and figurines, and also certain movements of the stars observed in the revolution of the heavens, humans can fashion on earth powers fit to bring about various effects—all this belongs to those same demons, who make fools of the souls subject to them and make a pleasant game for themselves out of human errors. So either Porphyry is genuinely doubting and inquiring about these things, and yet he mentions facts by which they may be refuted and exposed, and shown to belong not to the powers that help us attain the happy life but to the deceiving demons; or—to think better of the philosopher—he chose this way of dealing with an Egyptian devoted to such errors, who imagined he knew great things. He did not want to offend him with the proud authority, so to speak, of a teacher, nor to upset him with the open quarreling of an opponent, but, with the humility of someone asking questions and eager to learn, to turn him toward thinking these things over and to show how contemptible they are, and even how much to be shunned. In fact, near the end of the letter he asks Anebo to teach him what the way to happiness is according to Egyptian wisdom. But as for those whose dealings with the gods came

26 Chaeremon (1st century AD), an Egyptian priest and Stoic writer at Alexandria. In Egyptian myth Osiris was murdered and dismembered, and his limbs were gathered by Isis.

down to troubling the divine mind to find a runaway slave or acquire an estate, or about a marriage or a business deal or something of the kind, he says they seem to have cultivated wisdom in vain. And the very divinities with whom they had these dealings, even if they foretold the truth about other matters, nonetheless gave no prudent or adequate guidance about happiness; therefore, he says, they were neither gods nor benevolent demons, but either belonged to that kind called "the deceiver," or were wholly a human invention.

THE MIRACLES THAT THE TRUE GOD WORKS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY ANGELS

Wonders serving the worship of the one God are God's work through angels; humans are greater wonders.

10.12 But such great and remarkable things are done by these arts that they go beyond every limit of human capacity. What remains, then, but to recognize with good sense what such things are? Whatever seems to be foretold or done wondrously, as if by divine power, and yet is not directed to the worship of the one God, is the mockery of evil demons and their seductive obstacles, which true piety must guard against. And to cling simply to this God is the only good that makes us happy, as even the Platonists admit and attest in many ways. On the other hand, whatever miracles are done by divine power, whether through angels or in any other way, in such a manner that they commend the worship and religion of the one God, in whom alone is the happy life, we must believe that these are truly done by or through those who love us in accordance with truth and piety, God himself working in them. For we should not listen to those who deny that the invisible God works visible miracles. Even by their own account he made the world, and they certainly cannot deny that the world is visible. Whatever wonderful thing happens in this world, then, is surely less than this whole world, that is, heaven and earth and all that is in them, which God certainly made. And just as he who made it is hidden and beyond human comprehension, so too is the way in which he made it.

So although the miracles of visible nature have grown cheap to us because we see them constantly, yet when we look at them wisely, they are greater than the most unusual and rarest wonders. For a human being is a greater miracle than any miracle done through a human being. Therefore God, who made the visible heaven and earth, does not disdain to work visible miracles in heaven or on earth. By them he rouses the soul, still given over to visible things, to worship him, the invisible one. But where and when he does them rests in his unchangeable counsel, in whose plan all the times that are still to come have already been made. For while he moves temporal things, he is not moved in time. He does not know what is to be done in any other way than what has been done, and he does not hear those who call on him in any other way than he sees those who will call on him. For even when his angels hear, he hears in them, as in his true temple not made with hands, just as he does in his holy people. And his commands are carried out in time, having been seen in his eternal law.

THE INVISIBLE GOD, WHO HAS OFTEN MADE HIMSELF VISIBLE, NOT AS HE IS, BUT AS THOSE WHO SAW HIM COULD BEAR

God appeared to the fathers in bodily forms not his own, as a thought is heard in sound.

10.13 Nor should it trouble anyone that, though he is invisible, he is often recorded to have appeared visibly to the fathers. Take a thought formed in the silence of the mind: the sound by which it is heard is not the thought itself. In the same way, the form in which God, whose nature is invisible, was seen was not what he himself is. Yet he himself was seen in that bodily form, just as the thought itself is heard in the sound of the voice. And they were not unaware that they were seeing the invisible God in a bodily form, which he himself was not. For Moses spoke with him as he spoke, and yet said to him: "If I have found grace before you, show me your very self, so that I may see you and

know you."[27] The law of God, then, had to be given with awe-inspiring terror, through the decrees of angels. It was given not to one man or to a few wise men, but to a whole nation, a vast people. So great things were done before that same people on the mountain where the law was being given through one man, while the multitude watched the fearful and terrifying things that were happening. For the people of Israel did not believe Moses in the way the Spartans believed their Lycurgus, that he had received the laws he established from Jupiter or Apollo. When the law was given to the people, commanding them to worship one God, it was made plain before the eyes of that very people, by wondrous signs and upheavals in nature, as far as divine providence judged sufficient, that creation was serving its creator in the giving of that law.[28]

THAT THE ONE GOD IS TO BE WORSHIPED NOT ONLY FOR ETERNAL BUT ALSO FOR TEMPORAL BENEFITS, SINCE ALL THINGS ARE IN THE POWER OF HIS PROVIDENCE

Even when he promised earthly rewards, God taught people to seek them from him alone.

10.14 As with a single human being, so with the human race, insofar as it belongs to God's people. Its right education has advanced through certain stages of time, like successive steps of age, so that it might rise from temporal things to grasp eternal ones, and from visible things to invisible ones. Yet this was done in such a way that even in the time when God promised visible rewards, the worship of the one God alone was still enjoined. The human mind was not to submit to anyone but the soul's true creator and lord, not even for the earthly benefits of this passing life. For whoever denies that everything angels or humans can provide to humans lies in the power of the one Almighty is mad. Plotinus the Platonist certainly discusses providence. He proves

27 Exodus 33:13 (cf. 33:18).
28 Lycurgus was the legendary lawgiver of Sparta, said to have received his laws from Apollo's oracle at Delphi.

from the beauty of little flowers and leaves that it reaches from the supreme God, whose beauty is intelligible and beyond words, all the way down to these lowly earthly things. All these things, he affirms, though they are as if cast aside and perish so very swiftly, could not have the perfectly fitting proportions of their forms unless they were formed from that source where the intelligible and unchangeable form, holding all things together at once, abides. The Lord Jesus shows this where he says: "Consider the lilies of the field: they do not labor or spin. And I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of them. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith?"[29] It is very good, then, that the human soul, still weak with earthly desires, grows accustomed to expecting from the one God alone even the things it longs for in time. These are the lowest and earthly goods, necessary for this passing life and to be despised in comparison with the eternal benefits of the life to come. In this way, even while it desires them, it does not turn away from the worship of him to whom it comes by despising them and turning away from them.

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY ANGELS, BY WHICH THEY SERVE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The law was given through angels, who hear God's eternal word and carry it out in time.

10.15 So it pleased divine providence to order the course of time in such a way that, as I have said and as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the law concerning the worship of the one true God was given through the decrees of angels. In them the person of God himself appeared visibly. This was not in his own substance, which always remains invisible to corruptible eyes, but through definite signs, by means of creation subject to its creator. And he spoke syllable by syllable, in the brief passing moments of time, with the sounds of human language. Yet in his

29 The argument is from Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2. The quotation is Matthew 6:28–30.

own nature he neither begins nor ceases to speak: not bodily but spiritually, not to the senses but to the intellect, not in time but, so to speak, eternally. What he says is heard more purely in his presence, not with the ear of the body but with the ear of the mind, by his ministers and messengers, who enjoy his unchangeable truth in immortal happiness. And what they hear, in ways beyond words, must be done and carried down into this visible and sensible world, they carry out without hesitation or difficulty.[30] This law was given in accordance with a distribution of the ages, so that at first, as has been said, it contained earthly promises. Yet by these, eternal things were signified; many celebrated them in visible sacraments, but few understood them. Even so, the worship of the one God is commanded there with the clearest testimony of all its words and all its events. He is not one god out of a crowd. He is the one who made heaven and earth and every soul and every spirit that is not what he himself is. For he made them, and they were made; and in order to exist and to be well, they need him by whom they were made.

WHETHER, ABOUT GAINING THE HAPPY LIFE, WE SHOULD TRUST THE ANGELS WHO DEMAND TO BE WORSHIPED WITH DIVINE HONOR, OR THOSE WHO COMMAND THAT HOLY WORSHIP BE GIVEN NOT TO THEMSELVES BUT TO THE ONE GOD

Angels who demand sacrifice should be distrusted; those who direct worship to God alone should be believed.

10.16 Which angels, then, do we judge should be believed about the happy and eternal life? Those who want to be worshiped themselves with religious rites, demanding that mortals offer them rites and sacrifices? Or those who say that all this worship is owed to the one God, the creator of all, and teach that it must be rendered to him with true piety? It is by contemplating him that they themselves are happy, and they promise that we shall be happy too. For that vision of God is a vision of such great

30 Acts 7:53, where the law is said to have been received "by the decrees of angels."

beauty, and so supremely worthy of so great a love, that Plotinus does not hesitate to say that anyone without it is utterly unhappy, however richly endowed with other goods. Some angels, then, use wonderful signs to rouse us to worship this one God. Others rouse us to worship themselves with *latria* [the service due to God alone]. And they do so in such a way that the former forbid the latter to be worshiped, while the latter do not dare to forbid the former. Which should we rather believe? Let the Platonists answer, let any philosophers answer, let the theurgists answer—or rather the "periurgists," since all those arts better deserve that name. Finally, let human beings answer, if any sense of their own nature, that they were created rational, still lives in them in any degree. Let them answer, I say: should we sacrifice to the gods or angels who order sacrifice to themselves? Or should we sacrifice to the one God, as we are ordered by those who forbid it both to themselves and to the others?[31] Suppose neither group worked any miracles, but each simply gave commands. Some would order that sacrifice be offered to them; others would forbid this and order it to be offered only to the one God. Even then, piety itself ought to be enough to discern which of these came from arrogant pride and which from true religion. I will say more. Suppose only those who demand sacrifices for themselves stirred human souls by wondrous deeds. Suppose those who forbid this and command sacrifice only to the one God did not deign to perform such visible miracles at all. Even so, their authority should surely be preferred, not by the judgment of bodily sense but by the reasoning of the mind. But in fact God, to commend the words of his truth, has caused these immortal messengers to work miracles that are greater, more certain and more glorious. They proclaim not their own pride but his majesty. He did this so that those who demand sacrifices for themselves might not more easily persuade the weak among the pious to adopt a false religion by displaying astonishing things to their senses. Who, then, could wish to be so foolish

31 Augustine puns on "theurgists" (god-workers) with "periurgists," from Greek *periergos* [meddlesome], a word also used of magic.

as not to choose the truth to follow, when he also finds there the greater things to marvel at?

Consider the miracles of the gods of the nations that history records. (I do not mean the portents that occur at intervals of time from hidden causes in the world itself, causes nonetheless established and ordered under divine providence. Such are unusual births of animals and strange appearances in the sky and on earth, whether merely frightening or actually harmful. Through the demons' most deceitful cunning, these are claimed to be averted and softened by demonic rites. I mean those that quite evidently appear to be done by the demons' own force and power. Such is the story that the images of the household gods, the Penates, which Aeneas brought from Troy as he fled, moved from place to place; or that Tarquinius cut a whetstone with a razor;[32] or that the serpent of Epidaurus attached itself as a companion to Aesculapius as he sailed to Rome; or that a ship carrying the image of the Phrygian Mother had been made immovable against all the efforts of men and oxen, and a single frail woman tied her girdle to it and moved it and drew it along, as proof of her chastity; or that a Vestal Virgin, whose virginity was under investigation, settled the dispute by filling a sieve with water from the Tiber without its leaking through.) These things, then, and others like them are in no way to be compared in power and greatness with those we read were done among the people of God. How much less, then, can those things be compared that even the laws of the very peoples who worshiped such gods judged should be forbidden and punished—namely, magic or theurgy![33] Most of these deceive mortal senses with illusory trickery that is mere appearance. Such is drawing down the moon "until, coming closer, it foams onto the herbs set beneath," as Lucan says. Some of them may seem to match cer-

32 The Penates were the Roman household gods; those brought by Aeneas were said to have returned of their own accord from Alba to Lavinium. In Livy (1.36) it is the augur Attus Navius who cuts the whetstone, before King Tarquinius Priscus.
33 The serpent of Aesculapius was brought from Epidaurus in 293 BC. The woman who moved the ship of the Phrygian Mother (Cybele) in 204 BC was Claudia Quinta, and the Vestal with the sieve was Tuccia.

tain deeds of the pious in their effect. But the very end that distinguishes them shows that ours are incomparably superior. For through those arts many gods are put forward for worship with sacrifices, and they deserve it the less, the more they demand it. Through ours, the one God is commended. He shows that he needs nothing of the kind, both by the testimony of his Scriptures and by later doing away with those same sacrifices. If, then, some angels demand sacrifice for themselves, others are to be preferred to them: those who demand it not for themselves but for God, the creator of all, whom they serve. For by this they show how sincere their love for us is. Through sacrifice they wish us to be subject not to themselves but to him by contemplating whom they themselves are happy. And they wish us to come to him from whom they themselves have never departed.[34] But suppose the angels who want sacrifices offered not to one but to many want them not for themselves but for the gods whose angels they are. Even so, the angels of the one God of gods are to be preferred to them. These command sacrifice to him in such a way as to forbid it to any other, while none of the others forbids it to this God, to whom alone these command sacrifice. Further, suppose—as their proud deceit more strongly suggests—that they are neither good angels nor angels of good gods, but evil demons. Then they want to be worshiped with sacrifices themselves, rather than the one supreme God alone. What greater protection against them can we choose than that of the one God? The good angels serve him, and they command us to serve with sacrifice not themselves but him, whose sacrifice we ourselves ought to be.

34 Lucan, *Civil War* (*Pharsalia*) 6.506, on the witches of Thessaly; Lucan was a Roman poet of the first century AD.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS DONE BY GOD TO COMMEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE LAW AND THE PROMISE

The ark of the testimony and its miracles at the Jordan, Jericho and among the Philistines confirmed the law.

10.17 Accordingly, the law of God was given through the decrees of angels. In it the one God of gods was commanded to be worshiped with the sacred rites of religion, and all others were forbidden. This law was placed in the ark, which was called the ark of the testimony. This name makes it clear enough that God, who was worshiped through all those things, is not enclosed or contained in a place, even though his answers and certain signs perceptible to human senses were given from the place of that ark. Rather, testimonies of his will were given from there. Further, the law itself was written on tablets of stone and placed, as I said, in the ark. During the time of wandering in the desert, the priests carried the ark with due reverence, along with the tabernacle, which was likewise called the tabernacle of the testimony. And there was a sign: by day a cloud appeared, which shone like fire by night. When the cloud moved, the camp moved, and where it stood still, the camp was pitched. Besides the things I have mentioned, and besides the voices that came from the place of that ark, that law received the testimony of great miracles. For when they were entering the promised land and the ark was crossing, the river Jordan stopped on its upper side and ran off on its lower side. It gave dry ground for the ark itself and for the people to cross. Then they came to the first hostile city in their path, which worshiped many gods after the custom of the nations. When the ark had been carried around it seven times, its walls suddenly fell down, though no hand had attacked them and no battering ram had struck them. After this, when they were already in the promised land, the ark was captured by enemies because of the people's sins. Those who had captured it placed it with honor in the temple of their god, whom they worshiped above the rest, and shut the temple as they left. When it

was opened the next day, they found the image to which they prayed fallen down and shamefully shattered.[35] Then, driven by portents and punished still more shamefully, they returned the ark of the divine testimony to the people from whom they had taken it. And what a return it was! They put it on a cart and yoked to it heifers whose suckling calves they had taken away from them. Then they let the heifers go wherever they would, wanting to test the divine power by this too. But with no man to lead or guide them, the heifers kept steadily on the road toward the Hebrews. The lowing of their hungry young did not call them back, and they brought the great sacred sign back to those who worshiped it. To God these things and the like are small, but they are great for frightening mortals for their good and for instructing them.[36] The philosophers, and especially the Platonists, are praised for having been wiser than the rest, as I mentioned a little earlier. This is because they taught that divine providence governs even these lowest, earthly things, on the evidence of the many proportioned beauties that arise not only in the bodies of animals but even in plants and grass. If so, how much more clearly do these events bear witness to the divine, since they happen at the very hour of its proclamation! There that religion is commended which forbids sacrifice to any beings of heaven, earth or the underworld, and commands it to the one God alone. He alone, loving and loved, makes us happy. He fixed in advance the times during which those sacrifices were commanded, and foretold that they would be changed for the better through a better priest. In this way he testifies that he does not desire these things, but signifies through them other, better ones. He does this not to be exalted by these honors, but so that we, set ablaze by the fire of his love, may be roused to worship him and cling to him, which is good for us, not for him.[37]

35 See Joshua 3 (the Jordan) and Joshua 6 (Jericho); the capture of the ark and the fall of the Philistine god Dagon are told in 1 Samuel 5.

36 1 Samuel 6.

37 The "better priest" is Christ, as in the Letter to the Hebrews (chapters 7–8).

AGAINST THOSE WHO DENY THAT THE CHURCH'S BOOKS SHOULD BE BELIEVED ABOUT THE MIRACLES BY WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD WERE TAUGHT

Those who credit pagan wonders have no reason to reject the far better-attested miracles of Scripture.

10.18 Or will someone say that these miracles are false, that they never happened and were only written up as lies? Whoever says this, if he denies that any writings at all can be trusted on these matters, might as well say that no gods care about mortal affairs. For the gods persuaded people that they should be worshiped only through the effects of wonderful works. The history of the nations bears witness to these works too, but the gods of those nations could put themselves on display as wonderful rather than show themselves to be useful. That is why, in this work of ours, whose tenth book we now have in hand, we have not undertaken to refute those who deny that there is any divine power at all, or who contend that it does not care about human affairs. We are refuting those who prefer their own gods to our God, the founder of the holy and most glorious city. They do not know that he is also the invisible and unchangeable founder of this visible and changeable world, and the truest giver of the happy life, which he gives not from the things he has created but from himself. For his most truthful prophet says: "But for me it is good to cling to God." Among the philosophers, after all, the question is about the end of good, the goal to whose attainment all our duties must be directed.[38] This man did not say, "For me it is good to abound in riches," or to be distinguished by the purple, or to stand out with scepter or diadem. Nor did he say what some even of the philosophers were not ashamed to say: "For me the pleasure of the body is good." Nor did he say what others, as if they were better men, appeared to say as something better: "For me the virtue of my mind is good." Instead he says: "For me it is good to cling to God." He had been

38 Psalm 72:28 (73:28 in most English Bibles).

taught this by the one to whom alone sacrifice must be offered, as God's holy angels also warned, confirming the warning with miracles. And so he himself had become God's sacrifice. He burned, seized by God's intelligible fire, and was carried by holy longing into God's ineffable and incorporeal embrace. Furthermore, the worshipers of many gods, whatever kind of gods they suppose theirs to be, believe that these gods performed miracles. They rely on histories of civil affairs, or on books of magic, or on books of theurgy, which they consider more respectable. If so, what reason is there for them to refuse to believe the writings that report these miracles? Those writings deserve all the more credence, the greater above all others is the one to whom alone they command that sacrifice be offered.

THE REASON FOR THE VISIBLE SACRIFICE THAT TRUE RELIGION TEACHES SHOULD BE OFFERED TO THE ONE TRUE AND INVISIBLE GOD

Visible sacrifices are signs of the invisible sacrifice, and belong only to the God we ourselves offer.

10.19 Some think that these visible sacrifices suit other gods, while invisible sacrifices suit him as the invisible one: greater ones for the greater, better ones for the better, such as the offerings of a pure mind and a good will. Such people surely do not know that the visible sacrifices are signs of the invisible ones, just as spoken words are signs of things. So when we pray and praise, we direct words that signify to the one to whom we offer in our hearts the very things those words signify. In the same way, when we sacrifice, we must recognize that visible sacrifice should be offered to no one but him whose invisible sacrifice we ourselves ought to be in our hearts. Then the angels, and all the higher powers who are mightier by their very goodness and devotion, favor us, rejoice with us, and help us toward this very end as far as they are able. But if we choose to offer these things to them, they are unwilling to accept them. And when they are sent to human beings in such a way that their presence is perceived, they forbid it in the plainest terms. There are examples

in the holy writings. Some people thought they ought to give angels the honor that is owed to God, whether by worshiping them or by sacrificing to them. The angels' own warning forbade them, and they were ordered to give this honor to the one to whom alone, as the angels knew, it may rightly be given. Holy men of God also followed the example of the holy angels. When Paul and Barnabas had performed a miracle of healing in Lycaonia, they were taken for gods, and the Lycaonians wanted to sacrifice victims to them. With humble devotion they refused this honor and proclaimed to the people the God in whom they should believe. Those deceivers, the demons, proudly demand this honor for themselves for no other reason than that they know it is owed to the true God. They do not really delight, as Porphyry says and some believe, in the reek of carcasses, but in divine honors. They have a great abundance of such fumes everywhere, and if they wanted more, they could supply it for themselves.[39] So the spirits that claim divinity for themselves take delight not in the smoke of any body but in the soul of the suppliant. They want to deceive that soul, subject it and lord it over it. They block the road to the true God, so that a human being may not become God's sacrifice while sacrifice is being offered to anyone other than him.

THE SUPREME AND TRUE SACRIFICE, WHICH THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS HIMSELF BECAME

Christ, receiving sacrifice as God, chose to become the sacrifice as man; the Church offers itself through him.

10.20 That is why the true mediator, "the man Christ Jesus," acted as he did. Insofar as he took "the form of a servant," he was made "the mediator between God and humankind." In the form of God he receives sacrifice together with the Father, with whom he is also one God. Yet in the form of a servant he chose to be a sacrifice rather than to receive one, so that no one could take

39 Acts 14:8–18.

even this as an occasion to think that sacrifice should be offered to any creature whatever. In this way he is also the priest, himself the one who offers and himself the offering. He willed the daily sacrifice of the Church to be the sacrament of this reality. Since the Church is the body of which he is the head, she learns through him to offer herself. The ancient sacrifices of the saints were many and varied signs of this true sacrifice. This one sacrifice was prefigured by many, as one thing might be expressed in many words, so that it could be commended at length without tedium. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have given way.[40]

THE MEASURE OF POWER GIVEN TO THE DEMONS FOR THE GLORIFYING OF THE SAINTS THROUGH ENDURING SUFFERING, WHO OVERCAME THE SPIRITS OF THE AIR NOT BY APPEASING THEM BUT BY REMAINING IN GOD

Persecution by demons fills up the number of the martyrs, who conquer the powers of the air.

10.21 Moreover, for limited and predetermined periods, power is also granted to demons. They may stir up the people they possess and through them exercise a tyrannical hostility against the city of God. They may not only receive sacrifices from those who offer them and seek them from the willing, but even wring them by force from the unwilling through persecution. This power is not only not harmful but is actually found to be useful to the Church, because it fills up the number of the martyrs. The city of God holds the martyrs as citizens all the more illustrious and honored, the more bravely they fight against the sin of impiety, even to the shedding of their blood. If the Church's usage of speech allowed it, we would much more elegantly call them our heroes. This name is said to derive from Juno, because in Greek Juno is called Ἥρα [Hera]. That is supposedly why, according to the myths of the Greeks, one of her sons was named Heros. The myth, of course, carries a sort of mystical meaning: the air is

40 1 Timothy 2:5; Philippians 2:6–7.

assigned to Juno, and that is where they hold that the heroes dwell with the demons. "Heroes" is the name they give to the souls of the dead who have some merit. But our martyrs would be called heroes in the opposite sense, if, as I said, the usage of the Church's language admitted it. They would be called heroes not because they share the air with the demons, but because they conquer those same demons, that is, the powers of the air. Among those powers they conquer Juno herself, whatever she is thought to signify. Not altogether inappropriately, the poets present her as hostile to virtues and envious of brave men who strive for heaven. Virgil, however, unhappily gives way and yields to her again. In his poem she says, "I am conquered by Aeneas," and yet Helenus advises Aeneas himself, as if offering religious counsel: "Gladly sing your vows to Juno, and win over the powerful mistress with suppliant gifts." Following this opinion, Porphyry says, though he reports it as the view of others rather than his own, that a good god or guardian spirit does not come to a human being unless the evil one has first been appeased. This implies that, in their view, evil divinities are stronger than good ones. The evil ones block the help of the good unless they are appeased and make way for them, and the good cannot do any good if the evil are unwilling. The evil, by contrast, can do harm, because the good are unable to resist them. This is not the way of the true and truly holy religion. This is not how our martyrs conquer Juno, that is, the powers of the air that envy the virtues of the godly.[41] Our heroes, if the term could be used in ordinary speech, overcome Hera not at all by suppliant gifts but by divine virtues. Scipio, after all, was more fittingly given the surname Africanus because he conquered Africa by courage than he would have been if he had appeased the enemy with gifts so that they would spare him.[42]

41 Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.310 and 3.438–439; Helenus is the Trojan seer who prophesies to Aeneas.

42 Scipio Africanus, the Roman general who defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 BC.

WHERE THE SAINTS' POWER AGAINST DEMONS COMES FROM, AND WHERE TRUE PURIFICATION OF THE HEART COMES FROM

Saints cast out demons by prayer to God, and are cleansed of sin only through Christ the mediator.

10.22 With true devotion, the men of God cast out the power of the air, which is hostile and opposed to devotion, by exorcising it, not by appeasing it. They overcome all the temptations of its hostility by praying, not to it, but to their God against it. For it conquers or subjugates no one except through partnership in sin. It is conquered, therefore, in the name of him who took humanity upon himself and lived without sin, so that in him, as priest and sacrifice, the forgiveness of sins might come about. That is, it is conquered through "the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus," through whom we are reconciled to God once purification from sins has been made. Nothing but sins separates human beings from God. In this life we are cleansed of them not by our own virtue but by divine mercy, through his forgiveness and not through our own power. For even that virtue we call ours, however small it may be, has been granted to us by his goodness. We would credit ourselves with a great deal while in this flesh if we did not live under pardon until we lay it aside. That is why grace has been given to us through the Mediator: so that we, defiled by the flesh of sin, might be cleansed by the likeness of the flesh of sin. By this grace of God, in which he has shown his great mercy toward us, we are guided by faith in this life. After this life, by the very sight of unchangeable truth, we shall be led to the fullest perfection.

THE PRINCIPLES IN WHICH THE PLATONISTS SAY THE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL CONSISTS

Porphyry's oracle says only the "principles"—the Father, the Son and one between them—can purify.

10.23 Porphyry also says that divine oracles gave the reply that we are not purified by the *teletae* [initiation rites] of the moon and the sun. This was meant to show that a human being cannot be purified by the rites of any gods. Whose rites could purify, if those of the moon and the sun do not, when these are the ones they hold to be chief among the heavenly gods? He then says that the same oracle declared that the "principles" can purify. This was added so that, once it had been said that the rites of the sun and moon do not purify, no one would believe that the rites of some other god from the crowd had the power to purify. We know what he, as a Platonist, means by the principles. He speaks of God the Father and God the Son, whom he calls in Greek the paternal intellect or paternal mind. About the Holy Spirit he says either nothing or nothing clearly, though I do not understand whom else he means by the one "in between these." If he too had wanted the third to be understood as the nature of the soul, as Plotinus does where he discusses the three principal substances, he would surely not call it "in between these," that is, between the Father and the Son. Plotinus, after all, places the nature of the soul after the paternal intellect. Porphyry, by contrast, in saying "in between," does not place it after but between. No doubt he was expressing, as best he could or as he wished, what we call the Holy Spirit, the Spirit not of the Father alone nor of the Son alone, but of both. Philosophers speak with free words, and in matters very hard to understand they have no fear of offending religious ears. But we must speak according to a fixed rule, so that license in words does not give rise to an impious opinion about the very things the words signify.[43]

43 Plotinus taught three principal realities: the One, Intellect and Soul.

THE ONE TRUE PRINCIPLE, WHICH ALONE PURIFIES AND RENEWS HUMAN NATURE

There is one Principle, not three; Porphyry refused to see that Christ in the flesh is that cleansing Principle.

10.24 So when we speak of God, we do not speak of two or three principles, just as we are not permitted to speak of two or three gods. Even so, when we speak of each one, the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that each individually is God. Yet we do not say, as the Sabellian heretics do, that the Father is the same as the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the same as the Father and the Son. We say that the Father is the Father of the Son, that the Son is the Son of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit, who is of the Father and the Son, is neither Father nor Son. It was therefore truly said that a human being is purified only by a Principle, even though among them "principles" were spoken of in the plural.[44]

But Porphyry was subject to envious powers. He was ashamed of them, yet afraid to refute them openly, and so he refused to understand that the Lord Christ is the Principle by whose incarnation we are purified. He despised Christ in the very flesh that Christ took on for the sacrifice of our purification. Because of his pride, of course, he failed to understand a great mystery, the very pride that the true and kindly Mediator cast down by his humility. Christ showed himself to mortals in that mortality which the malign and deceitful mediators lack. Because they lack it, they have exalted themselves all the more proudly, and, posing as immortals before mortals, they have promised wretched human beings a deceptive help. So the good and true Mediator showed that it is sin that is evil, not the substance or nature of the flesh. Together with a human soul, that flesh could be taken on and kept without sin, laid aside in death, and changed for the better by resurrection. He also showed that

44 The Sabellians, followers of Sabellius (3rd century AD), held that Father, Son and Spirit are merely modes of a single divine person.

death itself is not to be avoided by sinning, though death is the penalty of sin, a penalty he himself paid for us without sin. Rather, if the occasion arises, death is to be endured for the sake of justice. He was able to undo sins by dying precisely because he died, and did not die for any sin of his own. That Platonist did not recognize him as the Principle; if he had, he would have recognized him as the one who purifies. For neither the flesh nor the human soul is the Principle, but the Word, "through whom all things were made." So the flesh does not cleanse by itself, but through the Word by whom it was taken on, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."[45] When he was speaking in a mystical sense about eating his flesh, those who did not understand took offense and went away, saying: "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" He answered those who remained: "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing." So the Principle, having taken on a soul and flesh, cleanses both the soul and the flesh of believers. That is why, when the Jews asked him who he was, he answered that he was the Principle. We were carnal, weak, liable to sin and wrapped in the darkness of ignorance. We could never have grasped this unless he had cleansed and healed us through what we were and what we were not. For we were human, but we were not righteous. In his incarnation, however, there was human nature, but it was righteous, not sinful.[46] This is the mediation by which a hand was stretched out to those who had fallen and lay prostrate. This is "the seed ordained through angels," and through their proclamations the law was also given. In that law the one God was commanded to be worshiped, and this Mediator was promised as the one who would come.[47]

45 John 1:3 and 1:14.
46 John 6:60, 63 (6:61, 64 in the Vulgate); John 8:25, where Augustine's Latin reads *principium*, "the Beginning" or "the Principle."
47 Galatians 3:19.

THAT ALL THE SAINTS, BOTH UNDER THE LAW AND IN EARLIER AGES, WERE JUSTIFIED IN THE MYSTERY AND THE FAITH OF CHRIST

The righteous of old were saved by faith in Christ; a psalm traces the turn from earthly hopes.

10.25 By faith in this mystery even the righteous of old could be cleansed by living devout lives. This was true not only before the law was given to the Hebrew people, for they did not lack God or angels to proclaim it to them, but also in the times of the law itself. The law did seem to hold carnal promises as figures of spiritual realities, which is why it is called the Old Testament. Yet there were prophets then too, through whom, as through angels, the same promise was proclaimed. Among them was the one whose great and divine saying about the end of human good I quoted a little earlier: "But for me it is good to cling to God." In this very psalm the distinction between the two testaments, called the old and the new, is made quite clear. For he saw the wicked abounding in carnal and earthly promises. Because of this, he says, his feet had almost been shaken and his steps had nearly slipped into a fall. It seemed as if he had served God in vain, since he saw those who despised God flourishing in the very happiness he had expected from God. He says he had labored over this question, wanting to grasp why it was so, until he entered the sanctuary of God and understood the final end of those who, while he was going astray, had seemed happy to him. Then he understood that in exalting themselves, as he says, they had been cast down, and had failed and perished because of their iniquities. He saw that the whole summit of their temporal happiness had become for them like the dream of someone waking up, who suddenly finds himself robbed of the deceptive joys he had been dreaming of. And since they seemed great in their own eyes in this land, that is, in the earthly city, he says: "Lord, in your city you will bring their image to nothing." Yet he shows clearly enough that it was beneficial for him to seek even earthly things from the one true God alone, in whose power all things

are. He shows it where he says: "I became like a beast before you, and I am always with you." "Like a beast," he said, meaning, of course, without understanding. "For I ought to have desired from you the things I cannot share with the wicked. When I saw them abounding in these other things, I thought I had served you in vain, since even those who had refused to serve you had them. Yet I am always with you, for even in desiring such things I did not seek other gods." And so it follows: "You have held my right hand, and in your will you have guided me, and with glory you have taken me up." It is as if all those things belong to the left hand, the things he had seen abounding among the wicked when he nearly collapsed. "For what is there for me in heaven," he says, "and what have I wanted from you on earth?" He rebukes himself and was rightly displeased with himself. He had so great a good in heaven, as he understood afterward, and yet he had sought from his God on earth a transitory, fragile and, in a way, muddy happiness. "My heart and my flesh have failed," he says, "God of my heart." This is a good failing, of course, a failing away from lower things toward the things above. Hence another psalm says: "My soul longs and fails for the courts of the Lord." And yet another says: "My soul has failed for your salvation."[48] Yet although he had spoken of both, of the heart and of the flesh failing, he did not go on to say "God of my heart and my flesh," but "God of my heart." For it is through the heart that the flesh is cleansed. Hence the Lord says: "Cleanse what is inside, and what is outside will be clean." He then says that his portion is God himself, not something from God, but God himself. "God of my heart," he says, "and my portion is God forever." Among the many things that human beings choose, it pleased him to choose God himself. "For behold," he says, "those who put themselves far from you will perish; you have destroyed everyone who commits fornication away from you." That means whoever is willing to be the prostitute of many gods. Then follows the line for whose sake the rest of the psalm seemed worth discuss-

48 Psalm 83:3 (84:2 in most English Bibles) and Psalm 118:81 (119:81 in most English Bibles).

ing: "But for me it is good to cling to God." That is, not to go far away, not to commit fornication with a multitude.[49] Clinging to God will be perfect only when all that is to be set free has been set free. For now, what follows is what takes place: "to put my hope in God." For "hope that is seen is not hope," says the apostle; "for why would anyone hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." Since we are now set in this hope, let us do what follows. Let us too, in our small measure, be angels of God, that is, his messengers, announcing his will and praising his glory and grace. And so, after saying, "to put my hope in God," he goes on: "that I may proclaim all your praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion."[50] This is the most glorious city of God. This city knows and worships the one God. The holy angels have proclaimed it; they have invited us into its fellowship and wished us to be their fellow citizens in it. It does not please them that we should worship them as our gods, but that we should worship, together with them, their God and ours. Nor does it please them that we should sacrifice to them, but that together with them we should be a sacrifice to God. No one who considers these things and lays aside malign obstinacy can doubt it. All the happy immortals who do not envy us (for if they envied us, they would not be happy), but rather love us, so that we too may be happy with them, favor us more and help us more when we worship with them the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, than if we worshiped them with sacrifices.

THE INCONSISTENCY OF PORPHYRY, WAVERING BETWEEN CONFESSING THE TRUE GOD AND WORSHIPING DEMONS

Porphyry distinguishes angels from demons, yet still will not openly reject the demons the theurgists serve.

10.26 Somehow, as far as I can see, Porphyry was embarrassed before his friends the theurgists. He had some sort of grasp of

49 Compare Matthew 23:26.
50 Romans 8:24–25.

these truths, but he would not speak out freely against the worship of many gods. He said, in fact, that there are some angels who come down from above and proclaim divine things to theurgists, and others who on earth make known the things that are the Father's, his height and his depth. Are we then to believe that these angels, whose ministry is to make known the Father's will, want us to be subject to anyone except him whose will they announce to us? That is why even this Platonist himself gives the excellent advice that we should imitate them rather than invoke them. So we need not fear that, by not sacrificing to them, we will offend the immortal and happy beings who are subject to the one God. For they know that worship is owed to the one true God alone, the God by clinging to whom they too are happy. They certainly do not want it offered to themselves, either through any figure that signifies it or through the very reality that the sacraments signify. This arrogance belongs to demons, proud and wretched as they are. Far different is the piety of those who are subject to God and happy from no other source than by clinging to him. They must also favor us with sincere kindness so that we may attain that good. They must not claim for themselves that we should be subject to them, but must announce him under whom we may be joined with them in peace. Why are you still afraid, philosopher, to speak freely against powers that envy true virtues and the gifts of the true God? You have already distinguished the angels who announce the Father's will from those angels who come down to theurgists, drawn by who knows what art. Why do you still honor them so far as to say that they proclaim divine things? What divine things, after all, do they proclaim if they do not announce the Father's will? These are surely the ones whom an envious man bound with sacred prayers so that they would not grant purification to a soul. A good man who wished to purify that soul, as you tell it, could not release them from those bonds and restore them to their own power. Do you still doubt that these are malign demons? Or do you perhaps pretend not to know, because you do not want to offend the theurgists? It was from

them that you, deceived by curiosity, learned these pernicious and insane things as if they were a great benefit. Do you dare to lift this envious thing above the air into heaven? It is not a potency but a pestilence. I will not call it a mistress, but rather, as you yourself admit, the handmaid of the envious. Do you dare to place it among your gods, even the starry ones, or else to disgrace the stars themselves with these infamies?[51]

THE IMPIETY OF PORPHYRY, BY WHICH HE GOES BEYOND EVEN THE ERROR OF APULEIUS

Apuleius kept the higher gods free of passions; Porphyry lifts human vices into heaven and sends people to theurgists.

10.27 How much more humanely and tolerably your fellow Platonist Apuleius erred! He held that only the demons, ranked from the moon downward, are agitated by diseased passions and turmoil of mind. He honored them, it is true, but willingly or unwillingly he admitted this. The higher gods of heaven, however, who belong to the ethereal regions, he set apart from every stain of these disturbances with all the argument he could muster. That held whether they were visible gods, which he saw shining plainly, such as the sun and moon and the other lights there, or invisible ones, which he supposed to exist. But you learned this not from Plato but from your Chaldean teachers: to raise human vices into the ethereal or empyrean heights of the world and the heavenly firmament, so that your gods could proclaim divine things to theurgists. Yet you make yourself higher than these divine things through the intellectual life. So to you, as a philosopher, the purifications of the theurgic art evidently seem by no means necessary. Still, you press them on others, and so pay your teachers a kind of fee. You lure those who cannot do philosophy into these things, which you admit are useless to you as one capable of higher ones. The result, evidently, is this. All who are far removed from the virtue of philosophy,

51 Augustine refers to Porphyry's story, cited in 10.9, of a man whose attempt to purify a soul was blocked by an envious rival who bound the powers with spells.

which is very arduous and belongs to few, seek out theurgists on your authority, to be purified by them. They are not purified in the intellectual soul, indeed, but at least in the spiritual soul. And since those who find philosophizing tedious are incomparably more numerous, more people are driven to your secret and illicit teachers than to the Platonic schools.[52] The most unclean demons pretend to be ethereal gods, and you have become their herald and angel. This is what they have promised you: those purified in the spiritual soul by the theurgic art do not, it is true, return to the Father, but they will dwell above the regions of the air among the ethereal gods. The multitude of human beings whom Christ came to free from the domination of demons does not listen to such things. For in him they have the most merciful purification of their mind, spirit and body alike. It was for this very reason that he took on the whole human being, without sin: to heal from the plague of sins the whole of what a human being consists of. If only you too had known him, and had entrusted yourself to him for healing! That would have been safer than trusting either your own virtue, which is human, frail and weak, or your most pernicious curiosity. He would not have deceived you. Your own oracles, as you yourself write, acknowledged him as holy and immortal. The most renowned of poets also spoke of him. He spoke poetically, to be sure, since he sketched it in the person of another, yet truly, if you apply it to Christ: "Under your leadership, whatever traces of our crime remain will be made void and will free the lands from perpetual fear." He said what can remain, because of the weakness of this life, even in those who are making great progress in the virtue of righteousness. If not crimes, then still the traces of crimes may remain, and these are healed only by the Savior of whom this verse was composed. Virgil indicates that he did not say this on his own account, in about the fourth line of that eclogue, where he says: "Now has come the last age of the Cumaean song." From

52 The Chaldean Oracles, a 2nd-century AD collection of verse oracles, were the founding text of theurgy and were treated by later Platonists as revelation.

this it is plain beyond doubt that the Cumaean Sibyl said it.[53] But those theurgists, or rather the demons who counterfeit the appearances and shapes of gods, defile the human spirit rather than purify it. They do so with the falsehood of phantasms and the deceptive mockery of empty forms. How could they purify a human being's spirit when their own is unclean? Otherwise they would never be bound by the spells of an envious man. Nor would they either withhold out of fear the empty benefit they seemed about to grant, or refuse it out of a like envy. It is enough that you say the intellectual soul, that is, our mind, cannot be purified by theurgic purification. You assert that the spiritual soul, the part of our soul lower than the mind, can be purified by such an art. Yet you admit that this art cannot make it immortal and eternal. Christ, however, promises eternal life. That is why the world flocks to him, while you people fume, yet also marvel and stand amazed. You could not deny that people go astray through the discipline of theurgy, and that very many are deceived by blind and foolish opinion. You admitted that it is a most certain error to run to principalities and angels with rites and supplications. What good is it, then, that you go on to send people back to the theurgists, as if not to seem to have wasted your effort in learning these things? You send them so that, through the theurgists, the spiritual soul of those who do not live according to the intellectual soul may be purified.

THE ARGUMENTS THAT BLINDED PORPHYRY SO THAT HE COULD NOT RECOGNIZE THE TRUE WISDOM, WHICH IS CHRIST

Porphyry admits theurgy is useless for the mind, yet despises Christ, the wisdom of God, for his cross.

10.28 So you send people into a most certain error. You are not ashamed of so great an evil, even though you profess to be a

53 Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.13–14 and 4.4. The poem, written in 40 BC, foretells a child who will bring a golden age, and Christians read it as a prophecy of Christ. The Sibyl of Cumae, near Naples, was a famous prophetess.

lover of virtue and wisdom. Had you loved them truly and faithfully, you would have recognized Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. You would not have recoiled from his most wholesome humility, puffed up with the swelling of empty knowledge. Yet you admit that even the spiritual soul can be purified by the virtue of self-restraint, without theurgic arts and without the *teletae* [initiation rites] that you labored in vain to learn. At times you even say that the *teletae* do not lift the soul up after death. So they seem to be of no use after the end of this life, even to that very soul you call spiritual. And yet you turn these matters over in many ways and keep repeating them. As far as I can judge, your only purpose is to appear expert in such things as well, and to please those who are curious about illicit arts, or to make people curious about them yourself. But it is good that you say this art is to be feared, both for the dangers of the law and for the dangers of the practice itself. If only the wretched would at least hear this from you! Then they might withdraw from it before they are swallowed up there, or never approach it at all. You certainly say that no *teletae* purge ignorance and the many vices it causes. Only the πατρικὸν νοῦν can do so, that is, the Father's mind or intellect, which is conscious of the Father's will. But you do not believe that this is Christ. You despise him because of the body he received from a woman and because of the shame of the cross. No doubt you think yourself fit to pluck lofty wisdom from on high, having spurned and cast away the lowliest things. But he fulfills what the holy prophets truly foretold of him: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject." He does not destroy and reject in them his own wisdom, which he himself gave. He destroys the wisdom that those who do not have his claim for themselves.[54] So after citing this prophetic testimony the apostle goes on to say: "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the

54 Isaiah 29:14, quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:19.

world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek wisdom; but we," he says, "preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; for the foolishness of God is wiser than human beings, and the weakness of God is stronger than human beings." Those who are wise and strong, supposedly by their own power, despise this as foolish and weak. But this is the grace that heals the weak. It does not heal those who proudly boast of their false happiness, but rather those who humbly confess their true misery.[55]

THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH THE IMPIETY OF THE PLATONISTS IS ASHAMED TO CONFESS

The Platonists glimpse the homeland but refuse the way, the humble incarnation of the Son of God.

10.29 You proclaim the Father and his Son, whom you call the Father's intellect or mind. You also proclaim a middle term between them, by whom we suppose you mean the Holy Spirit. In your fashion you call them three gods. Here, although you people use undisciplined language, you still see in some fashion where one must strive to go, as through certain shadowy outlines of a faint imagination. But you refuse to acknowledge the incarnation of the unchangeable Son of God. By it we are saved, so that we can come to the things we believe or understand, in however small a part. So you see, after a fashion, the homeland in which we must abide, though from afar and with clouded sight, but you do not hold to the way by which we must go. Yet you acknowledge grace, since you say that it has been granted to few to reach God by the virtue of the intellect. You do not say "It pleased few" or "Few wished." When you say "it has been granted," you are surely acknowledging the grace of God, not human

55 1 Corinthians 1:20–25.

sufficiency. You use this word even more openly where you follow Plato's view. You yourself do not doubt that in this life a human being can in no way attain the perfection of wisdom. Yet you hold that for those who live according to the intellect, whatever is lacking can be completed after this life by the providence and grace of God. Oh, if you had known the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, you could have seen that his very incarnation, in which he took on a human soul and body, is the supreme example of grace! But what am I to do? I know that I speak in vain to a dead man, as far as you are concerned. But some think highly of you and love you, whether from some kind of love of wisdom or from curiosity about the arts that you ought not to have learned. It is really they whom I address in addressing you, and as far as they are concerned, perhaps I do not speak in vain. The grace of God could not have been commended more graciously than by this. The only Son of God himself, remaining unchangeably in himself, clothed himself with humanity. Through a human mediator he gave human beings the hope of his love, by which they might come to him. He was so far off from them: the immortal from mortals, the unchangeable from the changeable, the just from the ungodly, the happy from the wretched. He has implanted in us by nature the desire to be happy and immortal. And so, remaining happy while taking on what is mortal, he gave us what we love, and by suffering he taught us to despise what we fear.

But for you to accept this truth, humility was needed, and that is extremely hard to press upon your stiff necks. For what incredible thing is being said, especially to you? Your own views ought to remind you to believe this. What incredible thing, I say, is being said to you when it is said that God took on a human soul and body? You certainly attribute so much to the intellectual soul, which is surely a human soul, that you say it can become consubstantial with that paternal mind which you acknowledge to be the Son of God. What then is incredible if one particular intellectual soul was taken up, in an ineffable and unique way, for the salvation of many? And our own nature

bears witness that a body is joined to a soul, so that a human being is whole and complete. If this were not so very ordinary, it would surely be the more incredible thing. It is easier to accept in faith that spirit should be joined to spirit than that a body should be joined to the incorporeal. That holds even when the one spirit is human and the other divine, the one changeable and the other unchangeable. In the terms you are accustomed to use, the incorporeal is joined to the incorporeal. Or perhaps you are offended by the unusual birth of a body from a virgin? This ought not to offend you either. Rather, the fact that the wonderful one was wonderfully born ought to lead you to embrace piety. Or perhaps you refuse to believe that he laid aside that very body in death, changed it for the better by resurrection, and carried it, now incorruptible and no longer mortal, up to the heavens? Perhaps you look to Porphyry. In the very books *On the Return of the Soul*, from which I have quoted much, he teaches so often that every body must be fled if the soul is to remain happy with God.[56] But it was rather Porphyry himself who needed correcting for holding such views. This is especially so since you, along with him, believe such incredible things about the soul of this visible world and its enormous bodily mass. On Plato's authority you say that the world is a living being, and a most happy living being, which you also want to be everlasting. How then will it never be released from its body and never lack happiness, if every body must be fled for a soul to be happy? You also acknowledge in your books that the sun and the other stars are bodies, and all people readily see and say this along with you. But you go further. By what you consider a higher expertise, you declare that they are most happy living beings, everlasting together with these bodies. Why is it, then, that when the Christian faith is urged upon you, you forget or pretend not to know what you usually argue or teach? Because of opinions that you yourselves contradict, you refuse to be Christians. What reason is there for this, except that Christ came

56 Porphyry's *On the Return of the Soul* survives only in fragments, many of them preserved in this book of Augustine.

in humility and you are proud? What the bodies of the saints will be like in the resurrection can be debated somewhat more minutely among those most learned in the Christian Scriptures. But we have no doubt at all that they will be everlasting, and that they will be like the example Christ showed in his own resurrection. Whatever they may be like, they are proclaimed to be wholly incorruptible and immortal, and in no way to hinder the soul's contemplation, by which it is fixed on God. You yourselves also say that in the heavens there are immortal bodies belonging to beings who are immortally happy. Why then do you hold that every body must be fled for us to be happy, so that you may seem to flee the Christian faith on rational grounds? Is it not for the reason I give once again: Christ is humble, and you are proud? Or perhaps you are ashamed to be corrected? This too is a vice found only in the proud. Of course, learned men are ashamed to pass from being disciples of Plato to being disciples of Christ. Yet by his Spirit Christ taught a fisherman to understand and to say: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of human beings; and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." This is the beginning of the holy Gospel entitled "According to John." A certain Platonist used to say that it ought to be written in letters of gold and set up in the most prominent places in all the churches. We often heard this from the holy old man Simplicianus, who later presided over the church of Milan as bishop.[57] But that God, the teacher, became contemptible to the proud precisely because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." So it is not enough for these wretched people that they are sick. They must also exalt themselves in their very sickness and be ashamed of the medicine by which they could have been healed. They do not do

57 John 1:1–5. Simplicianus guided Augustine before his conversion (*Confessions* 8) and succeeded Ambrose as bishop of Milan in AD 397.

this to be raised up, but only to be struck down more heavily by their fall.[58]

HOW MANY OF PLATO'S DOCTRINES PORPHYRY REFUTED AND CORRECTED BY DISAGREEING

Porphyry corrected Plato on souls returning as beasts and on endless cycles of return.

10.30 If it is thought improper to correct anything after Plato, why did Porphyry himself correct several points, and no small ones? It is quite certain that Plato wrote that human souls return after death even into the bodies of beasts. Plotinus, Porphyry's teacher, also held this view, but Porphyry rightly rejected it. He did believe that human souls return into human bodies, though not the ones they had left behind but other, new bodies. Evidently he was ashamed to believe the first view, in case a mother, returned as a mule, might carry her own son on her back. Yet he was not ashamed to believe the second, in which a mother, returned as a girl, might perhaps marry her son. How much more honorable it is to believe what the holy and truthful angels have taught, what the prophets moved by the Spirit of God have spoken, and what he himself taught, the Savior whose coming was foretold by messengers sent ahead of him. It is also what the apostles he sent taught, who filled the whole world with the gospel. How much more honorable, I say, to believe that souls return once to their own bodies than that they return so many times to different ones! Nevertheless, as I said, Porphyry was corrected on this opinion to a great extent. He held at least that human souls can be cast down only into human beings, and he had no hesitation in tearing down those prisons in the bodies of beasts. He also says that God gave the soul to the world so that, recognizing the evils of matter, it might hasten back to the Father and never again be held fast by the polluting contact of such things. Here his thinking is somewhat off the mark: the soul was given to the body rather so that it might do good, since

58 John 1:14.

it would not learn evil if it did not do evil. Yet on this point he corrected the opinion of the other Platonists, and in no small matter. He acknowledged that a soul cleansed of all evils and established with the Father will never again suffer the evils of this world. By this view he certainly did away with what is said to be most characteristically Platonic: that just as the dead come from the living, so the living always come from the dead. He also showed to be false what Virgil seems to have said in Platonic fashion. According to Virgil, the purified souls sent into the Elysian Fields are summoned to the river Lethe, that is, to forgetfulness of the past. The Elysian Fields are a name by which, as in a fable, the joys of the blessed seem to be signified. The souls are summoned "so that, forgetting, they may see again the vault above and begin once more to wish to return into bodies."[59] Porphyry rightly rejected this. It is truly foolish to believe that souls in that life should long for the taint of corruptible bodies and return from there to the things of this world. That life could not be supremely happy unless it were utterly certain of its own eternity. It would be as if the highest purification had the effect of making defilement sought again. For suppose being perfectly cleansed makes them forget all evils, and forgetting evils produces a longing for bodies, in which they are entangled in evils once again. Then supreme happiness will be the cause of unhappiness, the perfection of wisdom the cause of folly, and the highest cleansing the cause of uncleanness. Nor will the soul be truly happy there, however long it stays, if it must be deceived in order to be happy. For it will not be happy unless it is secure. But to be secure, it will have to think falsely that it will always be happy, since at some point it will also be miserable. If falsehood, then, is to be its reason for rejoicing, how will it rejoice in the truth? Porphyry saw this. He said that the purified soul returns to the Father so that it may never again be held fast by the polluting contact of evils. Some Platonists, then, were wrong to believe that this cycle of departing from the same things and returning to the same things is somehow necessary.

59 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.750–751, from Anchises' account of the souls in the underworld.

Even if it were true, what good would it do to know it? Perhaps the Platonists would dare to rank themselves above us on that account. We, in this life, would already be ignorant of this cycle. They themselves, utterly purified and utterly wise, would be ignorant of it in another and better life, and would be happy by believing what is false. If it is utterly absurd and foolish to say this, then Porphyry's view is certainly to be preferred. It must win over those who have imagined a cycle of souls in which happiness and misery forever alternate. If this is so, here is a Platonist disagreeing with Plato for the better. Here is one who saw what Plato did not see. After so great and eminent a teacher, he did not shrink from correction, but put the truth before the man.

AGAINST THE ARGUMENT OF THE PLATONISTS BY WHICH THEY CLAIM THE HUMAN SOUL IS COETERNAL WITH GOD

Against the Platonists, the soul is not coeternal with God; a happiness can begin in time and never end.

10.31 Why then do we not rather believe the divine word on matters that we cannot investigate with human intelligence? That word says that the soul itself, too, is not coeternal with God but was created, when before it did not exist. The Platonists refused to believe this, and they thought they were offering a sufficient reason. Their reason was that nothing could be everlasting from now on unless it had always existed before. And yet Plato speaks of the world, and of the beings in it that he writes were made gods by God. He says quite plainly that they began to be and have a beginning, but that they will have no end. He maintains that they will remain forever through the most powerful will of their maker. But the Platonists have found a way to interpret this: namely, that this is a beginning not in time but of dependence on a cause.[60] For, they say, suppose a foot had been in the dust from eternity. There would always be a footprint beneath it.

60 Plato, *Timaeus* 41a–b, where the maker tells the created gods that they are not immortal by nature but will never be dissolved, because of his will.

Yet no one would doubt that the footprint was made by the one treading, nor would one be prior to the other, although one was made by the other. In the same way, they say, the world and the gods created in it have always existed, since their maker has always existed, and yet they were made. Must we then say that, if the soul has always existed, its misery too has always existed? Further, something in the soul that did not exist from eternity began to exist in time. If so, why could it not be that the soul itself came to be in time, though it had not existed before? Then too, there is its happiness after the experience of evils, which is firmer and destined to last without end, as this man acknowledges. That happiness undoubtedly began in time, and yet it will always exist, though it did not exist before. So that whole line of argument collapses. It held that nothing can be without an end in time except what has no beginning in time. For a happiness of the soul has been found which had a beginning in time but will have no end in time. Therefore let human weakness give way to divine authority. Concerning the true religion, let us believe those happy and immortal beings who do not seek for themselves the honor that they know is owed to their God, who is ours as well. They do not command us to offer sacrifice except to him alone. As I have often said and must often say, we, together with them, ought to be his sacrifice. We are offered through that priest who willed to be a priest in the humanity he took on. In that humanity he also deigned to become a sacrifice for us, even to the point of death.

THE UNIVERSAL WAY OF THE SOUL'S DELIVERANCE, WHICH PORPHYRY DID NOT FIND BECAUSE HE SOUGHT IT WRONGLY, AND WHICH THE GRACE OF CHRIST ALONE HAS OPENED

Porphyry admitted there must be a universal way of freeing the soul; it is the Christian religion.

10.32 This is the religion that contains the universal way for the liberation of the soul, since by no other way can the soul be liberated. In a sense, this is the royal road, which alone leads to the

kingdom. That kingdom does not totter on a temporal height but is secure in the firmness of eternity. Near the end of the first book of his *On the Return of the Soul*, Porphyry says that no single school has yet been received that contains the universal way for the liberation of the soul. He means no school from some most true philosophy, from the customs and discipline of the Indians, from the initiation of the Chaldeans, or by any other way. He adds that this way has not yet been brought to his knowledge through historical knowledge. When he says this, he undoubtedly acknowledges that such a way exists, but that it has not yet come to his knowledge. So whatever he had most zealously learned about the liberation of the soul was not enough for him. He seemed to himself, or rather to others, to know and hold it, but it did not satisfy him. For he felt that he still lacked some supremely excellent authority that ought to be followed on so great a matter. He says that no school containing the universal way for the liberation of the soul has yet come to his knowledge, even from some most true philosophy. In my judgment, this shows clearly enough one of two things. Either the philosophy in which he himself practiced philosophy is not the truest, or such a way is not contained in it. And how can it be the truest if this way is not contained in it? For what other way is universal for the liberation of the soul than the one by which all souls are liberated? Without that way, therefore, no soul is liberated. Then he adds: "or from the customs and discipline of the Indians, or from the initiation of the Chaldeans, or by any other way." With this he testifies in the plainest words that this universal way of liberating the soul is not contained in what he had learned from the Indians. Nor is it contained in what he had learned from the Chaldeans. And he certainly could not keep silent about having taken from the Chaldeans the divine oracles which he mentions constantly. What, then, does he want us to understand by this universal way of liberating the soul? He says it has not yet been received from some most true philosophy, nor from the teachings of those nations which were reckoned great, as it were, in divine matters. They were so reckoned

because curiosity had greater power among them to learn about and worship angels of every kind. He also says it has not yet been brought to his knowledge by historical knowledge. What is this universal way, if not one that is not the private possession of each nation? It must be one that has been imparted by God to be common to all nations. And this man, endowed with no mean intellect, has no doubt that such a way exists. For he does not believe that divine providence could have left the human race without this universal way of liberating the soul. He does not say that it does not exist. He says only that this great good and this great help has not yet been received and has not yet been brought to his knowledge. That is no wonder. Porphyry lived at the time when this universal way of liberating the soul, which is none other than the Christian religion, was permitted to be attacked. The worshipers of idols and demons and the earthly kings attacked it. This was allowed so that the number of the martyrs, that is, the witnesses to the truth, might be established and consecrated. Through them it would be shown that all bodily evils must be endured for the faith of true godliness and for commending the truth. Porphyry saw these things and thought that persecutions of this kind would soon destroy this way. He concluded that it was therefore not the universal way of liberating the soul. He did not understand that the very thing that troubled him actually served to confirm it and to commend it more strongly. He feared to suffer that persecution if he chose this way, but it worked in the way's favor.

This, then, is the universal way of liberating the soul, that is, the way granted to all nations by divine mercy. Knowledge of it has already come to some and will come to others. No one should ever have asked of it, nor should anyone ask, "Why now?" or "Why so late?" The plan of the one who sends it cannot be penetrated by human intelligence. Porphyry himself sensed as much when he said that this gift of God had not yet been received and had not yet been brought to his knowledge. He did not judge it untrue just because it had not yet been received into his belief or had not yet come to his knowledge. This, I say, is the

universal way for the liberation of believers. Faithful Abraham received the divine oracle about it: "In your seed all nations shall be blessed."[61] Abraham was indeed a Chaldean by race. But he was commanded to leave his land, his kindred and his father's house, so that he might receive such promises. Through him would be propagated the seed "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator," in whom this universal way of liberating the soul would be found, that is, the way given to all nations. Then, first set free from the superstitions of the Chaldeans, he followed and worshiped the one true God, and he believed him faithfully when God made these promises. This is the universal way of which holy prophecy says: "May God have mercy on us and bless us. May he make his face shine upon us and have mercy on us, that we may know your way on earth, your salvation among all nations." Hence, so long afterward, the Savior took flesh from the seed of Abraham. He himself says of himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life."[62] This is the universal way of which it was foretold so long before: "In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be made manifest, established on the tops of the mountains, and it will be raised above the hills. All nations will come to it, and many peoples will enter and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob. He will announce his way to us, and we will walk in it.' For out of Zion will go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This way, then, does not belong to one nation but to all nations. The law and the word of the Lord did not remain in Zion and Jerusalem but went out from there to spread throughout the whole world. That is why the mediator himself, after his resurrection, said to his frightened disciples: "Everything written about me in the law and the prophets and the psalms had to be fulfilled."[63] Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He told them

61 Genesis 22:18.
62 Galatians 3:19; Genesis 12:1; Psalm 66:2–3 (67:1–2 in most English Bibles); John 14:6.
63 Isaiah 2:2–3; Luke 24:44.

that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. He also told them that repentance and the forgiveness of sins had to be preached in his name among all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. This, then, is the universal way of liberating the soul. The holy angels and the holy prophets first signified it among the few people who found the grace of God where they could. Above all, they did so in the Hebrew nation, whose commonwealth was in a sense consecrated to prophesying and foretelling the city of God, which was to be gathered from all nations. They signified this way by the tabernacle, the temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices. They also foretold it in certain utterances, some plain and most of them mystical. Then the mediator himself, present in the flesh, and his blessed apostles revealed the grace of the new covenant. They made known more openly what had been signified somewhat more obscurely in earlier times. This followed the division of the ages of the human race, as it pleased the wise God to order it. And signs of wonderful divine works bore witness to it; I have already set out a few of them above.[64] For it was not only that angelic visions appeared and the words of heavenly ministers alone were heard. Men of God also acted by the word of God in simple godliness. Through them unclean spirits were driven out of human bodies and senses, and bodily defects and illnesses were healed. Wild animals of land and water, birds of the sky, trees, elements and stars carried out divine commands. The powers of the underworld gave way, and the dead came back to life. And this is not to mention the Savior's own unique miracles, above all those of his birth and his resurrection. In the one he revealed only the mystery of a mother's virginity. In the other he also gave an example for those who are to rise at the end. This way cleanses the whole human being and prepares the mortal for immortality in all the parts of which he consists. One purification need not be sought for the part that Porphyry calls intellectual, another for the part he calls spiritual, and another for the body itself. For that reason the most truthful and most powerful

64 Luke 24:45–47.

cleanser and Savior took on the whole human being. This way has never been lacking to the human race. At times it was there as these things were foretold as future, at times as they were announced as done. Apart from this way no one has been liberated, no one is being liberated, no one will be liberated.

THE HISTORY THAT FORETELLS

Scripture's history is the most trustworthy, since its many fulfilled prophecies guarantee the rest.

Porphyry says that the universal way of liberating the soul had not yet been brought to his knowledge by historical knowledge. But what history can be found more illustrious than this one, which has taken hold of the whole world with such supreme authority? And what history is more trustworthy? In it past events are narrated in such a way that future ones are also foretold. Many of those we see fulfilled, so that from them we may hope without doubt that the rest will be fulfilled. In this way too, neither Porphyry nor any Platonist whatever can despise its divination and prediction as if they concerned earthly things belonging to this mortal life. They rightly do so with other prophecies and with divinations of every method or art. They say that these things are neither the concern of great men nor of great importance, and rightly so. Such predictions arise in one of two ways. Either they come from foresight of lower causes, as in the art of medicine much that will happen to someone's health is foreseen from certain preceding signs. Or else unclean demons announce beforehand what they themselves have arranged to do. In a sense, they claim for themselves a right over the minds and desires of the wicked, to lead them to deeds that suit them. They claim it also over the lowest matter of human frailty. Holy men walking on this universal way of liberating souls did not trouble to prophesy such things as if they were great. Such things did not escape them either, and they often foretold them to create belief in other things. Those other things could not be conveyed to mortal senses, nor brought quickly

and easily to the test of experience. But there were other things, truly great and divine, which they announced as future, as far as it was granted them, once they knew the will of God. For the scriptures of this way foretold and promised Christ, who was to come in the flesh. They foretold the glorious things accomplished in him and fulfilled in his name. These include the repentance of human beings and the turning of their wills to God, the forgiveness of sins, and the grace of righteousness. They include the faith of the godly and the multitude throughout the whole world believing in the true divinity. They include the overthrow of the worship of idols and demons, and testing by temptations. They include the purification of those who make progress and their deliverance from all evil. They include the day of judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal damnation of the company of the ungodly. Last, they include the eternal kingdom of the most glorious city of God, immortally enjoying the sight of him. So many of these things we see fulfilled that we trust, with right devotion, that the rest will come to pass. This way runs straight all the way to seeing God and cleaving to him forever. Its straightness is proclaimed and affirmed in the truth of the holy scriptures. Whoever does not believe that truth, and therefore does not understand it, can assail this way but cannot storm it.

So in these ten books I have refuted the objections of the ungodly, who prefer their gods to the founder of the holy city that I set out to discuss. I have done this as far as the true God and Lord has deigned to help me. The books fall short of what some expected of me, but they have satisfied the eagerness of certain others. Of these ten books, the first five were written against those who think the gods should be worshiped for the sake of the goods of this life. The last five were written against those who hold that the worship of the gods should be kept up for the sake of the life to come after death. From here on, then, as I promised in the first book, I shall set out what I think must be said about the two cities. As I have said, they are entangled and intermingled with each other in this world. I shall treat

their origin, their progress and their appointed ends, as far as I am helped by God.

Book XI

The beginnings of the two cities
Creation, time, the angels, and the fall of some angels as the origin of the two cities.

THE PART OF THE WORK IN WHICH THE ORIGINS AND ENDS OF THE TWO CITIES, THE HEAVENLY AND THE EARTHLY, BEGIN TO BE SHOWN

Scripture testifies to the city of God; Augustine turns to the two cities' origins among the angels.

11.1 We speak of the city of God, to which that Scripture bears witness which has brought every kind of human intellect under its sway. It surpasses the writings of all nations by its divine authority, and it does so not by chance impulses of human minds but plainly by the ordering of supreme providence. For there it is written: "Glorious things have been spoken of you, city of God." In another psalm we read: "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, on his holy mountain, spreading joy over the whole earth." A little later in the same psalm: "As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; God has founded it forever." And again in another: "The rush of the river gladdens the city of God; the Most High has sanctified his tabernacle; God is in its midst, it will not be moved."[1] From these and similar testimonies, which it would take too long to list in full, we have learned that there is a certain city of God. We long to be its cit-

1 Psalms 86:3; 47:2–3 and 47:9; 45:5–6 (87:3; 48:1–2 and 48:8; 46:4–5 in most English Bibles).

izens with that love which its founder has breathed into us. The citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods to this founder of the holy city. They do not know that he is the God of gods. He is not the God of false gods, that is, of impious and proud ones. These gods have been deprived of his unchangeable light, which is common to all, and have therefore been reduced to a kind of beggarly power. So they chase after what are, in a way, their own private powers, and seek divine honors from the subjects they have deceived. He is the God of pious and holy gods, who delight to subject themselves to one rather than many to themselves, and to worship God rather than to be worshiped in place of God. But we have already answered the enemies of this holy city in the ten preceding books, as far as we could, with the help of our Lord and King. Now, however, I recognize what is expected of me, and I have not forgotten my debt. I shall therefore undertake to discuss, as well as I am able, the origin, progress and due ends of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly. As I have said, in this present age they are in a certain way entangled and mixed with each other. I shall rely throughout on the help of that same Lord and King of ours. First I shall explain how the beginnings of these two cities came first, in the division among the angels.

KNOWING GOD, WHOM NO ONE COMES TO KNOW EXCEPT THROUGH THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

God speaks to the mind by truth itself; Christ, God and man, is the only way to him.

11.2 It is a great and very rare thing for someone to consider the whole of creation, bodily and non-bodily, and find it changeable. It is rarer still for that person to rise beyond it by the effort of the mind and arrive at the unchangeable substance of God, and there to learn from God himself that all nature which is not what he is was made by none other than himself. For in this way God does not speak with a human being through some bodily creature, sounding in bodily ears so that the spaces of air

between speaker and hearer are struck. Nor does he speak through a spiritual creature of the kind that is shaped in the likenesses of bodies, as in dreams or in some other such way. Even then he speaks as if to the ears of the body, since he speaks as if through a body and as if across an interval of bodily space, for such visions are very like bodies. Rather, he speaks by truth itself, if anyone is fit to hear with the mind, not with the body. For he speaks in this way to that part of a human being which is better than all the other parts of which a human being consists, and than which God alone is better. A human being is most rightly understood to have been made in the image of God, or, if that is beyond someone, is at least believed to have been. Certainly, then, a person is nearer to the God above by that part of himself by which he surpasses his lower parts, which he shares even with the beasts. But the mind itself, in which reason and understanding are naturally present, is weakened by certain dark and long-standing vices. It is too weak not only to cling to the unchangeable light in enjoyment, but even to endure it, until it is renewed and healed from day to day and becomes capable of such great happiness. It therefore had first to be steeped in faith and purified. So that the mind might walk toward truth with greater confidence in this faith, the Truth himself, God the Son of God, established and founded this same faith. He took up humanity without giving up his deity, so that there might be a way for man to man's God through the God who is man. For this is "the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus." He is mediator by being man, and by being man he is also the way. If there is a way lying between the one who travels and the place to which he travels, there is hope of arriving. But if there is no way, or if one does not know which way to go, what use is it to know where one must go? The only way that is fully secure against all errors is for one and the same person to be both God and man: God where we are going, man by which we go.[2]

2 1 Timothy 2:5.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CANONICAL SCRIPTURE, COMPOSED BY THE DIVINE SPIRIT

Things beyond our senses must be learned from trusted witnesses, above all canonical Scripture.

11.3 He spoke first through the prophets, then in his own person, and later through the apostles, as much as he judged sufficient. He also established the Scripture that is called canonical, which has the highest authority. We place our faith in it concerning things that it is not good for us to be ignorant of and that we are not able to know by ourselves. Some things can be known on our own testimony, namely those that are not remote from our senses, whether inner or outer. That is why they are called "present": we say they are *prae sensibus* [before the senses], just as things are *prae oculis* [before the eyes] when they are at hand to the eyes. But we cannot know on our own testimony the things that are remote from our senses. About these we look for other witnesses, and we believe those from whose senses we do not believe these things are or were remote. About visible things that we have not seen, then, we believe those who have seen them, and the same holds for the objects of each of the other bodily senses. In the same way, it is right for us to believe others about the things perceived by the soul and mind. This too is most rightly called a sense, which is how the word *sententia* [judgment] got its name. These are invisible things, remote from our inner sense. About them we ought to believe those who have learned them as they are set forth in that non-bodily light, or who behold them as they abide there.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, WHICH IS NEITHER TIMELESS NOR ORDAINED BY A NEW DECISION OF GOD, AS IF HE LATER WILLED WHAT HE HAD NOT WILLED BEFORE

The world proclaims it was made by God; the question is why at that time and not earlier.

11.4 The greatest of all visible things is the world; the greatest of all invisible things is God. But we see that the world exists; we believe that God exists. And no one is safer to believe about God's making the world than God himself. Where have we heard him? For now, nowhere better than in the holy Scriptures, where his prophet said: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." Was this prophet there when God made heaven and earth? No. But the wisdom of God was there, through which all things were made. That wisdom also passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets, and it tells them of its works inwardly, without any noise. The angels of God also speak to them, who always see the face of the Father and announce his will to those who should hear it. One of these was this prophet, who said and wrote: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth."[3] He is so fit a witness to bring us to believe God that he foretold, so long beforehand, this very faith of ours that was yet to come. He did so by the same Spirit of God by which he knew these things had been revealed to him.

But why did it please the eternal God to make heaven and earth at that particular time, when he had not made them before? Some who ask this want the world to be thought eternal, without any beginning, and therefore not made by God. They have turned far away from the truth and rave with the deadly disease of impiety. For quite apart from the voices of the prophets, the world itself proclaims, silently in a way, that it was made. Through its perfectly ordered change and movement and through the supreme beauty of all visible things, it proclaims that it could have been made only by God, who is great beyond

3 Genesis 1:1. The prophet is Moses, traditionally held to be the author of Genesis.

words and beyond sight, and beautiful beyond words and beyond sight. Others admit that the world was made by God, yet want it to have a beginning not of time but only of its creation, so that in some scarcely intelligible way it has always been made. They do say something by which they think they defend God against a charge of random rashness. On their view no one should believe that the idea of making the world suddenly came into his mind, though it had never come there before, or that he acquired a new will, since he is in no respect changeable at all. But I do not see how this reasoning of theirs can hold up in other matters, and above all in the case of the soul. If they contend that the soul is coeternal with God, they will be utterly unable to explain where its new misery came from, a misery that had never befallen it before through all eternity.[4] Suppose they say that its misery and happiness have always alternated. Then they must also say that they will always alternate. From this follows an absurdity. Even when the soul is called happy, it is surely not happy in this respect, if it foresees its future misery and disgrace. And if it does not foresee them, and supposes that it will never be disgraced and miserable but will always be happy, then its happiness rests on a false belief. Nothing more foolish than that can be said. Suppose instead they think that the soul's misery has indeed alternated with happiness through infinite ages past, but that from now on, once it has been set free, it will not return to misery. Then they are nonetheless proved to hold that it was never truly happy before, and that from now on it begins to enjoy a new happiness, one that does not deceive. And so they will admit that something new happens to it, and something great and splendid, which had never happened to it through all eternity past. If they deny that God held the cause of this new thing in his eternal plan, they will at the same time deny that he is the author of the soul's happiness, which is an abominable impiety. But if they say that he too devised a new plan, that the soul should be happy forever from then on, how

4 Augustine has in mind Platonist philosophers who read Plato's *Timaeus* as teaching that the world depends on God without having begun in time.

will they show that he is free from the changeability that they too reject? Further, they may admit that the soul was created in time but will never perish at any later time. Like number, it then has a beginning but no end, and so, having once experienced miseries, it will never be miserable again once it has been set free from them. In that case they will certainly not doubt that this happens while the unchangeableness of God's plan remains intact. Let them, then, likewise believe that the world too could have been made in time, and yet that God did not on that account change his eternal plan and will in making it.

THAT WE SHOULD NO MORE IMAGINE INFINITE STRETCHES OF TIME BEFORE THE WORLD THAN INFINITE STRETCHES OF SPACE OUTSIDE IT, SINCE JUST AS THERE ARE NO TIMES BEFORE IT, SO THERE ARE NO PLACES OUTSIDE IT

Asking why God made the world then and not earlier is like asking why it is here.

11.5 Next we must consider these people who agree that God is the founder of the world, and yet ask what answer we give about the time of the world. We must see what answer they give themselves about the place of the world. For to ask why it was made then rather than earlier is like asking why it is here, where it is, rather than somewhere else. They imagine infinite stretches of time before the world, in which they think God could not have been idle from work. Let them likewise imagine infinite stretches of space outside the world. Suppose someone says that the Almighty could not have been inactive there either. Will it not follow that they are forced to dream, with Epicurus, of innumerable worlds? The only difference would be that he asserts these are produced and dissolved by the chance movements of atoms, while they will say they are made by God's work. This follows if they will not allow God to be idle through the boundless immensity of space stretching out on every side beyond the world, and if they hold that those worlds, like this one as they

believe, cannot be dissolved by any cause.[5] For we are dealing with those who agree with us that God is non-bodily and the creator of all natures that are not what he is. It would be quite unworthy to admit others to this discussion of religion. This is especially so because, among those who think that the homage of rites should be paid to many gods, these philosophers have surpassed the rest in renown and authority. The only reason is that they are nearer to the truth than the others, though still at a great distance. Or will they perhaps say that the substance of God is absent from such vast spaces outside the world? They neither enclose it nor bound it nor stretch it out in space. Instead they confess, as it is fitting to think of God, that it is wholly present everywhere by a non-bodily presence. Will they say it is occupied with only one place, the one in which the world is, so tiny in comparison with that infinity? I do not think they will go so far as to talk such nonsense.[6] They say, then, that there is one world, of vast bodily mass indeed, yet finite, bounded in its place, and made by the working of God. They have an answer to the question why God is idle from work in the infinite places outside the world. Let them give themselves the same answer to the question why God was idle from work in the infinite times before the world. Consider the place first. It does not follow that God established the world in this place where it is and not in another by chance rather than by divine reason. Among infinite spaces lying open equally on every side, none had any better claim to be chosen than this one, though no human reason can grasp the divine reason by which the choice was made. In the same way, it does not follow that something happened to God by chance when he founded the world at that time rather than an earlier one. Earlier times had passed equally through an infinite span reaching backward, and there was no difference that would make one time preferable to another in the choosing. They may say that people's thoughts are empty

5 Epicurus (341–270 BC), Greek philosopher who taught that countless worlds arise and perish through the random collisions of atoms.

6 Augustine means the Platonists, whom he discussed at length in Book 8.

when they imagine infinite places, since there is no place outside the world. Then this is the answer to them: people are just as empty in imagining past times of God's idleness, since there is no time before the world.

THAT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND OF TIME HAD ONE BEGINNING, AND NEITHER CAME BEFORE THE OTHER

Since time is measured by change, the world was made not in time but with time.

11.6 Eternity and time are rightly distinguished in this way: there is no time without some movement and change, while in eternity there is no change at all. If that is so, who does not see that there would have been no times unless a creature had been made that would change something by some movement? One thing and then another give way and succeed each other in that movement and change, since they cannot exist simultaneously. Time would follow from this, in shorter or longer intervals of duration. God, in whose eternity there is no change whatever, is therefore the creator and orderer of times. So I do not see how he can be said to have created the world after spans of time, unless someone says that before the world there was already some creature by whose movements times ran their course. Further, the sacred and supremely truthful writings say that in the beginning God made heaven and earth. They say it in such a way that we understand he made nothing before. If he had made something before all the other things that he made, that would rather have been said to be made "in the beginning." If so, then without doubt the world was made not in time but with time. For what is made in time is made both after some time and before some time: after what is past, before what is to come. But there could have been no past, because there was no creature by whose changeable movements time could pass. The world was made with time, then, if changeable movement was made at its creation. This seems to be the case also with that sequence of the first six or seven days, in which morning and evening are named. All that God made in these days is completed on the

sixth day, and on the seventh God's rest is set before us as a great mystery. What kind of days these are is extremely difficult or even impossible for us to imagine, let alone to describe.

THE NATURE OF THE FIRST DAYS, WHICH ARE SAID TO HAVE HAD EVENING AND MORNING EVEN BEFORE THE SUN WAS MADE

The first days, before the sun, may be the angels' knowledge of creation, passing from evening to morning.

11.7 For we see that the days we know have no evening except from the setting of the sun and no morning except from its rising. But the first three of those days passed without the sun, which, we are told, was made on the fourth day. First, indeed, light was made by the word of God, and God is said to have separated it from the darkness and to have called that light day and the darkness night. But what that light is, by what alternating movement it made evening and morning, and what kind of evening and morning these were, is remote from our senses. Nor can we understand it as it is, though we must still believe it without any hesitation. There are two possibilities. Either it is some bodily light, whether in the upper parts of the world far from our sight or the source from which the sun was later kindled. Or the word "light" means the holy city in the holy angels and blessed spirits, of which the apostle says: "The Jerusalem that is above, our eternal mother in heaven." For he also says in another place: "For you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness." This holds, at least, if we can understand the evening and morning of this day in some fitting way. Compared with the knowledge of the Creator, the knowledge of a creature grows dusky, so to speak, as at evening. Then it grows bright again and becomes morning when it too is referred to the praise and love of the Creator. And it does not sink into night, so long as the Creator is not abandoned for love of the creature. In fact, when Scripture lis-

ted those days in order, it nowhere inserted the word "night."[7] For it nowhere says, "There was night," but, "There was evening and there was morning, one day." The same is true of the second day and the rest. A creature known in itself is known, so to speak, in duller colors than when it is known in the wisdom of God, as in the art by which it was made. That is why this knowledge can more fittingly be called evening than night. Yet, as I said, when it is referred to praising and loving the Creator, it turns back into morning.[8] When it does this in knowing itself, that is one day. When it does so in knowing the firmament, which was called heaven and set between the lower and the upper waters, that is the second day. When it does so in knowing the earth and the sea and all growing things, which are joined to the earth by their roots, that is the third day. When it does so in knowing the greater and lesser lights and all the stars, that is the fourth day. When it does so in knowing all the creatures from the waters that swim and fly, that is the fifth day. When it does so in knowing all the land animals and man himself, that is the sixth day.

WHAT GOD'S REST SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD TO BE, AND OF WHAT KIND, WHEN HE RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY AFTER THE WORKS OF SIX DAYS

God's rest on the seventh day signifies the rest of those who rest in him.

11.8 But when God rests on the seventh day from all his works and sanctifies it, this must not be understood in a childish way, as though God had labored in working. He spoke, and things were made, by a Word that is intelligible and eternal, not one that sounds and passes in time. Rather, God's rest signifies the rest of those who rest in God. In the same way, the joy of a house signifies the joy of those who rejoice in the house, even if it is not the

7 "The apostle" is Paul: Galatians 4:26 (Augustine's text adds "eternal in heaven") and 1 Thessalonians 5:5.
8 Genesis 1:5.

house itself but something else that makes them joyful. How much more fitting is the expression if that same house makes its occupants joyful by its own beauty! Then it is called joyful not only by the figure of speech in which we indicate what is contained by what contains it (as when we say that the theaters applaud or the meadows low, because in the one people applaud and in the other cattle low). It is also called joyful by the figure in which an effect is indicated by what produces it, as a letter is called joyful, meaning the joy of those whom it makes joyful when they read it. So when the authority of the prophetic writings tells us that God rested, it very fittingly signifies the rest of those who rest in him and whom he himself causes to rest. The prophecy also makes a promise to the human beings to whom it speaks, and for whose sake it was, of course, written down. It promises that they too will have eternal rest in him after the good works that God works in them and through them, if in this life they have first drawn near to him in some measure through faith. This was also prefigured among God's ancient people by the Sabbath rest commanded by the law, a subject I think should be discussed more carefully in its proper place.

WHAT WE SHOULD BELIEVE ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE ANGELS ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture shows the angels are God's work; they are probably the light created on the first day.

11.9 Now, I have undertaken to speak about the origin of the holy city, and I have thought it right to speak first of what concerns the holy angels. They are a large part of this city, and all the happier because it has never been on pilgrimage. So, God granting, I will try to set out such divine testimonies on this subject as are available, as far as seems sufficient. Where the sacred writings speak of the founding of the world, they do not state plainly whether the angels were created, or in what order. But if they have not been passed over, they are signified either by the word "heaven," where it says, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth," or rather by the word "light," the light I am speaking

about.[9] That they have not been passed over I infer from this. It is written that God rested on the seventh day from all the works he had made. Yet the book itself begins this way: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth," so that he seems to have made nothing else before heaven and earth. He began, then, with heaven and earth. And the earth itself, which he made first, was, as Scripture goes on to say, invisible and unformed. Since light had not yet been made, there was certainly darkness over the abyss, that is, over a kind of undifferentiated confusion of earth and water (for where there is no light, there must be darkness). Then, if all the things that are said to have been completed in six days were set in order by creation, how could the angels have been passed over, as if they were not among the works of God from which he rested on the seventh day? Here, then, the fact that the angels are God's work, though not omitted, is still not plainly stated. Elsewhere, however, holy Scripture testifies to it in the clearest terms. In the hymn of the three men in the furnace, after the opening words, "Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord," the angels too are named when those works are listed one by one. And in the psalm we sing: "Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights. Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his powers. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you stars and light. Praise him, heavens of heavens; and let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created."[10] Here too it is said by divine inspiration, as plainly as possible, that the angels were made by God. After they have been mentioned among the other heavenly things, words are added that apply to them all: "He spoke, and they were made." Who, then, will dare to suppose that the angels were made after all the things listed in the six days? But if anyone is so foolish, a passage of Scripture of equal authority refutes this nonsense, where God says: "When the

9 Genesis 1:1.

10 The Song of the Three Young Men in the furnace (Daniel 3:57 in the Greek and Latin Bible); Psalm 148:1–5.

stars were made, all my angels praised me with a loud voice." So the angels already existed when the stars were made. But the stars were made on the fourth day. Shall we then say that the angels were made on the third day? Certainly not. For it is plain what was made on that day. The earth was separated from the waters, those two elements each took on their own distinct forms, and the earth brought forth everything that clings to it by roots. On the second day, then? Not that either.[11] For on that day the firmament was made between the upper and the lower waters, and it was called heaven; and in this firmament the stars were made on the fourth day. Clearly, then, if the angels belong to God's works of these days, they are that light which received the name "day." To emphasize its unity, it is not called "the first day" but "one day." Nor is the second day, or the third, or any of the rest, a different day. Rather, the same single day was repeated to make up the number six or seven, on account of a sixfold or sevenfold knowledge: a sixfold knowledge of the works that God made, and a sevenfold knowledge of God's rest. For when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, if we are right to understand the creation of the angels in this light, then certainly they were made sharers in the eternal light. This light is the unchangeable wisdom of God itself, through which all things were made, the one we call the only-begotten Son of God. Thus, enlightened by the same light by which they were created, they would become light. They would be called "day" by sharing in the unchangeable light and day, which is the Word of God, through whom both they and all things were made. For "the true light, which enlightens every person coming into this world," also enlightens every clean angel, so that he is light not in himself but in God. If an angel turns away from God, he becomes unclean. Such are all those who are called unclean spirits: no longer light in the Lord, but darkness in

11 Job 38:7.

themselves, deprived of their share in the eternal light.[12] For evil has no nature of its own; rather, it is the loss of good that has received the name "evil."

THE SIMPLE AND UNCHANGEABLE TRINITY OF GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, IN WHOM QUALITY AND SUBSTANCE ARE NOT DIFFERENT THINGS

God alone is simple: the Trinity is what it has, while creatures have qualities they can lose.

11.10 There is, then, a good that alone is simple and therefore alone unchangeable, and that is God. By this good all goods were created, but they are not simple, and are therefore changeable. Created, I say, that is, made, not begotten. For what is begotten of the simple good is equally simple, and is the same as that of which it is begotten. These two we call the Father and the Son, and both of them, together with their Spirit, are one God. This Spirit of the Father and the Son is called the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture, by a special and proper use of this name. He is someone other than the Father and the Son, because he is neither the Father nor the Son. But I said "someone other," not "something other," because he too is equally a simple and equally unchangeable good, and coeternal. And this Trinity is one God. It is not the less simple for being a Trinity. For we do not call this nature of the good simple because the Father alone is in it, or the Son alone, or the Holy Spirit alone. Nor do we call it simple because it is merely a trinity of names without subsisting persons, as the Sabellian heretics thought. Rather, it is called simple because it is what it has, except for what is said of each person in relation to another. For the Father certainly has a Son, and yet he is not himself the Son. So in whatever is said of him with reference to himself, not to another, he is what he has.

12 Genesis 1:3; John 1:9. Augustine puns on *mundus*, which means both "world" and "clean": the light that comes into the "world" (*mundum*) enlightens every "clean" (*mundum*) angel, and the angel who turns away becomes "unclean" (*inmundus*).

Thus he is called living with reference to himself, because he has life, and he himself is that same life.

This, then, is why a nature is called simple: it does not have anything that it could lose, and the one that has is not one thing and what it has another. By contrast, a vessel has some liquid, a body a color, the air light or heat, a soul wisdom. None of these is what it has: the vessel is not liquid, the body is not color, the air is not light or heat, and the soul is not wisdom. That is why they can also be deprived of the things they have, and turned and changed into other states or qualities. The vessel can be emptied of the liquid that fills it, the body can lose its color, the air can grow dark or cold, and the soul can become foolish. Even an incorruptible body, such as is promised to the saints at the resurrection, does indeed have the quality of incorruption itself, which cannot be lost. But since its bodily substance remains, it is not the same thing as incorruption itself. For incorruption is present whole in each part of the body, not greater in one place and less in another, since no part is more incorruptible than another. But the body itself is greater as a whole than in a part. And when one part of it is larger and another smaller, the larger is not more incorruptible than the smaller. So the body, which is not whole everywhere in itself, is one thing. Incorruption, which is whole everywhere in it, is another. For every part of an incorruptible body, however unequal to the others, is equally incorrupt. For example, the hand is not more incorruptible than the finger just because the finger is smaller than the whole hand. So although the hand and the finger are unequal, the incorruptibility of the hand and of the finger is equal. And so, although incorruptibility cannot be separated from an incorruptible body, the substance by which it is called a body is one thing, and the quality by which it is called incorruptible is another. So even in this case it is not what it has. The soul too, even if it is always wise, as it will be when it is set free for eternity, will be wise by sharing in the unchangeable wisdom, which is not what the soul itself is. For even if the air were never abandoned by the light poured into it, it would still be one thing, and

the light by which it is illuminated another. I do not mean by this that the soul is air, as some have thought who were unable to conceive of an incorporeal nature. But these things bear a certain likeness to those, even amid great dissimilarity. So it is not inappropriate to say that the incorporeal soul is illuminated by the incorporeal light of God's simple wisdom, just as the body of the air is illuminated by bodily light. And just as the air grows dark when this light leaves it (for what is called darkness in any bodily place is nothing but air lacking light), so the soul grows dark when deprived of the light of wisdom.

In this sense, then, the things that are primarily and truly divine are called simple: in them quality is not one thing and substance another, and they are not divine or wise or happy by sharing in something else. The holy Scriptures do, it is true, call the Spirit of wisdom "manifold," because it has many things in itself. But what it has, it also is, and it is all of them as one. For there are not many wisdoms but one wisdom. In it are certain treasures of intelligible things, infinite, yet finite to it. And in these treasures are all the invisible and unchangeable principles even of the visible and changeable things that were made through it. For God made nothing without knowing it, which cannot rightly be said even of any human craftsman; and if he made all things knowingly, he certainly made the things he already knew.[13] From this a thought comes to mind that is astonishing, yet true: this world could not be known to us unless it existed, but it could not exist unless it were known to God.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT THE SPIRITS WHO DID NOT STAND FAST IN THE TRUTH SHARED IN THE HAPPINESS THE HOLY ANGELS HAVE ALWAYS HAD FROM THEIR BEGINNING

The fallen angels never shared the secure, eternal happiness of the holy angels.

11.11 Since this is so, those spirits we call angels were in no way darkness first, for some stretch of time. Rather, as soon as they

were made, they were made light. Yet they were not simply created so as to exist in some way and live in some way. They were also enlightened so as to live wisely and happily. Some angels turned away from this illumination and did not attain the excellence of the wise and happy life, which beyond doubt can only be eternal, and certain and secure of its eternity. Still, they have a rational life, though a foolish one, and they have it in such a way that they cannot lose it, even if they want to. How far they shared in that wisdom before they sinned, who can determine? Yet how could we say that they shared in it equally with those who are truly and fully happy precisely because they are in no way deceived about the eternity of their happiness? For if they had shared in it equally, these too would have remained in its eternity, equally happy because equally certain. A life that is going to end, however long it lasts, can truly be called life, but it cannot truly be called eternal life. Life gets its name simply from living, but eternal life from having no end. So not everything eternal is thereby happy (for the fire of punishment too is called eternal). Yet if a truly and perfectly happy life can only be eternal, theirs was not such a life, since it was going to end at some point and so was not eternal. This holds whether they knew it or, not knowing it, thought otherwise. For if they knew, fear would certainly not let them be happy; if they did not know, error would not. But suppose their ignorance was of another kind. Suppose they did not trust in what was false or uncertain, but simply gave firm assent to neither side as to whether their good was everlasting or would one day come to an end. Even so, this very hesitation about so great a happiness lacked the fullness of the happy life which we believe exists in the holy angels. For we do not narrow the term "happy life" to so cramped a meaning as to say that God alone is happy. He is indeed so truly happy that no greater happiness can exist. Compared with him, the angels are happy with a supreme happiness of their own, as great as angels can have, but what is that, or how great is it?

13 Wisdom 7:22.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS WHO HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED THE REWARD OF GOD'S PROMISE AND THAT OF THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS IN PARADISE BEFORE SIN

Adam in paradise was happier in present joy, but the suffering righteous are happier in certain hope.

11.12 Nor do we think that, among rational or intellectual creatures, only the angels should be called happy. For who would dare to deny that those first human beings in paradise were happy before their sin? They were uncertain how long their happiness would last, or whether it would be eternal (and it would have been eternal, had they not sinned). Even today we are not being impudent when we call people happy whom we see living this life justly and devoutly in the hope of future immortality. They live without any crime laying waste their conscience, and they readily obtain God's mercy for the sins of this weakness. Though they are certain of the reward for their perseverance, they are found to be uncertain about their perseverance itself. For what human being can know that he will persevere to the end in doing justice and advancing in it, unless he is made certain by some revelation from him? By a just and hidden judgment, God does not inform everyone about this matter, but he deceives no one. So as far as delight in present good is concerned, the first man in paradise was happier than any just person in this mortal weakness. But as far as hope for the future is concerned, any person in any bodily torments is happier than that man was in the great happiness of paradise, uncertain as he was about his own fall. For it is plain to such a person, not by opinion but by sure truth, that he will have the company of the angels without end, free of all trouble, sharing in the supreme God.

WHETHER ALL THE ANGELS WERE CREATED IN THE SAME HAPPINESS, SO THAT THOSE WHO FELL COULD NOT KNOW THEY WOULD FALL, AND THOSE WHO STOOD RECEIVED FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THEIR PERSEVERANCE AFTER THE OTHERS FELL

The holy angels are certain of their eternal happiness, a certainty the fallen never had.

11.13 Hence anyone can now easily see that the happiness which an intellectual nature rightly aims at and desires comes from the two together. It must enjoy the unchangeable good, which is God, without any trouble. And it must neither hesitate in any doubt nor be deceived by any error about its remaining in him forever. That the angels of light have this happiness we believe with devout faith. That the sinning angels, who were deprived of that light by their own perversity, did not have it even before they fell, we infer by logical consequence. Yet if they lived any life before their sin, they must certainly be believed to have had some happiness, even if it was not a happiness with foreknowledge. Or suppose it seems harsh to believe that, when the angels were made, some were made so as not to receive foreknowledge either of their perseverance or of their fall, while others were made so as to know with the surest truth that their happiness was eternal. Suppose instead that all were created from the beginning with equal happiness, and remained so until those who are now evil fell from that light of goodness by their own will. Even so, it is without doubt far harsher to think now that the holy angels are uncertain of their eternal happiness, and that they do not know about themselves what we have been able to know about them through the holy Scriptures. For what catholic Christian does not know that no new devil will ever again arise from among the good angels, just as this one will never return to the fellowship of the good angels? Indeed, the Truth promises in the gospel to the holy and faithful that they will be equal to the angels of God; and it is also promised to

them that they will go into eternal life.[14] Further, if we are certain that we will never fall from that immortal happiness, but they are not certain, then we shall be not their equals but their superiors. But since the Truth in no way deceives, and we shall be their equals, they too are surely certain of their eternal happiness. Those others were not certain of it, for their happiness, of which they might have been certain, was not eternal, since it was going to have an end. It follows, then, either that the two groups were unequal, or, if they were equal, that after the fall of the wicked ones certain knowledge of their own everlasting happiness came to the good. Unless perhaps someone says that what the Lord said of the devil in the gospel, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not stand in the truth," is to be understood in this way. He was a murderer not only from the beginning, that is, from the beginning of the human race, from the time when a human being was made whom he could kill by deceiving. He also did not stand in the truth from the beginning of his own creation, and therefore was never happy with the holy angels. On this view, he refused to be subject to his Creator, and through pride rejoiced in his own power as if it were his private possession. And so he was false and deceiving, for no one escapes the power of the Almighty, and he who would not hold fast through devout submission to what truly is, aspires through proud self-exaltation to feign what is not. In this way we would also understand what the blessed apostle John says: "The devil sins from the beginning." That is, from the moment he was created he refused justice, which only a will devoutly subject to God could have.[15] Whoever accepts this view does not think with those heretics, the Manichaeans, or with any other plagues that hold the same opinion: that the devil has a nature of evil all his own, as if derived from some opposing principle. These people are so foolish in their emptiness that, although they accept the authority of these words of the gospel as we do, they do not

14 "The Truth" is Christ. See Matthew 22:30 and Luke 20:36 (equal to the angels), and Matthew 25:46 (eternal life).
15 John 8:44; 1 John 3:8.

notice that the Lord did not say, "He was a stranger to the truth," but, "He did not stand in the truth." By this he meant us to understand a fall from the truth. For if he had stood in it, he would have become a partaker of it and would have remained happy with the holy angels.[16]

IN WHAT SENSE IT IS SAID OF THE DEVIL THAT HE DID NOT STAND FAST IN THE TRUTH, BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM

The devil does not have the truth in him because he did not stand in it, not the reverse.

11.14 He then added a proof, as if we had asked how it can be shown that he did not stand in the truth, and said: "Because there is no truth in him." But there would be truth in him if he had stood in it. This is said in a less usual turn of phrase. For it seems to mean: "He did not stand in the truth, because the truth is not in him," as if the reason he did not stand in the truth were that the truth is not in him. In fact, rather, the reason the truth is not in him is that he did not stand in the truth. The same turn of phrase occurs in a psalm: "I have cried out, because you heard me, O God," when it seems it should have been said: "You heard me, O God, because I cried out."[17] But having said, "I have cried out," as if he were being asked how he could show that he had cried out, he shows the feeling behind his cry from its effect, God's hearing of it, as if to say: "This is how I show that I cried out: you heard me."

16 The Manichaeans followed the dualist religion of Mani (3rd century AD), which held that good and evil are two eternal principles; Augustine belonged to it for about nine years in his youth.

17 Psalm 16:6 (17:6 in most English Bibles).

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE SAYING, "THE DEVIL SINS FROM THE BEGINNING"

The devil was created good; he sins "from the beginning" of his sin, which began with his pride.

11.15 As for what John says of the devil, "The devil sins from the beginning," they do not understand that, if this is his nature, it is in no way sin. But what answer can be given to the testimonies of the prophets? Isaiah, referring to the devil under the figure of the prince of Babylon, says: "How has Lucifer fallen, who used to rise in the morning!" And Ezekiel says: "You were in the delights of the paradise of God; you were adorned with every precious stone." Here he is understood to have been at one time without sin. For a little later it is said to him more explicitly: "You walked in your days without fault."[18] If these words cannot be understood otherwise more fittingly, then we must also take the words "He did not stand in the truth" to mean that he was in the truth but did not remain in it. And the statement that the devil sins from the beginning must be taken to mean not from the beginning when he was created, but from the beginning of sin, since sin first came into being through his pride. Then there is what is written in the book of Job, where the devil is spoken of: "This is the beginning of the Lord's handiwork, which he made to be mocked by his angels." The psalm also seems to agree with it, where we read: "This dragon, whom you formed to make sport of him." Nor is this to be understood as though he was created from the beginning as one to be mocked by the angels. Rather, he was assigned to this punishment after his sin.[19] His beginning, then, is the Lord's handiwork. For there is no nature, even among the lowest and smallest creatures, that was not established by him from whom comes all measure, all form, all order, without which nothing at all can be found or

18 Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:13 and 28:15. Lucifer ("light-bringer") is the Latin name of the morning star.
19 Job 40:14 (40:19 in most English Bibles); Psalm 103:26 (104:26 in most English Bibles).

even conceived. How much more is this true of the angelic creation, which surpasses all the other things God has made in the dignity of its nature!

THE RANKS AND DIFFERENCES OF CREATURES, WHICH PRACTICAL USE WEIGHS ONE WAY AND THE ORDER OF REASON ANOTHER

Nature ranks living over lifeless and rational over irrational; human valuation often ranks things by usefulness.

11.16 Among the things that exist in any way and are not what God is, by whom they were made, living things are ranked above non-living ones, just as things that have the power of reproducing, or even of desiring, are ranked above those that lack this movement. Among living things, those that have sensation are ranked above those that do not, as animals above trees. Among those that have sensation, those that have understanding are ranked above those that do not, as human beings above cattle. And among those that have understanding, the immortal are ranked above the mortal, as angels above human beings. But this is how they are ranked in the order of nature. There is also a quite different standard of valuation, according to the use each thing has for us. By it we rank certain things that lack sensation above certain things that have it, so much so that, if we had the power, we would want to remove the latter from the natural world altogether. We do so either because we do not know what place they hold in it, or because, even if we do know, we put them below our own convenience. For who would not rather have bread in his house than mice, or money than fleas? But why wonder at this, when even in the valuation of human beings themselves, whose nature is certainly of such great dignity, a horse is often bought for a higher price than a slave, or a jewel than a female slave? Thus, in its freedom of judgment, the reasoning of one who reflects is far removed from the necessity of one in need or the pleasure of one who desires. Reason considers what each thing weighs in itself in the scale of being, while necessity considers what it needs for the sake of what.

Reason looks to what appears true to the light of the mind, while pleasure looks for what is agreeable and flatters the bodily senses. But in rational natures a kind of weight, so to speak, of will and love has such power that, although in the order of nature angels rank above human beings, yet by the law of justice good human beings rank above evil angels.

THAT THE FAULT OF WICKEDNESS IS NOT NATURE BUT AGAINST NATURE, AND ITS CAUSE IN SINNING IS NOT THE CREATOR BUT THE WILL

A fault harms nature and so proves the nature good; God uses even the devil's evil will well.

11.17 It is therefore with reference to the devil's nature, not his malice, that we rightly understand the words: "This is the beginning of the Lord's handiwork." For without doubt, wherever there is the fault of malice, an unflawed nature came first. And a fault is so contrary to nature that it can do nothing but harm nature. So departing from God would not be a fault, unless being with God were rather what befits the nature to which the fault belongs. Hence even an evil will is strong evidence of a good nature. But God, as he is the supremely good Creator of good natures, is also the most just orderer of evil wills: while they use good natures badly, he uses even evil wills well. Therefore he brought it about that the devil, good by God's making and evil by his own will, should be placed in a lower rank and mocked by God's angels. That is, his temptations should benefit the saints, whom he wants them to harm. And since God, when he created him, was certainly not unaware of his future malice, and foresaw what good things he himself would bring out of his evil, the psalm says: "This dragon, whom you formed to make sport of him." We are thus to understand that in the very act of forming him, good as he was through God's goodness, God had already prepared through his foreknowledge how he would make use of him even when evil.

THE BEAUTY OF THE UNIVERSE, MADE MORE BRILLIANT BY GOD'S ORDERING EVEN THROUGH THE OPPOSITION OF CONTRARIES

God orders the ages like a poem adorned with antitheses, setting good against evil.

11.18 For God would never create anyone, I do not say any angel, but even any human being, whom he foreknew would be evil, unless he equally knew to what good uses he would put them. In this way he would adorn the order of the ages, like a most beautiful poem, with what might be called antitheses. For what are called antitheses are among the most elegant ornaments of style. In Latin they might be called *opposita* [things set against each other], or, more expressively, *contraposita* [things set over against each other]. This term is not in common use among us, although Latin speech also uses these same ornaments of style, and indeed so do the languages of all nations. By these antitheses the apostle Paul, too, in his second letter to the Corinthians, gracefully unfolds the passage where he says: "By the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left: through glory and dishonor, through ill repute and good repute; as deceivers and yet truthful, as unknown and yet well known; as dying, and see, we live; as chastened and yet not put to death; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." Just as these opposites, set against opposites, produce beauty of speech, so the beauty of the world is composed by the opposition of contraries, in a kind of eloquence not of words but of things. This is put most plainly in the book of Ecclesiasticus, in this way: "Good is set against evil, and life against death; so the sinner against the godly. And so look upon all the works of the Most High: two by two, one against the other."[20]

20 2 Corinthians 6:7–10; Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 33:14–15.

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE WORDS, "GOD DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS"

"God divided the light from the darkness" can be read as the separation of holy from fallen angels.

11.19 The obscurity of the divine word is indeed useful even in this respect: it gives birth to many true meanings and brings them into the light of knowledge, as one person understands it one way and another another. This holds provided that what is understood in an obscure passage is supported either by the testimony of plain facts or by other passages that are not in the least doubtful. Then either, as many views are discussed, we arrive at what the writer himself meant, or that remains hidden, but other true things are said on the occasion of treating a deep obscurity. That said, it does not seem to me an opinion out of keeping with the works of God if, taking the angels to have been created when that first light was made, we understand that a separation was made between the holy and the unclean angels where it is said: "And God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night."[21] For only he could make this distinction who could also foreknow, even before they fell, that they would fall and, deprived of the light of truth, would remain in the darkness of pride. Now, between the day and night so familiar to us, that is, between this light and this darkness, he commanded the lights of the sky, so well known to our senses, to divide: "Let there be lights," he says, "in the firmament of the sky, to shine upon the earth and to divide between day and night." And a little later: "And God made," it says, "two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars; and God set them in the firmament of the sky to shine upon the earth, and to govern day and night, and to divide between light and darkness."[22] But between that light, which is the holy fellowship of

21 Genesis 1:4–5.
22 Genesis 1:14 and 1:16–18.

the angels shining with the intelligible illumination of truth, and the darkness opposed to it, that is, the foul minds of the evil angels turned away from the light of justice, he alone could divide. For to him even a future evil, an evil not of nature but of will, could be neither hidden nor uncertain.

THE WORDS SPOKEN AFTER THE SEPARATION OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS, "AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT, THAT IT WAS GOOD"

God called the light good but not that darkness, since the fallen angels' evil is their own fault.

11.20 Finally, we must not pass over in silence the fact that, where God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, there was added at once: "And God saw the light, that it was good." This was not said after he separated the light from the darkness and called the light day and the darkness night, lest he should seem to have given the testimony of his approval to such darkness along with the light. For where the darkness is blameless, the darkness that the lights of the sky divide from this light visible to our eyes, the words "And God saw that it was good" are added not before but after: "He set them," it says, "in the firmament of the sky to shine upon the earth, and to govern day and night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good." Both pleased him, because both are without sin. But where God said, "Let there be light," and there was light—[23] "And God saw the light, that it was good"; and afterward it is added, "And God separated the light from the darkness; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night"—at this point the words "And God saw that it was good" were not added, so that both should not be called good, when one of them was evil, through its own fault and not by nature. And so, there, the light alone pleased the Creator; the angelic darkness, though it was to be given its place in the order, was not to be approved.

23 Genesis 1:3.

GOD'S ETERNAL AND UNCHANGEABLE KNOWLEDGE AND WILL, BY WHICH EVERYTHING HE MADE PLEASED HIM AS SOMETHING TO BE MADE, JUST AS IT PLEASED HIM WHEN MADE

God did not learn his works were good once made; he sees all times in one eternal present.

11.21 For what else are we to understand by the phrase repeated throughout, "God saw that it was good," but approval of the work as made according to the art that is the wisdom of God? God was so far from learning that it was good only once it was made that none of these things would have been made if it had been unknown to him. So when he sees that it is good, a thing that would certainly not have been made had he not seen it before it was made, he is teaching that it is good, not learning it. Plato, indeed, ventured to say more: that God was carried away with joy when the universe was completed.[24] Even he was not so foolish as to think that God was made happier by the novelty of his work. He meant rather to show that what had pleased its Maker in his art as something to be made pleased him now that it was made. Not that God's knowledge varies in any way, so that things not yet in existence, things now existing, and things that have been produce different effects in it. For he does not, as we do, look ahead to what is future, look at what is present, or look back at what is past, but sees in another way, far and deeply different from the habits of our thinking. For he sees, not by shifting his thought from this to that, but altogether unchangeably. Thus, while the things that come to be in time, if future, are not yet, if present, already are, and if past, are no longer, he himself comprehends all of them in a stable and eternal present. Nor does he see in one way with the eyes and in another with the mind, for he is not made up of soul and body; nor in one way now, another before, and another after. For his knowledge, unlike ours, does not change with the variety of the three times,

24 Plato, *Timaeus* 37c.

present, past, and future, since with him "there is no change, nor shadow of a moment." Nor does his attention pass from thought to thought; in his incorporeal gaze all that he knows is present at once. For he knows times with no temporal notions of his own, just as he moves temporal things with no temporal movements of his own.[25] So he saw that what he made was good in the same place where he saw that it was good to make it. Nor, because he saw it made, did he double his knowledge or increase it in any part, as though he had less knowledge before he made what he saw. He would not work so perfectly except with knowledge so perfect that nothing could be added to it from his works. Therefore, if we only needed to be told who made the light, it would be enough to say, "God made the light." If we needed to know not only who made it but also through what he made it, it would be enough to state it thus: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light," so that we would know not only that God made the light, but also that he made it through the Word. But since three things above all, which we most need to know about a creature, had to be made known to us—who made it, through what he made it, and why he made it—Scripture says: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." "And God saw the light, that it was good." If, then, we ask who made it: it is God. If through what he made it: he said, "Let it be," and it was. If why he made it: because it is good. There is no author more excellent than God, no art more effective than God's Word, no cause better than that something good should be created by one who is good. Plato, too, says that this is the most just cause of the world's creation: that good works should be made by a good God. Perhaps he read these words, or perhaps he learned them from those who had read them. Or perhaps, by his very keen intellect, he perceived "the invisible things of God, understood through the things that are made," or else learned them himself from those who had perceived them.[26]

25 James 1:17.
26 Plato, *Timaeus* 29e; Romans 1:20.

THOSE WHO DISLIKE SOME THINGS IN A UNIVERSE OF THINGS WELL MADE BY A GOOD CREATOR, AND THINK SOME NATURE EVIL

Heretics who find fault with harmful creatures overlook their place in the beauty of the whole.

11.22 Yet this cause, the goodness of God as the reason for creating good things, is so just and so fitting that, when carefully considered and devoutly pondered, it ends all the controversies of those who inquire into the origin of the world. And this cause, I say, certain heretics have failed to see. For a great many things harm the needy and fragile mortality of this flesh of ours, a mortality that already comes from just punishment, because they do not suit it: fire, for instance, or cold, or a wild beast, or something of that kind. These heretics do not notice how such things flourish in their own places and natures and are arranged in a beautiful order. They do not notice how much beauty each contributes, in its own measure, to the universe of things, as to a shared commonwealth, or how much benefit they bring to us ourselves, if we use them fittingly and knowledgeably. So true is this that poisons themselves, which are deadly when used unfittingly, are turned into wholesome medicines when properly applied. Nor do they notice how, on the other hand, even the things they delight in, such as food and drink and this light, are felt to be harmful when used immoderately and at the wrong time. Divine providence therefore warns us not to find fault with things foolishly, but to search out their usefulness carefully. Where our intelligence or our weakness fails, we should believe that their usefulness is hidden, just as some things were hidden that we could barely discover. For even the hiding of a thing's usefulness either trains us in humility or wears down our pride. No nature at all is evil, and "evil" is nothing but a name for the privation of good. But from earthly things to heavenly, and from visible to invisible, some goods are better than others, and they are unequal precisely so that all of them might exist. God, moreover, is so great a craftsman in great things that

he is no lesser in small ones. These small things are to be measured not by their own size (for they have none) but by the wisdom of their craftsman. Take the appearance of a visible human being: if one eyebrow is shaved off, how next to nothing is taken from the body, and how much from its beauty! For beauty does not consist in bulk but in the balance and proportion of the members. Nor indeed is it much to be wondered at that those who think some nature is evil, sprung from and propagated by some opposing principle of its own, refuse to accept this cause of the creation of things: that a good God created good things. They believe instead that he was driven to these vast works of the world by the extreme necessity of repelling an evil that was rebelling against him. They believe that he mixed his own good nature with evil in order to restrain and overcome it, and that he now cleanses and frees this nature, most shamefully polluted, most cruelly taken captive and oppressed, only with great labor and with difficulty. And not all of it, either: whatever part of it could not be purged of that defilement is to become the covering and the chain of the conquered and imprisoned enemy. Yet the Manichaeans would not be so foolish, or rather so insane, if they believed that God's nature is, as it truly is, unchangeable and wholly incorruptible, a nature that nothing can harm. They would not be so foolish if, with Christian soundness of mind, they held that the soul is not a part of God, nor of the nature that is God's, but was created by him and is far unequal to its Creator. For the soul could change for the worse by its will and be corrupted by sin, and so be deprived of the light of unchangeable truth.

THE ERROR FOR WHICH THE TEACHING OF ORIGEN IS BLAMED

Origen wrongly taught that the world was made to imprison sinful souls in bodies.

11.23 But it is far more to be wondered at that even some who believe with us that there is one principle of all things were nevertheless unwilling to believe this cause of the world's making.

These people also hold that no nature which is not what God is can exist unless he created it. Yet this cause is so good and simple, and they would not believe it in a good and simple way: that a good God created good things, and that after God there should be things that are not what God is, yet are good, things that only a good God could make. Instead they say that souls, which are not parts of God but were made by God, sinned by withdrawing from their Creator. By various stages of descent from the heavens down to the earth, according to the variety of their sins, these souls earned various bodies as chains. And this, they say, is the world, and this was the cause of making the world: not that good things might be created, but that evil things might be restrained. For this Origen is rightly blamed.[27] For in the books he calls περὶ ἀρχῶν, that is, *On First Principles*, this is what he thought and what he wrote. Here I am more astonished than I can say that a man so learned and so practiced in the writings of the Church failed to notice, first of all, how contrary this was to the intention of this Scripture of such great authority. After each of God's works it adds, "And God saw that it was good." When all were completed it concludes, "And God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good." And so Scripture meant us to understand no other cause for making the world than that good things should be made by a good God.[28] There, if no one had sinned, the world would have been adorned and filled with good natures alone. And even though sin has occurred, it does not follow that all things are filled with sins, since by far the greater number of good beings in the heavens keep the order of their nature. Nor has the evil will, because it refused to keep the order of its nature, therefore escaped the laws of a just God who orders all things well. For a painting is beautiful with black color in its proper place. In the same way the universe of things, if one could see it whole, is beautiful

27 Origen of Alexandria (c. AD 185–c. 254), Christian theologian and biblical scholar whose speculations on the preexistence of souls were later condemned.
28 Genesis 1:4–25 and 1:31.

even with sinners in it, though the sinners themselves, considered on their own, are disfigured by their own ugliness.

Next, Origen and all who think as he does ought to have seen what would follow if this opinion were true. On their view the world was made so that souls, according to the deserts of their sins, might receive bodies like prison-houses to be shut up in by way of punishment: higher and lighter bodies for those who sinned less, lower and heavier ones for those who sinned more. If that were so, the demons, than whom nothing is worse, ought to have had earthly bodies, than which nothing is lower or heavier, rather than human beings, even good ones. But as it is, God has made us understand that the merits of souls are not to be weighed by the qualities of their bodies. The worst demon received an airy body. Man received a body of clay, although even now, wicked as he is, his malice is far lesser and milder, and certainly it was so before sin. And what could be said more foolishly than this? God the craftsman made this sun to be the one sun in the one world, and on their view he was not providing in this for the grace and beauty, or even for the well-being, of bodily things. Instead it came about because one soul had sinned in such a way as to deserve to be shut up in such a body. On this reasoning, suppose not one soul but two had sinned in the same way and to the same degree, or rather not two but ten or a hundred. Would this world then have a hundred suns? And the reason this did not happen, they would say, was not that the craftsman provided for the well-being and beauty of bodily things by his marvelous foresight. Rather it happened because a single soul made such progress in sinning that it alone deserved such a body. Plainly, it is not the progress of souls that ought rightly to be checked, for they do not know what they are saying about souls. It is the progress of those very people who think such things, a progress that has carried them far, very far, from the truth. These three things, then, which I emphasized above, are to be asked about every creature: who made it, by what means he made it, and why he made it. The answer is: God, through the Word, because it is good. Perhaps in this the Trinity

itself, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is intimated to us with mystical depth. Or perhaps something forbids us to take it so in this passage of Scripture. That question requires a long discussion, and we should not be pressed to explain everything in a single book.

THE DIVINE TRINITY, WHICH HAS SCATTERED SIGNS OF ITSELF THROUGH ALL ITS WORKS

Who made each creature, through what, and why—God, through the Word, because it is good—points to the Trinity.

11.24 We believe, hold, and faithfully proclaim that the Father begot the Word, that is, Wisdom, through whom all things were made. The Word is his only-begotten Son: one begotten by one, coeternal with the eternal, equally good with the supremely good. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son together, and is himself consubstantial and coeternal with both. And we believe that this whole is a Trinity because of the distinct properties of the persons, and one God because of the inseparable divinity, just as it is one Almighty because of the inseparable omnipotence. Yet this holds in such a way that, when we ask about each one individually, the answer is that each of them is both God and almighty. When we ask about all together, the answer is not three gods or three almighties, but one God almighty. So great is the inseparable unity in the three, a unity that has willed to be proclaimed in this way. Since the Holy Spirit of the good Father and the good Son is common to both, can he rightly be called the goodness of both? I do not dare to rush into a rash opinion on that. Yet I would more readily venture to call him the holiness of both. I mean not as if he were a quality of both, but as himself also a substance, the third person in the Trinity. What leads me to think this more probable is the following. The Father is spirit and the Son is spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy. Yet it is he himself who is properly called the Holy Spirit, as the substantial and consubstantial holiness of both. But if the divine goodness is nothing other than holiness, then surely it is reasoned under-

standing and not presumptuous boldness to see the same Trinity intimated to us in God's works. Scripture does this through a certain hidden way of speaking meant to exercise our attention, when we ask about each creature who made it, by what means he made it, and for what reason he made it. For the one who said "Let it be" is understood to be the Father of the Word. What was made at his speaking was without doubt made through the Word. And the words "God saw that it was good" signify clearly enough that God made what was made out of no necessity and out of no need for any advantage of his own, but out of goodness alone, that is, because it is good. This is said after the thing was made in order to show that it accords with the goodness for whose sake it was made. If this goodness is rightly understood to be the Holy Spirit, then the whole Trinity is intimated to us in its works. From this comes the origin, the formation, and the happiness of the holy city, which is above among the holy angels. For if one asks where it comes from, God founded it. If one asks where its wisdom comes from, it is enlightened by God. If one asks where its happiness comes from, it enjoys God. Existing, it is given its measure; contemplating, it is illumined; cleaving to God, it is filled with joy. It is, it sees, it loves. In God's eternity it flourishes, in God's truth it shines, in God's goodness it rejoices.

THE THREEFOLD DIVISION OF ALL PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy's three parts—physics, logic and ethics—correspond to nature, knowledge and the good life.

11.25 As far as we are given to understand, this is why philosophers have held that the discipline of wisdom is threefold. Or rather, they were able to notice that it is threefold, for they did not decree that it should be so but discovered that it was so. One part was called physics, another logic, a third ethics. (The Latin names for these have by now become common in the writings of many: natural, rational, and moral philosophy; I also touched on them briefly in the eighth book.) It does not follow that these philosophers had any thought of the Trinity in these three, in a

way that accords with God. This is so even though Plato is said to have been the first to discover and recommend this division. To him it seemed that God alone is the author of all natures, the giver of understanding, and the inspirer of the love by which one lives well and happily. Different people certainly hold different views about the nature of things, about the method of seeking truth, and about the end of good to which we must refer all we do. Even so, all their attention is occupied with these three great and general questions. In each of them the opinions about what one should pursue disagree in many ways. Still, no one hesitates to say that there is some cause of nature, some form of knowledge, some sum of life. There are also three things looked for in any human craftsman if he is to produce something: nature, training, and use. Nature is to be judged by talent, training by knowledge, use by its fruit. I am well aware that, properly speaking, fruit belongs to the one who enjoys and use to the one who uses. The difference seems to be this. We are said to enjoy a thing that delights us in itself, without being referred to anything else. We use a thing that we seek for the sake of something else. (So temporal things are to be used rather than enjoyed, so that we may deserve to enjoy eternal things. We should not be like the perverse, who want to enjoy money but use God; for they do not spend money for God's sake but worship God for money's sake.) Yet in the way of speaking that custom has made more prevalent, we both use fruits and enjoy uses. For the produce of the fields is now properly called "fruits," and we all certainly use them in this temporal life. It is in this customary sense, then, that I have spoken of "use" among the three things that I pointed out are to be looked for in a human being: nature, training, and use.[29] From these three, as I said, the philosophers devised a threefold discipline for attaining the happy life: natural philosophy for the sake of nature, rational for the sake of training, moral for the sake of use. If, then, our nature came from ourselves, we would surely also have begotten our own

29 Augustine's wordplay depends on the Latin: *fructus* (fruit) comes from *frui* (to enjoy), *usus* (use) from *uti* (to use).

wisdom. We would not take care to acquire it by training, that is, by learning from elsewhere. And our love, setting out from ourselves and referred back to ourselves, would suffice for living happily and would need no other good to enjoy. But as it is, our nature has God as the author of its existence. So beyond doubt we must have him as our teacher if we are to be wise in what is true. We must also have him as the giver of inward sweetness if we are to be happy.

THE IMAGE OF THE SUPREME TRINITY, WHICH IN A CERTAIN WAY IS FOUND EVEN IN THE NATURE OF A HUMAN BEING NOT YET MADE BLESSED

We are, we know we are, and we love both; "If I am deceived, I am."

11.26 And we do recognize in ourselves an image of God, that is, of that supreme Trinity. It is not equal to him; indeed it is very far removed from him. It is not coeternal, and, to put it all more briefly, it is not of the same substance as God. Yet nothing among the things he has made is closer to God by nature. It is an image still to be perfected by reformation, so that it may also be closest to him in likeness. For we are, and we know that we are, and we love our being and our knowing. And in these three things I have mentioned, no falsehood that resembles truth troubles us. For we do not touch them with any bodily sense, as we do things outside us, as when we perceive colors by seeing, sounds by hearing, smells by smelling, tastes by tasting, and hard and soft things by touching. Of these sensible things we also turn over in thought images that are very like them, though no longer bodily. We hold these images in memory, and by them we are stirred to desire the things themselves. But it is entirely certain to me that I am, and that I know and love this, without any deceptive play of imagination involving fancies or phantoms. Regarding these truths I have no fear of the arguments of the Academics, who say, "What if you are deceived?" For if I am deceived, I am. Whoever does not exist certainly cannot be deceived either; and so, if I am deceived, I am. Since, then, I am if I am deceived, how am I deceived in thinking that I

am, when it is certain that I am if I am deceived?[30] Therefore, even if I were deceived, I would be the one who was deceived. So beyond doubt I am not deceived in knowing that I am. It follows also that I am not deceived in knowing that I know. For as I know that I am, so I also know this very thing, that I know. And when I love these two, I add to the things I know this same love as a third thing, of no lesser worth. Nor am I mistaken in thinking that I love, since I am not mistaken about the things I love. Even if they were false, it would still be true that I loved false things. For how could I rightly be blamed and rightly be kept from loving false things, if it were false that I loved them? But since those things are true and certain, who can doubt that, when they are loved, the love itself is also true and certain? Further, just as there is no one who does not want to be, so there is no one who does not want to be happy. For how can anyone be happy if he is nothing?

BEING, KNOWLEDGE, AND THE LOVE OF BOTH

Even the wretched would rather exist than not; all nature seeks to be, and humans to know.

11.27 Existence itself is so delightful, by a kind of natural force, that this is the only reason why even the wretched do not want to perish. When they feel their wretchedness, what they want removed from the world is not themselves but their wretchedness. Take those who seem most wretched to themselves, and plainly are, and are judged wretched not only by the wise, because they are fools, but also by those who think themselves happy, because they are poor and beggars. Suppose someone offered them immortality, in which their wretchedness would not die either, on the condition that if they refused to remain forever in that same wretchedness they would be nothing and nowhere and would perish altogether. They would surely leap for joy and choose to exist like that forever rather than not exist

30 The Academics were philosophers of Plato's Academy in its skeptical phase, who held that nothing can be known with certainty.

at all. Their own well-known feeling bears witness to this. For why do they fear to die, and prefer to live in that misery rather than end it by death, unless it is plain enough how nature shrinks from not existing? And so, when they know they are going to die, they long to be granted this mercy as a great favor: to live a little longer in that same misery and to die later. Without doubt, then, they show how gladly they would welcome immortality, even one that would not put an end to their beggary. What about all animals, even irrational ones, which have not been given the power to think about such things? From huge serpents down to tiny worms, do they not show that they want to exist, and therefore flee destruction with every movement they can? And what about trees and all shrubs, which have no sense by which to avoid destruction through visible movement? So that they may send the shoot of their tops safely up into the air, do they not fix another part, the root, in the earth, to draw nourishment from it, and so in a way preserve their existence? Finally, even bodies themselves, which have not only no sense but not even any seminal life, still either leap up to the heights or sink down to the depths or hang balanced in between, so as to guard their being where by nature they are able to exist.

Again, how much knowing is loved, and how much human nature hates to be deceived, can be seen from this alone: everyone would rather grieve with a sound mind than rejoice in madness. This great and wonderful power belongs to no mortal living creature except human beings. Some animals, it is true, have far keener eyesight than we do for seeing this light of ours. But they cannot reach that incorporeal light by which our mind is in some way illuminated, so that we can judge rightly about all these things; for we can do so to the extent that we receive that light. Even so, there is in the senses of irrational animals, if certainly not knowledge, at least a certain likeness of knowledge. The rest of corporeal things, however, are called "sensible" not because they sense but because they are sensed. Among these, trees have something like the senses in that they are nourished and reproduce. Yet these and all corporeal things have causes

hidden in nature. But they offer to the senses their forms, which give the structure of this visible world its beautiful form, so that, since they cannot know, they seem as it were to want to be known. We, however, take them in by bodily sense in such a way that we do not judge them by bodily sense. For we have another sense, belonging to the inner man, far superior to that one, by which we perceive what is just and what is unjust—the just by an intelligible form, the unjust by its absence. The work of this sense requires no sharpness of the pupil, no opening of the ear, no passages of the nostrils, no taste in the throat, no bodily touch of any kind. There I am certain both that I exist and that I know this; and I love these things, and I am equally certain that I love them.

WHETHER WE OUGHT ALSO TO LOVE THE VERY LOVE BY WHICH WE LOVE BEING AND KNOWING, IN ORDER TO COME CLOSER TO THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

We also love our love, which, like a weight, carries the mind wherever it goes.

11.28 As for those two, being and knowing, we have said enough, as far as the plan of this work seemed to require, about how much they are loved in us, and about how some likeness of them, though a different one, is also found in other things below us. But nothing has been said about the love by which they are loved—whether that love is itself loved. It is loved; and we prove it from this: in people who are more rightly loved, it is their love itself that is loved more. For a man is not rightly called good because he knows what is good, but because he loves it. Why then do we not perceive in ourselves, too, that we love the very love by which we love whatever good we love? For there is also a love by which even what ought not to be loved is loved; and whoever loves the love by which what ought to be loved is loved hates that other love in himself. For both can exist in one person. And this is good for a person: that as the love by which we live well grows, the love by which we live badly should shrink, until our whole life is healed to perfection and changed into

good. If we were cattle, we would love the life of the flesh and whatever suits its senses; that would be good enough for us, and when things went well for us in that respect we would seek nothing more. Likewise, if we were trees, we could not love anything with a sentient movement, yet we would seem in a way to strive after whatever would make us more fertile and more abundantly fruitful. If we were stones, or waves, or wind, or flame, or anything of that kind, without any sense or life at all, we would still not lack a kind of striving for our proper places and order. For the loves of bodies are, so to speak, the pull of their weights, whether they press downward by heaviness or upward by lightness. A body is carried by its weight, just as a mind is carried by its love, wherever it is carried. We are human beings, then, created in the image of our Creator, to whom belong true eternity, eternal truth, and eternal and true love, and who is himself the eternal, true and beloved Trinity, neither confused nor separated. In the things below us, too, we can see him: for they would not exist in any way, nor be held together by any form, nor seek or keep any order, unless they had been made by him who supremely is, who is supremely wise, who is supremely good. So let us run, as it were, through all the things he has made with such wonderful stability, and gather up what we might call his traces, imprinted more deeply in some places and less in others. But in ourselves let us behold his image, and, like the younger son in the Gospel, come back to ourselves, rise up, and return to him from whom we had departed by sinning.[31] There our being will have no death, there our knowing will have no error, there our loving will have no stumbling. Now, it is true, we hold these three of ours as certain. We do not believe them on the testimony of others; we ourselves perceive them as present and discern them with a most truthful inner sight. Yet we cannot know by ourselves how long they will last, or whether they will never cease, or where they will end up if they are handled badly and where if well. So for this we either seek other witnesses or have them already. Why there ought to be no

31 The parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15:11–32.

doubt about their trustworthiness is a matter to be discussed more carefully, not here, but later. In this book, however, we are dealing with the city of God that is not on pilgrimage in the mortality of this life but is always immortal in heaven—that is, with the holy angels who cleave to God, who never were and never will be deserters. Between them and those who abandoned the eternal light and became darkness, God, as we have already said, made a division at the beginning. With his help, then, let us go on to explain, as best we can, what we have begun.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ANGELS, BY WHICH THEY KNOW THE TRINITY IN ITS VERY GODHEAD, AND SEE THE CAUSES OF WORKS FIRST IN THE ART OF THE MAKER RATHER THAN IN THE WORKS THEMSELVES

The holy angels know creatures first in God's Word, as in the art that made them.

11.29 Those holy angels, of course, do not learn about God through spoken words, but through the very presence of unchangeable truth, that is, his only-begotten Word. They know the Word himself, and the Father, and their Holy Spirit; they know that this is an inseparable Trinity, that each person in it is substance, and yet that all together are not three gods but one God. And they know this in such a way that these things are better known to them than we are to ourselves. They also know creation itself better there—that is, in the wisdom of God, as in the art by which it was made—than in creation itself. And so they know even themselves better there than in themselves, though they do know themselves in themselves as well. For they were made, and are something other than the one who made them. There, then, they know as if by daytime knowledge, and in themselves as if by evening knowledge, as we said above. For it makes a great difference whether something is known in the plan according to which it was made, or in itself. In the same way, the straightness of lines or the truth of figures is known one way when it is seen by the intellect, and another way when it is drawn in the dust; and justice is known one way in unchange-

able truth, and another way in the soul of a just person. So too with everything else: the firmament between the waters above and the waters below, which was called heaven; the gathering of the waters below, the laying bare of the land, and the establishing of plants and trees; the creation of the sun, the moon and the stars; the creation of the living creatures from the waters, namely birds and fish and the great swimming creatures of the sea; the creation of everything that walks and creeps on the earth, and of man himself, who was to surpass all things on earth. All these things are known by the angels in one way in the Word of God, where their causes and plans—that is, the plans according to which they were made—abide unchangeably, and in another way in themselves: the former by a clearer knowledge, the latter by a dimmer one, like the knowledge of an art and the knowledge of its works. Yet when these works are referred to the praise and veneration of the Creator himself, it is as if morning dawns in the minds of those who contemplate them.

THE PERFECTION OF THE NUMBER SIX, THE FIRST NUMBER MADE UP OF THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Six is the first number equal to the sum of its parts, a sign of the completeness of creation.

11.30 These things are described as completed in six days—the same day repeated six times—because of the perfection of the number six. It was not that God needed any lapse of time, as if he could not create all things at once, which would then carry time forward by their fitting movements. It was because the perfection of his works was signified by the number six. For six is the first number that is completed by its parts, that is, by its sixth, its third and its half, which are one, two and three; and these, added together, make six. In this way of looking at numbers, "parts" must be understood as those of which one can say what fraction they are, such as a half, a third, a quarter and so on, each named after some number. For example, in the number nine, four is a part of it in some sense, but one cannot say what

fraction of it four is. One can say this of one, since it is its ninth, and of three, since it is its third. But these two parts joined together, the ninth and the third—that is, one and three—fall far short of its total, which is nine. Likewise, in ten, four is a part of it in some sense, but one cannot say what fraction it is. One can say this of one, for it is its tenth part. Ten also has a fifth, which is two, and a half, which is five. But these three parts of it, the tenth, the fifth and the half—that is, one, two and five—added together do not make ten; they make eight. The parts of twelve, on the other hand, when added up, exceed it. It has a twelfth, which is one; a sixth, which is two; a quarter, which is three; a third, which is four; and a half, which is six. But one, two, three, four and six make not twelve but more, namely sixteen. I thought I should mention this briefly to commend the perfection of the number six, which, as I said, is the first to be completed by its own parts added together; and it was in six that God completed his works. So the meaning of number should not be despised. How highly it ought to be valued shines out, for those who look carefully, in many passages of the holy Scriptures. Nor was it said in vain in the praise of God: "You have ordered all things in measure and number and weight."[32]

THE SEVENTH DAY, IN WHICH FULLNESS AND REST ARE COMMENDED

Seven signifies wholeness and God's rest; the angels already enjoy that rest.

11.31 On the seventh day, that is, the same day repeated seven times, God's rest is set before us, and seven is itself a perfect number for another reason. In this rest we first hear of sanctification. So God chose to sanctify this day not in any of his works but in his rest, which has no evening. For his rest is not a creature, which, being known one way in the Word of God and another way in itself, would produce one kind of knowledge like daytime and another like evening. Much more could be said

32 Wisdom of Solomon 11:20.

about the perfection of the number seven. But this book is already long, and I am afraid that, having found an opening, I may seem to want to show off my bit of learning more frivolously than usefully. I must therefore keep to moderation and seriousness, or I may be judged to neglect measure and weight while talking so much about number. Let it be enough, then, to point out that three is the first wholly odd number and four the first wholly even number, and seven is made up of these two. That is why it is often used for the whole, as in: "Seven times the righteous man will fall, and rise again." That is: however often he falls, he will not perish. The text means this to be understood not of sins but of tribulations that lead to humility. Again: "Seven times a day I will praise you," which is said elsewhere in another way: "His praise is always in my mouth." Many passages of this kind are found in the divine authorities, in which, as I said, the number seven is regularly used for the entirety of a thing. For this reason the Holy Spirit is often signified by this same number, the Spirit of whom the Lord says: "He will teach you all truth." There is God's rest, the rest by which we rest in God. For in the whole, that is, in full perfection, there is rest; but in the part there is toil.[33] So we toil as long as we know in part, "but when the perfect comes, what is in part will be done away with." That is why we search even these Scriptures with toil. But the holy angels, for whose fellowship and company we sigh on this most toilsome pilgrimage, have ease in knowing and happiness in resting, just as they have eternity in abiding. They help us without difficulty, for in their spiritual movements, pure and free, they do not toil.[34]

33 Proverbs 24:16; Psalm 118:164 (119:164 in most English Bibles); Psalm 33:2 (34:1 in most English Bibles); John 16:13.
34 1 Corinthians 13:9–10.

THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO HOLD THAT THE ANGELS WERE CREATED BEFORE THE WORLD

Even if the angels were made before the world, Genesis still sets the Trinity at its opening.

11.32 Someone may argue that the holy angels are not meant by the words "Let there be light, and there was light." He may think or teach that some light or other, a bodily light, was made for the first time then. He may hold that the angels were made earlier, not only before the firmament that was made between the waters and the waters and called heaven, but even before what is meant in the words "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." And he may say that "In the beginning" does not mean that this was made first, since God had made the angels before it, but that he made all things in wisdom, which is his Word, and which Scripture itself has called the beginning (just as he himself, in the Gospel, answered the Jews who asked who he was that he was the beginning). I will not meet such a person with a counter-argument, especially because it delights me greatly that the Trinity is set before us at the very opening of the holy book of Genesis.[35] For "In the beginning God made heaven and earth" is said in such a way that we understand the Father to have made them in the Son, as the psalm attests where we read: "How great are your works, O Lord! You have made all things in wisdom." And then, most fittingly, the Holy Spirit too is mentioned a little later. For Scripture first says what kind of earth God made at the start, or what mass or matter for the future building of the world he called by the name "heaven and earth," by adding: "But the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the abyss." Then at once, to complete the mention of the Trinity, it says: "And the spirit of God was borne over the water."[36] So let each person take this as he will. The passage is so

35 Genesis 1:3 and 1:1; John 8:25, where Augustine's Latin has Jesus answer "the beginning."
36 Psalm 103:24 (104:24 in most English Bibles); Genesis 1:2.

deep that, to exercise its readers, it can give rise to several interpretations that do not conflict with the rule of faith. The one condition is that no one doubt that the holy angels in their lofty dwellings, though not coeternal with God, are nonetheless secure and certain of their everlasting and true happiness. The Lord taught that his little ones belong to their fellowship. He not only said, "They will be equal to the angels of God." He also showed what contemplation the angels themselves enjoy, when he said: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."[37]

THE TWO DIFFERENT AND UNEQUAL COMMUNITIES OF ANGELS, WHICH ARE FITTINGLY UNDERSTOOD TO BE CALLED BY THE NAMES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Light and darkness fittingly name the two angelic societies, one loving God, the other swollen with pride.

11.33 That some angels sinned and were thrust down into the lowest parts of this world, which is a kind of prison for them, until their final condemnation to come on the day of judgment, the apostle Peter shows very plainly. He says that God did not spare the angels who sinned, but thrust them into the prisons of the gloom of the underworld and handed them over to be kept for punishment at the judgment. Who, then, would doubt that God, whether by foreknowledge or by action, made a division between these and the others? And who would deny that the others are rightly called light? For even we, who still live by faith and still hope for equality with them and certainly do not yet possess it, have already been called light by the apostle: "For you were once darkness," he says, "but now you are light in the Lord." As for these deserters, anyone who understands or believes that they are worse than unbelieving human beings surely sees that they are most fittingly called darkness.[38] Per-

37 Matthew 22:30 (compare Luke 20:36); Matthew 18:10.
38 2 Peter 2:4; Ephesians 5:8.

haps some other light is to be understood in this passage of the book, where we read, "God said: Let there be light, and there was light," and some other darkness is meant by the words, "God divided the light from the darkness." Even so, consider these two angelic societies. The one enjoys God; the other is swollen with arrogance. To the one it is said, "Worship him, all you his angels"; the other has a prince who says, "All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me." The one is ablaze with the holy love of God; the other smolders with the unclean love of its own exaltation. And since, as it is written, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," the one dwells in the heaven of heavens, while the other, cast down from there, riots in this lowest, airy heaven. The one is tranquil in luminous devotion; the other is turbulent with dark cravings. The one, at God's bidding, mercifully brings help and justly takes vengeance; the other seethes with its own arrogance and with the lust for subjugating and harming.[39] The one is the servant of God's goodness, so that it may help as much as it wishes; the other is bridled by God's power, so that it may not harm as much as it wishes. The one mocks the other, so that by its persecutions the other does good against its will; the other envies the first when it gathers in its pilgrims. These two angelic societies, then, unlike each other and opposed—one good by nature and upright in will, the other good by nature but perverse in will—are made clear by other, more explicit testimonies of the divine Scriptures. We have judged that they are signified in this book too, which is called Genesis, by the words "light" and "darkness." Even if the writer perhaps meant something else in this place, the obscurity of this passage has not been discussed to no purpose. For even if we have not been able to trace the intention of the author of this book, we have not strayed from the rule of faith, which is known well enough to the faithful through other sacred writings of the same authority. For although it is bodily works of God that are recorded here, they doubtless bear some

39 Genesis 1:4; Psalm 96:7 (97:7 in most English Bibles); Matthew 4:9; James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.

likeness to spiritual ones. It is in this sense that the apostle says: "For you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness." But if the writer also meant this, our inquiry reaches a more complete conclusion. We may believe that the man of God, of such outstanding and divine wisdom—or rather the Spirit of God through him—in recounting the works of God, all of which he said were completed on the sixth day, in no way left out the angels. Perhaps "In the beginning God made heaven and earth" was written "in the beginning" because he made these first. Or perhaps, as is more fittingly understood, it was written "in the beginning" because he made them in the only-begotten Word. Either way, by these names the whole of creation is signified. It may be spiritual and bodily creation, which is more credible. Or it may be the two great parts of the world in which all created things are contained. In that case he first set out creation as a whole and then went through its parts according to the mystical number of the days.[40]

THE VIEW OF SOME THAT THE ANGELS ARE MEANT BY THE NAME OF THE WATERS SEPARATED AT THE MAKING OF THE FIRMAMENT, AND OF OTHERS THAT THE WATERS WERE NOT CREATED

Some read the waters above the firmament as angels; Augustine rejects the claim that waters were never created.

11.34 And yet some have thought that the name "waters" in some way signifies the peoples of angels. On this view, that is what is meant by "Let there be a firmament between water and water." Above the firmament the angels are to be understood. Below it are to be understood either these visible waters, or the multitude of evil angels, or the nations of all mankind. If this is so, the passage does not show where the angels were made, but where they were separated. Some people, indeed, deny that the waters were made by God, and this is a most perverse and impious

40 1 Thessalonians 5:5.

folly. Their reason is that it is nowhere written: "God said: Let there be waters." With similar folly they could say the same of the earth too, for nowhere do we read: "God said: Let there be earth." But, they say, it is written: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." Then water too must be understood there, for both are included under one name.[41] For "the sea is his," as we read in the psalm, "and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." But those who want the waters above the heavens to be understood as angels are swayed by the weights of the elements. So they do not think that the fluid and heavy nature of water could have been placed in the upper regions of the world. By their reasoning, if they could make a human being themselves, they would not put phlegm in the head. Phlegm is called φλέγμα [*phlegma*, phlegm] in Greek, and among the elements of our body it holds, as it were, the place of water.[42] For that is where phlegm has its seat. This is most fitting according to God's work, but so absurd according to these men's conjecture that, if we did not know it, and this book had said likewise that God put a fluid and cold, and therefore heavy, humor in the highest part of the human body, above all the rest, these weighers of the elements would never believe it. And if they were subject to the authority of the same Scripture, they would decide that something else must be understood by it. But if we were to examine and treat carefully every single thing written in that divine book about the establishment of the world, there would be a great deal to say, and we would have to digress far from the plan of the work we have undertaken. We have now discussed these two angelic societies, different from each other and opposed, as much as seemed sufficient. In them lie certain beginnings of the two cities in human affairs as well, which I have set out to speak about next. So let us at last bring this book too to a close.

41 Genesis 1:6.
42 Psalm 94:5 (95:5 in most English Bibles).

Book XII

The angels' wills and the creation of humanity
Why some angels fell; against cyclical time; the creation of the first man.

THE ONE NATURE OF THE GOOD AND THE EVIL ANGELS

Good and evil angels share one good nature; they differ by will, clinging to God or turning to themselves.

12.1 Before I speak about the creation of man, I must first say some things about the angels themselves. The creation of man is where the origin of the two cities, as far as the race of rational mortals is concerned, will come into view, just as in the previous book it seems already to have come into view among the angels. What I say about the angels should show, as far as we are able, how fitting and appropriate it is to speak of a fellowship between human beings and angels. It follows that there are rightly said to be not four cities (two of angels, that is, and as many of human beings), but rather two cities, that is, two societies. One is made up of the good and the other of the evil, and each includes not only angels but also human beings.

The good and the evil angels have opposing inclinations. It is not right to doubt that these arose not from different natures and first principles, since God, the good author and founder of all substances, created both, but from their wills and desires. Some remain steadfastly in the good that is common to all, which for them is God himself, and in his eternity, truth and love. Others, delighting rather in their own power, as if they were their own good, slipped away from the higher good, common to all and the source of happiness for all, to what was their

own. They had arrogant pride in place of the most exalted eternity, the cunning of vanity in place of the most certain truth, and partisan zeal in place of undivided love, and so they became proud, deceitful and envious. The cause of the happiness of the first, then, is to cling to God. Therefore the cause of the misery of the others must be understood as the opposite, which is not to cling to God. So when it is asked why the first are happy, the right answer is, "Because they cling to God." When it is asked why the others are miserable, the right answer is, "Because they do not cling to God." If both answers are right, then there is no good for a rational or intellectual creature by which it may be happy except God. Not every creature can be happy, for wild beasts, trees, stones and anything of that kind neither attain nor are capable of this gift. Yet the creature that can be happy cannot be so of itself, since it was created from nothing. It can be happy only from him by whom it was created. For when it has attained him it is happy, and when it has lost him it is miserable. But he who is happy through no other good but himself cannot be miserable, because he cannot lose himself.

We say, therefore, that there is no unchangeable good except the one, true, happy God. The things he made are indeed good, because they are from him. Yet they are changeable, because they were made not out of him but out of nothing. They are not supreme goods, then, since God is a greater good than they are. Still, those changeable goods are great that can cling to the unchangeable good in order to be happy. That good is so truly their good that without it they must be miserable. Nor are the other things in this whole creation better simply because they cannot be miserable. We should not say that the other members of our body are better than the eyes because they cannot be blind. A nature that has sensation, even when it feels pain, is better than a stone, which cannot feel pain at all. In the same way a rational nature, even in misery, is superior to one that lacks reason or sensation and is therefore not subject to misery. Consider, then, this rational nature. It was created with such excellence that, though itself changeable, it attains happiness by

clinging to the unchangeable good, that is, to the supreme God. It cannot satisfy its need unless it is happy, and nothing but God is enough to satisfy that need. For such a nature, surely, not to cling to God is a flaw. Every flaw, however, harms the nature, and is therefore contrary to nature. So this nature differs from the one that clings to God not by nature but by a flaw. Yet by this very flaw the nature itself is shown to be very great and highly praiseworthy. When something's flaw is rightly censured, its nature is without doubt praised. The censure of a flaw is right precisely because the flaw disfigures a praiseworthy nature. When blindness is called a flaw of the eyes, this shows that sight belongs to the nature of the eyes. When deafness is called a flaw of the ears, it is shown that hearing belongs to their nature. In the same way, when we speak of a flaw in the angelic creature by which it does not cling to God, this declares most plainly that it befits its nature to cling to God. And who could worthily conceive or express how praiseworthy it is to cling to God? To cling to him is to live for him, to draw wisdom from him, to rejoice in him, and to enjoy so great a good without death, without error, without trouble. Every flaw harms the nature. Therefore the very flaw of the evil angels, by which they do not cling to God, makes it clear enough that God created their nature so good that it is harmful to it not to be with God.

THAT NO ESSENCE IS CONTRARY TO GOD, SINCE WHAT IS WHOLLY DIFFERENT FROM HIM WHO SUPREMELY AND ALWAYS IS, IS WHAT IS NOT

God supremely is, so the only contrary to him is non-being; no nature is contrary to him.

12.2 I have said all this so that no one, when we speak of the apostate angels, may suppose that they could have had a different nature, as if from a different first principle, or that God was not the author of their nature. Anyone will be free of this impious error the more quickly and easily, the more clearly he is able to understand what God said through an angel when he was

sending Moses to the children of Israel: "I am who I am."[1] For God is the supreme essence, that is, he supremely is, and is therefore unchangeable. To the things he created from nothing he gave being, but not supreme being, such as he himself has. To some he gave more being, to others less, and so he arranged natures in an order of degrees of essence. (Just as "wisdom" [*sapientia*] is named from "being wise" [*sapere*], so "essence" [*essentia*] is named from "being" [*esse*]. It is a new word, which the ancient writers of the Latin language did not use, but which has become customary in our own times, so that our language too might not lack what the Greeks call οὐσία [being]. *Essentia* was coined as a word-for-word rendering of that term.) And for this reason the nature that supremely is, and by whose making all things that are exist, has no contrary nature except that which is not. For to what is, not being is the contrary. And therefore no essence is contrary to God, that is, to the supreme essence and the author of all essences of whatever kind.

THE ENEMIES OF GOD, WHO ARE SUCH NOT BY NATURE BUT BY A CONTRARY WILL, WHICH, IN HARMING THEM, HARMS A GOOD NATURE, SINCE A FAULT THAT DOES NO HARM IS NO FAULT

God's enemies oppose him by fault, not nature, and harm only themselves.

12.3 Scripture does speak of enemies of God. They oppose his rule not by their nature but by their flaws, and they are powerless to harm him, but only themselves. They are enemies by their will to resist, not by any power to injure. For God is unchangeable and in every way incorruptible. Therefore the flaw by which those called his enemies resist God is an evil not to God but to themselves. It is an evil to them for no other reason than that it corrupts the good of their nature. It is not nature, then, that is contrary to God, but the flaw, because evil is contrary to good.

1 Exodus 3:14. The error is chiefly that of the Manichaeans, who held that evil derives from a second first principle opposed to God.

And who would deny that God is supremely good? The flaw, therefore, is contrary to God as evil is contrary to good. Furthermore, the nature that it damages is also a good, so the flaw is certainly contrary to this good too. But to God it is contrary only as evil to good, whereas to the nature that it damages it is not only evil but also harmful. For no evils are harmful to God. They harm only natures that are changeable and corruptible. These natures are nonetheless good, as even the flaws themselves bear witness, for if they were not good, flaws could not harm them. When flaws harm them, what do they do but take away their integrity, beauty, health, strength, and whatever good is usually stripped away or diminished in a nature through a flaw? If good is wholly absent, then a flaw takes away no good and so does no harm, and therefore it is not a flaw at all. For it is impossible to be a flaw and to do no harm. From this we gather that, although a flaw cannot harm the unchangeable good, it can harm nothing but a good, because it exists only where it does harm. This can also be put another way: a flaw cannot exist in the supreme good, and it cannot exist except in some good. Good things alone, then, can exist somewhere, while evil things alone can exist nowhere. Even those natures that have been flawed by an evil will from the outset are evil insofar as they are flawed, but good insofar as they are natures. And when a flawed nature is being punished, there is, besides the fact that it is a nature, this further good in it: it is not unpunished. For this is just, and everything just is without doubt good. No one pays the penalty for natural flaws, only for voluntary ones. Even a flaw that has been strengthened by habit or by excessive growth, and has become ingrained as if by nature, took its beginning from the will. We are speaking here, of course, of the flaws of that nature which has a mind capable of the intelligible light by which the just is distinguished from the unjust.

THE NATURES OF BEINGS WITHOUT REASON OR WITHOUT LIFE, WHICH IN THEIR OWN KIND AND ORDER DO NOT CLASH WITH THE BEAUTY OF THE UNIVERSE

The decay of irrational and lifeless things belongs to the order and beauty of passing time.

12.4 Animals, trees and other changeable and mortal things lack understanding, or sensation, or life altogether. It is ridiculous to regard as damnable the flaws in them by which their perishable nature is corrupted. At the Creator's bidding these creatures received a mode of being such that, by passing away and giving place to others, they complete the lowest kind of beauty, the beauty of passing time, which in its own kind fits the parts of this world. Earthly things were not meant to be made equal to heavenly things. Nor should they have been missing from the universe just because heavenly things are better. In the places where such things belong, some arise as others fail, the lesser succumb to the greater, and the conquered are transformed into the qualities of their conquerors. This is the order of things that pass away. We do not delight in the beauty of this order because, as our mortal condition requires, we are woven into one part of it. We cannot perceive the whole, into which the small parts that offend us fit quite suitably and becomingly. Hence, where we are less able to contemplate the Creator's providence, we are quite rightly commanded to trust in it. In the vanity of human rashness we must not dare to find fault with any part of the work of so great an artist. And yet, if we consider carefully, even the flaws of earthly things that are neither voluntary nor penal commend those very natures for the same reason. There is absolutely none of those natures of which God is not the author and founder. In them too, what displeases us when a flaw takes it away is the very thing that pleases us in the nature. It is true that people are often displeased even with the natures themselves when they become harmful to them. They consider not the natures but their own advantage, as with those animals whose great numbers scourged the pride of the Egyptians. But in that

way they could even find fault with the sun, since certain offenders, or those who fail to pay their debts, are ordered by judges to be set out in the sun.[2] So it is not by our advantage or disadvantage that a nature gives glory to its maker. It does so when it is considered in itself. Thus the nature of the eternal fire too is beyond doubt praiseworthy, even though it will be the punishment of the damned and ungodly. For what is more beautiful than fire as it blazes, thrives and shines? What is more useful than fire as it warms, heals and cooks? And yet nothing is more painful than fire when it burns. So the same fire that is destructive when applied one way is found most beneficial when used fittingly. Who could adequately explain in words its uses throughout the whole world? Nor should we listen to those who praise the light of fire but find fault with its heat, judging, of course, not by the power of its nature but by their own advantage or disadvantage. They want to see; they do not want to burn. But they pay little attention to two facts. That very light, which certainly pleases them too, harms weak eyes because it is not suited to them. And in that heat which displeases them some animals live in good health because it is suited to them.

THAT THE CREATOR IS TO BE PRAISED IN EVERY KIND AND MEASURE OF NATURE

Every nature has measure, form and peace, and so gives praise to its Creator.

12.5 All natures, then, are certainly good, since they exist and therefore have their own measure, their own form, and a certain peace with themselves. When they are where they ought to be according to the order of nature, they preserve their being to the extent that they have received it. Those that have not received everlasting being are changed for better or for worse, according to the use and movement of the things to which the Creator's law subjects them. Under divine providence they tend toward

2 The plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7–10), which included swarms of frogs, gnats, flies and locusts.

the end that the plan for governing the universe includes. So even a corruption great enough to bring changeable and mortal natures to destruction does not make what was cease to be in such a way that what ought to be does not follow from it in due course. Since this is so, God is not to be blamed when any flaws offend us, and he is to be praised when we consider all natures. He supremely is, and therefore every essence that does not supremely exist was made by him. (What was made from nothing ought not to be equal to him, and it could not exist at all if it had not been made by him.)

THE CAUSE OF THE GOOD ANGELS' HAPPINESS AND THE CAUSE OF THE EVIL ANGELS' MISERY

The good angels cling to God; the fallen turned to themselves in pride.

12.6 Accordingly, the truest cause of the good angels' happiness is found to be this: they cling to him who supremely is. But when we ask the cause of the evil angels' misery, the answer that rightly presents itself is this: they turned away from him who supremely is and turned toward themselves, who do not supremely exist. And what else should this flaw be called but pride? For "pride is the beginning of all sin." They would not, then, keep their strength for him. They would have been more if they had clung to him who supremely is, but by preferring themselves to him they preferred what is less. This was the first failing, the first deprivation, and the first flaw of that nature. It was so created that it did not supremely exist, and yet, in order to have happiness, it could enjoy him who supremely is. Once it turned away from him it would not become nothing, but it would be less, and for that reason it would become miserable.[3] If we ask for the efficient cause of this evil will, none is found. For what is it that makes the will evil, when it is the will itself that makes the act evil? So an evil will is the efficient cause of an evil act, but an evil will has no efficient cause. For suppose it is

3 Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 10:13. "Keep their strength for him" echoes Psalm 58:10 (59:9 in most English Bibles).

some thing. Either that thing has a will or it does not. If it has one, it certainly has either a good will or an evil one. If a good one, who would be so foolish as to say that a good will makes a will evil? If that were so, a good will would be the cause of sin, and nothing more absurd can be imagined. But suppose this thing that is thought to make the will evil itself also has an evil will. Then I go on to ask what thing made that will. And so, that there may be some limit to the inquiry, I ask for the cause of the first evil will. For an evil will made by an evil will is not the first. The first is the one that nothing made, for if another preceded it and made it, the one that made the other is prior. Suppose the answer is that nothing made it and that it has therefore always existed. Then I ask whether it existed in some nature. If it existed in none, it did not exist at all. But if it existed in some nature, it was flawing and corrupting that nature and was harmful to it, and so was depriving it of good. So the evil will could not exist in an evil nature, but only in a good one, though a changeable one, which this flaw could harm. For if it did no harm, it was certainly not a flaw, and so it should not be called an evil will either. And if it did harm, it certainly harmed by taking away or diminishing good. An evil will, then, could not be everlasting in a thing in which a natural good had preceded it, a good that the evil will could take away by doing harm. If, then, it was not everlasting, I ask who made it. The only answer left is that the evil will was made by a thing in which there was no will. I ask whether this thing is superior, inferior or equal. A superior thing is certainly better. How then could it have no will, and not rather a good will? The same certainly holds for an equal thing. For as long as two beings both have a good will, one does not produce an evil will in the other. It remains that an inferior thing, which has no will, made the evil will of the angelic nature that first sinned. But even that inferior thing, whatever it is, all the way down to the lowest earth, is beyond doubt good, since it is a nature and an essence and has its own measure and form in its own kind and order. How then can a good thing be the efficient cause of an evil will? How, I say, can good be the cause of

evil? When the will abandons what is higher and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil. It does so not because what it turns to is evil, but because the turning itself is perverse. Therefore it was not the inferior thing that made the will evil. Rather, the will itself, because it was made, desired the inferior thing in a depraved and disordered way. Suppose two people, alike in their disposition of mind and body, see the beauty of one and the same body. At the sight one of them is moved to enjoy it unlawfully, while the other remains steadfast in a chaste will. What do we suppose is the reason an evil will arises in the one and not in the other? What thing produced it in the one in whom it arose? Not the beauty of that body, for it did not produce it in both, since it was presented to the eyes of both alike. Is the flesh of the one who looks the cause? Why not the flesh of the other as well? Or is it the mind? Why not the mind of both? For we have already said that both were alike in mind and body. Or should we say that one of them was tempted by the secret suggestion of an evil spirit? That would be to suggest that he had not consented to that suggestion, and to whatever persuasion it was, by his own will. It is this consent, then, this evil will that he gave to the one persuading him to evil, that we are asking about: what thing produced it in him? To remove this obstacle from the question as well, suppose both are tempted by the same temptation. One yields and consents to it, while the other remains just as he was. What else is apparent but that one was unwilling and the other willing to fall away from chastity? Where could this come from, if not from his own will, since the disposition of body and mind had been the same in both? The same beauty was seen equally by the eyes of both. The same secret temptation pressed upon both equally. So those who want to know what thing produced the evil will that belongs to one of them find nothing, if they look carefully. Suppose we say that he himself produced it. What was he before the evil will but a good nature, whose author is God, who is the unchangeable good? Someone may say, then, that the man made the evil will for himself. This is the man who consented to the one tempting and persuading him to make

unlawful use of a beautiful body, when the other did not consent. That body was before the eyes of both alike, and before that sight and that temptation the two were alike in mind and body. Certainly this man was good before the evil will. Let whoever says this ask why he made it: was it because he is a nature, or because he was made from nothing? He will find that the evil will begins not from the fact that it is a nature, but from the fact that it is a nature made from nothing. For if nature is the cause of the evil will, what else are we forced to say but that evil comes from good and that good is the cause of evil, since an evil will comes from a good nature? For how can it happen that a good nature, however changeable, should do something evil before it has an evil will, that is, should produce the evil will itself?

THAT NO EFFICIENT CAUSE OF AN EVIL WILL SHOULD BE SOUGHT

An evil will has no efficient cause, only a deficient one, like darkness or silence.

12.7 No one, then, should look for the efficient cause of an evil will. Its cause is not efficient but deficient, because the evil will itself is not an effecting but a defecting. To defect from that which supremely is to that which has less being—this is what it is to begin to have an evil will. Moreover, wanting to discover the causes of these defections, which, as I have said, are not efficient but deficient, is like wanting to see darkness or hear silence. Yet both of these are known to us, the one only through the eyes, the other only through the ears—not, of course, by their form, but by the absence of form. So let no one try to learn from me what I know that I do not know—unless perhaps to learn not to know what must be known to be unknowable. Things that are known not by their form but by its absence are known, if this can be said or understood, in a sense by not knowing them, so that in being known they remain unknown. When the gaze even of the bodily eye passes over bodily forms, it sees darkness nowhere except where it begins not to see. In

the same way, perceiving silence belongs to no other sense but to the ears alone, and yet silence is perceived in no way except by not hearing. So too our mind beholds intelligible forms by understanding them; but where they fail, it learns by not knowing. For "who understands his failings?"[4]

THE PERVERSE LOVE BY WHICH THE WILL FALLS AWAY FROM THE UNCHANGEABLE GOOD TO A CHANGEABLE GOOD

Sin is not in the things loved but in loving them perversely, against the order of goods.

12.8 This I know: that the nature of God can never, nowhere, in no respect fail, and that things made from nothing can fail. Yet these things, insofar as they have more being and do good (for then they are doing something), have efficient causes; but insofar as they fail and so do evil (for what are they doing then but what is empty?), they have deficient causes. I also know that when an evil will arises in anyone, what arises in him is something that would not arise if he did not will it. That is why just punishment follows failings that are not necessary but voluntary. For one does not fall away to evil things; one falls away evilly. That is, the falling away is not to natures that are evil; it is evil because, against the order of natures, it turns from that which supremely is to that which has less being. Greed is not a fault in gold but in the person who perversely loves gold and abandons justice, which ought to be preferred to gold beyond all comparison. Sensuality is not a fault in beautiful and pleasant bodies but in the soul that perversely loves bodily pleasures and neglects temperance, which fits us for things spiritually more beautiful and incorruptibly more pleasant. Boastfulness is not a fault in human praise but in the soul that perversely loves to be praised by others and scorns the testimony of conscience. Pride is not a fault in the one who gives power, or in power itself, but in the soul that perversely loves its own power and despises the juster power of one who is mightier. And so whoever perversely

4 Psalm 18:13 (19:12 in most English Bibles).

loves the good of any nature whatever, even if he obtains it, himself becomes evil in the midst of good, and wretched, because he is deprived of what is better.

WHETHER THE HOLY ANGELS HAVE THE SAME AUTHOR OF THEIR GOOD WILL AS OF THEIR NATURE, THROUGH THE LOVE POURED INTO THEM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The good angels' good will, like their nature, was made by God and given by his love.

12.9 There is, then, no natural or—if the word may be used—essential efficient cause of an evil will. For the evil of mutable spirits begins from the evil will itself, and by it the good of their nature is diminished and corrupted; and nothing produces such a will except defection, by which God is deserted—a defection whose cause is itself, of course, deficient. But if we say that there is no efficient cause of a good will either, we must take care not to let anyone believe that the good will of the good angels was not made but is coeternal with God. Since the angels themselves were made, how can their will be said not to have been made? And since it was made, was it made together with them, or did they first exist without it? If it was made together with them, there is no doubt that it was made by the one who made them. As soon as they were made, they clung to him who made them by the love with which they were made. And the fallen angels were separated from their company in this: the good ones remained in that same good will, while the others were changed by falling away from it—changed into an evil will, that is, by the very fact that they fell away from the good one; and they would not have fallen away from it had they not willed to. But if the good angels at first existed without a good will, and produced it in themselves by themselves, without God working in them, then they were made better by themselves than by him. Far from it! For what were they without a good will but evil? Or, if they were not evil because there was no evil will in them either (for they had not fallen away from a good will that they had not yet begun to have), they were certainly not yet such as they

became—not yet as good as they began to be once they had a good will. But if they could not make themselves better than he had made them, than whom no one makes anything better, then surely they could not have had the good will by which they would be better except by the working help of the Creator. Their good will brought it about that they turned not to themselves, who had less being, but to him who supremely is, so that by clinging to him they might have more being and live wisely and happily by sharing in him. What does this show, if not that any will, however good, would have remained destitute, in mere longing, had not he who made their good nature out of nothing, capable of receiving him, made it better out of himself by filling it—having first made it more eager by stirring it up?

This question too must be examined: if the good angels themselves produced a good will in themselves, did they do so by some will or by none? If by none, then they did not produce it at all. If by some will, was that will evil or good? If evil, how could an evil will produce a good will? If good, then they already had one. And who had made that will but he who created them with a good will—that is, with the chaste love by which they might cling to him—at one and the same time establishing their nature and bestowing grace upon them? We must therefore believe that the holy angels were never without a good will, that is, without the love of God. But those who, though created good, are nevertheless evil (evil by their own will, which their good nature did not produce except when it freely fell away from the good, so that the cause of evil is not the good but falling away from the good) either received a lesser grace of divine love than those who persevered in it, or else, if both were created equally good, then, while the former fell through their evil will, the latter received greater help and attained that fullness of happiness which made them completely certain that they would never fall. We have already discussed this in the book preceding this one. We must therefore acknowledge, with the praise due to the Creator, that it is not only of holy human beings but also of the holy angels that it can be said that "the love of God has been poured

out in them through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them." And what is written—"But for me it is good to cling to God"—is the good not only of human beings but first and foremost of angels. Those who share this good in common have a holy fellowship both with him to whom they cling and with one another, and they are one city of God, and at the same time his living sacrifice and his living temple. Part of this city is being gathered from mortal human beings to be joined to the immortal angels; it is now on pilgrimage on earth in mortal fashion, or, in those who have died, it rests in the hidden resting places and abodes of souls. I see that I must now explain how this part came into being, by the creative work of the same God, as I have done for the angels.[5] For according to the faith of holy Scripture, the human race took its beginning from one man, whom God created first. Not without reason does this Scripture have marvelous authority throughout the world and among all the nations; among the other true things it has spoken, it foretold, with true divinity, that they would believe in it.

THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO THINK THE HUMAN RACE, LIKE THE WORLD ITSELF, HAS ALWAYS EXISTED

Some hold that humanity, like the world, has always existed, destroyed and renewed by floods and fires.

12.10 Let us then set aside the conjectures of people who do not know what they are talking about when they speak of the nature or origin of the human race. Some think, as they believed about the world itself, that there have always been human beings. So Apuleius, describing this kind of living creature, says: "Individually mortal, yet collectively, as a whole race, everlasting."[6] They are asked: if the human race has always existed, how can their own history be telling the truth when it records who invented this or that, who first established the liberal disciplines and the other arts, or by whom this or that region and part of the earth,

5 Romans 5:5; Psalm 72:28 (73:28 in most English Bibles).
6 From Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates*.

this or that island, first began to be inhabited? They reply that at certain intervals of time floods and conflagrations lay waste, not indeed the whole earth, but most of it, so that human beings are reduced to a tiny few, from whose offspring the former multitude is restored. And so, they say, things are again and again discovered and established as if for the first time, when in fact what is happening is rather the restoration of what those overwhelming devastations had interrupted and extinguished; but a human being could not come into existence at all except from a human being. They say what they think, however, not what they know.

THE FALSITY OF THE HISTORY THAT ASSIGNS MANY THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO PAST AGES

Egyptian claims of vast antiquity are false; Scripture counts under six thousand years since man.

12.11 They are also misled by certain thoroughly lying writings which, they claim, record many thousands of years of history, whereas from the sacred writings we reckon that not yet six thousand years have passed since man was first made. I will not argue at length how the emptiness of those writings, which report far more thousands of years, is refuted, and how no adequate authority on this matter is to be found in them. That letter of Alexander the Great to his mother Olympias, in which he passes on the account of a certain Egyptian priest, drawn by the priest from writings regarded as sacred among the Egyptians, also includes kingdoms that Greek history knows as well;[7] and among these, the kingdom of the Assyrians, in that same letter of Alexander, exceeds five thousand years, whereas in Greek history it runs to about thirteen hundred from the reign of Belus himself, whom the Egyptian too places as king at the beginning of that kingdom. The empire of the Persians and of the Macedonians, up to Alexander himself, whom he was

7 Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), king of Macedon; the letter, probably a later forgery, circulated widely in antiquity.

addressing, the priest puts at more than eight thousand years; but among the Greeks the Macedonian kingdom is found to last four hundred eighty-five years up to Alexander's death, and the Persian is reckoned at two hundred thirty-three years until it was ended by Alexander's own victory.[8] These figures, then, are far smaller than the Egyptian ones, and would not equal them even if they were counted three times over. For the Egyptians are said once to have had years so short that each ended after four months; hence the fuller and truer year, such as both we and they now have, comprised three of their old years. But even so, as I said, Greek history does not agree with the Egyptian in its reckoning of time. And so the Greek should rather be trusted, because it does not exceed the true number of years contained in our writings, which are truly sacred. Further, if this letter of Alexander, which has become very well known, departs so far from credible fact in its spans of time, how much less should we believe those writings, full of fabulous so-called antiquities, which they have chosen to bring forward against the authority of the best-known and divine books! That authority foretold that the whole world would believe it, and the whole world, as it foretold, has believed it; and it shows that it has told the truth about the past by the fact that what it foretold of the future is being fulfilled with such great truth.

THOSE WHO THINK THIS WORLD IS NOT EVERLASTING, BUT HOLD THAT EITHER COUNTLESS WORLDS, OR THIS SAME ONE, ARE ALWAYS BORN AND DISSOLVED AT A FIXED END OF THE AGES

Those who believe in many worlds, or one world reborn, must admit humanity once began without parents.

12.12 Others, however, do not consider this world everlasting. Some think there is not just this one world but innumerable worlds; others that there is indeed only one, but that at fixed

8 Belus was the legendary first king of Assyria, often identified with the Babylonian god Bel.

intervals of ages it arises and perishes innumerable times. Either way, they must admit that the human race first came into existence without human parents to beget it. The former group hold that the floods and conflagrations of the earth do not affect the whole world entirely, and so they contend that a few human beings always survive, from whom the former multitude is restored. These others cannot suppose in the same way that some part of humanity is left in the world when the world perishes. Rather, just as they think the world itself is reborn from its own matter, so they think that within it the human race springs up from its elements, and that thereafter the offspring of mortals springs from parents, as with other animals.

WHAT TO ANSWER THOSE WHO COMPLAIN THAT THE FIRST CREATION OF HUMANITY CAME LATE

Any finite span is nothing compared with eternity, so the question "why not earlier?" never ends.

12.13 When the question concerned the origin of the world, I gave a reply to those who refuse to believe that it has not always existed but had a beginning—as even Plato quite plainly admits, although some believe he held the contrary of what he says. I would give the same reply concerning the first creation of man, for the sake of those who are similarly troubled about why man was not created through innumerable and infinite ages past, but was created so late that, according to the sacred writings, it is less than six thousand years since he began to exist. If the shortness of the time offends them, because so few years seem to them to have passed since man was made, as we read in our authoritative texts, let them consider that nothing is long-lasting that has an end, and that all the finite spans of the ages, compared with endless eternity, must be considered not small but nothing at all.[9] And so, if it were said that not five or six thousand years, but sixty thousand or six hundred thousand, or sixty

9 Plato's *Timaeus* describes the world as having come into being; some later Platonists read this figuratively. Augustine's earlier reply is in Book 11.

times or six hundred times as many, or six hundred thousand times as many, had passed since God made man—or if this sum were again multiplied as many times over by as much, until we had no name left for the number—the same question could still be asked: why did he not make him earlier? For God's abstention from creating man, stretching back eternally without beginning, is so vast that any number of ages, however great and unspeakable, if it is still bounded by an end and limited to a definite span, should not seem even as large, compared with it, as the tiniest drop of water compared with the whole sea, including all that the ocean flows around. For of these two, one is indeed very tiny and the other incomparably great, but both are finite. But a span of time that proceeds from some beginning and is confined by some end, however great its extent, when compared with that which has no beginning—I do not know whether it should be reckoned as the very least or rather as nothing. For if from this finite span even the briefest moments are subtracted one by one from the end, working backward, then, as the number decreases—however vast it may be, so vast that it can find no word for itself—that subtraction will at some point arrive at the beginning, just as if you were to subtract a man's days from the one on which he is now living back to the one on which he was born. But suppose one subtracts backward in a span that began from no starting point—I do not mean tiny moments one by one, or quantities of hours or days or months or even years, but spans as great as that sum of years which no calculator can any longer name, though it is used up by the subtraction of moments one at a time—and suppose these vast spans are subtracted not once or twice or many times, but forever. What happens, what is achieved, when one never arrives at the beginning, since there is no beginning at all? So the question we are asking now, after five thousand years and somewhat more, our descendants might ask with the same curiosity even after six hundred thousand times as many years, if human mortality, with its births and deaths, and its ignorant weakness were to last so long. Those who lived before us, in the

times when the creation of man was still recent, could also have raised this question. Indeed, the first man himself, the day after he was made, or later that same day, could have asked why he was not made earlier. And however much earlier he had been made, this dispute about the beginning of temporal things would have had no different force then than it has now, or will have later.

THE CYCLES OF AGES, AT WHOSE FIXED END SOME PHILOSOPHERS BELIEVED ALL THINGS WOULD ALWAYS RETURN TO THE SAME ORDER AND FORM

Philosophers invented endless cycles of repetition; Augustine denies that Plato will teach again and again.

12.14 The philosophers of this world, however, have thought that they could and should resolve this dispute only by introducing cycles of time. In these cycles, they asserted, the same things have always been renewed and repeated in the natural order, and so the revolutions of ages coming and going would continue from then on without ceasing—whether these cycles took place within a permanent world, or the world, arising and perishing at fixed intervals, always presented as if new the same things that had happened and were yet to come. From this mockery they cannot free even the immortal soul, even when it has attained wisdom: it goes without ceasing to a false happiness and returns without ceasing to a true misery. For how can that be true happiness whose eternity one can never be confident of, while the soul either, though in possession of truth, is most ignorantly unaware of the misery to come, or, though in happiness, most unhappily dreads it? But if the soul passes from these miseries to happiness, never to return to them again, then something new happens in time that has no end in time. Why not, then, the world as well? Why not man, too, made in the world? Thus, by following the path of the right road in sound doctrine, we may avoid those false cycles, whatever they are, discovered by false and fallacious sages.

Some people want the passage in the book of Solomon called Ecclesiastes to be understood as referring to these cycles that return to the same point and bring everything back to the same state: "What is it that has been? The very thing that will be. And what is it that has been done? The very thing that will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Who will speak and say, 'Look, this is new'? It has already been in the ages that were before us." But he said this either of the things he was speaking of just before—generations going and others coming, the circuits of the sun, the rushing of torrents—or certainly of the kinds of all things that arise and pass away. For there were human beings before us, there are human beings with us, and there will be human beings after us; and so with every kind of animal and plant.[10] Even monstrous births, which come in unusual forms, though they differ from one another and some of them are reported to have happened only once, nevertheless, considered generally as marvels and prodigies, certainly have been and will be; and it is nothing recent or new for a monstrous birth to occur under the sun. Some, however, have understood these words to mean that the wise man wanted us to understand that all things had already been made in God's predestination, and that therefore there is nothing new under the sun. But far be it from right faith for us to believe that these words of Solomon refer to those cycles in which, as these people think, the same revolutions of times and of temporal things are repeated—so that, for example, just as in this age the philosopher Plato taught his students in the city of Athens, in the school called the Academy, so through innumerable ages past, at intervals very long indeed but fixed, the same Plato, the same city, the same school, and the same students have been repeated, and are to be repeated through innumerable ages to come. Far be it, I say, for us to believe such things. For "Christ died once for our sins"; and "rising from the dead he dies no more, and death will no longer have dominion over him." And after the resurrection "we shall always be with the Lord," to

10 Ecclesiastes 1:9–10.

whom we now say, as the sacred psalm urges us: "You, Lord, will preserve us and guard us from this generation and forever." And I think what follows suits these people well enough: "The ungodly will walk in a circle"—not because their life is going to come round again through the cycles they imagine, but because such is now the path of their error, that is, their false doctrine.[11]

THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN RACE IN TIME, WHICH GOD MADE BY NO NEW DECISION AND NO CHANGEABLE WILL

God created the human race in time by an eternal, unchangeable plan, according to his hidden depth.

12.15 What wonder is it, then, if those who wander in these circuits find neither a way in nor a way out? For they do not know how the human race and this mortal condition of ours began, nor by what end it will be closed. They cannot penetrate the depth of God. Though he himself is eternal and without beginning, by that depth he nevertheless began time from some beginning, and in time he made the human being whom he had never made before. He did this not by a new and sudden plan, but by an unchangeable and eternal one. Who could trace this untraceable depth and search out this unsearchable one? According to it God, with no change of will, created in time a temporal human being, before whom no human being had ever existed, and multiplied the human race from one. For the psalm itself first said, "You, Lord, will preserve us and guard us from this generation and forever." Then it struck back at those whose foolish and impious teaching preserves no eternity of liberation and happiness for the soul, adding at once, "The ungodly will walk in a circle." Then, as though someone asked it, "What, then, do you believe, think, understand? Are we to suppose that it suddenly pleased God to make man, whom he had never made before through an infinite eternity past—God, to whom nothing new can happen, in whom there is nothing changeable?"—it

11 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Psalm 11:8–9 (12:7–8 in most English Bibles).

immediately answered, speaking to God himself: "According to your depth you have multiplied the children of men." Let people think what they think, it says, and let them hold and argue whatever they please: "According to your depth," which no human being can know, "you have multiplied the children of men."[12] For it is truly deep that he should both have always existed and yet have willed, from a certain time, to make for the first time the human being he had never made before, without changing his plan or his will.

WHETHER, SO THAT GOD MAY BE UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN LORD, WE MUST BELIEVE THERE WAS NEVER A TIME WITHOUT A CREATURE FOR HIM TO RULE; AND HOW SOMETHING CAN BE CALLED ALWAYS CREATED THAT CANNOT BE CALLED COETERNAL

Was God always Lord over some creature? Augustine weighs time and the angels without asserting an answer.

12.16 For my part, just as I dare not say that the Lord God was ever not a lord, so I ought not to doubt that man had never existed before and that the first man was created at a certain time. But when I consider what he was always lord of, if there was not always a creation, I am afraid to assert anything. For I look at myself, and I recall that it is written: "Who among men can know the counsel of God, or who can think what the Lord wills? For the thoughts of mortals are timid, and our inventions uncertain. For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the mind that thinks many things."[13] Among these many things, then, that I think in this earthly dwelling (many, precisely because I cannot find the one thing among them, or apart from them—perhaps something I do not think of—that is true), suppose I say that there was always a creation for him to be lord of, he who is always lord and never was not lord; but that it was now this creation, now another,

12 The last line follows the Greek and Latin text of the psalm.
13 Wisdom 9:13–15.

through one stretch of time after another, so that we may not call any of them coeternal with the Creator, which faith and sound reason condemn. Then I must beware lest it be absurd and foreign to the light of truth to hold that mortal creation has always existed through the succession of ages, one passing away and another succeeding, while immortal creation did not begin to exist until our own age was reached, when the angels too were created—if the light that was made first rightly signifies them, or rather that heaven of which it was said, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." For they at least did not exist before they were made; otherwise, if they were said always to have existed, they would be believed, being immortal, to be coeternal with God.[14] But if I say that the angels were not created in time, but existed before all times, so that God was lord of them, he who was never anything but lord, I will be asked further: if they were made before all times, could beings that were made have always existed? Here one might perhaps answer: "How not always, since what exists at every time may fittingly be said to exist always?" And these have existed at every time to such a degree that they were made even before all times—if indeed times began with the heaven, and they already existed before the heaven. But suppose time began not with the heaven but existed even before the heaven—not, indeed, in hours and days and months and years (for it is clear that these measurements of temporal stretches, which are customarily and properly called times, began from the motion of the stars; which is why God, when he established them, said, "And let them be for signs and for times and for days and for years"), but in some changeable movement, in which one thing passes earlier and another later, because they cannot exist at once. If, then, something of this kind existed before the heaven in the movements of the angels, and so time already existed, and the angels moved temporally from the moment they were made, then even so they have existed at every time, since times were made together with

14 Genesis 1:1.

them. And who would say, "What existed at every time did not always exist"?[15]

But if I give this answer, I will be told: "How, then, are they not coeternal with the Creator, if he always existed and they always existed? And how can they be called created, if they are understood always to have existed?" What answer shall be given to this? Should we say that they always existed, since they existed at every time—they who were made with time, or with whom times were made—and yet were created? For we shall not deny that times themselves were created either, although no one doubts that time has existed at every time. For if time did not exist at every time, then there was a time when there was no time. Who would be foolish enough to say that? We can rightly say, "There was a time when Rome did not exist; there was a time when Jerusalem did not exist; there was a time when Abraham did not exist; there was a time when man did not exist," and anything else of this kind. Finally, if the world was made not with the beginning of time but after some time, we can say, "There was a time when the world did not exist." But to say, "There was a time when there was no time," is as unfitting as if someone were to say, "There was a man when there was no man," or, "This world existed when this world did not exist." If it is understood of one thing and another, it can be said in a way—that is, "There was another man when this man did not exist." So we can rightly say, "There was another time when this time did not exist." But who, even the most senseless, would say, "There was a time when there was no time"? Just as we say, then, that time was created, although it is said always to have existed because time existed at every time, so it does not follow that, if the angels always existed, they were therefore not created. They are said always to have existed because they existed at every time; and they existed at every time because times themselves could in no way exist without them. For where there is no creature through whose changeable movements times run their course, there can be no times at all. And so, even if they always

15 Genesis 1:14.

existed, they were created; and if they always existed, they are not for that reason coeternal with the Creator. For he always existed in unchangeable eternity, whereas they were made. They are said always to have existed because they existed at every time, since without them times could not exist at all. But time, since it runs on through changeableness, cannot be coeternal with unchangeable eternity. And so, even if the immortality of the angels does not pass away in time—it is neither past, as if it no longer existed, nor future, as if it did not yet exist—yet their movements, by which times run their course, pass from future into past. Therefore they cannot be coeternal with the Creator, in whose movement we must not say either that something was which no longer is, or that something will be which is not yet.

Therefore, if God was always lord, he always had a creation serving his lordship—yet one not begotten from him but made by him from nothing, and not coeternal with him. For he was before it, though at no time without it, preceding it not by an elapsing interval but by abiding perpetuity. But if I give this answer to those who ask how he was always creator, always lord, if a serving creation did not always exist; or how it was created, and is not rather coeternal with its creator, if it always existed—I fear I may more readily be judged to be asserting what I do not know than teaching what I know. I return, therefore, to what our creator has willed us to know. As for the things he has allowed wiser people to know in this life, or has reserved to be known by the wholly perfected in the other life, I confess that they are beyond my powers. But I thought these matters should be discussed without assertion, so that those who read them may see from what perilous questions they should restrain themselves, and may not think themselves equal to everything, but may rather understand how much we must obey the apostle, whose instruction is so wholesome when he says: "By the grace of God given to me I say to all who are among you: do not be wiser than you ought to be wise, but be wise with restraint, each according to the measure of faith God has assigned." For if an

infant is fed according to its strength, it will come about that as it grows it takes in more; but if it goes beyond the strength of its capacity, it will waste away before it grows.[16]

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE ETERNAL LIFE PROMISED TO HUMANITY BY GOD BEFORE ETERNAL TIMES

Paul speaks of "eternal times" before which God promised eternal life, fixed in his predestination.

12.17 What ages passed before the human race was established, I confess I do not know; yet I do not doubt that nothing at all in creation is coeternal with the Creator. The apostle even speaks of eternal times—and not future ones but, what is more remarkable, past ones. For he says: "In hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before eternal times; but in his own times he has revealed his word." See: he has said that in the past there were eternal times, which nevertheless were not coeternal with God. For God not only existed before eternal times, but also promised eternal life, which he revealed in his own times—that is, the fitting ones. And what is that but his Word? For this is eternal life.[17] But how did he promise it, since he certainly made the promise to human beings, who did not yet exist before eternal times—unless it was because in his eternity, and in his very Word coeternal with him, what was to come about in its own time was already fixed by predestination?

WHAT SOUND FAITH HOLDS ABOUT GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE COUNSEL AND WILL, AGAINST THE REASONING OF THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT GOD'S WORKS, REPEATED FROM ETERNITY, ALWAYS RETURN IN THE SAME CYCLES OF AGES

Augustine rejects the argument that God must repeat the same works in cycles to know them.

12.18 This too I do not doubt: before the first man was created, there never was any man—neither that same man brought

16 Romans 12:3.
17 Titus 1:2–3; the closing words echo 1 John 5:20.

round again in who knows what cycles, who knows how many times, nor any other like him in nature. Nor do the arguments of the philosophers frighten me away from this faith. The sharpest of them is thought to be their claim that nothing infinite can be comprehended by any knowledge. Therefore, they say, God holds within himself finite ideas of all the finite things he makes. Yet his goodness must never be believed to have been idle, they say, lest his activity be temporal, preceded by an eternal inactivity, as if he regretted his earlier leisure without beginning and therefore set about making a beginning of work; and therefore, they say, the same things must always be repeated, and must always pass by to be repeated again—either while the world continues in its changes (a world which, though it never failed to exist and is without beginning in time, was nevertheless made), or with its rising and setting too always repeated, and always to be repeated, in those cycles. Otherwise, if God's works are said to have begun at some point for the first time, he would be believed to have somehow condemned his previous idleness without beginning as inert and sluggish, and so displeasing to himself, and to have changed on that account. But if he is held always to have made temporal things, though one after another, and so at some point to have come to the making of man, whom he had never made before, then he would seem to have made what he made not by knowledge—by which, they think, nothing infinite can be comprehended—but as if on the spur of the moment, as things came into his mind, with a kind of random fickleness. On the other hand, they say, if those cycles are admitted, in which the same temporal things are repeated—whether the world continues, or itself also inserts its own revolving risings and settings into the same cycles—then neither lazy idleness, especially of so long a duration without beginning, is attributed to God, nor reckless lack of foresight in his works. For if the same things are not repeated, things varied by infinite diversity cannot be comprehended by any knowledge or foreknowledge of his.

These are the arguments by which the impious try to turn our simple piety from the right road, so that we may walk in a circle with them. If reason could not refute them, faith ought to laugh at them. But there is more: with the help of the Lord our God, clear reason breaks apart these revolving circles that opinion has forged. For these people go astray chiefly in this—and so prefer to walk in a false circle rather than on the true and straight road—that they measure the divine mind, wholly unchangeable, able to grasp any infinity, and numbering all innumerable things without any alternation of thought, by their own human mind, changeable and narrow. And what the apostle says happens to them: "For comparing themselves with themselves, they do not understand."[18] For since, whenever it comes into their minds to do something new, they do it by a new plan (for they have changeable minds), they are surely thinking not of God, whom they cannot conceive, but of themselves in his place; and they compare not him but themselves, and not with him but with themselves. But it is not right for us to believe that God is affected one way when he is at rest and another way when he is working; for he should not even be said to be affected, as though something came about in his nature that was not there before. For whoever is affected undergoes something, and everything that undergoes anything is changeable. So let no laziness, sluggishness or inertia be imagined in his rest, just as no toil, effort or exertion in his work. He knows how to act while resting and to rest while acting. He can apply to a new work not a new but an everlasting plan; and it was not out of regret for having previously been inactive that he began to make what he had not made. And even if he was inactive before and worked afterward (and I do not know how a human being could understand this), this "before" and "after," without doubt, lay in the things, which did not exist before and existed afterward. In him, however, no later will changed or removed an earlier one. Rather, by one and the same everlasting and unchangeable will he brought it about, regarding the things he created, both that

18 2 Corinthians 10:12.

they should not exist earlier, so long as they did not exist, and that they should exist later, when they began to exist. In this way he perhaps shows, wonderfully, to those who can see such things, how little he needed them, and that he created them out of freely given goodness, since without them he remained, from an eternity without beginning, in no less happiness.

AGAINST THOSE WHO SAY THAT INFINITE THINGS CANNOT BE COMPREHENDED EVEN BY GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

God knows all numbers, though they are infinite, so infinity does not limit his knowledge.

12.19 As for that other claim of theirs, that not even God's knowledge can comprehend infinite things, it only remains for them to dare to say—and so plunge themselves into this deep whirlpool of impiety—that God does not know all numbers. That numbers are infinite is perfectly certain. For whatever number you might think to stop at, that very number can—I do not say be increased by adding one—but, however great it is and however vast a multitude it contains, by the very principle and science of numbers be not only doubled but multiplied. Moreover, each number is so bounded by its own properties that none of them can be equal to any other. So they are both unequal to and different from one another, and each one is finite, and all together are infinite. Does God, then, not know all numbers because of their infinity? Does God's knowledge reach as far as some sum of numbers and fail to know the rest? Who would be so mad as to say this? Nor will these people dare to despise numbers and say that they do not pertain to God's knowledge—these people among whom Plato, with great authority, presents God as building the world by numbers. And among us we read the words addressed to God: "You have arranged all things in measure and number and weight." Of him the prophet also says, "He who brings out the world by number," and the Savior says in the gospel, "Your hairs are all numbered." Far be it from us, then, to doubt that every number is known to him whose understanding, as the psalm sings, is beyond number. So the infinity of

number, though there is no numbering of infinite numbers, is not incomprehensible to him whose understanding is beyond number. Therefore, if whatever is comprehended by knowledge is bounded by the comprehension of the knower, then surely every infinity is in some inexpressible way finite to God, because it is not incomprehensible to his knowledge.[19] So if the infinity of numbers cannot be infinite to the knowledge of God, by which it is comprehended, who are we, mere little humans, to presume to fix limits to his knowledge, saying that unless the same temporal things are repeated in the same cycles of time, God cannot either foreknow all that he makes in order to make it, or know it once he has made it? His wisdom, simply manifold and uniformly multiform, comprehends all incomprehensible things with so incomprehensible a comprehension that, if he always willed to make new things that followed upon earlier ones and were unlike them, he could not hold them as disordered and unforeseen; nor would he foresee them just ahead of time, but would contain them in eternal foreknowledge.

THE AGES OF AGES

"The ages of ages" may mean several things, but none of them supports the cycles.

12.20 Whether he does so, I do not dare to decide. Perhaps what are called "the ages of ages" are joined to one another in a continuous chain, yet run on one after another in an ordered diversity, while only those who are freed from misery remain without end in their happy immortality. Or perhaps they are called "the ages of ages" in the sense that the ages which abide in God's wisdom with unshaken stability are, so to speak, the causes that produce these ages which pass away with time. For perhaps "age" can be said for what are "ages," so that "the age of the age" means nothing other than "the ages of ages," just as "the heaven of heaven" means nothing other than "the heavens of

19 Plato's *Timaeus*; then Wisdom 11:20, Isaiah 40:26 (in the Greek and Latin text), Matthew 10:30, and Psalm 146:5 (147:5 in most English Bibles).

heavens." For God called the firmament, above which are the waters, "heaven"; and yet the psalm says: "And let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord."[20] Which of these two it is, or whether something else besides these two can be understood by "the ages of ages," is a very deep question. Nor does it hinder our present task if it is set aside for now without discussion. Either we may be able to settle something about it, or the more careful treatment itself may make us more cautious, so that in such obscurity we do not dare to affirm anything rashly. For at present we are arguing against the view that asserts those cycles in which the same things are thought to be necessarily repeated at intervals of time. Whichever of those opinions about the ages of ages is true, it has nothing to do with these cycles. For the ages of ages may not be the same ages repeated, but ages running on one from another in a most ordered connection, while the happiness of the freed remains utterly secure with no return of miseries. Or the ages of ages may be eternal ages, ruling, as it were, over the temporal ones subject to them. Either way, those cycles that roll the same things round again have no place—and they are refuted above all by the eternal life of the saints.

THE IMPIETY OF THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT SOULS THAT SHARE IN SUPREME AND TRUE HAPPINESS WILL RETURN AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGH CYCLES OF TIME TO THE SAME MISERIES AND LABORS

It is monstrous to claim that souls who reach God's happiness must fall back into misery forever.

12.21 For what devout ears could bear to hear the following? After a life spent through so many and such great calamities (if indeed it should be called life, when it is rather death—a death so heavy that the death which frees us from it is feared out of love for this death); after evils so great, so many and so dreadful have at long

20 "Ages of ages" is the Latin biblical idiom usually rendered "forever and ever." The quotation is Psalm 148:4–5.

last been expiated and ended through true religion and wisdom, a person is to arrive at the sight of God and become happy by contemplating the incorporeal light, through sharing in his unchangeable immortality, which we burn with love to attain. Yet this is to happen in such a way that it must at some point be abandoned, and those who abandon it, thrown down from that eternity, truth and happiness, must be entangled in hellish mortality, shameful folly and accursed miseries, where God is lost, where truth is hated, where happiness is sought through unclean wickedness. And this has happened, and is to happen, again and again without any end, at fixed intervals and measured spans of ages, earlier and later; and all this so that God may be able to know his own works, by means of fixed cycles forever going and returning through our false happinesses and true miseries—alternating, to be sure, but everlasting in their ceaseless revolution—since he can neither rest from making nor, by knowing, track down things that are infinite? Who would listen to this? Who would believe it? Who would bear it? If these things were true, it would be wiser not only to keep silent about them but even (to say what I mean as best I can) more learned not to know them. For if we shall not remember them there, and shall be happy for that very reason, why is our misery here made heavier by knowing them? But if we must necessarily know them there, let us at least not know them here, so that our expectation here may be happier than our attainment of the supreme good there. For here we expect to attain eternal life; there, however, we shall know that life to be happy but not eternal, and destined someday to be lost.

But suppose they say that no one can reach that happiness unless, in the training of this life, he has come to know these cycles, in which happiness and misery alternate by turns. How then can they admit that the more a person loves God, the more easily he will reach happiness—they who teach things that make love itself grow numb? For who would not love more slackly and lukewarmly one whom he thinks he must necessarily abandon, and against whose truth and wisdom he will come to think—and

this when he has reached, as far as his capacity allows, full knowledge of him in the perfection of happiness? No one can love even a human friend faithfully if he knows that he will become his enemy. But far be it that these things should be true, which threaten us with a true misery that will never end, only to be broken often and without end by interludes of false happiness. For what could be more false and deceptive than that happiness in which, amid so great a light of truth, we either do not know that we shall be miserable, or, on the very summit of happiness, we fear it? If we are to be ignorant of the coming calamity, then our misery here is better informed, since here we know of the happiness to come. But if the impending disaster will not be hidden from us there, then the soul in misery passes its times more happily—for when they are over it will be lifted up to happiness—than the happy soul passes its times, for when they are over it will be rolled back into misery. And so the hope of our unhappiness is happy, and the hope of our happiness unhappy. The result is that, since here we suffer present evils and there we fear impending ones, we could more truly be always miserable than ever happy.

But these things are false: piety cries it aloud, and truth proves it. For that true happiness is truthfully promised to us, whose sure security will always be kept and will be broken by no unhappiness. So let us follow the right way, which for us is Christ, and with him as our guide and Savior let us turn the path of our faith and our minds away from the empty and foolish cycle of the ungodly. For Porphyry the Platonist refused to follow the opinion of his own school on these cycles and on the ceaselessly alternating goings and returnings of souls—whether he was moved by the sheer emptiness of the idea or was already in awe of Christian times. As I mentioned in the tenth book, he preferred to say that the soul was given to the world so that it might come to know evils, and that, once freed and cleansed of them and returned to the Father, it would suffer nothing of the

kind again. If he did so, how much more ought we to detest and shun this falsehood, which is hostile to the Christian faith![21]

SOMETHING NEW WITHOUT A CHANGE IN GOD

With the cycles refuted, God can make new things, including humanity, without changing his will.

Now that these cycles have been emptied and defeated, no necessity compels us to think that the human race has no beginning in time from which it began to exist, on the ground that, through some cycles or other, there is nothing new in the world that has not existed before at fixed intervals of time and will not exist again later. For if a soul is freed never to return to miseries, as it was never freed before, then something happens in it that never happened before—and indeed something very great, namely an eternal happiness that never ceases. But if such great newness occurs in an immortal nature, repeated in no cycle and to be repeated in none, why do they insist that it cannot occur in mortal things? If they say that no new happiness arises in the soul, since it returns to the happiness in which it always was, then surely the liberation itself is new, since it is freed from a misery in which it had never been; and the very newness of that misery arose in it, which had never existed. Now if this newness does not fall within the order of things governed by divine providence, but rather comes about by chance, where are those determined and measured cycles in which nothing new happens, but the same things that were are repeated? But if this newness too is not excluded from the ordering of providence—whether the soul was given to the world or fell into it—then new things can happen that never happened before and yet are not foreign to the order of things. And if the soul could, through its folly, make for itself a new misery that was not unforeseen by divine providence, so that providence included this too in the order of things and, not without foresight, freed the soul from it, by what rashness of human vanity, then, do we dare to deny that

21 Augustine discussed Porphyry's views in Book 10 (especially 10.30).

the divinity can make things that are new—not to itself, but to the world—things it never made before and yet never failed to foresee? But suppose they say that the freed souls will indeed not return to misery, but that when this happens nothing new happens in the world, since some souls after others always have been, are being and will be freed. Then, if that is so, they certainly grant that new souls come into being, for whom there is both a new misery and a new liberation. For if they say that these souls are ancient and everlasting into the past, and that from them new human beings come into being every day, from whose bodies the souls, if they have lived wisely, are freed in such a way that they never roll back into miseries, then it follows that they will have to call them infinite. For however large a finite number of souls there had been, it could not have sufficed for infinite ages past, so that human beings might always come from it, whose souls were always to be freed from this mortality and never afterward to return to it. Nor will they in any way explain how there can be an infinite number of souls among things that they want to be finite, so that these can be known to God.

Therefore, since those cycles have now been hissed off the stage—the cycles by which the soul was thought necessarily to return to the same miseries—what remains more in keeping with piety than to believe that it is not impossible for God both to make new things he has never made and, in his ineffable foreknowledge, not to have a changeable will? As for whether the number of souls that are freed and will never return to miseries can keep on increasing, let those see to it who argue so subtly about restricting the infinity of things. We, for our part, close off our reasoning on both sides. If it can increase, what reason is there to deny that something could be created that had never been created before, if the number of freed souls, which never existed before, has not only been made once but will never cease to be made? But if there must be some fixed number of freed souls that never return to misery, and this number is not to increase any further, then this number too, whatever it will

be, certainly never existed before. And it surely could not grow and reach the limit of its size without some beginning; and that beginning never existed before in that way. It was so that this might exist that man was created, before whom there was no one.

THE CREATION OF ONE FIRST HUMAN BEING, AND OF THE HUMAN RACE IN HIM

God made humanity from one man, unlike the animals, to bind the human race in kinship.

12.22 This very difficult question, raised by God's eternity in creating new things without any newness of will, has now been explained as far as we were able. So it is not hard to see that it was much better for things to be done as they were—that God multiplied the human race from one man, whom he created first—than if he had begun it from many. For some animals he made solitary and, so to speak, lone wanderers, that is, animals that prefer solitude, such as eagles and kites, lions and wolves, and any others of that kind. Others he made gregarious, preferring to live together in flocks and herds, such as doves and starlings, deer and fallow deer, and others of this sort. Yet he did not propagate either kind from single individuals, but commanded many to come into existence at once. Man, however, he created one and single. He was making man's nature a kind of middle ground between angels and beasts. If man remained subject to his Creator as to his true lord and kept his command with devout obedience, he would pass into the fellowship of the angels, attaining happy immortality without end and without any death in between. But if he offended the Lord his God by using his free will proudly and disobediently, he would be handed over to death and live like a beast, a slave of lust, destined after death to eternal punishment. God did not create him single, of course, so that he would be left alone without human fellowship, but so that the unity of that fellowship and the bond of harmony might be commended to him all the more forcefully, if human beings were bound together not only by

likeness of nature but also by the affection of kinship. For it did not please God to create even the woman who was to be joined to the man in the way he had created the man himself; he created her from him, so that the human race might spread entirely from one human being.

THAT GOD FOREKNEW THAT THE FIRST HUMAN BEING HE MADE WOULD SIN, AND FORESAW AT THE SAME TIME HOW GREAT A PEOPLE OF THE DEVOUT FROM HIS RACE HE WOULD BRING BY HIS GRACE INTO THE COMPANY OF THE ANGELS

God foresaw human sin and war, and also a people of the devout to be joined with the angels.

12.23 God knew that man would sin and, once subject to death, would beget others who would die. He knew too that mortals would go so far in the savagery of their sinning that beasts without a rational will would live more safely and peacefully among their own kind than human beings do. Those beasts sprang in the beginning from many individuals, out of the waters and the earth, whereas the human race was propagated from one man in order to commend concord. For never have lions among themselves, or serpents among themselves, waged wars like the wars of men. But God also foresaw that by his grace a people of the godly would be called to adoption, would have their sins forgiven and be justified by the Holy Spirit, and would be joined with the holy angels in eternal peace once the last enemy, death, had been destroyed. To this people it would be a help to reflect that God had established the human race from one man in order to commend to human beings how pleasing unity is to him, even among many.[22]

22 "The last enemy, death" echoes 1 Corinthians 15:26.

THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN SOUL, CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

God made man's soul in his image, formed the man from dust and the woman from his side.

12.24 So God made man in his own image. For he created for him a soul of such a kind that by reason and understanding he would surpass all the creatures of land, water and air, which did not have a mind of this kind. He formed the man from the dust of the earth and put into him a soul of the kind I have described. Either he had already made that soul and placed it in him by breathing, or, more probably, he made it by breathing and willed that the breath he made by breathing should be the soul of man (for what else is breathing out than making breath?). Then he also made him a wife, to help in begetting, from a bone taken from his side, and he did it as God does. For we must not think of these things in a fleshly way, by our habits, as we usually see craftsmen working some earthly material with their bodily limbs and fashioning whatever the skill of their art can achieve. God's hand is God's power, and he works even visible things invisibly.[23] But some people think these things are fables rather than truth. They measure the power and wisdom of God, by which he knows how, and is able, to make even seeds without seeds, by these familiar, everyday works. As for the things that were established at the beginning, they do not know them, and so they think about them without faith. It is as if the very things they do know about human conception and birth would not seem even more incredible if they were described to people who had never experienced them! Yet even these things most people attribute to the bodily causes of nature rather than to the works of the divine mind.

23 See Genesis 1:27, 2:7 and 2:21–22.

WHETHER ANGELS CAN BE CALLED CREATORS OF EVEN THE SMALLEST CREATURE

Angels, which the Platonists call gods, are not the creators of any living thing.

12.25 But in these books we have no business with those who do not believe that the divine mind makes these things or cares for them. Then there are those who believe their Plato. He held that all mortal living things were made not by the supreme God who fashioned the world but by other, lesser gods, whom he himself had created, acting by his permission or command, and that among these creatures man held the chief place, akin to the gods themselves. If these people rid themselves of the superstition that makes them look for a way to seem justified in performing rites and sacrifices to those gods as their makers, they will easily rid themselves of the error of this opinion as well. For it is not right to believe or to say that anyone but God is the creator of any nature, however tiny and mortal, and that is true even before it can be understood.[24] As for the angels, whom they prefer to call gods: even if, by command or by permission, they apply their activity to the things that come to birth in the world, we no more call them creators of living things than we call farmers creators of crops and trees.

THAT EVERY NATURE AND EVERY FORM OF ALL CREATION IS MADE AND FORMED ONLY BY THE WORK OF GOD

Only God gives natures their inner form, as he gave the sun and an eye their roundness.

12.26 For there is one kind of form that is applied from outside to some bodily material. This is how human potters, smiths and craftsmen of that sort work, and they also paint and sculpt shapes resembling the bodies of animals. But there is another

24 Augustine refers to Plato's *Timaeus*, in which the supreme craftsman delegates the making of mortal creatures to lesser gods.

kind of form whose efficient causes work from within, from the secret, hidden will of a living and intelligent nature. That nature, while it is not itself made, makes not only the natural forms of bodies but even the very souls of living things. The first kind of form may be ascribed to any craftsmen. But this second kind belongs to only one craftsman, God the creator and founder, who made the world itself and the angels without the help of any world or any angels. There is a divine and, so to speak, effective power that does not know how to be made, only how to make. By that power the roundness of the sky and the roundness of the sun received their form when the world was made. By that same divine and effective power, which does not know how to be made, only how to make, the roundness of the eye and the roundness of an apple received their form, along with the other natural shapes we see in everything that comes to birth. These shapes are not applied from outside. They come from the innermost power of the Creator, who said, "I fill heaven and earth," and whose wisdom it is that "reaches mightily from end to end and orders all things sweetly." What kind of service the angels, who were made first, rendered to the Creator as he made the rest, I do not know. I do not dare ascribe to them what perhaps they cannot do, nor ought I to deny them what they can.[25] Yet the creation and founding of all natures, by which they come to be natures at all, I ascribe to God, and the angels themselves approve. They know, and give thanks for it, that they too owe their very being to him. So we do not call farmers the creators of any fruits, since we read, "Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth." Nor do we even call the earth itself their creator, though it seems to be the fruitful mother of all things, pushing forward what bursts out in shoots and holding fast what is fixed by roots. For again we read, "God gives it a body as he has willed, and to each of the seeds its own body." In the same way we ought not to call a woman the creator of her child. That title belongs to him who said to one of his servants, "Before I formed you in the womb, I

25 Jeremiah 23:24; Wisdom 8:1.

knew you."[26] The soul of a pregnant woman, affected in this way or that, may be able to clothe the unborn child, as it were, with certain qualities. Jacob did something similar with the streaked rods, so that the flocks were born with varied colors. Yet the mother no more made the nature that is born than she made herself. Whatever bodily or seminal causes are applied to the generation of things, whether through the operations of angels or of humans or of any animals, or through the union of males and females; and whatever desires or emotions of the mother's soul may be able to sprinkle features or colors on the tender, soft beings she has conceived: the natures themselves, which are affected in this way or that within their kind, are made by none but the supreme God. His hidden power penetrates all things with a presence that nothing can defile. It makes whatever exists in any way exist, to whatever extent it exists. For without his making, a thing would not be of this sort or that sort; it could not exist at all.[27] Take the form that craftsmen impose from outside on bodily things. Even there we say that the city of Rome and the city of Alexandria had as their founders not builders and architects but kings, by whose will, plan and command they were built: Romulus founded the one, Alexander the other. How much more, then, ought we to call none but God the founder of natures! He makes nothing out of material that he did not himself make, and he has no workers except those he himself created. If he were to withdraw his, so to speak, constructive power from things, they would cease to exist, just as they did not exist before they were made. But when I say "before," I mean in eternity, not in time. For who else is the creator of times but he who made the things by whose motions times would run?

26 1 Corinthians 3:7; 1 Corinthians 15:38; Jeremiah 1:5.

27 Genesis 30:37–39, where Jacob sets peeled, streaked rods before the breeding flocks.

THE OPINION OF THE PLATONISTS, WHO THOUGHT THE ANGELS WERE INDEED MADE BY GOD BUT WERE THEMSELVES THE MAKERS OF HUMAN BODIES

If bodies are prisons, the Platonists' maker-gods are jailers; in fact every body is God's gift.

12.27 Plato, it is true, wanted the lesser gods, made by the supreme God, to be the makers of the other living things. They were to receive the immortal part from him and themselves weave the mortal part onto it. So he wanted them to be the creators not of our souls but of our bodies. Now Porphyry says that every body must be fled for the soul to be purified. He also holds, with his Plato and the other Platonists, that those who have lived without restraint and without honor return to mortal bodies to pay penalties. Plato says they may return even to the bodies of beasts, Porphyry only to those of humans. It follows that these gods, whom they want us to worship as our parents and founders, must be nothing but the forgers of our fetters and our prisons. They are not our makers but our jailers, who lock us up in wretched slave-prisons and bind us with the heaviest chains. So either the Platonists should stop threatening souls with punishment through these bodies, or they should stop preaching to us that we must worship gods whose work in us they urge us to flee and escape as far as we can. In fact both claims are utterly false. Souls do not pay penalties in this way when they are rolled back again into this life. And of all living things, whether in heaven or on earth, there is no founder but the one by whom heaven and earth were made. Besides, if there is no reason to live in this body except to pay punishments, how can the same Plato say that the world could not have become most beautiful and best unless it were filled with every kind of living thing, that is, with both immortal and mortal ones? But if our formation, by which we were made even as mortals, is a divine gift, how can it be a punishment to return to these bodies, that is, to divine benefits? And if God, as Plato constantly reminds us, held in his eternal intelligence the forms of all living things, just as he held the

form of the whole world, how could he not have founded them all himself? Or would he refuse to be the craftsman of some things when his mind, ineffable and ineffably worthy of praise, possessed the art of making them?

THAT THE WHOLE FULLNESS OF THE HUMAN RACE AROSE IN THE FIRST MAN, IN WHOM GOD FORESAW WHICH PART WOULD BE HONORED WITH REWARD AND WHICH CONDEMNED TO PUNISHMENT

From the first man, by God's foreknowledge, the two cities already took their beginning.

12.28 Rightly, then, true religion recognizes and proclaims that the founder of the whole world is also the founder of all living things, that is, of both souls and bodies. Among these earthly creatures, man, the chief of them, was made by God in his image. He was made one, for the reason I have given and perhaps for some other, greater reason that lies hidden, but he was not left alone. For no race is so quarrelsome by vice and so social by nature as this one. And against the vice of discord, whether to guard against its arising or to heal it once it had arisen, human nature could say nothing more fitting than to recall that first parent. God willed to create him as one so that a multitude might be propagated from him, and so that by this reminder a harmonious unity might be preserved even among many. The fact that the woman was made for him from his side also shows clearly enough how dear the union of husband and wife ought to be. These works of God are unusual, of course, precisely because they are the first. Those who do not believe them ought not to believe in any wonders at all, for these too would not be called wonders if they were produced in the usual course of nature. Yet under so great a governance of divine providence, what is produced in vain, even if its cause is hidden? A sacred psalm says, "Come and see the works of the Lord, what wonders he has set upon the earth." Why, then, the woman was made

from the man's side, and what this first wonder, so to speak, prefigured, will be explained elsewhere, as far as God helps me.[28]

Now, since this book must be brought to a close, let us hold that in this first-made man there arose in the human race two societies, two cities as it were. They did not yet exist visibly, but they already existed in God's foreknowledge. For from him human beings were to come, some to be joined with the evil angels in punishment, others with the good angels in reward, by a judgment of God that is hidden but nonetheless just. For since it is written, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth," his grace cannot be unjust, nor his justice cruel.[29]

28 Psalm 45:9 (46:8 in most English Bibles).
29 Psalm 24:10 (25:10 in most English Bibles).

Book XIII

Death
Death as the punishment of sin; the soul, the body, and the resurrection body.

THE FALL OF THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS, THROUGH WHICH MORTALITY WAS CONTRACTED

Augustine turns to the fall of the first humans and the origin of death as its just punishment.

13.1 We have now dealt with the very difficult questions about the origin of our world and the beginning of the human race. The order of our subject next requires us to take up the discussion we have undertaken of the fall of the first man, or rather of the first human beings, and of the origin and spread of human death. For God had not made human beings as he made the angels, so that they could not die at all even if they sinned. He made them so that, once they had fulfilled the duty of obedience, angelic immortality and blessed eternity would follow without death coming in between. If they disobeyed, however, death would punish them by a most just condemnation. We have already said this in the previous book as well.

THE DEATH THAT CAN BEFALL THE SOUL, WHICH WILL ALWAYS LIVE IN SOME WAY, AND THE DEATH TO WHICH THE BODY IS SUBJECT

The soul dies when God abandons it, the body when the soul leaves; the second death is eternal punishment.

13.2 But I see that I must discuss the kind of death itself a little more carefully. For although the human soul is truly said to be immortal, it too has a certain death of its own. It is called immortal because in some way, however slight, it never ceases to live and to feel. The body, on the other hand, is called mortal because it can be abandoned by all life and has no life at all of itself. The death of the soul, then, occurs when God abandons it, just as the death of the body occurs when the soul abandons it. Therefore the death of both, that is, of the whole human being, occurs when the soul, abandoned by God, abandons the body. For then the soul does not live from God, and the body does not live from the soul. This death of the whole human being is followed by the one that the authority of the divine Scriptures calls the second death. The Savior pointed to it when he said: "Fear him who has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell."[1] This second death does not happen until the soul has been joined to the body in such a way that no parting can separate them. So it may seem strange that the body can be said to be killed by a death in which the soul does not abandon it, and in which it is tormented while still animated and able to feel. In that final and everlasting punishment, which must be discussed more carefully in its proper place, we rightly speak of the death of the soul, because the soul does not live from God. But how can it be the death of the body, when the body lives from the soul? For otherwise it could not feel the bodily torments that are to come after the resurrection. Or is it this: since life of any kind is something good, and pain is evil, the body should not be said to live at all when the soul is in it as a cause not of living but of

1 Matthew 10:28. The phrase "the second death" comes from Revelation 20:14.

suffering? So the soul lives from God when it lives well, for it cannot live well unless God works in it what is good. The body lives from the soul when the soul lives in the body, whether or not the soul itself lives from God. For the life of the ungodly in their bodies is the life not of their souls but of their bodies. Their souls can give them this life even when the souls are dead, that is, abandoned by God, because the souls' own life, however slight, never ceases, and this is why they are immortal. But in the final condemnation, although a person does not cease to feel, that feeling is neither sweet with pleasure nor wholesome with rest but full of punishing pain. So it is not without reason called death rather than life. It is called the second death because it comes after the first, in which natures that cling together are parted, whether God and the soul or the soul and the body. Of the first death, the death of the body, it can therefore be said that it is good to the good and evil to the evil. But the second death, beyond doubt, belongs to none of the good, and so it is good to no one.

WHETHER DEATH, WHICH PASSED THROUGH THE SIN OF THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS TO ALL, IS A PUNISHMENT OF SIN EVEN FOR THE SAINTS

Death, the punishment of the first sin, passed to all descendants because human nature was changed for the worse.

13.3 But here a question arises that must not be passed over. Is the death by which soul and body are separated really good to the good? If it is, how can we maintain that it is also the punishment of sin? For the first human beings would certainly not have suffered it if they had not sinned. How then can it be good to the good, when it could happen only to the wicked? And again, if it could happen only to the wicked, it ought not to be good to the good. It ought not to exist for them at all. For why should there be any punishment for those in whom there was nothing to punish? We must therefore admit two things. The first human beings were so created that, had they not sinned, they would not have experienced any kind of death. But as the first sinners they were

punished with death in such a way that whatever sprang from their stock would also be held liable to the same penalty. For nothing could be born of them other than what they themselves had become. In proportion to the greatness of that guilt, the condemnation changed human nature for the worse. What came first as a penalty in the first human beings who sinned therefore followed as nature in all the others who were born. For a human being does not come from a human being in the same way as a human being came from dust. Dust was the material for making a human being, but a human being is the parent for begetting a human being. So flesh is not what earth is, although flesh was made from earth; but whatever the human parent is, the human offspring is as well. In the first man, then, the whole human race was present, to pass through the woman into its descendants, when that married couple received God's sentence condemning them. And what man became, not when he was created but when he sinned and was punished, is what he begot, at least as far as the origin of sin and death is concerned. Sin and punishment did not reduce the first man to the infantile dullness and weakness of mind and body that we see in little children. (God willed these to be like the first stage of young animals, whose parents he had cast down into a beastly life and death. As it is written: "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he was compared to the senseless cattle and became like them." Yet we see that infants are even weaker in the use and movement of their limbs, and in the sense for seeking and avoiding things, than the most tender young of other animals. It is as though human power rose more eminently above the other living creatures the further back it has drawn its thrust, like an arrow when the bow is bent.) So it was not into these infantile beginnings that the first man fell, or was driven, by his unlawful presumption and his just condemnation. Rather, human nature was corrupted and changed in him to this extent: he suffered the rebellious disobedience of desire in his members and was bound by the necessity of dying. And so he begot what he had become through fault and punishment, that is, offspring liable

to sin and death.[2] If infants are released from this bond of sin through the grace of Christ the Mediator, they can suffer only the death that separates the soul from the body. Freed from the debt of sin, they do not pass into that second death, whose punishment has no end.

WHY DEATH, THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN, IS NOT TAKEN AWAY FROM THOSE FREED FROM SIN BY THE GRACE OF REBIRTH

The baptized still die so that faith may be tested, and martyrs turn the penalty of sin into victory.

13.4 Someone may be troubled by a further question. If this death too is the punishment of sin, why do those whose guilt is wiped out by grace suffer even this? I have already treated and resolved that question in another work of mine, which I wrote on the baptism of infants. There I said that the soul is left to experience separation from the body, even though the bond of guilt has been removed, because faith itself would be weakened if the body's immortality followed immediately on the sacrament of rebirth. Faith is faith only when what is not yet seen in reality is awaited in hope. By the strength and struggle of faith, at least in those of riper age, even the fear of death had to be overcome, and this was most evident in the holy martyrs. There would certainly be no victory and no glory in that struggle, since there could be no struggle at all, if after the washing of rebirth the saints could no longer suffer bodily death.[3] Who would not then rush to the grace of Christ with little children to be baptized, chiefly to avoid being released from the body? Then faith would not be tested by an invisible reward. Indeed, it would no longer be faith at all, since it would seek and take the wage for its work at once. As it is, by a greater and more wonderful grace of the Savior, the punishment of sin has been turned to the service of

2 Psalm 48:13 (49:12 in most English Bibles).
3 Augustine refers to *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants* (AD 411–412).

righteousness. Then it was said to man: "You will die if you sin." Now it is said to the martyr: "Die, so that you may not sin." Then it was said: "If you transgress the commandment, you shall die by death." Now it is said: "If you refuse death, you will transgress the commandment." What had then to be feared so that no one would sin must now be accepted so that no one may sin. Thus, by the inexpressible mercy of God, even the punishment of vices passes into the weapons of virtue, and even the sinner's penalty becomes the merit of the righteous. For then death was gained by sinning; now righteousness is fulfilled by dying.[4] This holds, however, for the holy martyrs, to whom the persecutor offers a choice: either abandon the faith or suffer death. The righteous prefer to suffer by believing what the first wrongdoers suffered by not believing. Unless those had sinned, they would not have died; but these will sin unless they die. Those, then, died because they sinned; these do not sin because they die. Through the guilt of those it came about that punishment was reached; through the punishment of these it comes about that guilt is not reached. This is not because death, which was formerly an evil, has become something good. It is because God has granted such grace to faith that death, which is plainly the opposite of life, has become the instrument by which one passes over to life.

THAT AS THE WICKED MAKE BAD USE OF THE LAW, WHICH IS GOOD, SO THE RIGHTEOUS MAKE GOOD USE OF DEATH, WHICH IS EVIL

As the wicked make bad use of the good law, the righteous make good use of evil death.

13.5 The Apostle wished to show how much power sin has to do harm when grace does not come to our help. So he did not hesitate to say that even the law, by which sin is forbidden, is the power of sin. "The sting of death," he says, "is sin, and the power of sin is the law." This is entirely true. For prohibition increases

4 The words spoken "then" paraphrase God's warning in Genesis 2:17.

the desire for the unlawful act whenever righteousness is not loved enough for delight in it to overcome the craving to sin. And only divine grace helps us to love true righteousness and to delight in it. But so that the law would not be thought evil because it was called the power of sin, he takes up a question of this kind in another passage and says: "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. Did what is good, then, become death to me? By no means. But sin, so that it might be shown to be sin, worked death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment the sinner, or sin, might become sinful beyond measure."[5] He said "beyond measure" because transgression is added too, when the lust for sinning has grown and the law itself is despised. Why have I thought this worth mentioning? Because the law is not evil when it increases the desire of sinners, and in the same way death is not good when it increases the glory of those who suffer it. In the one case the law is abandoned for the sake of wickedness and makes transgressors; in the other, death is accepted for the sake of truth and makes martyrs. The law, then, is good, because it is the prohibition of sin; but death is evil, because it is the wages of sin. Yet injustice makes bad use not only of evil things but also of good ones, and justice makes good use not only of good things but also of evil ones. This is why the wicked make bad use of the law, although the law is good, and the good die well, although death is evil.

THE GENERAL EVIL OF DEATH, BY WHICH THE UNION OF SOUL AND BODY IS BROKEN

The separation of soul and body is harsh and unnatural, a punishment even when borne with patience.

13.6 Therefore, as regards the death of the body, that is, the separation of the soul from the body, it is good to no one while it is being suffered by those we call dying. In the living person soul and body had been joined and interwoven, and the very force

5 The Apostle Paul: 1 Corinthians 15:56; Romans 7:12–13.

that tears them apart is a harsh experience and contrary to nature. It lasts until all the feeling that came from this embrace of soul and flesh is taken away. Sometimes a single blow to the body or a sudden snatching away of the soul cuts all this distress short, and its swiftness does not allow it to be felt. Yet whatever it is in the dying that takes away feeling through painful feeling, bearing it with devotion and faith increases the merit of patience. It does not remove the name of punishment. So death, passed down through the unbroken line of descent from the first man, is beyond doubt the punishment of everyone who is born. Yet if it is paid for the sake of devotion and righteousness, it becomes the glory of everyone who is reborn. And although death is the retribution for sin, it sometimes secures that sin receives no retribution at all.

THE DEATH THAT SOME WHO ARE NOT REBORN UNDERGO FOR CONFESSING CHRIST

Dying while confessing Christ forgives sins as fully as baptism, even for the unbaptized.

13.7 For those who die confessing Christ, even without having received the washing of rebirth, find that their death avails as much for the forgiveness of their sins as if they had been washed in the holy font of baptism. He who said, "Unless someone is reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven," made an exception for them in another saying, which is no less universal: "Whoever confesses me before others, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven." And in another place: "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Hence it is written: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." For what is more precious than a death through which all offenses are forgiven and merits are increased all the more abundantly?[6] Some could not postpone death, were baptized, and departed this life with all their sins

6 John 3:5; Matthew 10:32; Matthew 10:39; Psalm 115:15 (116:15 in most English Bibles).

wiped away. They are not of such great merit as those who could have postponed death but did not, because they preferred to end their life confessing Christ rather than to deny him and so come to his baptism. Had they done that, even their denial of Christ out of fear of death would surely have been forgiven them in that washing. In that same washing even so monstrous a crime was forgiven to those who had killed Christ. But without the abundance of the grace of that Spirit who blows where he wills, how could they ever love Christ so much that they could not deny him, in so great a danger to their lives and with so great a hope of pardon?[7] So the precious death of the saints has shown something. For them the death of Christ was sent ahead and granted beforehand with such great grace that they did not hesitate to spend their own death to gain him. Their death has shown that what had earlier been established as the punishment of sin has been turned to such uses that a richer harvest of righteousness springs from it. Death, therefore, ought not to seem good because it has been turned to such great benefit, not by its own power but by divine help. What was then set before us as something to fear, so that sin would not be committed, is now set before us as something to accept, so that sin may not be committed, so that sin already committed may be blotted out, and so that the palm owed to righteousness for a great victory may be awarded.

THAT FOR THE SAINTS, ACCEPTING THE FIRST DEATH FOR THE TRUTH IS THE ABOLITION OF THE SECOND DEATH

Martyrs accept the first death to escape the second; the souls of the godly rest until the resurrection.

13.8 For if we consider more carefully, even when someone dies faithfully and admirably for the truth, it is death that is being avoided. Part of it is accepted precisely so that the whole of it may not befall him, with the second death, which never ends, added on top. The separation of the soul from the body is accep-

7 "The Spirit who blows where he wills" echoes John 3:8.

ted so that the soul, once separated from God, may not also be separated from the body. Then the first death of the whole person would be complete, and the everlasting second death would follow it. Therefore death, as I said, is good to no one while the dying suffer it and while it works in them to make them die. But it is borne admirably for the sake of keeping or gaining what is good. When, however, those who are now called dead are in it, it is not absurd to say that it is evil to the evil and good to the good. For the souls of the godly, separated from the body, are at rest, while the souls of the ungodly pay penalties. This lasts until the bodies of the godly come back to life for eternal life, and the bodies of the ungodly for eternal death, which is called the second death.

WHETHER THE TIME OF DEATH, IN WHICH THE SENSE OF LIFE IS TAKEN AWAY, SHOULD BE SAID TO BELONG TO THE DYING OR TO THE DEAD

When exactly is someone in death? While he feels, he is alive; once dead, he is after death.

13.9 But the time in which souls separated from the body are either in good or in evil: should it be said to be after death rather than in death? If it is after death, then what is good or evil is no longer death itself, which is over and past, but the soul's present life after it. Death was evil to them while it existed, that is, while they were suffering it in dying, because it brought a grievous and distressing feeling. The good make good use of this evil. But once death is over, how can it be either good or evil, since it no longer exists? Further, if we look still more closely, it will appear that even the thing whose grievous and distressing feeling in the dying we spoke of was not death. For as long as people feel, they are certainly still alive. And if they are still alive, they ought to be said to be before death rather than in death, because death, when it comes, takes away all the bodily feeling that is so distressing while death approaches. It is therefore hard to explain how we can call people dying who have not yet died but are tossed about by the final, deadly affliction as death draws near.

Yet they are rightly called dying, because once the death now looming has arrived, they are called not dying but dead. No one, then, is dying except someone living. When a person has reached the extremity of life of those we say are giving up their soul, he has not yet been deprived of his soul, and so he is surely still alive. The same person, then, is at once dying and living, drawing near to death and drawing away from life. He is still in life, because the soul is in the body; he is not yet in death, because the soul has not yet left the body. But if, when it has left, he will not be in death even then but rather after death, who could say when he is in death? Nor will anyone be dying, if no one can be dying and living at the same time. For as long as the soul is in the body, we cannot deny that the person is living. Or suppose that the one in whose body the work of dying is already under way should rather be called dying, and that no one can be living and dying at the same time. Then I do not know when he is living.

WHETHER THE LIFE OF MORTALS SHOULD BE CALLED DEATH RATHER THAN LIFE

Life in a mortal body is a steady race toward death, so perhaps we are always in death.

13.10 From the moment anyone begins to exist in this body that is bound to die, there is never a moment in it when the work of bringing death is not going on. Its changeableness works at this through the whole time of this life (if it should even be called life): to arrive at death. There is no one, after all, who is not nearer to death a year from now than a year ago, tomorrow than today, today than yesterday, a little later than now, and now than a little while ago. Whatever time is lived is subtracted from the span of living, and what remains grows less and less every day. So the time of this life is nothing at all but a race toward death, in which no one is allowed to stand still even for a moment or to go a little more slowly. All are pressed on at the same pace and driven forward at no different rate. The one whose life was shorter did not get through his days more quickly

than the one whose life was longer. Moments were snatched from both equally and in equal measure. One simply had nearer, the other farther away, the goal toward which both were running at the same speed. It is one thing to have covered more road, another to have walked more slowly. So whoever spends longer stretches of time on the way to death does not go more slowly; he completes more of the journey. Further, suppose each person begins to die, that is, to be in death, from the moment death itself begins its work in him, that is, the taking away of life. (When that taking away is complete, he will be after death, not in death.) Then surely he is in death from the moment he begins to exist in this body. For what else is going on through each day, hour and moment, until they are used up and the death that was in progress is completed? Then the time after death begins, whereas while life was being taken away, the time was in death. So a human being is never in life from the moment he is in this body, which is dying rather than living—if he cannot be in life and in death at the same time. Or is he rather in life and in death at once? In life, that is, because he lives until all of it is taken away; in death, because he is already dying while life is being taken away. For if he is not in life, what is it that is being taken away until it is completely used up? And if he is not in death, what is this very taking away of life? It is not for nothing that, once life has been entirely taken from the body, a person is said to be "after death"; this is only because death was going on while life was being taken away. For if, when life has been taken away, a man is not in death but after death, when will he be in death, if not while it is being taken away?

WHETHER ANYONE CAN BE BOTH LIVING AND DEAD AT THE SAME TIME

The moment of dying cannot be pinned down, like the present instant; even the Latin verb resists inflection.

13.11 But it is absurd to say that a man is already in death before he reaches death. For what is he approaching as he lives through the seasons of his life, if he is already in it? It is especially

absurd because it is quite unheard of for someone to be called living and dying at the same time, when he cannot be waking and sleeping at the same time. So we must ask when he will be dying. Before death comes, he is not dying but living; and when death has come, he will be dead, not dying. The first state, then, is still before death; the second is already after death. When, then, is he in death? For that is when he is dying, so that, just as there are three things when we say "before death," "in death" and "after death," so three terms may be assigned, one to each: "living," "dying" and "dead." So it is extremely hard to define when he is dying, that is, in death—when he is neither living, which is before death, nor dead, which is after death, but dying, that is, in death. As long as the soul is in the body, especially if sensation is also present, a human being, who consists of soul and body, is beyond doubt alive. For that reason he must be said to be still before death, not in death. But when the soul has departed and taken all sensation away from the body, he is described as already after death, and dead. Between the two, then, the state in which he would be dying, or in death, vanishes. If he is still alive, he is before death; if he has ceased to live, he is already after death. So he is never caught being dying, that is, in death. In the same way, in the passing of time we look for the present and cannot find it, because the point at which we pass from future to past has no extension at all. Must we not take care, then, that this reasoning does not lead us to say that bodily death does not exist? For if it exists, when does it exist, since it can be in no one and no one can be in it? If one is living, it does not yet exist, because this is before death, not in death; and if living has already ceased, it no longer exists, because this too is after death, not in death. But again, if there is no death for anything to be before or after, what do we mean when we say "before death" or "after death"? That too would be said in vain, if death is nothing. If only we had lived well in paradise, so that there truly were no death! As it is, however, death not only exists but is so grievous that no form of speech can explain it and no reasoning can escape it.

Let us speak, then, according to ordinary usage—for we ought not to do otherwise—and say "before death" of the time before death occurs, as it is written: "Praise no one before his death." Let us also say, once it has occurred: "After the death of this or that person, this or that happened." Let us speak of the present time too, as best we can, as when we say: "As he was dying, he made his will," and: "When he was dying, he left this and that to these and those people"—though he could not have done this at all unless he was living, and he did it before death rather than in death. Let us also speak as divine Scripture speaks, which does not hesitate to say that even the dead are not after death but in death. Hence the verse: "For there is no one in death who remembers you."[8] Until they come back to life, they are rightly said to be in death, just as someone is said to be in sleep until he wakes up. Yet although we call those who are in sleep "sleeping," we cannot in the same way call those who are already dead "dying." For those who, as far as the death of the body is concerned—the death we are now discussing—are already separated from their bodies are no longer in the process of dying. But this is what I said cannot be explained by any form of speech: how the dying can be said to be living, or how the already dead, even after death, can be said still to be in death. For how can they be after death, if they are still in death? This is all the more puzzling since we do not call them "dying," as we call those who are in sleep "sleeping," those in sickness "sick," those in pain "suffering," and those in life "living." Yet the dead, before they rise again, are said to be in death, and still they cannot be called dying. Hence I think it has come about—not inappropriately or unfittingly, and if not by human design, then perhaps by divine judgment—that even the grammarians have been unable to inflect the Latin verb *moritur* ["he dies"] by the rule by which other verbs of its kind are inflected. From *oritur* ["he rises"] comes the past-tense form *ortus est* ["he has risen"], and similar verbs are inflected through their past participles. But if we ask

8 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 11:28; Psalm 6:5 (6:6 in the Latin and Hebrew verse numbering).

for the past-tense form of *moritur*, the usual answer is *mortuus est* ["he has died"], with the letter u doubled. For *mortuus* is formed in the same way as *fatuus* ["foolish"], *arduus* ["steep"], *conspicuus* ["conspicuous"] and similar words. These are not past-tense forms; being adjectives, they are declined without tense. Yet *mortuus* is put in place of the past participle, as if to decline what cannot be declined. So it has fittingly come about that, just as the thing the word signifies cannot be declined in action, so the word itself cannot be declined in speech. Yet with the help of the grace of our Redeemer it can be brought about that we may at least decline the second death. That death is more grievous and the worst of all evils. It consists not in the separation of soul and body but in their being joined together for eternal punishment. There, on the contrary, people will not be before death and after death, but always in death; and so never living, never dead, but dying without end.[9] A human being will never be worse off in death than where death itself will be without death.

WHAT DEATH GOD THREATENED THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS WITH IF THEY BROKE HIS COMMAND

The death God threatened for disobedience included every kind of death, up to the second death.

13.12 So when it is asked what death God threatened the first human beings with if they transgressed the command they had received from him and failed to keep obedience—whether the death of the soul, or of the body, or of the whole human being, or the death called the second—we must answer: all of them. The first death consists of two; death in its totality consists of all. Just as the whole earth consists of many lands and the whole Church of many churches, so death as a whole consists of all deaths. The first consists of two, one of the soul and the other of the body. Thus the first death is the death of the whole human

9 Augustine plays on *declinare*, which means both to inflect a word grammatically and to turn aside from or avoid something.

being, when the soul, without God and without the body, pays its penalty for a time; the second is when the soul, without God but with the body, pays an eternal penalty. When, then, God said to that first man, whom he had placed in paradise, about the forbidden food, "On whatever day you eat of it, you shall die by death," that threat did not include only the first part of the first death, in which the soul is deprived of God. Nor did it include only the later part, in which the body is deprived of the soul, nor only the whole first death itself, in which the soul, separated both from God and from the body, is punished. It embraced every kind of death, right up to the last, which is called the second death and after which there is no other.[10]

WHAT FIRST PUNISHMENT THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS FELT AFTER THEIR TRANSGRESSION

After the sin, the first humans felt their flesh move in disobedience against them and were ashamed.

13.13 As soon as the command had been transgressed, divine grace forsook them, and they were ashamed of the nakedness of their bodies. That is why they covered their shameful parts with fig leaves, which were perhaps the first thing they came across in their confusion. These were the same members as before, but before they had not been shameful. So they felt a new motion of their disobedient flesh, as a punishment matching their own disobedience. For the soul, now delighting in its own freedom to do wrong and disdaining to serve God, lost the body's former service. Because it had deserted its higher Lord by its own choice, it no longer held its lower servant subject to its choice. It no longer had the flesh wholly subject to it, as it could always have had if it had itself remained subject to God. It was then that the flesh began to set its desire against the spirit. We are born with this conflict, inheriting the origin of death, and carrying in

10 Genesis 2:17.

our members and our corrupted nature the flesh's struggle, or its victory, which comes from the first transgression.[11]

WHAT KIND OF BEING GOD MADE THE HUMAN BEING, AND INTO WHAT CONDITION HE FELL BY THE CHOICE OF HIS OWN WILL

God made man upright; corrupted by his own will, Adam passed on a corrupted and condemned nature.

13.14 God, the author of natures and certainly not of vices, created man upright. But man, corrupted by his own will and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned offspring. For we were all in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin through the woman, who had been made from him before sin. The particular form in which each of us would live had not yet been created and allotted to us individually; but the seminal nature from which we were to be propagated already existed. Since this nature was corrupted by sin, bound by the chain of death and justly condemned, no human being could be born of a human being in any other condition. And so from the misuse of free will arose this whole train of calamity. It leads the human race, corrupted at its origin as if at a diseased root, through a chain of miseries all the way to the ruin of the second death, which has no end—with the sole exception of those who are set free by the grace of God.[12]

THAT ADAM, ABOUT TO SIN, ABANDONED GOD BEFORE HE WAS ABANDONED BY GOD, AND THAT THE SOUL'S FIRST DEATH WAS ITS DEPARTURE FROM GOD

The soul abandoned God before God abandoned it; the body's death followed as a further penalty.

13.15 Consider, then, the words "You shall die by death." Since the text does not say "by deaths," we may take it to mean only the death that occurs when the soul is forsaken by its own life,

11 Galatians 5:17.
12 Ecclesiastes 7:29 (7:30 in the Latin Bible).

which for the soul is God. (It was not forsaken so that it forsook; it forsook so that it was forsaken. In its evil, its own will comes first; in its good, the will of its Creator comes first—whether to make it when it did not exist, or to remake it, since it had fallen and perished.) Even if, then, we understand this to be the death God announced when he said, "On the day you eat of it, you shall die by death"—as though he were saying, "On the day you forsake me through disobedience, I will forsake you through justice"—surely the other deaths were also announced in that death, since they were bound to follow. When the disobedient motion arose in the flesh of the disobedient soul—the motion that made them cover their shameful parts—one death was felt: the death in which God forsook the soul. This was signified by his words when he said to the man, who was hiding in senseless fear, "Adam, where are you?" He was not asking out of ignorance, but rebuking and admonishing him to consider where he was, now that God was not in him. But when the soul itself forsook the body, decayed by age and worn out by old age, the other death came to be experienced, the one of which God, still punishing sin, had said to the man: "You are earth, and to earth you shall go." So from these two deaths that first death, which is the death of the whole human being, was completed; and the second death follows it at the end, unless a person is set free through grace.[13] The body, which is from the earth, would not return to the earth except by its own death, which befalls it when it is forsaken by its life, that is, the soul. Hence Christians who truly hold the Catholic faith agree that even the death of the body was inflicted on us not by a law of nature—for God made no death for man—but as the just desert of sin. For God, punishing sin, said to the man, in whom we all were at that time: "You are earth, and to earth you shall go."

13 Genesis 3:9 and 3:19.

THE PHILOSOPHERS WHO DO NOT THINK THE SEPARATION OF THE SOUL FROM THE BODY IS A PUNISHMENT, THOUGH PLATO DEPICTS THE SUPREME GOD PROMISING THE LESSER GODS THAT THEY WILL NEVER BE STRIPPED OF THEIR BODIES

Against Platonists who mock bodily resurrection, Augustine cites Plato's supreme god promising the lesser gods everlasting bodies.

13.16 But the philosophers, against whose slanders we are defending the city of God, that is, his Church, think they are being clever when they laugh at our saying that the separation of the soul from the body should be counted among its punishments. For they hold that the soul's perfect happiness comes about precisely when, stripped entirely of every body, it returns to God simple, alone, and in a sense naked. If I found nothing in their own writings to refute this opinion, I would have to argue at greater length to show that it is not the body as such that is a burden to the soul, but the corruptible body. Hence the passage from our Scriptures that we cited in the previous book: "For the corruptible body weighs down the soul." By adding "corruptible," the writer surely showed that the soul is weighed down not by any body whatever, but by the kind of body that resulted from sin when punishment followed. Even if he had not added the word, we ought to understand nothing else.[14] But Plato declares in the plainest terms that the gods made by the supreme God have immortal bodies. He brings in God himself, by whom they were made, promising them as a great benefit that they will remain with their bodies forever and never be released from them by any death. Why, then, do these people, in order to harass the Christian faith, pretend not to know what they know? Or why do they even prefer to contradict themselves and argue against their own position, provided they never stop contradicting us? These, in fact, are Plato's words, as Cicero translated them into Latin, in which he brings in the supreme

14 Wisdom 9:15.

god addressing the gods he made: "You who have sprung from the seed of gods, attend. The works of which I am the parent and maker are indissoluble unless I will it, although everything that is bound together can be undone; but it is in no way good to wish to dissolve what reason has joined.[15] "But since you have come into being, you cannot be immortal and indissoluble. Yet you will by no means be dissolved, nor will any fated death destroy you, nor will it prove stronger than my purpose, which is a greater bond for your perpetuity than the bonds by which you are bound together." See: Plato says that the gods are mortal because of the binding together of body and soul, and yet immortal by the will and purpose of the god who made them. If, then, it is a punishment for the soul to be bound in a body of any kind, why does the god address them as if they were anxious that they might die, that is, be dissolved from the body, and reassure them about their immortality? And he does so not on account of their nature, which is composite, not simple, but on account of his own utterly invincible will, by which he has the power to make things that have come into being not perish, and things that are joined not be dissolved, but endure incorruptibly.

Whether what Plato says here about the stars is true is another question. We need not immediately grant him that those globes or disks of light, shining over the earth with bodily light by day or by night, live by souls of their own, and souls that are intellectual and happy. He also insistently affirms this about the whole universe itself, as though it were one huge living being in which all other living beings are contained. But this, as I said, is another question, which I have not undertaken to discuss now. I thought I should mention only this against those who boast of being called Platonists, or of being Platonists. Out of pride in that name they are ashamed to be Christians, for fear that a name shared with the common people might cheapen their little band of cloaked philosophers, all the more puffed up the fewer they are. Looking for something to criticize

15 Plato, *Timaeus* 41a–b; Cicero's Latin translation of the *Timaeus* survives in part.

in Christian teaching, they attack the eternity of bodies, as if it were self-contradictory both to seek the happiness of the soul and to want it to be always in a body, bound to it as if by a wretched chain. Yet their own founder and teacher Plato says that the supreme god granted the gods he had made the gift that they would never die, that is, never be separated from the bodies to which he had joined them.[16]

AGAINST THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT EARTHLY BODIES CANNOT BECOME INCORRUPTIBLE AND ETERNAL

If the world and the star-gods keep their bodies forever, God can make earthly bodies immortal too.

13.17 They also argue that earthly bodies cannot be everlasting. Yet they have no doubt that the whole earth itself is a limb of their god—not the supreme god, it is true, but still a great one, namely this whole world—set in the middle, and that it is everlasting. Consider, then, what they think. The supreme god made for them another god, namely this world, to be ranked above the other gods who are beneath him. They believe this god is a living being, with a soul, rational or intellectual as they assert, enclosed in the vast mass of his body. And the supreme god set up the four elements as the limbs of that body, each placed and arranged in its own position, and they want the joining of these elements to be indissoluble and everlasting, so that so great a god of theirs may never die. If so, what reason is there for the earth to be eternal as a middle limb in the body of a greater living being, while the bodies of other, earthly living beings could not be eternal if God willed it, as he wills that? "But earth," they say, "must be given back to earth, from which the earthly bodies of living creatures were taken. It follows," they say, "that these bodies must necessarily be dissolved and die, and in that way be restored to the stable and everlasting earth from which they were taken." Suppose someone were to assert the same about fire as well, and say that the bodies taken from it to make the

16 The *pallium*, a Greek cloak, was the distinctive dress of philosophers.

heavenly living beings must be given back to the universal fire. Would not the immortality that Plato promised to such gods, with the supreme god speaking, as it were, be swept away by the violence of this argument? Or does that not happen there because God does not will it—God, whose will, as Plato says, no force overcomes? What, then, prevents God from being able to bring this about for earthly bodies too? For Plato admits that God can bring it about that things which have come into being do not pass away, that things bound together are not loosed, that things taken from the elements are not given back, and that souls placed in bodies never desert them but enjoy with them immortality and everlasting happiness. Why, then, could he not bring it about that earthly bodies also do not die? Or is God not as powerful as Christians believe, but only as powerful as Platonists permit? No doubt the philosophers were able to know God's plan and power, and the prophets were not! The truth is rather the reverse: God's Spirit taught his prophets to declare his will, so far as he deigned to do so, while human guesswork deceived the philosophers in their attempt to know it.

Yet they ought not to have been deceived to such a degree—not only through ignorance but also through obstinacy—that they contradict themselves quite openly. With great force of argument they assert that, for the soul to be happy, it must flee not only an earthly body but every body. And then they say that the gods have supremely happy souls, and yet souls bound to eternal bodies: the heavenly gods to bodies of fire, while the soul of Jupiter himself, whom they take to be this world, is enclosed in absolutely all the bodily elements of which this whole mass is built up, rising from earth to heaven. For Plato holds that this soul is diffused from the innermost middle of the earth, which geometers call the center (*centron*), through all its parts up to the highest and outermost reaches of heaven, and is extended according to musical numbers. So this world is a living being—the greatest, the happiest, everlasting. Its soul would both possess the perfect happiness of wisdom and never leave its own body; and its body would both live forever from that

soul and be unable to dull or slow it down, even though the body is not simple but compacted of so many bodies, and such great ones. Since, then, they give their conjectures this much license, why are they unwilling to believe that by the divine will and power earthly bodies can be made immortal—bodies in which souls live everlastingly and happily, separated from them by no death and weighed down by no burdens of theirs? For they assert that their gods can do this in bodies of fire, and Jupiter himself, their king, in all the bodily elements.[17] For if, to be happy, the soul must flee every body, then let their gods flee from the globes of the stars, let Jupiter flee from heaven and earth; or, if they cannot, let them be judged wretched. But these men want neither. They dare not grant their gods separation from bodies, lest they seem to worship mortal beings; nor dare they grant them deprivation of happiness, lest they admit that they are unhappy. So it is not all bodies that must be fled to attain happiness, but bodies that are corruptible, troublesome, heavy, and dying—not such as God's goodness made for the first human beings, but such as the punishment of sin forced them to become.

EARTHLY BODIES, WHICH THE PHILOSOPHERS CLAIM CANNOT BE IN HEAVEN BECAUSE WHAT IS EARTHLY IS DRAWN BACK TO EARTH BY ITS NATURAL WEIGHT

Natural weight is no obstacle: God can let incorruptible earthly bodies dwell in heaven.

13.18 "But," they say, "the natural weight of earthly bodies must necessarily either hold them on the earth or drive them toward it, and so they cannot be in heaven." The first human beings, it is true, were on earth, in a wooded and fruitful land which came to be called paradise. But since this objection too must be answered—both for the sake of the body of Christ, with which he ascended into heaven, and for the sake of the bodies of the

17 Augustine is drawing on Plato's *Timaeus,* where the world is a single living being whose soul is structured according to musical ratios.

saints as they will be in the resurrection—let them look a little more closely at these earthly weights themselves. If human skill can take metals, which sink at once when placed in water, and by certain techniques fashion them into vessels that even float, how much more credibly and effectively can some hidden mode of God's working do this! It is by his all-powerful will, Plato says, that things which have come into being cannot perish and things bound together cannot be loosed; and it is far more wonderful for incorporeal things to be joined to corporeal ones than for any bodies whatever to be joined to any other bodies. Such a working of God can grant to earthly masses that no weight presses them down to the depths, and to perfectly happy souls themselves that they may place their bodies—earthly, yet now incorruptible—wherever they wish and move them wherever they wish, with the greatest ease of position and motion! Or if angels were to do this, snatching up any earthly creatures from anywhere they like and setting them down wherever they like, are we to believe that they either cannot do it or that they feel the burden? Why, then, should we not believe that the spirits of the saints, made perfect and happy by God's gift, can without any difficulty carry their bodies wherever they will and set them down wherever they will? Among earthly bodies, as we commonly feel with the loads we carry, the greater the bulk, the greater the weight, so that many pounds press harder than few. Yet the soul carries the limbs of its own flesh more lightly when they are sturdy in health than when they are thin in sickness. And though a healthy, strong man is a heavier load for others to carry than a thin, sickly one, he himself is nimbler at moving and carrying his own body when he has more bulk in good health than when, in plague or famine, he has very little strength. So much does it matter, in having even earthly bodies —though still corruptible and mortal—not the weight of their quantity but the right balance of their constitution. And who can explain in words how great the distance is between what we now call health and the immortality to come? So the philosophers do not refute our faith by appeal to the weights of bodies. I

do not wish to ask why they do not believe that an earthly body can be in heaven, when the whole earth is poised on nothing. For perhaps a more plausible argument might be made about the very middle place of the world, because all heavier things converge on it. This is what I say. Plato entrusted to the lesser gods the making of man, among the other earthly living creatures; and, as he says, they were able to remove from fire its property of burning while leaving its property of shining, which was to flash out through the eyes. If so, shall we hesitate to grant to the supreme God—to whose will and power Plato conceded that things which have come into being do not die, and that things so diverse and so unlike, the corporeal and the incorporeal, once joined to each other, cannot be separated by any dissolution—that from the flesh of man, to whom he gives immortality, he can take away corruption while leaving its nature, keep the harmony of its shape and limbs, and remove the sluggishness of its weight? But the faith in the resurrection of the dead and in their immortal bodies must be discussed more carefully, God willing, at the end of this work.

AGAINST THE DOCTRINES OF THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS WOULD HAVE BEEN IMMORTAL IF THEY HAD NOT SINNED, AND WHO WANT SOULS TO BE ETERNAL WITHOUT BODIES

Plato's souls cycling back into bodies, and Porphyry's escape from all bodies, are set against Christian resurrection.

13.19 Now let us explain what we set out to explain about the bodies of the first human beings. Not even this death could have befallen them unless it had followed as the desert of sin—this death which is said to be good for the good, and which is known not only to a few who understand or believe but to everyone; the death by which the soul is separated from the body, by which the body of a living creature, plainly alive before, plainly dies. For although it is not right to doubt that the souls of the righteous and godly dead live in rest, it would still be so much better for them to live with their bodies in good health that even those

who think it supremely blessed to be wholly without a body refute this opinion of theirs by another, contradictory view of their own. For none of them will dare to rank wise men, whether about to die or already dead—that is, either without bodies or about to leave them—above the immortal gods, to whom the supreme God in Plato promises an immense gift: indissoluble life, that is, eternal partnership with their bodies. Yet the same Plato thinks that the best that can happen to human beings, provided they have lived this life piously and justly, is to be separated from their bodies and received into the bosom of those very gods who never desert their bodies—"so that, of course, forgetting, they may revisit the vaults above and begin again to wish to return into bodies." Virgil is praised for having said this on the basis of Platonic doctrine.[18] For Plato thinks that the souls of mortals can neither be in their bodies always, since they are dissolved by the necessity of death, nor last forever without bodies; rather, in ceaseless alternation, the living come from the dead and the dead from the living. Thus the wise seem to differ from other people in this: after death they are carried to the stars, so that each may rest somewhat longer in the star suited to him, and from there, forgetting his former misery and overcome by the desire to have a body, may return once again to the toils and sorrows of mortals; while those who have led a foolish life are rolled back at once into bodies due to their deserts, whether of humans or of beasts. So he placed even good and wise souls in this harshest of conditions: they were not assigned bodies with which they could live always and immortally, and so they can neither remain in bodies nor endure without them in eternal purity. As we said in earlier books, Porphyry was ashamed of this Platonic doctrine in this Christian age. He not only removed the bodies of beasts from human souls but also wanted the souls of the wise to be freed from bodily bonds in such a way that, fleeing every body, they would be kept in happiness with the Father without end.

18 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.750–751, from Anchises' account of the souls in the underworld awaiting rebirth.

So, lest he seem to be outdone by Christ, who promises everlasting life to the saints, he too established purified souls in eternal happiness with no return to their former miseries; and, to oppose Christ, he denied the resurrection of incorruptible bodies and asserted that these souls will live forever not only without earthly bodies but without any bodies whatsoever.[19] Yet, whatever this opinion of his was worth, he did not at least teach that such souls should not be subjected in religious worship to embodied gods. Why so, unless because he did not believe these souls, though joined to no body, to be better than those gods? Therefore, if these men will not dare—and I do not think they will dare—to rank human souls above gods who are supremely happy and yet placed in eternal bodies, why does what the Christian faith proclaims seem absurd to them? It proclaims that the first human beings were so created that, had they not sinned, they would not have been separated from their bodies by any death, but, endowed with immortality as the reward of the obedience they had kept, would have lived with them forever; and that in the resurrection the saints will have the very bodies in which they toiled here, but such bodies that no corruption or hardship can befall their flesh, and no pain or unhappiness their happiness.

THAT THE FLESH OF THE SAINTS, WHICH NOW RESTS IN HOPE, WILL BE RESTORED TO A BETTER CONDITION THAN THAT OF THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS BEFORE SIN

The saints' flesh rests in hope and will rise spiritual, better even than Adam's body before sin.

13.20 Accordingly, the souls of the saints who have died do not now find grievous the death by which they have been separated from their bodies, because their flesh rests in hope, whatever indignities it may seem to have suffered, now without any sensation. For they do not long for bodies through forgetfulness, as

19 Porphyry (c. AD 234–305) was a Neoplatonist philosopher, the pupil and editor of Plotinus, and author of a major work against the Christians.

Plato thought. Rather, because they remember what has been promised them by the one who deceives no one, who has even assured them that the hairs of their heads will be kept intact, they wait with longing and patience for the resurrection of the bodies in which they endured many hardships, and in which they will never again feel any such thing. For if they did not hate their flesh when, in its weakness, it resisted their mind and they restrained it by spiritual law, how much more do they love it now that it too is to become spiritual! For just as a spirit that serves the flesh is not inappropriately called fleshly, so flesh that serves the spirit will rightly be called spiritual. This is not because it will be turned into spirit, as some think on the basis of what is written, "It is sown an animal body, it will rise a spiritual body," but because it will be subject to the spirit with a supreme and wonderful readiness to obey, to the point of fulfilling the utterly secure will of indissoluble immortality, with all sense of trouble, all corruptibility and sluggishness removed. For it will not only be unlike what it is now even in the best of health; it will not even be like what it was in the first human beings before sin. Although they would not have died had they not sinned, they still used food as human beings do, since the earthly bodies they bore were not yet spiritual but still animal.[20] Those bodies did not grow old with age so as to be brought by necessity to death—a condition granted them by God's wonderful grace from the tree of life, which stood in the middle of paradise together with the forbidden tree. Yet they also ate other foods, apart from the one tree which had been forbidden—forbidden not because it was itself an evil, but to commend the good of pure and simple obedience, which is a great virtue for a rational creature placed under the Lord its Creator. For where nothing evil was being touched, surely, if what was forbidden was touched, the only sin was disobedience. So the other things they ate served to keep their animal bodies from feeling any discomfort from hunger and thirst; while they tasted of the tree of

20 1 Corinthians 15:44. Augustine's *animale* ("animal," i.e. animated by the soul, *anima*) is usually rendered "natural" in English Bibles.

life so that death might not creep upon them from any quarter, and they might not perish worn out by old age after the long course of time. It was as though the other foods were for nourishment, that one for a sacrament. Thus the tree of life in the bodily paradise may be understood to have been what the wisdom of God is in the spiritual—that is, the intelligible—paradise, the wisdom of which it is written, "She is a tree of life to those who embrace her."[21]

THE PARADISE IN WHICH THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS LIVED: THAT SOMETHING SPIRITUAL IS RIGHTLY UNDERSTOOD BY IT, WHILE THE TRUTH OF THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF A PHYSICAL PLACE IS KEPT

Paradise may be read allegorically of the soul or the Church, but it was also a real place.

13.21 Hence some refer the whole of that paradise—where, by the truth of holy Scripture, the first human beings, the parents of the human race, are related to have lived—to intelligible things, and turn those trees and fruit-bearing plants into the virtues and moral habits of life, as though they were not visible and bodily things but had been spoken or written of in that way to signify intelligible ones. As if there could not have been a bodily paradise just because a spiritual one can also be understood! As if there were not two women, Hagar and Sarah, and two sons of Abraham born from them, one of the slave woman and the other of the free, just because the apostle says that the two covenants were prefigured in them! Or as if no water flowed from any rock when Moses struck it, just because Christ too can be understood there in a figurative sense, as the same apostle says: "And the rock was Christ."[22] So no one forbids us to understand paradise as the life of the blessed; its four rivers as the four virtues—prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice; its trees as all useful disciplines; the fruits of the trees as the moral habits of the

21 Proverbs 3:18.

22 On Hagar and Sarah, see Galatians 4:22–24; the quotation is 1 Corinthians 10:4.

godly; the tree of life as wisdom herself, the mother of all good things; and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the experience of a commandment transgressed. For God established punishment for sinners well, certainly, since he did so justly; but man does not experience it to his own good. These things can also be understood of the Church, so that we take them better as prophetic signs going before things to come: paradise as the Church herself, as we read of her in the Song of Songs; the four rivers of paradise as the four Gospels; the fruit-bearing trees as the saints, and their fruits as their works; the tree of life as the Holy of Holies, who is surely Christ; and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the will's own free choice.[23] For once he has scorned the divine will, a man can make only ruinous use of himself, and so he learns what difference it makes whether he clings to the good common to all or takes delight in his own. For in loving himself he is handed over to himself, so that, filled with fears and sorrows, he sings in the psalm—if indeed he is aware of his ills—"My soul is troubled at myself"; and, once corrected, he may say, "I will keep my strength for you." Let these things, and any others that can be said more fittingly about understanding paradise spiritually, be said, with no one forbidding it—provided that the truth of that history, too, commended to us by a most faithful narrative of events, is also believed.[24]

THE BODIES OF THE SAINTS AFTER THE RESURRECTION, WHICH WILL BE SPIRITUAL WITHOUT THE FLESH BEING TURNED INTO SPIRIT

Resurrection bodies will not need food, though they can eat, as the risen Christ did.

13.22 The bodies of the righteous, then, as they will be in the resurrection, will need no tree to keep them from dying of dis-

23 In the Song of Songs (4:12–13) the bride is called an enclosed garden, an orchard (*paradisus*) of fruit trees.
24 Psalm 41:7 (42:6 in most English Bibles) and Psalm 58:10 (59:9 in most English Bibles).

ease or of worn-out old age. Nor will they need any other bodily nourishment to ward off hunger and thirst and whatever discomfort these bring. For they will be clothed with the gift of immortality, which is certain and in every way inviolable, so that they will eat only if they wish to: because they can, not because they must. The angels did the same when they appeared in visible and tangible form. They did not eat because they needed to, but because they wished to and were able to, so as to adapt themselves to human beings by a certain humanity in their ministry. We should not believe that the angels ate only in appearance when people received them as guests, even though to those who did not know they were angels they seemed to eat out of a need like ours. Hence the angel says in the book of Tobit: "You saw me eat, but you saw with your own sight." That is, you thought I was taking food out of the need to refresh my body, as you do.[25] Even if some other, more credible account can perhaps be given of the angels, Christian faith certainly has no doubt about the Savior himself. Even after the resurrection, in flesh that was now spiritual but nonetheless real, he took food and drink with his disciples. For what will be taken away from such bodies is not the power to eat and drink but the need. That is why they will be spiritual: not because they will cease to be bodies, but because they will subsist by the life-giving spirit.

WHAT WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND BY THE ANIMAL BODY AND THE SPIRITUAL BODY, AND WHO DIE IN ADAM AND WHO ARE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

Paul contrasts the animal body Adam received with the spiritual body of the resurrection.

13.23 Bodies that have a living soul but not yet a life-giving spirit are called animal bodies, and yet they are not souls but bodies. In the same way, those bodies are called spiritual. Yet heaven forbid that we should believe they will be spirits. They will be

25 Abraham and Lot received angels as guests (Genesis 18–19). The quotation is Tobit 12:19.

bodies with the substance of flesh, but the life-giving spirit will spare them all the sluggishness and corruption of the flesh. Then man will no longer be earthly but heavenly. This is not because the body that was made from the earth will not be the same body. It is because a heavenly gift will make it fit to dwell even in heaven, not by losing its nature but by a change in its qualities. The first man, however, earthly and from the earth, was made a living soul, not a life-giving spirit. That was being kept for him as the reward of obedience.[26] His body, therefore, needed food and drink so as not to suffer hunger and thirst. It was kept from the necessity of death and held in the flower of youth not by that absolute and indissoluble immortality but by the tree of life. There is no doubt, then, that it was not spiritual but animal. Yet it would by no means have died had he not fallen, by his transgression, under the sentence that God had foretold and threatened. Then, although food was not denied him even outside paradise, he was barred from the tree of life and handed over to time and age to be brought to an end. This end concerned that life which, had he not sinned, he could have had forever in paradise, in a body that was animal, it is true, until it became spiritual as the reward of obedience. God had said: "On the day you eat of it, you shall die by death." Suppose we take these words to signify at the same time this evident death, in which the soul is separated from the body. It should not seem absurd that they were not released from the body on the very day they took the forbidden and deadly food. For on that day their nature was changed for the worse and corrupted. And by their entirely just separation from the tree of life, the necessity of bodily death also came upon them, the necessity with which we are born. That is why the apostle does not say, "The body is going to die because of sin," but, "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness."[27] Then he added: "But if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will

26 "Living soul" and "life-giving spirit" come from 1 Corinthians 15:45.
27 Genesis 2:17; Romans 8:10.

also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit dwelling in you." So the body, which now exists as a living soul, will then exist as a life-giving spirit. And yet the apostle calls it dead, because it is already bound by the necessity of dying. Back then, however, it was a living soul, though not a life-giving spirit, in such a way that it could not rightly be called dead. It could not have come under the necessity of dying except by committing sin. When God said, "Adam, where are you?"[28] he signified the death of the soul, which came about when he forsook it. When he said, "You are earth, and to earth you shall go," he signified the death of the body, which befalls it when the soul departs. We should therefore believe that he said nothing about the second death because he wished it to stay hidden for the sake of the dispensation of the New Testament, where the second death is declared most plainly. In this way the first death, which is common to all, would first be shown to have come from that sin which, in one man, became common to all. The second death, by contrast, is certainly not common to all. It does not touch those who "are called according to his purpose." These are the ones whom, as the apostle says, "he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." God's grace has freed them from the second death through the Mediator.[29]

The apostle speaks of the first man as made in an animal body in the following way. He wishes to distinguish the present animal body from the spiritual one that will exist in the resurrection, and so he says: "It is sown in corruption, it will rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it will rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it will rise in power. It is sown an animal body, it will rise a spiritual body." Then, to prove this, he says: "If there is an animal body, there is also a spiritual one." And to show what an animal body is, he says: "Thus it is written: 'The first man was made a living soul.'" In this way, then, he wished to show what an animal body is. Yet when the first man, who

28 Romans 8:11; Genesis 3:9.
29 Genesis 3:19; Romans 8:28–29.

was called Adam, had his soul created by the breath of God, Scripture did not say of him, "And man was made in an animal body," but, "Man was made a living soul."[30] In the words "The first man was made a living soul," then, the apostle wished us to understand man's animal body. He showed how the spiritual body was to be understood by adding: "The last Adam, a life-giving spirit." Here he undoubtedly means Christ, who has now risen from the dead in such a way that he can never die again. Then he goes on to say: "But it is not the spiritual that comes first, but the animal, and afterward the spiritual." There he declared far more plainly what he had meant. The animal body is indicated in the words of Scripture that the first man was made a living soul. The spiritual body is indicated in his own words: "The last Adam, a life-giving spirit."[31] For the animal body comes first. The first Adam had a body of this kind, though it would not have died had he not sinned. We too now have such a body, since his nature has been changed and corrupted in us to the same extent as it was in him after he sinned, which put him under the necessity of dying from then on. Christ too, for our sake, deigned at first to have such a body, not by necessity but by his own power. Afterward comes the spiritual body. It has already gone before in Christ as our head, and it will follow in his members at the final resurrection of the dead.

THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY MAN

We bear the image of the earthly Adam by birth and of the heavenly Christ by rebirth.

Then the apostle adds a perfectly plain difference between these two men, saying: "The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven, heavenly. As was the earthly, so are those who are earthly; as is the heavenly, so are those who are heavenly. And just as we have put on the image of the earthly man, let us also put on the image of him who is from heaven."

30 1 Corinthians 15:42–45, quoting Genesis 2:7.
31 1 Corinthians 15:45–46.

The apostle put this in such a way that it happens in us now according to the sacrament of rebirth. As he says elsewhere: "All of you who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ." But in reality it will be completed only when, in us too, what is animal by birth has become spiritual by resurrection. For, to use his words again: "In hope we have been saved."[32] We have put on the image of the earthly man through the transmission of transgression and death, which our generation brought upon us. But we put on the image of the heavenly man through the grace of pardon and everlasting life, which our regeneration grants us. This comes only through "the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus." The apostle wants us to understand Christ as the heavenly man because he came from heaven to be clothed in a body of earthly mortality, so that he might clothe it with heavenly immortality. He calls others heavenly too, because by grace they become his members, so that with them he is one Christ, as head and body. He puts this more clearly in the same letter: "Through a man, death; and through a man, the resurrection of the dead."[33] "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." This means, of course, alive in a spiritual body, which will be a life-giving spirit. It does not mean that all who die in Adam will be members of Christ, for far more of them will be punished with the second death forever. "All" is said in both places because no one dies in an animal body except in Adam, and in the same way no one is made alive in a spiritual body except in Christ. We must by no means think, therefore, that in the resurrection we shall have the kind of body the first man had before sin. Nor is the saying "As was the earthly, so are those who are earthly" to be understood of what came about through the commission of sin. We must not suppose that he had a spiritual body before he sinned and that it was changed into an animal one as the penalty of sin.[34] Anyone who thinks this pays too little attention to the words of so great a

32 1 Corinthians 15:47–49; Galatians 3:27; Romans 8:24.
33 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 15:21.
34 1 Corinthians 15:22.

teacher, who says: "If there is an animal body, there is also a spiritual one; thus it is also written: 'The first man Adam was made a living soul.'" Did this happen after sin? It was man's first creation, and the most blessed Paul took this testimony of the law from it to demonstrate the animal body.

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND BOTH GOD'S BREATHING, BY WHICH THE FIRST MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL, AND THE LORD'S, WHEN HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT"

God's breathing into Adam gave him a created soul, not the Holy Spirit, as the Greek words show.

13.24 So too some people have concluded, with too little thought, that the passage "God breathed into his face the spirit of life, and man was made a living soul" does not mean that a soul was then given to the first man for the first time. In their view, the soul already present in him was given life by the Holy Spirit. They are swayed by the fact that the Lord Jesus, after he rose from the dead, breathed on his disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." From this they suppose that something happened like what happened then, as if here too the evangelist had gone on to say, "And they were made a living soul." If that had been said, we would take it to mean that the Spirit of God is a kind of life of souls. Without this Spirit, rational souls must be counted dead, even though bodies seem to live by their presence.[35] But the very words of the book are enough to show that this is not what happened when man was created. They run as follows: "And God formed man as dust from the earth." Some people thought this should be translated more plainly and rendered it: "And God fashioned man from the mud of the earth." They did so because just before it had been said: "But a spring rose up from the earth and watered the whole face of the earth." From this it seemed that mud was meant, compacted of moisture and earth. For immediately after these words there follows: "And God

35 John 20:22.

formed man as dust from the earth." That is the reading of the Greek manuscripts from which the Scripture was translated into Latin. The Greek says ἔπλασεν [he molded]. Whether one chooses to render it "formed" or "fashioned" makes no difference to the matter, though "fashioned" is the more precise term.[36] But those who preferred to say "formed" thought an ambiguity should be avoided, because in Latin usage the word *fingere* has come to be applied mostly to people who put something together by lying pretense. This man, then, formed from the dust or mud of the earth (for it was moistened dust)—this man, I say, or, to put it more exactly in Scripture's own words, this "dust from the earth"—became an animal body, so the apostle teaches, when he received a soul: "And this man was made a living soul," that is, this formed dust was made a living soul.

"He already had a soul," they say, "otherwise he would not have been called a man, since a man is not a body alone or a soul alone, but what consists of both soul and body." This much is true: the soul is not the whole man but the better part of a man, and the body is not the whole man but the lower part of a man. When both are joined together, the whole bears the name "man." Yet each part does not lose that name even when we speak of the parts separately. For who is forbidden, by a kind of rule of everyday speech, to say, "That man has died and is now at rest," or "in torment," though this can be said of the soul alone? Or, "That man is buried in such and such a place," though this can be understood only of the body alone? Or will they say that divine Scripture does not usually speak this way? On the contrary, Scripture so supports us on this point that, even when these two are joined and a man is alive, it still calls each of them by the name "man," calling the soul the inner man and the body the outer man, as if there were two men, though together both are one man. But we must understand in what respect man is said to be in the image of God, and in what respect man is said to

36 Genesis 2:7 and 2:6. "Fashioned" renders Latin *finxit*, from *fingere*, which can also mean "to invent" or "to feign."

be earth and destined to return to the earth. The first is said with respect to the rational soul, such as God placed in man—that is, in man's body—by breathing on him or, if it is better put, by breathing into him. The second is said with respect to the body, such as the man whom God fashioned from dust, to whom a soul was given so that he might become an animal body, that is, a man made a living soul.

Therefore, in what the Lord did when he breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," he surely meant it to be understood that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit not only of the Father but also of the Only-begotten himself. For he is one and the same Spirit, of the Father and of the Son, with whom the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are the Trinity—not a creature, but the Creator. For that bodily breath coming from a mouth of flesh was not the substance and nature of the Holy Spirit. It was rather a sign by which we might understand, as I said, that the Holy Spirit is common to the Father and the Son, since there is not a separate spirit for each of them, but one Spirit of both.[37]

BREATH AND SPIRIT

Genesis uses the Greek pnoē, breath, not pneuma, spirit, so Adam's soul was created.

Now in the Holy Scriptures this Spirit is always called by the Greek word πνεῦμα [spirit], as Jesus also called him in this passage when he gave him to the disciples, signifying him by the breath of his bodily mouth; and in all the passages of the divine oracles I have never found him named in any other way. But here, where we read, "And God fashioned man as dust from the earth and breathed upon (or breathed into) his face the spirit of life," the Greek does not say πνεῦμα, the word normally used for the Holy Spirit, but πνοήν [breath], a word found more often of the creature than of the Creator. That is why some Latin translators too, for the sake of the distinction, preferred to render this word not as "spirit" but as "breath." For this is also the word in

37 John 20:22.

the Greek in that passage of Isaiah where God says, "I have made every breath," undoubtedly meaning every soul.[38] So the word πνοή in Greek our translators have rendered sometimes as "breath," sometimes as "spirit," sometimes as "inspiration" or "aspiration," even when it is used of God. But πνεῦμα they have never rendered except as "spirit"—whether the spirit of man (of which the apostle says, "For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man that is in him?"), or the spirit of a beast (as is written in the book of Solomon: "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes up into heaven, and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?"),[39] or this bodily spirit, which is also called wind (for that is its name where the psalm sings, "Fire, hail, snow, ice, the spirit of the storm"), or even the Spirit who is not created but the Creator. This last is the Spirit of whom the Lord says in the gospel, "Receive the Holy Spirit," signifying him by the breath of his bodily mouth. It is also he of whom he says, "Go, baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," where the Trinity itself is set before us most excellently and most clearly. And it is he of whom we read, "God is spirit," and so in very many other passages of the sacred writings. In all these testimonies of Scripture, as far as the Greek is concerned, we see written not πνοήν [breath] but πνεῦμα [spirit]; and as far as the Latin is concerned, not *flatus* [breath] but *spiritus* [spirit].[40] Therefore, in the text "He breathed into," or, to speak more precisely, "He blew into his face the spirit of life," even if the Greek had put not πνοήν, as we read there, but πνεῦμα, it still would not follow that we were compelled to understand the Creator Spirit, who in the Trinity is properly called the Holy Spirit. For, as has been said, it is clear that πνεῦμα is regularly used not only of the Creator but also of the creature.[41]

"But," they say, "once Scripture had said 'spirit,' it would not have added 'of life' unless it wanted the Holy Spirit to be under-

38 Isaiah 57:16.
39 1 Corinthians 2:11; Ecclesiastes 3:21, a book traditionally ascribed to Solomon.
40 Psalm 148:8; John 20:22; Matthew 28:19; John 4:24.

stood. And once it had said, 'Man was made a soul,' it would not have added 'living' unless it meant the life of the soul, which is imparted to him by God through the gift of the Spirit of God. For since the soul lives by its own proper mode of life," they say, "what need was there to add 'living,' unless what was meant was the life given to it through the Holy Spirit?" What is this but to argue carefully for a human guess and to read the holy Scriptures carelessly? For what great effort would it have been—without going any further—to read a little earlier in that very same book, "Let the earth bring forth the living soul," where all the land animals were created?[42] Then, a little further on, but still in that same book, what great effort would it have been to notice what is written: "And all things that have the spirit of life, and everyone who was on the dry land, died," where it is indicating that everything that lived on the earth perished in the flood? If, then, we find both "living soul" and "spirit of life" even in beasts, as is the habit of divine Scripture, and if in this passage too, where we read "all things that have the spirit of life," the Greek said not πνεῦμα but πνοήν, why do we not ask, "What need was there to add 'living,' since a soul cannot exist unless it lives?" Or, "What need was there to add 'of life,' once it had said 'spirit'?"[43] But we understand that Scripture, in its customary way, said "living soul" and "spirit of life" when it wanted animals to be understood—that is, animate bodies, in which there was, through the soul, this evident bodily sense-perception as well. In the creation of man, however, we forget how Scripture usually speaks, even though it spoke there entirely in its usual way. It wanted to indicate that man, although he had also received a rational soul—a soul it wanted us to understand as created not, like that of other flesh, by the waters and the earth bringing it forth, but by God breathing—was nevertheless made in such a way that, in an animal body (which comes to be through a soul living in it), he would live as those animals lived of which it said,

41 Genesis 2:7.
42 Genesis 2:7 and 1:24.
43 Genesis 7:22.

"Let the earth bring forth the living soul," and which it likewise said had in them the spirit of life. There too, even in the Greek, it said not πνεῦμα but πνοήν, certainly expressing by that name not the Holy Spirit but their soul.

"But God's breath," they say, "is understood to have come out of God's mouth. If we believe that it is the soul, it will follow that we must confess it to be of the same substance as that Wisdom, and equal to her, who says, 'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High.'" Wisdom, however, did not say that she had been breathed out of God's mouth, but that she had come forth from his mouth. Now we, when we blow, can make a breath not out of our own nature, by which we are human beings, but out of the air around us, which we draw in and give back as we breathe in and out. In the same way almighty God could make a breath not out of his own nature, nor out of some underlying creature, but even out of nothing. And by putting it into the man's body he is most fittingly said to have breathed or blown it in—the incorporeal breathing the incorporeal, but the unchangeable the changeable, because the uncreated breathed the created.[44] Even so, these people want to talk about the Scriptures without paying attention to the Scriptures' ways of speaking. So that they may know that "to come out of the mouth of God" is not said only of what is equal to him and of the same nature, let them hear or read what is written, where God says: "Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth."[45]

There is therefore no reason for us to resist the apostle when he speaks so very plainly. He distinguishes the animal body from the spiritual body, that is, the body we are in now from the one we shall be in, and says: "It is sown an animal body; it will rise a spiritual body. If there is an animal body, there is also a spiritual one. So it is also written: 'The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.' But it is not the spiritual that comes first, but the animal, and afterward

44 Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 24:3.
45 Revelation 3:16.

the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven, heavenly. As was the earthly, so are those who are earthly; and as is the heavenly, so are those who are heavenly. And just as we have put on the image of the earthly, let us also put on the image of the one who is from heaven." We have already discussed all these words of the apostle above.[46] The animal body, then, in which the apostle says the first man, Adam, was made, was made in such a way that it was not altogether unable to die, but would not die unless man sinned. For the body that will be spiritual and immortal through the life-giving spirit will be altogether unable to die, just as the soul was created immortal. The soul, it is true, is said to be dead through sin, since it lacks a certain life of its own, that is, the Spirit of God, by whom it could also live wisely and happily. Yet it does not cease to live by a certain life of its own, however miserable, because it was created immortal. So too the deserter angels: although in a certain sense they died by sinning, because they deserted the fountain of life, which is God, by drinking from whom they could have lived wisely and happily, they still could not die in such a way as to cease entirely from living and feeling, since they were created immortal. And so, after the last judgment, they will be hurled into the second death in such a way that not even there will they lack life, since they will not lack even feeling when they are in torment. But human beings who belong to the grace of God, fellow citizens of the holy angels who abide in the happy life, will be clothed with spiritual bodies in such a way that they will neither sin any more nor die. They will be clothed with an immortality that, like the angels', cannot be taken away even by sin. The nature of flesh will indeed remain, but no carnal corruptibility or sluggishness of any kind will remain.

There follows, however, a question that must be thoroughly examined and, with the help of the Lord God of truth, resolved. The lust of the disobedient members arose in those first human beings from the sin of disobedience, when divine grace had

46 1 Corinthians 15:44–49; the inner quotation is Genesis 2:7.

deserted them. That is why their eyes were opened to their nakedness, that is, they paid it more inquisitive attention; and because that shameless motion resisted the choice of the will, they covered their shameful parts. If so, how would they have propagated children if they had remained as they had been created, without transgression? But since this book must be brought to a close, and so great a question should not be squeezed into the narrow limits of a short discussion, it is postponed to the next book, where it can be treated more conveniently.

Book XIV

Sin, the passions, and two loves
Living by the flesh and by the spirit; the first sin; two loves made two cities.

THAT BECAUSE OF THE DISOBEDIENCE OF THE FIRST MAN, ALL WOULD HAVE FALLEN INTO THE ENDLESSNESS OF THE SECOND DEATH, HAD NOT GOD'S GRACE FREED MANY

One sin brought death to all, and humanity divides into two cities, of the flesh and of the spirit.

14.1 We have already said in the earlier books that God chose to create human beings from one man. He did this so that the human race might be united not only by likeness of nature but also bound by a kind of family kinship into a harmonious unity, by the bond of peace. We also said that this race would not have died, person by person, had not the first two deserved it by disobedience. Of these two, one was created from nothing and the other from him. They committed so great a sin that human nature was changed for the worse by it, and the liability to sin and the necessity of death were passed on to their descendants as well. The reign of death came to dominate human beings so completely that the punishment they deserved would have driven them all headlong into the second death as well, which has no end, had not the undeserved grace of God set some free from it. And so it has come about that there are so many great nations throughout the world, living by different rites and customs and distinguished by a manifold variety of languages, weapons and dress. Even so, there have arisen no more than two kinds of human society, which, following our Scriptures, we

may rightly call two cities. One is the city of those who wish to live according to the flesh, the other of those who wish to live according to the spirit, each in its own kind of peace. And when they obtain what they seek, each lives in its own kind of peace.

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, WHICH MUST BE UNDERSTOOD TO COME FROM THE VICES NOT ONLY OF THE BODY BUT ALSO OF THE MIND

In Scripture flesh can mean the whole person, so the works of the flesh include vices of the mind.

14.2 First, then, we must see what it is to live according to the flesh, and what it is to live according to the spirit. Someone may look at what we have said only at first glance, either not remembering or not noticing how the holy Scriptures speak. Such a person may think that the Epicurean philosophers live according to the flesh, because they placed man's supreme good in bodily pleasure. He may think the same of any others who held in any way that the good of the body is man's supreme good. He may also include the whole mass of those who do not philosophize by any doctrine or in that manner at all, but who are prone to lust and know no joy except from the pleasures they take through the bodily senses. The Stoics, on the other hand, place man's supreme good in the mind, so he may think that they live according to the spirit. After all, what is the human mind but spirit? But as divine Scripture speaks, both are shown to live according to the flesh. For Scripture calls "flesh" not only the body of an earthly and mortal living creature, as when it says, "Not all flesh is the same flesh: there is one flesh of human beings, another of cattle, another of birds, another of fish." It also uses this word in many other senses. Among these various ways of speaking, it often calls man himself, that is, human nature, "flesh," by the figure of speech that names the whole from the part. An example is "No flesh will be justified by the works of the law." For what did it mean us to understand but every human being? He says this more plainly a little later: "In the law no one is justified." And he writes to the Galatians:

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." In this sense we understand "And the Word became flesh," that is, man. Some have taken this wrongly and supposed that Christ lacked a human soul.[1] The part is understood from the whole where we read in the Gospel the words of Mary Magdalene: "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She was speaking only of Christ's flesh, which she thought had been buried and then taken from the tomb. In just the same way, the whole is understood from the part when man is called "flesh," as in the passages we mentioned above.[2]

Divine Scripture, then, uses the word "flesh" in many senses, which it would take too long to examine and collect. We want to discover what it is to live according to the flesh, which is certainly evil, though the nature of the flesh itself is not evil. To find out, let us look carefully at the passage of the letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, where he says: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: they are fornications, impurities, licentiousness, the service of idols, sorceries, enmities, strife, jealousies, animosities, dissensions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not possess the kingdom of God." This whole passage of the apostle's letter, considered as far as seems sufficient for the present matter, will be able to settle this question of what it is to live according to the flesh.[3] He said the works of the flesh were plain, and he listed and condemned them. Among them we find not only those that belong to the pleasure of the flesh, such as fornications, impurities, licentiousness, drunkenness and carousings. We also find those that reveal vices of the mind which have nothing to do with the pleasure of the flesh. For who would not understand the service paid to idols, sorceries, enmities, strife, jealousies, animosities, dissensions, heresies and envyings to be vices of the mind rather than of the flesh? Indeed, it can happen

1 1 Corinthians 15:39; Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11; Galatians 2:16; John 1:14.
2 John 20:13.
3 Galatians 5:19–21.

that someone abstains from bodily pleasures for the sake of idolatry or through the error of some heresy. Yet even then, though he seems to restrain and curb the lusts of the flesh, this apostolic authority convicts him of living according to the flesh. In the very act of abstaining from the pleasures of the flesh, he is shown to be doing damnable works of the flesh. Who does not harbor enmities in his mind? Or who would speak to his enemy, or to someone he thinks his enemy, and say, "Your flesh is ill-disposed toward me," rather than, "Your mind is ill-disposed toward me"? Finally, anyone who heard of "carnalities," if I may use the word, would not hesitate to assign them to the flesh. In the same way, no one doubts that animosities belong to the mind (*animus*). Why, then, does the teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth call all these things, and others like them, works of the flesh? It can only be because he wants the word "flesh" to be understood as man himself, by the figure of speech in which the whole is signified by the part.[4]

THAT THE CAUSE OF SIN CAME FROM THE SOUL, NOT FROM THE FLESH, AND THAT THE CORRUPTION CONTRACTED FROM SIN IS NOT SIN BUT PUNISHMENT

Sin began in the soul, not the flesh: the devil has no body, yet is supremely proud and envious.

14.3 Someone may say that the flesh is the cause of every kind of vice in bad conduct, on the ground that the soul lives as it does because it is affected by the flesh. If so, he has certainly not paid careful attention to the whole nature of man. It is true that "the corruptible body weighs down the soul." So the same apostle also discusses this corruptible body, of which he had said a little earlier, "Even though our outer man is being corrupted." He says: "We know that if our earthly house, our dwelling, is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, longing to

4 "Teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" is Paul's description of himself in 1 Timothy 2:7.

be clothed over with our dwelling that is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this dwelling groan, being weighed down, because we do not wish to be stripped but to be clothed over, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."[5] So we are weighed down by the corruptible body. Yet we know that the cause of this burden is not the nature and substance of the body but its corruption. For that reason we do not wish to be stripped of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality. For then too there will be a body, but because it will not be corruptible, it will not be a burden. For now, then, "the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the mind that ponders many things." Yet those who think that all the evils of the soul have come from the body are mistaken.

Virgil, it is true, seems to set out the Platonic view in splendid verses when he says: "Those seeds have a fiery vigor and a heavenly origin, so far as harmful bodies do not slow them, and earthly limbs and dying members do not dull them." He wants all four of the well-known disturbances of the mind (desire and fear, joy and sorrow) to be understood as arising from the body, as the origins, so to speak, of all sins and vices. So he goes on to say: "Hence they fear and desire, grieve and rejoice, and do not look up to the open air, shut in darkness and a blind prison." But our faith holds otherwise. For the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause of the first sin but its punishment. It was not corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.[6] Certain incitements to vice, and vicious desires themselves, may arise from this corruption of the flesh. Still, not all the vices of a wicked life are to be attributed to the flesh. Otherwise we would clear the devil of all of them, since he has no flesh. The devil cannot be called a fornicator or a drunkard, or anything else of this evil kind that belongs to the pleasures of the flesh, though

5 Wisdom 9:15; 2 Corinthians 4:16 and 5:1–4.

6 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.730–734, where Aeneas' father Anchises explains the nature of souls in the underworld.

he is the secret persuader and instigator even of such sins. Even so, he is supremely proud and envious. This viciousness took such hold of him that because of it he was destined to eternal punishment in the prison of this murky air. Yet these vices, which hold first place in the devil, the apostle attributes to the flesh, which the devil certainly does not have. For he says that enmities, strife, jealousies, animosities and envyings are works of the flesh. The head and origin of all these evils is pride, which reigns in the devil without any flesh. Who is more hostile to the saints than he is? Who is found more contentious against them, more full of animosity, more jealous and envious? Yet he has all these without flesh. How, then, are they works of the flesh, unless because they are works of man, whom, as I said, the apostle calls by the name of flesh? For man has become like the devil not by having flesh, which the devil does not have, but by living according to himself, that is, according to man. The devil too wished to live according to himself when he did not stand fast in the truth. So he spoke a lie out of what was his own, not out of what was God's. For he is not only a liar but the father of lies.[7] He was, after all, the first to lie, and lying began with the one with whom sin began.

WHAT IT IS TO LIVE ACCORDING TO MAN, AND WHAT ACCORDING TO GOD

To live according to man rather than according to God is to live a lie, like the devil.

14.4 So when man lives according to man and not according to God, he is like the devil. For not even an angel should have lived according to an angel. He should have lived according to God, so as to stand fast in the truth and speak truth from what is God's, not lies from what is his own. The same apostle says of man as well, in another place: "But if the truth of God has abounded through my lie." He called the lie ours and the truth God's. So when man lives according to truth, he does not live according to

7 John 8:44.

himself but according to God. For it is God who said, "I am the truth."[8] But when he lives according to himself, that is, according to man and not according to God, he certainly lives according to a lie. This is not because man himself is a lie, since his author and creator is God, who is surely not the author and creator of a lie. It is because man was made upright on the condition that he should live not according to himself but according to the one who made him. In other words, he was to do God's will rather than his own. Not to live in the way he was made to live: that is the lie. For he wants to be happy even while not living in the way that would allow him to be happy. What could be more of a lie than such a will? So it can be said, not without reason, that every sin is a lie. For sin is committed only by the will by which we want things to go well with us, or do not want them to go badly with us. So it is a lie when something is done so that things may go well with us, and instead they go badly for us because of it. It is a lie when something is done so that things may be better for us, and instead they become worse because of it. Why is this so? It is because man's well-being can come from God, whom he forsakes by sinning, and not from himself, by living according to whom he sins.

We said that two cities, different from and opposed to each other, arose from the fact that some live according to the flesh and others according to the spirit. This can also be put another way: some live according to man, others according to God. For Paul says very plainly to the Corinthians: "For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not carnal, and walking according to man?" So to walk according to man is the same as to be carnal, since by "flesh," which is a part of man, man is understood. Earlier he called "natural" the very people he afterward called "carnal," speaking thus: "For who among men," he says, "knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? So too no one knows the things of God except the

8 Romans 3:7; John 14:6.

Spirit of God."[9] "But we," he says, "have received not the spirit of this world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may know the things that have been given us by God. These we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him." To such people, then, that is, to the natural, he says a little later: "And I, brothers, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal." Both the one expression and the other use the same manner of speaking, that is, the whole from the part.[10] For the whole, which is man, can be signified both by the soul and by the flesh, which are parts of man. And so the natural man is not one thing and the carnal man another. Both are one and the same, namely man living according to man. In the same way, nothing but human beings is meant either where we read, "No flesh will be justified by the works of the law," or where it is written, "Seventy-five souls went down with Jacob into Egypt." In the one, "flesh" is understood as every human being; in the other, seventy-five souls are understood as seventy-five human beings. And where it says, "not in words taught by human wisdom," it could have said, "not in words of carnal wisdom." Likewise, where it says, "you walk according to man," it could have said, "according to the flesh."[11] This became even clearer in what he added: "For when one says, 'I belong to Paul,' and another, 'I to Apollos,' are you not men?" What he had been saying with "You are natural" and "You are carnal," he put more explicitly with "You are men." That is: "You live according to man, not according to God. If you lived according to him, you would be gods."[12]

9 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2:11. "Natural" renders *animalis* (Greek *psychikos*), formed from *anima*, "soul"; Augustine's argument turns on this link.
10 1 Corinthians 2:12–14; 3:1.

THAT THE PLATONISTS' VIEW OF THE NATURE OF BODY AND SOUL IS MORE TOLERABLE THAN THE MANICHEES', YET MUST ITSELF BE REJECTED, SINCE IT ASCRIBES THE CAUSES OF ALL VICES TO THE NATURE OF THE FLESH

The Platonists, though wiser than the Manichaeans, wrongly blame the body for the soul's disturbances.

14.5 There is no need, then, to blame the nature of the flesh for our sins and vices, to the Creator's dishonor, for in its own kind and order it is good. But to forsake the good Creator and live according to a created good is not good. That is true whether one chooses to live according to the flesh, or according to the soul, or according to the whole man. Man consists of soul and flesh, which is why he can be signified by the name of soul alone or by the name of flesh alone. For whoever praises the nature of the soul as the supreme good and condemns the nature of the flesh as evil certainly both seeks the soul in a carnal way and flees the flesh in a carnal way. His view comes from human vanity, not from divine truth. The Platonists, it is true, are not as foolish as the Manichaeans, who detest earthly bodies as the very nature of evil. The Platonists ascribe to God as their maker all the elements of which this visible and tangible world is composed, and their qualities too. Yet they hold that souls are so affected by earthly limbs and dying members that from these come their diseases of desire and fear, and of joy or sorrow. Cicero calls these four "disturbances"; most writers call them "passions," rendering the Greek word word for word. In them is contained all the viciousness of human conduct. But if this is so, why does Aeneas in Virgil marvel at this belief? When he has heard from his father in the underworld that souls will return to bodies again, he exclaims: "O father, must we think that some souls go up from here to the sky on high, and return again to sluggish bodies? What is this dreadful craving for the light in these

11 Genesis 46:27 in the Greek and Old Latin text (the Hebrew has seventy); compare Acts 7:14.
12 1 Corinthians 3:4.

wretched souls?"[13] Can it be that this dreadful craving, arising from earthly limbs and dying members, is still present in that much-vaunted purity of souls? Does he not assert that they have been cleansed of all such bodily plagues, as he calls them, when they begin once more to want to return to bodies? From this it follows that, even if this ceaseless alternation of cleansing and defilement in souls departing and returning were true, and it is utterly empty, it still could not truthfully be said that all the culpable and vicious impulses of souls grow in them from earthly bodies. For by their own account, that "dreadful craving," as the noble poet puts it, is so far from coming from the body that it drives the soul into a body, even after the soul has been cleansed of every bodily plague and placed outside every body. Hence, even by their own admission, the soul is not only affected by the flesh so as to desire and fear, rejoice and grieve. It can also be stirred by these impulses from within itself.

THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN WILL, BY WHOSE JUDGMENT THE EMOTIONS OF THE MIND ARE HELD TO BE EITHER WRONG OR RIGHT

The emotions are acts of will, good or bad as the will is right or perverse.

14.6 What matters is the quality of a person's will. If the will is perverse, these emotions will be perverse. If it is right, they will be not only blameless but praiseworthy. For will is present in all of them; indeed, they are all nothing other than acts of will. What are desire and gladness but the will agreeing with the things we want? And what are fear and sorrow but the will disagreeing with the things we do not want? When we agree by seeking what we want, it is called desire; when we agree by enjoying what we want, it is called gladness. Likewise, when we disagree with something we do not want to happen, that act of

13 The Manichaeans were followers of the third-century prophet Mani, who taught that matter is the substance of evil; Augustine had once belonged to them. Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.719–721.

will is fear; and when we disagree with something that happens against our will, that act of will is sorrow. In general, a person's will is attracted or repelled by the variety of things that are sought or shunned, and it is changed and turned into this or that feeling accordingly. Therefore the person who lives according to God, and not according to man, must be a lover of the good; and it follows that he hates evil. And since no one is evil by nature, but whoever is evil is evil through vice, the one who lives according to God owes a perfect hatred to the wicked. He should neither hate the person because of the vice nor love the vice because of the person, but hate the vice and love the person. For once the vice is healed, all that will remain is what he ought to love, and nothing that he ought to hate.[14]

THAT IN SCRIPTURE THE WORDS *amor* AND *dilectio* ARE USED WITHOUT DISTINCTION FOR BOTH GOOD AND EVIL LOVE

Scripture uses its words for love without distinction; the emotions are good or bad as love is.

14.7 Take someone whose purpose is to love God, and to love his neighbor as himself, not according to man but according to God. Because of this love he is without doubt said to be a person of good will. This is more usually called *caritas* in the holy Scriptures, but according to the same sacred writings it is also called *amor*. For the apostle says that the man to be chosen to govern the people must be a lover (*amator*) of the good. And the Lord himself, questioning the apostle Peter, said, "Do you love (*diligis*) me more than these?" and Peter answered, "Lord, you know that I love (*amo*) you." Again the Lord asked, not whether Peter loved him with *amor*, but whether he loved him with *dilectio*; and Peter answered again, "Lord, you know that I love (*amo*) you." But at the third question Jesus himself did not say, "Do you love (*diligis*) me?" but "Do you love (*amas*) me?" At this point the evangelist went on to say, "Peter was grieved because he said to

14 "Perfect hatred" echoes Psalm 138:22 (139:22 in most English Bibles).

him the third time, 'Do you love (*amas*) me?'"[15] Yet the Lord had said "Do you love (*amas*) me?" not three times but only once, and "Do you love (*diligis*) me?" twice. From this we understand that even when the Lord said *diligis,* he meant nothing other than *amas*. Peter, for his part, did not change his word for this one thing, but the third time too he said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (*amo*) you."

I thought this worth mentioning because some people think that *dilectio* or *caritas* is one thing and *amor* another. They say that *dilectio* is to be taken in a good sense and *amor* in a bad one. It is quite certain, however, that not even the authors of secular literature spoke this way. Whether the philosophers make this distinction, or on what principle, is their affair; but their books make it plain enough that they set great value on *amor* when it is directed to good things and toward God himself. What had to be shown was that the Scriptures of our religion, whose authority we place above all other writings, do not treat *amor* as one thing and *dilectio* or *caritas* as another. And we have already shown that *amor* is used in a good sense. But in case anyone thinks that *amor* may be used in both a bad and a good sense, while *dilectio* may be used only in a good one, let him consider what is written in the psalm: "But whoever loves (*diligit*) iniquity hates his own soul"; and the words of the apostle John: "If anyone loves (*dilexerit*) the world, the love (*dilectio*) of the Father is not in him." Here, in a single passage, is *dilectio* in both a good and a bad sense. And in case anyone demands an example of *amor* in a bad sense (since we have already shown it in a good one), let him read what is written: "For people will be lovers (*amantes*) of themselves, lovers (*amatores*) of money." A right will, then, is good love, and a perverse will is bad love. So love that longs to have what it loves is desire; when it has it and enjoys it, it is gladness; when it flees what opposes it, it is fear; and when it feels that thing if it happens, it is sorrow.[16] Accordingly, these

15 Augustine's Latin Gospel uses two verbs for "love," *diligere* and *amare*; John 21:15–17. The overseer as "lover of the good": Titus 1:8.

16 Psalm 10:6 (11:5 in most English Bibles); 1 John 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:2.

emotions are bad if the love is bad, and good if it is good. Let us prove from Scripture what we are saying. The apostle desires (*concupiscit*) to depart and be with Christ. And: "My soul has desired (*concupiuit*) to long for your judgments"—or, if it is put more fittingly, "My soul has longed to desire (*concupiscere*) your judgments." And: "The desire (*concupiscentia*) for wisdom leads to a kingdom." Even so, usage has established that if *cupiditas* or *concupiscentia* is mentioned without saying what it is a desire for, it can only be understood in a bad sense. Gladness is used in a good sense: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous"; and "You have put gladness into my heart"; and "You will fill me with gladness with your countenance."[17] Fear is used in a good sense by the apostle when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; and "Do not be high-minded, but fear"; and "But I fear that, as the serpent seduced Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted from the chastity that is in Christ." Then there is sorrow, which Cicero prefers to call *aegritudo* [distress] and Virgil calls *dolor* [grief] where he says, "they grieve and rejoice." (I have preferred to say *tristitia* [sorrow] because *aegritudo* and *dolor* are more commonly used of the body.) Whether sorrow can be found in a good sense is a more delicate question.[18]

THE THREE EMOTIONS THAT THE STOICS ALLOWED IN THE MIND OF THE WISE MAN, EXCLUDING PAIN OR SADNESS, WHICH THE VIRTUE OF THE MIND OUGHT NOT TO FEEL

The Stoics allow the wise three good feelings but no sorrow; Augustine tests this against Scripture and usage.

14.8 The Greeks speak of εὐπαθείας [good feelings], which Cicero in Latin called *constantiae* [steady states]. The Stoics held that there are three of these in the soul of the wise man, in place of three disturbances: will (*uoluntas*) in place of desire, joy (*gaud-*

17 Philippians 1:23; Psalm 118:20 (119:20 in most English Bibles); Wisdom 6:20; Psalm 31:11 (32:11); Psalm 4:7; Psalm 15:11 (16:11).
18 Philippians 2:12; Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 11:3. The Virgil line is *Aeneid* 6.733.

ium) in place of gladness, and caution in place of fear. But in place of distress or grief—which, to avoid ambiguity, we have preferred to call sorrow—they denied that there could be anything in the wise man's soul. For will, they say, seeks the good, and this the wise man does. Joy is over a good attained, and the wise man attains it everywhere. Caution avoids evil, which the wise man ought to avoid. But sorrow concerns an evil that has already happened; and since they hold that no evil can happen to the wise man, they said that nothing could exist in his soul in its place.[19] So they speak in such a way as to deny that anyone but the wise man wills, rejoices or is cautious, while the fool only desires, is glad, fears and is saddened. The first three are the constancies; the latter four are the disturbances, as Cicero calls them, or the passions, as most call them. In Greek, as I said, the three are called εὐπάθειαι, and the four πάθη [passions]. When I inquired as carefully as I could whether this usage agrees with the holy Scriptures, I found the saying of the prophet: "There is no rejoicing (*gaudere*) for the wicked, says the Lord"—as though the wicked could be glad (*laetari*) about evil things rather than rejoice in them, since joy properly belongs to the good and the godly. Likewise the saying in the gospel, "Whatever you want (*uultis*) people to do to you, do the same to them," seems to have been put as though no one could will anything evil or shameful, but only desire (*cupere*) it.[20] Indeed, because of ordinary usage, some translators added "good" and rendered it, "Whatever good things you want people to do to you." They thought they had to keep anyone from wanting indecent things done to him by others—lavish banquets at least, to say nothing of fouler things—and then supposing that by doing the same for them he would be fulfilling this commandment. But in the Greek gospel, from which the Latin was translated, "good" is not found; it reads, "Whatever you want people to do to you, do the same to them." I believe this is because by saying

19 The Stoic doctrine is reported by Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.12–14.
20 Isaiah 48:22 in the Greek Septuagint wording, which Augustine's Latin follows; Matthew 7:12.

"you want" he already meant good things to be understood. For he does not say "you desire."

Still, our language need not always be reined in by these precise distinctions, though sometimes they should be used. When we read those whose authority it is not right to contradict, the distinctions must be understood wherever a correct sense can find no other way out—as in the examples we have cited, partly from the prophet and partly from the gospel. For who does not know that the wicked exult with gladness? And yet: "There is no rejoicing for the wicked, says the Lord." How can this be, unless rejoicing is something different when the word is used properly and precisely? Likewise, who would deny that it would be wrong to instruct people to do to others whatever they desire others to do to them, for then they might delight one another with the shamefulness of illicit pleasure? And yet this is a most wholesome and true commandment: "Whatever you want people to do to you, do the same to them." How can this be, unless in this passage "will" is used in a special, proper sense that cannot be taken in a bad sense? But in more ordinary usage, the kind everyday speech employs most, it certainly would not be said, "Do not will to tell any lie at all," unless there were also an evil will. It is from the depravity of that evil will that the will proclaimed by the angels is distinguished when they said, "Peace on earth to people of good will." For "good" would have been added needlessly if will could only be good. And what great thing would the apostle have said in praise of love, that it "does not rejoice in iniquity," unless malice does rejoice in that way? Among the authors of secular literature, too, these words are found used without distinction. For Cicero, that most eminent orator, says: "I desire, senators, to be merciful."[21] Since he used that word in a good sense, who would be so perversely pedantic as to insist that he ought to have said not "I desire" but rather "I wish"? Again, in Terence a dissolute young man, burning with mad desire, says: "I want nothing else but Philumena." That this "want" was lust is shown clearly enough by the reply the play-

21 Sirach 7:13; Luke 2:14; 1 Corinthians 13:6. Cicero, *Against Catiline* 1.4.

wright gives there to his more level-headed slave, who says to his master: "How much better it would be for you to set about driving that love out of your heart than to say things that only inflame your lust to no purpose!" As for joy, that they used it in a bad sense too is attested by that very line of Virgil in which he summed up these four disturbances with the utmost brevity: "Hence they fear and desire, grieve and rejoice." The same author also spoke of "the evil joys of the mind."[22]

So both the good and the wicked will, are cautious and rejoice; or, to say the same thing in other words, both the good and the wicked desire, fear and are glad. But the good do so well and the wicked badly, according as their will is right or perverse. Even sorrow itself, in whose place the Stoics thought nothing could be found in the soul of the wise man, is found in a good sense, especially in our writers. For the apostle praises the Corinthians because they were saddened in a godly way. But perhaps someone will say that the apostle congratulated them because they were saddened by repenting, and that kind of sorrow can belong only to those who have sinned. For this is what he says: "I see that that letter saddened you, if only for a while. Now I rejoice, not because you were saddened, but because you were saddened into repentance. For you were saddened in a godly way, so that you suffered no loss through us in anything.[23] For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation and is not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. See what diligence this very thing, being saddened in a godly way, has produced in you." In reply, the Stoics can argue on their own behalf that sorrow appears useful for this purpose, that one may repent of having sinned. But, they will say, it cannot exist in the soul of the wise man, because no sin befalls him over which repentance could sadden him, nor any other evil whose endurance and experience could make him sad. For they tell how Alcibiades (if my memory does not fail me about the

22 Terence, *The Woman of Andros* 306–308: the young man is Charinus, the slave Byrria. The Virgil passages are *Aeneid* 6.733 and 6.278–279.
23 2 Corinthians 7:8–11.

man's name), who thought himself happy, wept when Socrates argued with him and showed him how wretched he was because he was a fool. For him, then, folly was the cause even of this useful and desirable sorrow, by which a person grieves that he is what he ought not to be.[24] The Stoics, however, say that it is not the fool but the wise man who cannot be sad.

THE EMOTIONS OF THE MIND WHOSE RIGHT EXPRESSIONS ARE FOUND IN THE LIFE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Citizens of the city of God rightly feel fear, desire, grief and joy, as Paul and Christ himself did.

14.9 But we have already answered these philosophers, as far as this question of the soul's disturbances is concerned, in the ninth book of this work. There we showed that, arguing not so much about things as about words, they are more eager for contention than for truth. Among us, however, in accordance with the holy Scriptures and sound doctrine, the citizens of the holy city of God, who live according to God in the pilgrimage of this life, fear and desire, grieve and rejoice; and because their love is right, all these affections of theirs are right. They fear eternal punishment, and they desire eternal life. They grieve in the present reality, because they themselves still groan inwardly, waiting for adoption, the redemption of their body; they rejoice in hope, because the saying that is written will come to pass: "Death is swallowed up in victory." Likewise they fear to sin and desire to persevere; they grieve over their sins and rejoice in good works.[25] That they may fear to sin, they hear: "Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold." That they may desire to persevere, they hear what is written: "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved." That they may grieve over their sins, they hear: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That they may rejoice in

24 Alcibiades was an Athenian statesman and follower of Socrates; the story is told by Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.77.
25 Book 9, chapters 4–5. Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:54.

good works, they hear: "God loves a cheerful giver." Likewise, depending on their weakness or their strength, they fear to be tempted and desire to be tempted; they grieve in temptations and rejoice in temptations.[26] That they may fear to be tempted, they hear: "If anyone is caught in some fault, you who are spiritual should instruct such a person in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted." That they may desire to be tempted, they hear a valiant man of the city of God saying: "Test me, Lord, and tempt me; burn my inmost being and my heart." That they may grieve in temptations, they see Peter weeping. That they may rejoice in temptations, they hear James saying: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations."[27]

They are moved by these affections not only for their own sake but also for the sake of those whom they desire to see set free and fear may perish; they grieve if such people perish and rejoice if they are set free. Consider in particular—for we have come into the Church of Christ from the Gentiles—that excellent and most valiant man who glories in his weaknesses, the teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth, who labored more than all his fellow apostles, and who by more letters than any instructed the peoples of God, not only those whom he saw in person but also those whom he foresaw would come after—[28] that man, I say, the athlete of Christ, taught by him, anointed by him, crucified with him, glorious in him, who in the theater of this world became a spectacle to angels and to human beings, competing lawfully in the great contest and pressing on toward what lies ahead for the prize of the upward call. The citizens of God's city watch him most gladly with the eyes of faith. They see him rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, with battles without and fears within. They see him desiring to depart and be with Christ; longing to see the Romans, that he might reap some harvest among them as

26 Matthew 24:12; Matthew 10:22; 1 John 1:8; 2 Corinthians 9:7.
27 Galatians 6:1; Psalm 25:2 (26:2 in most English Bibles); Matthew 26:75; James 1:2.
28 Paul, alluding to 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Timothy 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 15:10.

among the other Gentiles; jealous for the Corinthians, and in that very jealousy fearing that their minds might be led astray from the chastity that is in Christ. They see him with great sorrow and unceasing pain of heart over the Israelites, because, ignorant of God's righteousness and wishing to establish their own, they had not submitted to the righteousness of God. And they see him declaring not only his pain but even his mourning over some who had sinned before and had not repented of their impurity and fornications.[29]

If these emotions, these affections, which come from love of the good and from holy love, are to be called vices, then let us allow what are truly vices to be called virtues. But since these affections follow right reason when they are applied where they ought to be, who would dare to call them diseases or vicious passions? That is why even the Lord himself, who deigned to live a human life in the form of a servant, though without any sin at all, displayed them where he judged they should be displayed. For in one who had a true human body and a true human soul, human feeling was not false.[30] So when the gospel reports such things of him—that he was grieved with anger at the hardness of heart of the Jews; that he said, "I am glad for your sakes, so that you may believe"; that when he was about to raise Lazarus he even shed tears; that he earnestly desired to eat the Passover with his disciples; that as his passion drew near his soul was sorrowful—these things are certainly not reported falsely. But for the sake of a definite plan he took on these emotions in his human soul when he willed, just as he became man when he willed.[31]

Accordingly—and this must be admitted—even when our affections are right and according to God, they belong to this life, not to the life we hope is to come, and we often yield to them even against our will. So sometimes, though moved not by

29 A mosaic of Paul's own words, e.g., 1 Corinthians 4:9, Philippians 3:13–14, Romans 12:15, Romans 9:2 and 10:3, 2 Corinthians 12:21.
30 "The form of a servant": Philippians 2:7.
31 Mark 3:5; John 11:15; John 11:35; Luke 22:15; Matthew 26:38.

blameworthy craving but by praiseworthy love, we weep even when we do not want to. We have these affections, then, because of the weakness of the human condition. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus, whose very weakness came from his power. Yet as long as we bear the weakness of this life, if we had none of these affections at all, it is then rather that we would not be living rightly. For the apostle reproached and denounced certain people whom he even described as being without affection. The sacred psalm, too, blamed those of whom it says, "I waited for someone to grieve with me, and there was no one."[32]

FREEDOM FROM PASSION

Stoic apatheia is impossible in this life, and total numbness would be worse than any vice.

For to feel no pain at all while we are in this place of misery is certainly not achieved, as a certain man of letters of this world also thought and said, without a heavy price: savagery in the mind and numbness in the body. Consider, then, what in Greek is called ἀπάθεια [freedom from passion], which in Latin, if the word could be used, would be called *inpassibilitas* [impassibility]. If it is to be understood—and it refers to the mind, not the body—as living without those affections that arise contrary to reason and disturb the mind, then it is plainly good and greatly to be desired. But it too does not belong to this life. For it is the voice not of just any people but especially of the godly and of the thoroughly just and holy: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This ἀπάθεια, therefore, will exist only when there is no sin in a human being.[33] As things are now, we live well enough if we live without crime. But whoever thinks he lives without sin does not succeed in having no sin; he succeeds only in receiving no pardon. Further, if ἀπάθεια is the name for the state in which no

32 Romans 1:31; Psalm 68:21 (69:20 in most English Bibles).

33 The man of letters is Crantor, an early Academic philosopher, quoted by Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.12.

affection at all can touch the mind, who would not judge such numbness to be worse than all the vices? It can be said, then, without absurdity, that perfect happiness will be without the sting of fear and without any sorrow. But who would say that love and joy will not be there, unless he is wholly shut off from the truth? If, however, ἀπάθεια is the state in which no fear terrifies and no pain torments, it is to be shunned in this life, if we want to live rightly, that is, according to God; but in that happy life which is promised as everlasting, it is clearly to be hoped for.

Consider the fear of which the apostle John says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment; and whoever fears is not perfect in love." That fear is not of the same kind as the fear with which the apostle Paul feared that the Corinthians might be led astray by the serpent's cunning; for love has that fear—indeed, only love has it. Rather, it is of the kind that is not in love, of which the same apostle Paul says, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear." But as for that chaste fear "enduring forever and ever": if it is to exist in the age to come as well (and how else can "enduring forever and ever" be understood?), it is not a fear that frightens us away from an evil that may happen, but one that holds us fast in a good that cannot be lost.[34] For where the love of the good once attained is unchangeable, the fear of avoiding evil is surely, if one may put it so, a fear without anxiety. By the name "chaste fear" is meant that will by which we shall necessarily not wish to sin, and shall avoid sin not out of the anxiety of weakness, lest we should happen to sin, but out of the tranquillity of love. Or, if there can be no fear of any kind at all in that utterly certain security of everlasting and happy joys, then "The chaste fear of the Lord endures forever and ever" was said in the same way as "The patience of the poor will not perish forever." For patience itself will not be eternal, since it is needed only where evils have to be endured; but what is reached

34 1 John 4:18; Romans 8:15. "Chaste fear … enduring forever and ever": Psalm 18:10 (19:9 in most English Bibles).

through patience will be eternal. So perhaps chaste fear is said to endure forever and ever because what fear leads us to will endure.[35]

This being so, since we must lead a right life by which to reach the happy life, a right life has all these affections right, and a perverse life has them perverse. But the happy life, which is also the eternal life, will have love and joy that are not only right but certain, and no fear or pain at all. From this it is already in some measure clear what the citizens of the city of God ought to be like in this pilgrimage, living according to the spirit, not according to the flesh—that is, according to God, not according to man—and what they will be like in that immortality toward which they are traveling. The city—that is, the society—of the ungodly, on the other hand, consists of those who live not according to God but according to man, and who, in their very worship of a false divinity and contempt for the true one, follow the teachings of men or of demons. That city is shaken by these depraved affections as by diseases and disturbances. And if that city has some citizens who seem to restrain such emotions and, as it were, to temper them, they are so proud and puffed up in their impiety that in them the swelling is all the greater for the smarting being less. And if some, with a vanity as monstrous as it is rare, have become so enamored of this in themselves that they are not roused or stirred by any emotion at all, nor bent or swayed by any, they lose all their humanity rather than attain true tranquillity. For a thing is not right because it is hard, nor healthy because it is numb.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS IN PARADISE WERE AFFECTED BY ANY EMOTIONS BEFORE THEY SINNED

Before sin the first couple knew untroubled love and joy, without fear or grief.

14.10 But it is not unreasonable to ask whether the first man, or rather the first human beings (for theirs was a marriage of two),

had these emotions in their animal body before sin—emotions such as we shall not have in the spiritual body, when all sin has been purged away and brought to an end. For if they had them, how were they happy in that memorable place of happiness, that is, paradise? Who, after all, can be called happy without qualification if he is affected by fear or grief? And what could those human beings fear or grieve over, amid such an abundance of so many goods, where neither death was dreaded nor any ill health of the body, where nothing was lacking that a good will might obtain, and nothing was present that could hurt the flesh or the mind of a man living in happiness? Their love was untroubled, both toward God and toward each other, as husband and wife living in faithful and sincere partnership; and from this love came great joy, since what they loved never ceased to be there for them to enjoy. There was a calm avoidance of sin, and as long as it lasted no evil from any quarter broke in to sadden them. Or did they perhaps desire to touch the forbidden tree and eat from it, but fear to die, so that even then both desire and fear were troubling those human beings, even in that place? Far be it from us to think that this was so where there was no sin at all. For it is certainly a sin to desire what the law of God forbids and to abstain from it out of fear of punishment, not out of love of justice. Far be it, I say, that before any sin there should already have been such a sin there—that they committed in regard to the tree what the Lord says about a woman: "Whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."[36] As happy, then, as they were—troubled by no disturbances of mind and harmed by no discomforts of body—so happy would the whole of human society have been, if neither they had committed the evil that they would also pass on to their descendants, nor anyone of their stock had committed by wickedness anything that would incur condemnation. And while this happiness lasted, until, through that blessing in which it was said, "Increase and multiply," the number of the

35 Psalm 9:19 (9:18 in most English Bibles).
36 Matthew 5:28.

predestined saints was complete, another and greater happiness would have been given: the one given to the most blessed angels, in which there would be the sure security that no one would sin and no one would die. And the life of the saints, without any experience of toil, pain, or death, would have been such as it will be after all these things, in the incorruption of bodies, once the resurrection of the dead has been granted.[37]

THE FALL OF THE FIRST MAN, IN WHICH A NATURE WELL MADE WAS CORRUPTED, AND CAN BE RESTORED ONLY BY ITS MAKER

God foresaw the fall; the devil deceived Eve through the serpent, and Adam sinned out of loyalty to her.

14.11 But since God foreknew all things, and therefore could not be unaware that man too would sin, we ought to give our account of the holy city according to what he foreknew and ordained, not according to what could not come to our knowledge because it was not part of God's plan. For man could not by his sin throw the divine counsel into disorder, as if he had forced God to change what he had decided. God in his foreknowledge anticipated both things: how evil the man whom he himself had created good would become, and what good he himself would make of him even so. For even if God is said to change his decisions (which is why in the Scriptures, by a figure of speech, we even read that God repented), this is said with respect to what man had expected, or what the order of natural causes was bringing about, not with respect to what the Almighty had foreknown he would do. So God made man, as it is written, upright, and therefore with a good will. For he would not be upright if he did not have a good will. A good will, then, is the work of God; for man was made by him with it. But the first evil will, since it preceded all evil works in man, was rather a kind of falling away from the work of God to its own works than any work at all. And those works were evil because they were according to self, not

37 Genesis 1:28.

according to God. So the will itself, or man himself insofar as he had an evil will, was like an evil tree, and those works were like its evil fruit. Further, although an evil will is not according to nature but against nature, since it is a fault, it still belongs to the nature whose fault it is, for a fault cannot exist except in a nature. But it exists in a nature which the Creator created out of nothing, not one which he begot from himself, as he begot the Word, through whom all things were made. For although God fashioned man from the dust of the earth, that same earth and all earthly matter come entirely from nothing; and when man was made, God gave the body a soul made from nothing.[38] Evils are so thoroughly overcome by goods that, although they are permitted to exist in order to show how the Creator's most provident justice can make good use even of them, goods can nevertheless exist without evils—as God himself, the true and supreme God, does, and every heavenly creature, invisible and visible, above this murky air. But evils cannot exist without goods, because the natures in which they exist are certainly good insofar as they are natures. Moreover, an evil is removed not by taking away some nature that had been added, or any part of it, but by healing and correcting the nature that had been vitiated and depraved. The choice of the will, then, is truly free when it is not a slave to vices and sins. Such was the choice God gave; and once it has been lost through its own fault, it cannot be restored except by him who was able to give it. Hence the Truth says: "If the Son sets you free, then you will be truly free." This is the same as if he had said: "If the Son saves you, then you will be truly saved." For he is our liberator on the very ground on which he is our Savior.[39]

So man lived according to God in a paradise that was both bodily and spiritual. For it was not a bodily paradise for the goods of the body without being a spiritual one for the goods of the mind; nor was it a spiritual one for man to enjoy through his inner senses without being a bodily one for him to enjoy

38 John 1:3.
39 John 8:36; "the Truth" is Christ, who calls himself the truth in John 14:6.

through his outer senses. It was plainly both, for the sake of both. That proud angel—and, because proud, envious—turned by that same pride away from God toward himself, and, choosing with a kind of tyrannical arrogance to rejoice in having subjects rather than to be a subject, he fell from the spiritual paradise. (I have argued sufficiently, as far as I was able, in the eleventh and twelfth books of this work, about his fall and that of his companions, who from being angels of God became his angels.) After this, seeking to creep into man's mind with a cunning that urges to evil—for he envied man for standing, since he himself had fallen—he chose a snake in the bodily paradise, where the other land animals too lived with those two human beings, male and female, subject to them and harmless. It was, of course, a slippery animal, moving in twisting coils, well suited to his work, and through it he would speak. Having subjected it to himself by spiritual wickedness, through his angelic presence and superior nature, and misusing it as an instrument, he spoke deceitfully to the woman. He began, that is, with the lower part of that human couple, so that he might reach the whole by degrees; for he did not think that the man was easily credulous or could be deceived by falling into error himself, but only by yielding to another's error. Aaron did not consent to the erring people's making of an idol because he was persuaded, but gave in because he was constrained; nor is it credible that Solomon mistakenly thought idols should be served, but rather that he was driven to those sacrileges by the blandishments of women. In the same way, we must believe that the man—one with his one, human being with human being, spouse with spouse—was not led astray into transgressing God's law by believing his wife as if she spoke the truth, but obeyed her out of the bond of their partnership. For the apostle did not say without reason, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived," except because she accepted what the serpent said to her as though it were true, while he refused to be separated from his only companion, even in a partnership of sin. Nor was he any less guilty for that, since

he sinned knowingly and with his eyes open.[40] That is why the apostle did not say, "He did not sin," but, "He was not deceived." For he certainly shows that Adam sinned when he says, "Through one man sin entered the world," and a little later, more plainly, "in the likeness of Adam's transgression." By "deceived" he meant those who do not think that what they are doing is a sin; but Adam knew. Otherwise how will it be true that "Adam was not deceived"? But having no experience of divine severity, he could be mistaken in this, that he believed what he had committed was pardonable. And so, though he was not deceived in the way the woman was deceived, he was mistaken about how the plea he was going to make would be judged: "The woman you gave to be with me, she gave it to me, and I ate." Why say more? Even if they were not both deceived by believing, they were both caught by sinning and entangled in the devil's snares.[41]

THE NATURE OF THE SIN COMMITTED BY THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS

The sin was grave because obeying so easy a command would have been so easy.

14.12 Someone may be troubled by the question why human nature is not changed by other sins in the way it was changed by that transgression of the first two human beings. By it, human nature became subject to the great corruption we see and feel, and through this to death, and it is disturbed and tossed about by so many, such great, and such conflicting emotions—which it certainly was not in paradise before sin, even though it was in an animal body. If anyone, as I said, is troubled by this, he should not think that the offense was light and small because it was committed in the matter of food—food that was not bad or harmful, except in being forbidden. For God would not create

40 Aaron made the golden calf (Exodus 32), and Solomon's wives turned him to idols (1 Kings 11). The quotation is 1 Timothy 2:14.
41 Romans 5:12 and 5:14; Adam's plea is Genesis 3:12.

and plant anything evil in that place of such great happiness. But obedience was what the commandment enjoined, and in a rational creature this virtue is in a sense the mother and guardian of all the virtues, since such a creature was made in such a way that it is beneficial for it to be subject to him, and ruinous for it to do its own will rather than the will of him who created it. So this commandment—not to eat one kind of food, where such an abundance of others lay at hand—was so light to keep and so short to remember, especially since desire did not yet resist the will (that came afterward as the penalty of transgression). And it was violated with an injustice all the greater, the more easily it could have been observed and kept.

THAT IN ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION AN EVIL WILL CAME BEFORE THE EVIL ACT

Pride came first, in secret: the evil will preceded the evil act as self-pleasing turned away from God.

14.13 But they began to be evil in secret, and so they slid into open disobedience. For the evil deed would never have been reached unless an evil will had come first. And what could be the beginning of an evil will but pride? For "pride is the beginning of all sin." And what is pride but a craving for perverse exaltation? For it is a perverse exaltation to abandon the source to which the soul ought to cling, and in a sense to become and to be one's own source. This happens when the soul is too pleased with itself. And it is pleased with itself in this way when it falls away from that unchangeable good which ought to have pleased it more than it pleases itself.[42] This falling away is of the will's own accord. For if the will had remained steadfast in love for the higher, unchangeable good, by which it was illumined so that it might see and kindled so that it might love, it would not have turned away from that good to please itself, and so grown dark and cold. Then neither would she have believed that the serpent had spoken the truth, nor would he have put his wife's will

42 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 10:13.

ahead of God's command and thought that he would be a pardonable transgressor of the commandment if he did not desert the companion of his life even in a partnership of sin. So the evil deed—that is, the transgression of eating the forbidden food—was committed only by those who were already evil. For that evil fruit could only come from an evil tree. But that the tree became evil happened against nature, since it could certainly not have happened except through a fault of the will, which is against nature. But only a nature made from nothing could be depraved by a fault. And so its being a nature it has from having been made by God; but its falling away from what it is it has from having been made from nothing. Yet man did not fall away so far as to be nothing at all, but, turned toward himself, he was less than he was when he clung to him who supremely is. So to abandon God and to exist in oneself—that is, to please oneself—is not yet to be nothing, but it is to draw near to nothing. That is why, according to the holy Scriptures, the proud are called by another name: "self-pleasers." For it is good to have the heart lifted up—not to oneself, which belongs to pride, but to the Lord, which belongs to obedience, and obedience can belong only to the humble.[43] There is, then, something in humility which, in a wonderful way, lifts the heart up, and something in self-exaltation which brings the heart down. This seems a contradiction, that exaltation should lead downward and humility upward. But devout humility makes one subject to what is higher; and nothing is higher than God; and therefore humility, which makes one subject to God, exalts. Self-exaltation, on the other hand, which is a fault, by that very fact spurns subjection, falls away from him than whom nothing is higher, and so will be lower. Thus what is written comes to pass: "You cast them down when they were being lifted up." For it does not say, "when they had been lifted up," as if they were first raised and afterward cast down; but at the very moment they were being lifted up, they were cast

43 "Self-pleasers" is 2 Peter 2:10 in Augustine's Latin; "lift up the heart" echoes the liturgy's "Lift up your hearts."

down. For to be lifted up is itself already to be cast down.[44] Therefore humility is most highly commended in the city of God, and to the city of God on pilgrimage in this world, and it is most highly proclaimed in its king, who is Christ; and the sacred writings teach that the opposite vice, self-exaltation, holds sway above all in its adversary, who is the devil. Surely this is the great difference by which the two cities we are speaking of are distinguished: the one a society of devout people, the other of the impious, each with the angels belonging to it—cities in which love of God came first on the one side, love of self on the other. So the devil would not have caught man in the manifest and open sin of doing what God had forbidden, if man had not already begun to be pleased with himself. This is why he was delighted by what was said: "You will be like gods." And they could have been this better by clinging to the supreme and true source through obedience, not by being their own source through pride.[45] For created gods are gods not by their own truth but by participation in the true God. By craving more, one becomes less: while he chooses to suffice for himself, he falls away from the one who truly suffices for him. So that evil by which man, pleasing himself as if he himself were light, turns away from that light which, if it pleased him, would make him light too—that evil, I say, came first in secret, so that there followed this evil which was committed in the open. For what is written is true: "Before a fall the heart is exalted, and before glory it is humbled." The fall that happens in secret precedes the fall that happens in the open, while the first is not thought to be a fall. For who thinks exaltation is a fall, though the falling away by which the Most High has been forsaken is already there?[46] But who does not see that it is a fall when an evident and unmistakable transgression of the commandment takes place? This is why God forbade something that, once committed, could not be defended by any pretense of justice. And I venture to say that it

44 Psalm 72:18 (73:18 in most English Bibles).
45 Genesis 3:5.
46 Proverbs 18:12.

is useful for the proud to fall into some open and manifest sin, so that they may become displeasing to themselves—they who had already fallen by being pleasing to themselves. For Peter was in a healthier state when he was displeased with himself and wept than when he was pleased with himself and presumed. The sacred psalm says this too: "Fill their faces with shame, and they will seek your name, O Lord"—that is, so that you may please them as they seek your name, they who had pleased themselves by seeking their own.[47]

THE PRIDE OF THE TRANSGRESSOR, WHICH WAS WORSE THAN THE TRANSGRESSION ITSELF

Adam and Eve made their sin worse by excusing themselves and blaming another.

14.14 But worse and more damnable is the pride that looks for the refuge of an excuse even when the sins are open ones. So it was with those first human beings. She said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate," and he said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Nowhere here is there any sound of a plea for pardon, nowhere an entreaty for healing. For although they do not deny what they committed, as Cain did, pride still seeks to shift onto someone else what it did wrong: the woman's pride onto the serpent, the man's pride onto the woman. But where a divine command has been openly transgressed, this is really an accusation rather than an excuse. Nor are they any less the doers of the deed because the woman committed it at the serpent's persuasion and the man at the woman's offering—as if anything ought to have been put before God, whom they should have believed and to whom they should have yielded![48]

47 Peter boasted he would never deny Christ, then wept bitterly after denying him (Matthew 26:33–75). The psalm is Psalm 82:17 (83:16 in most English Bibles).
48 Genesis 3:13 and 3:12. Cain denied killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4:9).

THE JUSTICE OF THE RETRIBUTION THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS RECEIVED FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE

Disobedience was punished with disobedience: man can no longer command even his own mind and body.

14.15 So God was held in contempt when he commanded. He had created man and made him in his own image. He had set him above the other animals and placed him in paradise. He had supplied him with an abundance of all things and of well-being. He had burdened him with commands neither many nor great nor difficult, but had supported him, for the healthiness of obedience, with one command, very brief and very light, by which he reminded that creature, for whom free service was beneficial, that he was its Lord. Because this God was despised, a just condemnation followed. And the condemnation was such that man, who by keeping the commandment would have become spiritual even in his flesh, became carnal even in his mind. He who had pleased himself in his pride was, by God's justice, handed over to himself. Yet not in such a way that he was wholly in his own power. Instead, at odds even with himself, under the one with whom he sided by sinning, he lived, in place of the freedom he craved, a harsh and wretched slavery: dead in spirit by his own will, and destined to die in body against his will; a deserter of eternal life, condemned to a death that would also be eternal, unless grace set him free. Whoever thinks this kind of condemnation either excessive or unjust certainly does not know how to measure how great the wickedness of sinning was, when not sinning was so easy. For just as Abraham's obedience is rightly proclaimed great, because he was commanded something extremely difficult—to kill his son—so in paradise the disobedience was all the greater, the less difficult the command was. And just as the obedience of the second man is all the more praiseworthy because he became obedient even to death, so the disobedience of the first man is all the more detestable because he became disobedient even to death. For where a great penalty for disobedience has been set forth and

the Creator has commanded something easy, who could adequately explain how great an evil it is not to obey in an easy matter, when so great a power commands it and so great a punishment threatens?[49]

In short, to put it briefly: in the punishment of that sin, what was the retribution for disobedience if not disobedience? For what other misery does man have than his own disobedience against himself—so that, because he would not do what he could, he now wills what he cannot? In paradise, even if he could not do everything before he sinned, still whatever he could not do he did not will, and so he could do everything he willed. But now, as we recognize in his offspring and as divine Scripture testifies, "Man has become like vanity." For who can count how many things he wills that he cannot do, while he does not obey himself—that is, while his own mind, and his flesh, which is lower than his mind, do not obey his will?[50] For against his will the mind is often disturbed, and the flesh feels pain, grows old and dies; and so with whatever else we suffer that we would not suffer against our will if our nature obeyed our will in every way and in all its parts. But, it may be said, the flesh undergoes something that does not let it serve. What does it matter from what source, so long as, through the justice of God our master—whom we, his subjects, refused to serve—our flesh, which had been subject to us, troubles us by not serving us? We, by not serving God, could trouble ourselves, but not him. For he does not need our service as we need the service of the body; and so what we receive is a punishment for us, but what we did is no punishment for him. Moreover, the pains that are called pains of the flesh are pains of the soul, in the flesh and arising from the flesh. For what can the flesh, by itself and without the soul, feel either pain or desire? When the flesh is said to desire or to feel pain, it is either the man himself, as we have argued, or some part of the soul that is affected by what the

49 Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22). "Obedient even to death" echoes Philippians 2:8, said of Christ.
50 Psalm 143:4 (144:4 in most English Bibles).

flesh undergoes—harshly, so as to cause pain, or gently, so as to cause pleasure. But pain of the flesh is simply the soul's being offended by the flesh, a kind of disagreement with what the flesh undergoes; just as the pain of the mind, which is called sadness, is a disagreement with things that have happened to us against our will. Sadness, however, is generally preceded by fear, which is itself in the soul, not in the flesh. Pain of the flesh, on the other hand, is not preceded by any kind of fear of the flesh, felt in the flesh before the pain. Pleasure, though, is preceded by a certain appetite, which is felt in the flesh as its craving—like hunger and thirst, and the one in the genitals that is most commonly called lust, though this is a general word for every craving. Indeed, the ancients defined anger itself as nothing other than the lust for revenge—although sometimes a person grows angry even with inanimate things, where there is no sense of vengeance at all, and in anger smashes a stylus that writes badly or breaks a reed pen. But even this, though more irrational, is still a kind of lust for revenge: a sort of shadow, so to speak, of retribution, that those who do evil should suffer evil. So there is a lust for revenge, which is called anger; a lust for possessing money, which is called avarice; a lust for winning by any means, which is called obstinacy; a lust for glorying, which is called boastfulness. There are many different lusts, some of which have names of their own, while others do not. For who could easily say what the lust for domination is called? Yet the civil wars testify how powerful it is in the minds of tyrants.

THE EVIL OF LUST, A WORD THAT FITS MANY VICES BUT IS PROPERLY APPLIED TO THE STIRRINGS OF OBSCENE HEAT

Sexual lust overwhelms the mind more than any other, yet defies even the will of those who want it.

14.16 Although, then, there are lusts for many things, when "lust" is mentioned without saying what it is lust for, what usually comes to mind is only the lust that arouses the shameful parts of the body. This lust lays claim not only to the whole body, and not

only outwardly but inwardly as well. It stirs the whole person, the emotion of the mind joined and mingled with the appetite of the flesh, so that a pleasure follows that is greater than any other bodily pleasure. So much so that at the very moment its climax is reached, almost all the sharpness and, as it were, the watchfulness of thought is overwhelmed. But is there any lover of wisdom and of holy joys, living a married life yet knowing, as the apostle advised, "how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the disease of desire, like the Gentiles who do not know God," who would not prefer, if he could, to beget children without this lust? Then, even in this duty of sowing offspring, the members created for this work would serve his mind as all the other members serve it, each assigned to its own tasks—set in motion at the nod of the will, not stirred up by the surge of lust.[51] But not even the lovers of this pleasure are aroused when they wish, whether for marital intercourse or for the impurities of shameful acts. Sometimes that motion is importunate when no one asks for it; at other times it deserts the one who longs for it, and while desire blazes in the mind, it is cold in the body. And so, strangely, lust fails to serve not only the will to beget but even the lust for wantonness. Though for the most part it wholly opposes the mind that restrains it, sometimes it is divided even against itself: having stirred the mind, it fails to follow through itself in stirring the body.

THE NAKEDNESS OF THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS, WHICH AFTER THEIR SIN THEY SAW AS SHAMEFUL AND TO BE COVERED

After sinning, Adam and Eve covered their genitals, which had begun to move against their will.

14.17 Rightly, then, is this lust the chief cause of shame. And rightly are the very members that it moves or does not move by its own right, so to speak, and not wholly at our discretion, called *pudenda,* the parts that cause shame—which they were

51 1 Thessalonians 4:4–5.

not before man sinned. For as it is written, "They were naked and were not ashamed." This was not because their nakedness was unknown to them, but because nakedness was not yet disgraceful. Lust did not yet move those members apart from their will; the flesh did not yet, as it were, bear witness by its own disobedience to convict man of his disobedience. For they were not created blind, as the uneducated crowd supposes. He saw the animals to which he gave names, and of her we read, "The woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasing to the eyes to look at."[52] Their eyes, then, were open, but they were not opened to this—that is, not attentive to it—so as to recognize what the garment of grace was granting them, when their members did not know how to resist their will. When that grace was removed, so that disobedience might be punished by a matching penalty, there appeared in the movement of the body a certain shameless novelty, which made nakedness indecent. It made them attentive and left them confounded. That is why, after they had violated God's commandment by open transgression, it is written of them: "And the eyes of both were opened, and they recognized that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves *campestria*." "The eyes of both were opened," it says—not to see, for they could see before, but to distinguish between the good they had lost and the evil into which they had fallen.[53] This is also why the tree itself took its name from this: because it would produce this discernment if it were touched and eaten against the prohibition, it was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For once the discomfort of illness has been experienced, the pleasantness of health becomes all the clearer. They recognized, then, that they were naked—stripped, that is, of the grace that kept the nakedness of their bodies from confounding them, since no law of sin was yet resisting their mind. So they came to know what they would have been happier not knowing, if, believing and obeying God, they had not committed what forced them to learn

52 Genesis 2:25 and 3:6.
53 Genesis 3:7.

by experience the harm done by unbelief and disobedience. Thus, confounded by the disobedience of their flesh, as by a punishment bearing witness to their own disobedience, "they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves *campestria*"—that is, coverings girded around the genitals. For some translators have put *succinctoria* [girdles]. Now *campestria* is indeed a Latin word, but it comes from the fact that young men who exercised naked on the field (*campus*) covered their private parts; hence those girded in this way are commonly called *campestrati*. So what lust disobediently set in motion, against a will condemned for the guilt of disobedience, modesty modestly covered. From this, all nations, since they are descended from that stock, hold so firmly to the ingrained custom of veiling the private parts that some foreign peoples do not leave those parts of the body bare even in the baths, but bathe with their coverings on. And in the dark solitudes of India, though certain men practice philosophy naked, and are therefore called gymnosophists, they still put coverings on their genitals, though they have none on the rest of their bodies.[54]

THE SHAME ATTACHED TO INTERCOURSE, NOT ONLY ILLICIT BUT ALSO MARRIED

Intercourse, even lawful married intercourse, seeks privacy and shuns being seen.

14.18 As for the act itself that is carried out with such lust, it shuns public view. This is true not only of every kind of illicit intercourse, where hiding places are needed to escape human judgment, but even of the use of prostitutes, a baseness that the earthly city has made lawful. Although what is done there is something that no law of that city punishes, lust, even when permitted and unpunished, still avoids being seen in public. Out of natural shame the brothels themselves have provided for privacy, and unchastity found it easier to be free of the chains of

54 The *campus* is the Campus Martius at Rome, used for exercise. "Gymnosophists" is Greek for "naked philosophers," the Greek name for Indian ascetics.

prohibition than shamelessness did to do away with the hiding places of that foulness. Even the base call this baseness: though they love it, they do not dare to put it on display. And what of marital intercourse, which takes place for the sake of begetting children, as the marriage contract prescribes? Lawful and honorable as it is, does it not also seek a bedroom removed from witnesses? Does it not send outside all the servants, and even the groomsmen and anyone whom some tie of family had allowed in, before husband and wife so much as begin to caress each other? A certain supreme master of Roman eloquence says that all right actions wish to be set in the light—that is, they seek to be known. Yet this right action seeks to be known in such a way that it still blushes to be seen. For who does not know what married couples do with each other so that children may be born? It is precisely so that this may be done that wives are married with such ceremony. And yet when the act from which children are born is performed, not even the children already born from it are allowed to witness it. Thus this right action seeks the light of minds, so as to be known, yet flees the light of eyes. Why is this, if not because what is fitting by nature is done in such a way that something shameful, by way of punishment, accompanies it?[55]

THAT THE IMPULSES OF ANGER AND LUST, WHICH STIR SO VICIOUSLY IN HUMAN BEINGS THAT THEY MUST BE CHECKED BY THE REINS OF WISDOM, DID NOT EXIST IN NATURE'S SOUND STATE BEFORE SIN

Anger and lust need reason's reins now but were not faulty in paradise; lust alone controls the genitals.

14.19 This is why even those philosophers who came closer to the truth admitted that anger and lust are faulty parts of the soul: they are moved turbulently and without order even toward things that wisdom forbids us to do, and so they need a mind and reason to govern them. This third part of the soul, they say,

55 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.64.

is placed as if in a citadel to rule the other two, so that, with it commanding and them serving, justice may be preserved in a person among all the parts of the soul.[56] These parts, then, they admit are faulty even in a wise and temperate person. The mind must therefore curb and restrain them, reining them in and calling them back from the things toward which they are wrongly moved, and permitting them to go toward the things allowed by the law of wisdom—anger, for instance, to exercise just correction, and lust for the duty of propagating offspring. These parts, I say, were not faulty in paradise before sin. For they were not moved toward anything against a right will, so that they had to be held back by reason, governing them like reins. Now, indeed, they are moved in this way, and those who live temperately, justly and devoutly keep them in measure by restraining and resisting them, sometimes more easily, sometimes with more difficulty. But this is certainly not the health of nature; it is the sickness of guilt. Why is it, then, that shame does not hide the works of anger and of the other emotions, in all sorts of words and deeds, as it hides the works of lust performed by the genital members? What is the reason, if not that in the other cases it is not the emotions themselves that move the members of the body, but the will, once it has consented to them—and the will has complete mastery in their use? For whoever utters a word in anger, or even strikes someone, could not do so unless his tongue and hand were moved, in a sense, at the command of the will; and these same members are moved by the same will even when there is no anger at all. But lust has, so to speak, made the genital parts of the body its own property, so that they cannot move if it is absent, unless it has risen, either of its own accord or when aroused. This is what causes shame; this is what blushes and shuns the eyes of onlookers. A man will more readily bear a crowd of spectators when he is unjustly angry with another person than the gaze of a single one when he is justly united with his wife.

56 The division of the soul into reason, spirit (anger) and appetite (desire), with reason enthroned in the head, comes from Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*.

THE UTTERLY EMPTY INDECENCY OF THE CYNICS

The Cynics' doctrine of public intercourse was shameless and short-lived, and natural shame prevailed.

14.20 This is what those dog-philosophers, the Cynics, failed to see when they put forward against human modesty a view that is nothing if not doglike—that is, unclean and shameless. They held that, since what is done with one's wife is just, one should not be ashamed to do it openly, nor avoid marital intercourse in any street or square. Yet natural shame has overcome the opinion born of this error. For though it is said that Diogenes once did this, glorying in it, in the belief that his school would become more renowned if his shamelessness were fixed more conspicuously in people's memory, the Cynics afterward stopped doing it. Shame, which makes human beings blush before human beings, prevailed over error, which made human beings aspire to be like dogs. So I rather think that he, or they, who are reported to have done this merely presented the movements of intercourse to the eyes of onlookers who did not know what was happening under the cloak, rather than that such pleasure could actually be consummated under the pressure of human gaze.[57] For there the philosophers did not blush to be seen wanting to have intercourse, where lust itself would have blushed to rise. Even now we see that there are still Cynic philosophers: they are the ones who not only wear the cloak but also carry a club. Yet none of them dares to do this. If any had dared, they would be overwhelmed—I will not say by the blows of people stoning them, but certainly by the spittle of people spitting on them. Human nature, then, is beyond any doubt ashamed of this lust, and rightly so. For in the disobedience of this lust, which has subjected the genital members of the body to its own motions alone and snatched them from the power of the will, it is shown clearly enough what was paid back to man

57 The name "Cynic" comes from the Greek for "dog." Diogenes of Sinope (4th century BC) was the most famous of the Cynics.

for that first disobedience. And it was fitting that this should appear most of all in the part by which nature itself is generated —the nature that was changed for the worse by that first great sin. From its bond no one is set free unless what was committed to the common ruin when all were in one, and was punished by God's justice, is expiated in each individual by God's grace.

THE BLESSING OF MULTIPLYING HUMAN OFFSPRING, GIVEN BEFORE SIN, WHICH THE TRANSGRESSION DID NOT TAKE AWAY, THOUGH THE DISEASE OF LUST WAS ADDED TO IT

God's blessing to increase and multiply was given before sin and did not depend on lust.

14.21 Far be it from us, then, to believe that the married couple placed in paradise would have fulfilled through this lust what God said in his blessing: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." This was the lust that made them blush and cover those very members. For this lust arose after sin. It was after sin that nature, which was not shameless, lost the power to which the body had been subject in every part; then it felt this lust, noticed it, blushed at it, and covered it. But that blessing of marriage, that the married should increase and multiply and fill the earth, remained even in those who had sinned. Yet it was given before they sinned, so that it might be recognized that the procreation of children belongs to the glory of marriage, not to the punishment of sin.[58] But people now are, of course, ignorant of the happiness that existed in paradise. So they suppose that children could not have been begotten except in the way they have experienced, that is, through lust, at which we see even the honorable state of marriage blush. Some of them do not accept the divine Scriptures at all, where we read that after sin the first couple were ashamed of their nakedness and covered their shameful parts; instead they mock them in unbelief. Others accept and honor the Scriptures, yet they want the words

58 Genesis 1:28.

"Increase and multiply" to be understood not of fleshly fruitfulness. Their reason is that we read something similar said with reference to the soul: "You will multiply me in my soul in virtue." So they take what follows in Genesis, "And fill the earth and have dominion over it," and understand "earth" to mean the flesh, which the soul fills with its presence and over which it has the greatest dominion when it is multiplied in virtue. Fleshly offspring, however, they say, could not have been born then without lust, any more than they can be now. This lust arose after sin, was noticed, caused shame, and was covered. Nor, they say, would such offspring have been in paradise, but outside it, as indeed happened.[59] For it was only after they had been sent out from there that they came together to beget children and begot them.

THE BOND OF MARRIAGE, INSTITUTED AND BLESSED BY GOD FROM THE BEGINNING

Marriage between male and female was instituted and blessed by God from the beginning.

14.22 We, however, have no doubt at all that to increase and multiply and fill the earth, in accordance with God's blessing, is the gift of marriage. God established marriage from the beginning, before man's sin, by creating male and female, and this difference of sex is certainly evident in the flesh. Indeed, the blessing itself was attached to this very work of God. For when Scripture had said, "Male and female he made them," it immediately added: "And God blessed them, saying, 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over it,'" and so on.[60] All of this could, not inappropriately, also be given a spiritual interpretation. Still, "male and female" cannot be understood as referring to something similar within a single human being, namely, that in him there is one part that rules and another that is ruled. Rather, as is most evidently apparent in bodies of differ-

59 Psalm 137:3 (138:3 in most English Bibles).
60 Genesis 1:27–28.

ent sex, male and female were created so that by begetting offspring they might increase and multiply and fill the earth. To resist this is a great absurdity. The Lord was asked whether it was lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause, since Moses, because of the hardness of heart of the Israelites, had permitted a certificate of divorce to be given. He answered and said: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall be in one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no one separate." Here he was not speaking of the spirit that commands and the flesh that obeys, nor of the rational mind that rules and the irrational craving that is ruled, nor of the contemplative virtue that excels and the active virtue that is subordinate, nor of the understanding of the mind and the sense of the body. He was speaking plainly of the marriage bond, by which each sex is bound to the other.[61] It is certain, then, that male and female were established at the beginning just as we now see and know two human beings of different sex to be. They are called one either because of their union or because of the origin of the woman, who was created from the side of the man. For the apostle too uses this first example, which came first by God's own institution, to admonish each and every husband to love his wife.[62]

WHETHER CHILDREN WOULD HAVE BEEN BORN EVEN IN PARADISE IF NO ONE HAD SINNED, AND WHETHER THE REASON OF CHASTITY WOULD HAVE HAD TO FIGHT THERE AGAINST THE HEAT OF LUST

Without sin, children would have been begotten in paradise with the sexual organs obeying the will.

14.23 But whoever says that they would not have had intercourse or begotten children unless they had sinned—what is he saying

61 Matthew 19:4–6.
62 The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:25–33.

but that man's sin was necessary to make up the number of the saints? For if by not sinning they would have remained alone, since, as these people think, they could not have begotten children unless they had sinned, then certainly sin was necessary so that there could be not just two righteous human beings but many. But if that is absurd to believe, we should believe instead that, even if no one had sinned, there would have come into being a number of saints large enough to complete that most blessed city—as large as the number now gathered by the grace of God out of the multitude of sinners, for as long as the children of this age beget and are begotten.

And so, if there had been no sin, that marriage, worthy of the happiness of paradise, would have produced offspring to be loved and would not have had lust to be ashamed of. How this could have happened, there is now no example to demonstrate. Yet that is no reason why it should seem incredible that this one member too could have served the will without this lust, when so many members serve it now. We move our hands and feet when we will, to do the tasks proper to these members, without any resistance and with such ease as we see both in ourselves and in others—especially in craftsmen of every kind of bodily work, where a more agile skill has been added to train a weaker and slower nature. Do we, then, not believe that for the work of begetting children those members could have served human beings obediently at the will's command, just like the others, if there had been no lust, which was the retribution for the sin of disobedience? Did not Cicero, in his books *On the Republic*, when he was discussing the different kinds of rule and drew an analogy from human nature, say that the members of the body are ruled like children because they obey so readily, but that the vicious parts of the soul are restrained like slaves by a harsher rule? Certainly in the natural order the soul is placed above the body, and yet the soul commands the body more easily than it commands itself. Nevertheless, this lust we are now discussing has become all the more shameful because in it the soul neither commands itself effectively, so as to feel no desire at all, nor

commands the body fully, so that the will rather than lust should move the shameful members. If that were so, they would not be shameful. As it is, the soul is ashamed to be resisted by the body, which by its inferior nature is subject to it.[63] For in other passions, when the soul resists itself, it is less ashamed, because when it is overcome by itself, it is itself that overcomes itself. This may happen in a disordered and vicious way, since it is overcome by those parts which ought to be subject to reason; still, it is overcome by its own parts, and so, as has been said, by itself. For when the soul overcomes itself in an orderly way, so that its irrational impulses are subjected to the mind and to reason—provided that the mind itself is subject to God—this deserves praise and is a mark of virtue. Even so, the soul is less ashamed when it is not obeyed by its own vicious parts than when the body, which is other than the soul and beneath it, and whose nature cannot live without it, refuses to yield when the soul wills and commands.

But when the other members are held in check by the command of the will—the members without which those aroused by lust against the will cannot accomplish what they seek—chastity is preserved. The delight in sin has not been lost, but it has not been permitted. This resistance, this opposition, this quarrel between will and lust, or at least this need for lust to be added before the will is sufficient—marriage in paradise would undoubtedly not have had it, had guilty disobedience not been punished by disobedience as its penalty. Instead, all the members, these as well as the rest, would have served the will. So the organ created for this work would have sown the field of generation as the hand now sows the earth. As it is, when I wish to discuss this subject more carefully, modesty resists me and compels me to ask pardon of chaste ears with a respectful apology in advance. Then there would have been no reason for this. Instead, speech would have ranged freely, without any fear of obscenity, over everything that might come to mind when one

63 The passage survives only in fragments of Cicero's dialogue *On the Republic* (Book 3).

thinks about members of this kind. There would not even be words called obscene; whatever was said about these matters would be as decent as what we say when we speak of other parts of the body. Whoever, then, comes to these pages with an unchaste mind, let him shun the guilt, not the nature; let him condemn the deeds of his own depravity, not the words my argument makes necessary. In these words the chaste and religious reader or listener will very readily pardon me, while I refute an unbelief that argues not from faith in things it has not experienced, but from its perception of things it has. For anyone who does not shudder at the apostle when he rebukes the dreadful shameful acts of women who "exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature" will read these things without offense—especially since I am not now, as he was, mentioning and rebuking damnable obscenity. Rather, in explaining as far as I can the workings of human generation, I nevertheless, like him, avoid obscene words.[64]

THAT HUMAN BEINGS WITHOUT SIN, REMAINING IN PARADISE BY THE MERIT OF OBEDIENCE, WOULD HAVE USED THEIR SEXUAL ORGANS TO BEGET CHILDREN JUST AS THEY USE THEIR OTHER MEMBERS, AT THE COMMAND OF THE WILL

Some people control unusual bodily functions at will, so unfallen humans could have begotten children without lust.

14.24 The man, then, would have sown the offspring and the woman would have received it, with the genital members moved by the will, when it was needed and as much as was needed, not aroused by lust. For we move at our command not only those members that are jointed with solid bones, such as hands, feet, and fingers, but also those made of soft, slack sinews. When we will, we move these by shaking them, extend them by stretching, bend them by twisting, and stiffen them by contracting, as with the parts of the mouth and face that the will

64 Romans 1:26.

moves as far as it can. Even the lungs themselves, the softest of all the internal organs except the marrow, and for that reason protected in the cavern of the chest, serve the will, like the bellows of smiths or of organs, for drawing breath and letting it out and for producing or modulating the voice, whenever one blows, breathes, speaks, shouts, or sings. I pass over the fact that certain animals have it naturally implanted in them that, if they feel something that needs driving off anywhere on the covering that clothes their whole body, they can move that covering only at the spot where they feel it, and by a shiver of the skin shake off not only flies that settle on them but even spears that stick in them. Just because a human being cannot do this, was the Creator therefore unable to grant it to whatever living creatures he wished? In the same way, then, man himself could also have had the obedience even of his lower members, which he lost by his own disobedience. For it was not difficult for God to create him in such a way that even that part of his flesh which is now moved only by lust would have been moved only by his will.

For we know, too, that some people have natures very different from the rest, remarkable for their very rarity, and can do certain things with their bodies at will which others cannot do at all and scarcely believe when they hear of them. There are people who move their ears, either one at a time or both together. There are people who, without moving the head, bring all their hair, as far as it extends, down onto the forehead and draw it back again when they wish. There are people who swallow an incredible number of different objects and then, with a slight squeeze of the diaphragm, bring up whichever one they please, perfectly intact, as if from a bag. Some imitate and reproduce the voices of birds and beasts and of any other people so exactly that, unless they are seen, they cannot be told apart at all. Some, without any stench, produce at will such rhythmic sounds from their lower end that they seem to be singing even from that part. I myself have known a man who used to sweat whenever he wished. It is well known that some people can weep when they wish and shed floods of tears. But what follows

is far more incredible, and a great many of the brothers witnessed it quite recently. There was a priest named Restitutus in the parish of the church of Calama. Whenever he pleased, he would do this. People who wanted to see this marvel with their own eyes used to ask him to. At the sound of voices imitating someone in mourning, he would withdraw from his senses and lie there exactly like a dead man. He felt nothing at all when people pinched and pricked him, and sometimes he was even burned by fire held close to him without any sensation of pain, except afterward from the wound. That his body was motionless not because he was resisting but because he felt nothing was proved by the fact that, as in a dead man, no breath could be detected. Yet afterward he reported that he had heard people's voices, if they spoke rather loudly, as if from far away.[65] Even now, then, the body serves certain people marvelously in many movements and states beyond the usual limits of nature, though they lead this wretched life in corruptible flesh. Since this is so, what reason do we have not to believe that, before the sin of disobedience and the punishment of corruption, human members could have served the human will for the begetting of offspring without any lust? So man was handed over to himself, because he abandoned God by pleasing himself. Not obeying God, he could not obey even himself. Hence the more obvious misery, that man does not live as he wills. For if he lived as he wanted, he would think himself happy. But even so he would not be happy, if he lived shamefully.

THE TRUE HAPPINESS THAT TEMPORAL LIFE DOES NOT ATTAIN

No one lives as he wills unless he is happy, and true happiness must be eternal.

14.25 And yet, if we look into it more carefully, no one lives as he wills unless he is happy, and no one is happy unless he is just.

65 Calama (modern Guelma, Algeria) was a town in Numidia not far from Augustine's Hippo.

But even the just person will not live as he wills until he arrives where he cannot die, be deceived or be harmed in any way, and is certain that it will always be so. For this is what nature longs for, and it will not be fully and perfectly happy unless it gains what it longs for. But now what human being can live as he wills, when living itself is not in his power? He wants to live; he is compelled to die. How then does he live as he wills, when he does not live as long as he wills? And if he wishes to die, how can he live as he wills, when he does not will to live? Perhaps he wants to die not because he does not want to live, but in order to live better after death. Then he does not yet live as he wills. He will do so only when, by dying, he has reached what he wills. But suppose he does live as he wills, because he has forced himself and commanded himself not to want what he cannot have and to want what he can. As Terence says, "Since what you want cannot be, want what can." Is he happy, then, because he is patiently miserable? For if the happy life is not loved, it is not possessed. Further, if it is loved and possessed, it must be loved more than all other things, since whatever else is loved must be loved for its sake.[66] Further, suppose it is loved as much as it deserves to be loved, for no one is happy who does not love the happy life itself as it deserves. Then it is impossible that one who loves it in this way should not want it to be eternal. Therefore it will be a happy life only when it is eternal.

THAT WE SHOULD BELIEVE THE HAPPY PEOPLE LIVING IN PARADISE COULD HAVE FULFILLED THE DUTY OF BEGETTING CHILDREN WITHOUT SHAMEFUL DESIRE

Life in paradise was tranquil, and procreation there would have been an act of calm will.

14.26 So man lived in paradise as he willed, as long as he willed what God had commanded. He lived enjoying God, the good from whom his own goodness came. He lived without any want, and it was in his power to live so forever. Food was at hand so

66 Terence, *The Woman of Andros* 305–306.

that he would not hunger, drink so that he would not thirst, and the tree of life so that old age would not wear him away. No corruption in the body, or arising from the body, inflicted any discomfort on any of his senses. No disease from within and no blow from without was feared. There was perfect health in the flesh and complete tranquillity in the soul. Just as in paradise there was no heat or cold, so in its inhabitant no craving or fear arose to thwart his good will. There was nothing sad at all, and nothing glad in an empty way. True joy flowed unceasingly from God, toward whom love blazed "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." Between husband and wife there was a faithful partnership grounded in honorable love, a harmonious watchfulness of mind and body, and an effortless keeping of the commandment. No weariness tired man in his leisure, and no sleep overcame him against his will. Things were so easy and human beings so happy that we must never suspect that offspring could not have been begotten without the disease of lust. Rather, those members would have been moved at the bidding of the will like the others. Without the seductive goad of passion, with tranquillity of mind and body, and with no loss of her virginity, the husband would have been poured into his wife's embrace.[67] We should not refuse to believe this simply because it cannot be proved by experience. No turbulent heat would then have driven those parts of the body. Instead, a voluntary power would have employed them as needed. So the male seed could then have been introduced into the wife's womb with the integrity of the female genitals preserved, just as now, with that same integrity preserved, the flow of menstrual blood can be discharged from the womb of a virgin. For the one could be introduced by the same path by which the other can be expelled. In childbirth, it would have been not the groans of pain but the impulse of maturity that opened the woman's body. In the same way, for impregnation and conception it would have been not the craving of lust but a voluntary act that joined the

67 1 Timothy 1:5. The image of the husband "poured into his wife's embrace" echoes Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.406.

two sexes. We are now speaking of shameful things. We are conjecturing as best we can what they might have been like before they were shameful. Even so, our discussion must be restrained by the modesty that holds us back rather than helped by eloquence, of which we have too little. Even those who could have experienced what I am describing did not experience it. Sin came first, and they deserved exile from paradise before they could come together by tranquil choice in the work of begetting offspring. So now, when these things are mentioned, how can anything present itself to human senses except the experience of turbulent lust, rather than a conjecture about a calm will? This is why shame hinders the speaker, even though reason does not fail the thinker. Nevertheless, God is almighty. He is the supreme and supremely good Creator of all natures, the helper and rewarder of good wills, the one who abandons and condemns bad wills, and the one who orders both. He certainly did not lack a plan by which to fill up the fixed number of citizens of his city, predestined in his wisdom, even from the condemned human race. He distinguishes them not by merits, since the whole mass has been condemned as if in a corrupted root, but by grace. And he shows those who are set free what he bestows on them, not only from their own case but also from the case of those not set free. For each person recognizes that he has been rescued from evils by a goodness that is not owed but freely given, when he is exempted from the company of those with whom he would justly have shared a common punishment. Why, then, should God not create those whom he foreknew would sin? In them and through them he could show both what their guilt deserved and what his grace bestowed. And under such a Creator and Disposer, the perverse disorder of wrongdoers could not pervert the right order of things.

SINNERS, BOTH ANGELS AND HUMAN BEINGS, WHOSE PERVERSITY DOES NOT DISTURB PROVIDENCE

God foresaw that angels and humans would sin and permitted it, knowing how he would use their evil.

14.27 Accordingly, sinners, both angels and humans, do nothing to hinder "the great works of the Lord, sought out according to all his wills." For he who providently and omnipotently assigns to each its own knows how to make good use not only of the good but also of the evil. The evil angel had been so condemned and hardened, in recompense for his first evil will, that he would never again have a good will. God makes good use of him. Why, then, should God not permit the first man, who had been created upright, that is, with a good will, to be tempted by this angel? For man had been so constituted that, if as a good man he trusted in God's help, he would conquer the evil angel. But if he proudly abandoned God, his Creator and helper, by pleasing himself, he would be conquered. He would have good merit in an upright will helped by God, and bad merit in a perverse will that abandoned God.[68] For even trusting in God's help was something he certainly could not do without God's help. Yet this did not mean that he lacked the power to withdraw from these benefits of divine grace by pleasing himself. It is not in our power to live in this flesh without the support of food, but it is in our power not to live in it, as those do who kill themselves. In the same way, it was not in man's power, even in paradise, to live well without God's help. But it was in his power to live badly, though then his happiness would not last and a most just punishment would follow. Since, then, God was not ignorant of this future fall of man, why should he not allow him to be tempted by the malice of the envious angel? God was not at all uncertain that man would be conquered. But no less did he foreknow that this same devil was to be conquered by man's offspring, helped by his grace, to the greater glory of the saints. So it came about

68 Psalm 110:2 (111:2 in most English Bibles).

that nothing in the future was hidden from God, and yet by foreknowing he compelled no one to sin. And through the experience that followed he demonstrated to the rational creation, angelic and human, what a difference there is between each one's own presumption and his protection. For who would dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to ensure that neither angel nor man fell? But he preferred not to take this out of their power. In this way he showed both how much evil their pride could do and how much good his grace could do.

THE NATURE OF THE TWO CITIES, THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY

Two loves made two cities: love of self the earthly city, love of God the heavenly city.

14.28 Two loves have made two cities: the earthly city, love of self even to contempt of God; the heavenly city, love of God even to contempt of self. In short, the one glories in itself, the other in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from human beings, but for the other the greatest glory is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory. The other says to its God, "My glory, and the one who lifts up my head." In the one, the lust for domination dominates its princes and the nations it subjugates. In the other, people serve one another in love, the leaders by taking counsel for others, the subjects by obeying. The one loves its own strength in its powerful men. The other says to its God, "I will love you, O Lord, my strength."[69] And so in the one city, its wise men, living according to man, have pursued the goods of the body or of their own mind, or of both. Or else those who were able to know God "did not honor him as God or give thanks, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish heart was darkened. Claiming to be wise"—that is, exalting themselves in their own wisdom, under the domination of pride—"they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible

69 Psalm 3:4 (3:3 in most English Bibles); Psalm 17:2 (18:1 in most English Bibles).

man and of birds and four-footed beasts and serpents." In the worship of such idols they were either the leaders of the peoples or their followers. "And they worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." In the other city, however, there is no human wisdom except godliness, by which the true God is rightly worshiped. This godliness looks for its reward in the fellowship of the saints, not only of humans but also of angels: "that God may be all in all."[70]

70 Romans 1:21–25; 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Book XV

Cain and Abel to the flood
The two cities in history from Cain and Abel to Noah's ark.

THE TWO LINES OF THE HUMAN RACE, RUNNING FROM THE BEGINNING TOWARD DIFFERENT ENDS

The two cities' course through history begins with Cain, a citizen of this world, and Abel, a pilgrim.

15.1 On the happiness of paradise, on paradise itself, on the life the first human beings led there, and on their sin and punishment, many people have held many opinions, said many things and committed many things to writing. We too have spoken of these matters in the preceding books, following the holy Scriptures. We set out either what we read in them or what we were able to understand from them in keeping with their authority. If these questions are pursued in finer detail, however, they give rise to discussions of many kinds and many forms. These would need to be woven into more volumes than this work and the time allow. And our time is not so ample that we ought to linger over every question that might be raised by people with leisure and fastidious minds, who are readier to ask questions than able to understand the answers. Still, I think we have now done enough with the great and very difficult questions about the beginning of the world, of the soul and of the human race itself. We have divided that race into two kinds: one made up of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. In a mystical sense we also call these two cities, that is, two societies of human beings. One is predestined to reign forever with God, the other to undergo eternal punishment with

the devil. But that is their end, which must be discussed later. Enough has now been said about their origin, whether among the angels, whose number is unknown to us, or in the first two human beings. So it seems to me that I must now take up their course, from the time when those two began to have children until human beings cease to have children. For this whole stretch of time, this age in which the dying give way and the newborn take their place, is the course of these two cities we are discussing.

So Cain was born first of those two parents of the human race, and he belonged to the city of men. Abel was born after him, and he belonged to the city of God. In each individual human being we experience what the apostle said: "It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the animal, and afterward the spiritual." Hence each of us, since we spring from a condemned stock, must first be bad and carnal, from Adam. But if we advance by being reborn into Christ, we will afterward be good and spiritual. So it is with the whole human race. When these two cities first began to run their course through birth and death, the citizen of this world was born first. After him came the one who was a pilgrim in this world and belonged to the city of God: predestined by grace, chosen by grace, by grace a pilgrim below, by grace a citizen above.[1] For as far as he himself is concerned, he springs from the same lump, which is wholly condemned from its origin. But God, like a potter, made from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor. The apostle introduces this comparison not impudently but prudently. The vessel for dishonor was made first, and the other, for honor, afterward. For in each individual human being too, as I have already said, what is reprobate comes first. We must begin there, but we need not remain there. What is approved comes later. We arrive at it by making progress, and once we have reached it we remain there. Accordingly, not every bad person will become good, yet no one will be good who was not bad. But the sooner anyone is changed for the better, the more quickly he has himself called

1 1 Corinthians 15:46.

by what he has grasped, and he covers the earlier name with the later one.[2] Accordingly, Scripture says of Cain that he founded a city, while Abel, as a pilgrim, founded none. For the city of the saints is on high, although it gives birth here to citizens, and in them it lives as a pilgrim until the time of its kingdom arrives. Then it will gather together all of them, rising again in their bodies, and the promised kingdom will be given to them. There they will reign with their prince, the King of the ages, without any end of time.[3]

THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH AND THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE

Paul's allegory of Hagar and Sarah shows how the earthly Jerusalem served as an image of the heavenly city.

15.2 To be sure, a kind of shadow of this city, a prophetic image of it, served on earth at the time when it had to be shown. It served to signify the city rather than to make it present. This shadow too was called the holy city, by virtue of the image that signified, not of the truth expressed as it will be in the future. Of this image that serves, and of the free city it signifies, the apostle speaks to the Galatians in this way: "Tell me," he says, "you who want to be under the law, have you not heard the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The son of the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but the son of the free woman was born through the promise. These things are an allegory.[4] "For these are the two covenants. One, from Mount Sinai, bears children for slavery; this is Hagar. For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which is joined to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: 'Rejoice, you barren one who do not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor;

2 Romans 9:21.
3 Genesis 4:17.
4 Galatians 4:21–24.

for the children of the desolate woman are many, more than of her who has a husband.' Now we, brothers, are children of the promise, like Isaac. But just as at that time the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the spirit, so it is now also. But what does Scripture say? 'Cast out the slave woman and her son; for the son of the slave woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.'[5] Now we, brothers, are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman, with the freedom with which Christ has set us free." This way of understanding comes down to us from apostolic authority, and it shows us how we ought to read the Scriptures of the two Testaments, the Old and the New. For one part of the earthly city was made an image of the heavenly city. It signified not itself but the other, and therefore it served. It was established not for its own sake but to signify another. And since it was itself preceded by another signification, the very thing that prefigured was itself prefigured.[6] For Hagar, Sarah's slave woman, and her son were a kind of image of this image. And since the shadows were to pass away when the light came, Sarah, the free woman, spoke. She signified the free city, which that shadow also served to signify in yet another way. She said: "Cast out the slave woman and her son; for the son of the slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." The apostle puts this as "with the son of the free woman." So we find two forms in the earthly city: one displays its own presence, while the other serves by its presence to signify the heavenly city. Now nature, vitiated by sin, gives birth to the citizens of the earthly city. But grace, which frees nature from sin, gives birth to the citizens of the heavenly city. Hence the former are called vessels of wrath, and the latter vessels of mercy.[7] This was also signified in Abraham's two sons. One, Ishmael, was born according to the flesh, of the slave woman called Hagar. The other, Isaac, was born according to the promise, of

5 Galatians 4:24–30, quoting Isaiah 54:1 and Genesis 21:10.
6 Galatians 4:31–5:1.
7 Genesis 21:10; the phrases "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" come from Romans 9:22–23.

Sarah, the free woman. Both, indeed, were of Abraham's seed. But the one was begotten by ordinary custom, which displays nature, while the other was given by the promise, which signifies grace. In the one case human usage is shown; in the other, a divine gift is commended.

THE BARRENNESS OF SARAH, WHICH GOD'S GRACE MADE FRUITFUL

Isaac, born to barren Sarah by God's promise, signifies the children of grace.

15.3 Sarah, you see, was barren. Despairing of offspring, she longed at least to have through her slave woman what she saw she could not have through herself. So she gave her to her husband to bear him children, the husband by whom she had wanted to bear children but could not. In this way, too, she claimed what her husband owed her, exercising her right through another woman's womb. Ishmael, then, was born as human beings are born, from the union of the two sexes, by the usual law of nature. That is why it is said: "according to the flesh." This is not because such things are not gifts of God, or because God does not bring them about. As it is written, his craftsman wisdom "reaches mightily from one end to the other and orders all things sweetly." But where God's gift was to be signified, a gift that grace bestows on human beings though it is not owed them, a son had to be given in a way not owed to the ordinary course of nature.[8] For nature by then denies children to such a union of man and woman as Abraham and Sarah could have at that age. Besides, the wife was barren. She could not bear children even at the time when it was not her age that lacked fertility but her fertility that failed her age. A nature in that condition was not owed the fruit of descendants. This signifies that the nature of the human race, vitiated by sin and therefore justly condemned, deserved nothing of true happiness for the future. Rightly, then, does Isaac, born through the promise,

8 Wisdom 8:1.

signify the children of grace, the citizens of the free city, the partners in eternal peace. There will be no love of one's own will, a will that is in a sense private. Instead there will be an obedience of love that rejoices in a good common to all and unchangeable, and that makes one heart out of many. That is, there will be an obedience of love in perfect concord.

THE STRIFE OR THE PEACE OF THE EARTHLY CITY

The earthly city seeks peace through war; its goods are real, but lesser goods.

15.4 The earthly city, however, will not be everlasting, for once it has been condemned to the final punishment it will no longer be a city. It has its good here, and it rejoices in sharing it, with such joy as can come from things of that kind. And since this is not the kind of good that causes its lovers no distress, this city is for the most part divided against itself by lawsuits, wars and battles. It seeks victories that are either deadly or, at the very least, mortal. For whatever part of it rises up in war against another part seeks to be the conqueror of nations, though it is itself the captive of vices. If, when it has conquered, it is lifted up in greater pride, its victory is also deadly. But it may reflect on the human condition and the misfortunes common to all, and be more troubled by the adversities that may befall it than puffed up by the successes that have come its way. Then its victory is merely mortal. For it will not be able to dominate permanently those whom it has been able to subjugate by conquest. Yet it is not right to say that the things this city desires are not goods, since even this city, in its own human kind, is better. For it desires a kind of earthly peace for the sake of the lowest things, and it longs to reach this peace by waging war. If it conquers and no one is left to resist, there will be peace. The opposing sides did not have this peace while they fought one another in unhappy want over things they could not both possess at once. This is the peace that toilsome wars seek. This is the peace won by what is thought a glorious victory. And when those who

fought for the juster cause are victorious, who would doubt that the victory deserves congratulation and that a desirable peace has come? These things are goods, and without doubt they are gifts of God. But the better things belong to the city on high, where victory will be secure in eternal and supreme peace. If these better things are neglected, and these lesser goods are so desired that they are believed to be the only goods, or are loved more than the things believed to be better, then misery must follow, and the misery already present must increase.

THE FIRST FOUNDER OF THE EARTHLY CITY, A FRATRICIDE, WHOSE IMPIETY THE FOUNDER OF THE CITY OF ROME MATCHED BY KILLING HIS BROTHER

Cain killed Abel and Romulus killed Remus: the earthly city is founded in fratricide and divided against itself.

15.5 So the first founder of the earthly city was a fratricide. Overcome by envy, he killed his own brother, a citizen of the eternal city on pilgrimage in this earth. It is no wonder, then, that the same pattern returned so long afterward. When that city was founded which was to be the capital of this earthly city we are discussing, and to reign over so many nations, a kind of image of its own kind answered to this first example, to what the Greeks call ἀρχετύπῳ [the archetype]. For there too, as one of their poets put it when recalling that very crime, "the first walls were soaked with a brother's blood." That is how Rome was founded: Roman history attests that Remus was killed by his brother Romulus. The difference is that these two were both citizens of the earthly city. Both sought glory from establishing the Roman commonwealth, but both could not have as much glory as one would have alone.[9] For one who wanted to glory in domination would surely have less dominion if a living partner diminished his power. So, that one man might have the whole dominion, his partner was removed. What would have been

9 The poet is Lucan (*Pharsalia* 1.95). Romulus and Remus were the legendary twin founders of Rome.

smaller and better through innocence grew into something worse through crime. The brothers Cain and Abel, however, did not both share a similar craving for earthly things. Nor did the one who killed the other envy him because his own dominion would be narrower if both ruled, for Abel was not seeking dominion in the city his brother was founding. It was rather that diabolical envy with which the bad envy the good, for no other reason than that the ones are good and the others bad. For the possession of goodness is in no way diminished when a partner joins in or remains. Indeed, goodness is a possession that the undivided love of partners holds all the more widely the more harmoniously they hold it. In short, whoever is unwilling to share this possession will not have it. And he will find it all the larger the more he is able to love the one who shares it. What arose between Remus and Romulus, then, shows how the earthly city is divided against itself. What arose between Cain and Abel displayed the enmity between the two cities themselves, the city of God and the city of men. So the bad fight with the bad, and the bad also fight with the good. But the good cannot fight with the good, if they are perfect. Those who are making progress but are not yet perfect can fight in this sense: each good person fights against another in the same respect in which he also fights against himself. For even within a single human being "the flesh desires against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."[10] So the spiritual desire of one person can fight against the carnal desire of another, or the carnal desire of one against the spiritual desire of another, just as the good and the bad fight each other. Or indeed the carnal desires of two good people, who are of course not yet perfect, can fight each other, just as the bad fight the bad. This goes on until the health of those who are being healed is brought to final victory.

10 Galatians 5:17.

THE WEAKNESSES THAT EVEN CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF GOD SUFFER AS A PUNISHMENT OF SIN DURING THE PILGRIMAGE OF THIS LIFE, AND FROM WHICH THEY ARE HEALED BY GOD'S CARE

Citizens of God's city are healed of their weaknesses by mutual forgiveness and by God's inward grace.

15.6 For this weakness is the disobedience we discussed in the fourteenth book. It is the punishment of the first disobedience, and therefore it is not nature but a flaw. That is why the good who are making progress and living by faith during this pilgrimage are told: "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ." Again, elsewhere it is said: "Rebuke the restless, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil." Again, in another place: "If someone has been caught in some fault, you who are spiritual should instruct such a person in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted." And elsewhere: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." And in the Gospel: "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him between you and him alone." Again, the apostle speaks of sins where care must be taken not to give offense to many: "Rebuke those who sin in front of everyone, so that the rest may stand in fear."[11] For this reason many precepts are given about granting pardon to one another, and great care is taken over keeping the peace, without which no one will be able to see God. Here belongs that terrifying passage where the servant is ordered to pay back the debt of ten thousand talents that had been forgiven him. This was because he did not forgive his fellow servant a debt of a hundred denarii. Having set out this parable, the Lord Jesus added: "So also will your heavenly Father do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts." In this way the citizens of the city of God are healed while they live as pil-

11 Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 18:15; 1 Timothy 5:20.

grims on this earth and sigh for the peace of their homeland above. But the Holy Spirit works within, so that the medicine applied from without may have some effect.[12] Otherwise, suppose God himself, using a creature subject to him, were to address human senses in some human form. These might be the bodily senses, or those very similar senses we have in dreams. If he did not also rule and move the mind by inward grace, all preaching of the truth would be of no benefit to a person. But God does this, distinguishing vessels of wrath from vessels of mercy. He does so by a dispensation that he himself knows, deeply hidden, yet just. For he helps us in wonderful and hidden ways. Sin dwells in our members, though it is now rather the punishment of sin. As the apostle commands, it must not reign in our mortal body so that we obey its desires, and we must not offer our members to it as weapons of iniquity. When this is so, a person is turned toward a mind that, under God's rule, does not consent to sin for evil ends. He will now have that mind ruling more calmly. Afterward, when health has been made perfect and immortality received, he will reign without any sin in eternal peace.[13]

THE CAUSE OF CAIN'S CRIME AND HIS OBSTINACY IN IT, FROM WHICH NOT EVEN GOD'S WORD CALLED HIM BACK ONCE HE HAD CONCEIVED IT

God warned Cain to master his sin, but envy drove him to murder his brother.

15.7 God spoke to Cain in the way he used to speak with the first human beings: through a creature subject to him, in a fitting form, as if he were their companion. We have explained this as well as we could. But what good did it do Cain? Did he not carry out the crime he had conceived, the murder of his brother, even after the word of divine warning? God had distinguished between the sacrifices of the two, regarding the one's and dis-

12 Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 18:23–35.
13 Romans 6:12–13; compare Romans 7:17.

regarding the other's. There is no doubt that this could have been recognized by some visible sign bearing witness to it. God had done this because Cain's works were evil and his brother's good. Then Cain was very sad, and his face fell. For so it is written: "And the Lord said to Cain: 'Why have you become sad, and why has your face fallen? If you offer rightly but do not divide rightly, have you not sinned? Be still; for its turning is toward you, and you shall rule over it.'"[14] This admonition, or warning, was delivered by God to Cain. In it the words "If you offer rightly but do not divide rightly, have you not sinned?" do not make clear why or on what basis they were said. Their obscurity has therefore given birth to many interpretations, as each commentator on the divine Scriptures tries to explain them according to the rule of faith. A sacrifice is rightly offered, of course, when it is offered to the true God, the only one to whom sacrifice must be made. But it is not rightly divided when there is no right discernment of the places, or the times, or the things offered, or the one who offers and the one to whom the offering is made, or those among whom what has been offered is distributed to be eaten. Here, that is, we take "division" to mean "discernment." So it is not rightly divided when something is offered where it should not be, or when something is offered there that ought to be offered elsewhere. The same is true when it is offered when it should not be, or when something is offered then that ought to be offered at another time. It is also true when something is offered that should never have been offered at all, anywhere or at any time. Or a person keeps for himself choicer things of the same kind than those he offers to God. Or a profane person, or anyone for whom it is not lawful, comes to share in what has been offered. But in which of these ways Cain displeased God cannot easily be discovered. The apostle John, however, speaking of these brothers, says: "Not like Cain, who was of the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his works were evil, but his brother's righteous." From this we are

14 Genesis 4:6–7, in the form of the Greek Septuagint, which Augustine's Latin Bible followed here.

given to understand why God did not look with favor on Cain's gift. By this very act he was dividing badly, giving God something of his own but keeping himself for himself. All people do this who follow not God's will but their own. They live not with an upright heart but with a perverse one, and yet they offer God a gift, by which they think he can be bought. They want him to help them, not to heal their depraved cravings, but to satisfy them. And this is characteristic of the earthly city: to worship God or gods with whose help it may reign in victories and earthly peace, not out of the love that seeks to serve others, but out of the craving for domination.[15] The good use the world in order to enjoy God. The wicked, on the contrary, want to use God in order to enjoy the world. These are at least people who already believe that he exists or that he cares about human affairs, for those who do not even believe this are much worse. So when Cain learned that God had looked with favor on his brother's sacrifice and not on his own, he certainly ought to have changed and imitated his good brother, not swelled with pride and envied him. But he was sad, and his face fell. This is the sin God rebukes most of all: sadness at another's goodness, and that the goodness of a brother. It was in rebuking this that he asked, "Why are you sad, and why has your face fallen?" For God saw that he envied his brother, and this is what he rebuked.[16] Human beings cannot see into another's heart. To them it could be doubtful and wholly uncertain what that sadness grieved over. It might have been his own wickedness, by which, as he had learned, he displeased God. Or it might have been his brother's goodness, which pleased God when he looked with favor on his sacrifice. But God gave the reason why he refused to accept Cain's offering, so that Cain might be displeased with himself, as he deserved, rather than with his brother, who did not deserve it. In doing so God showed something more. Cain was unrighteous in not dividing rightly, that is,

15 1 John 3:12.

16 Augustine distinguishes "using" (*uti*) something as a means from "enjoying" (*frui*) something for its own sake, which is rightly done only with God.

in not living rightly, and he was unworthy to have his offering approved. But he was far more unrighteous in hating his righteous brother without cause.

RULING OVER SIN

"You shall rule over it" means Cain should master his sin, or the envy of the flesh.

Yet God did not send him away without a command that was holy, just, and good. "Be still," he said; "for its turning is toward you, and you shall rule over it." Rule over his brother? Far from it. Over what, then, if not over sin? For God had said, "You have sinned," and then he added, "Be still; for its turning is toward you, and you shall rule over it." This can indeed be understood to mean that the turning of sin must be toward the man himself. He must know that he should attribute his sinning to no one but himself. This is the healing medicine of repentance and a fitting plea for pardon. On this reading, where it says, "For its turning is toward you," we should supply not "will be" but "let it be." The words are then those of one who commands, not of one who foretells. For each person will rule over sin only if he does not set it above himself by defending it, but subjects it to himself by repenting. Otherwise, if he acts as its advocate when it befalls him, he will also be its slave, and it will be his master. But "sin" may be understood as carnal desire itself. The apostle says of it, "The flesh desires against the spirit," and among the fruits of this flesh he also mentions envy. It was certainly envy that goaded and inflamed Cain to destroy his brother. On this reading it is right to supply "will be," that is: "For its turning will be toward you, and you shall rule over it." The apostle calls that carnal part itself "sin" when he says, "It is not I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." (Even the philosophers call this part of the soul vicious. It ought not to drag the mind along with it. Instead the mind ought to command it and use reason to restrain it from unlawful acts.) Suppose, then, that this part has been stirred to commit some wrong. If one keeps still and obeys the apostle

when he says, "Do not present your members to sin as weapons of iniquity," it turns back toward the mind, tamed and conquered, so that reason rules over it as its subject.[17] This is what God commanded the man who was inflamed by the torches of envy against his brother and who wanted to be rid of the one he ought to have imitated. "Be still," he says. Keep your hands from crime. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires, and do not present your members to sin as weapons of iniquity. "For its turning is toward you," as long as it is not encouraged by slackened reins but held in check by your keeping still. "And you shall rule over it." When it is not allowed to act outwardly, it may then grow used to not being stirred even inwardly, under the power of a mind that rules it and wishes it well. Something similar is said in the same divine book about the woman too. After the sin, God questioned and judged them, and they received their sentences of condemnation: the devil in the serpent, and she and her husband in their own persons. For when he had said to her, "I will greatly multiply your sorrows and your groaning, and in sorrows you shall bear children," he then added, "And your turning shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you." What was said to Cain about sin, or about the vicious desire of the flesh, is said in this passage about the sinful woman. Here we must understand that the husband, in ruling his wife, should be like the mind ruling the flesh. That is why the apostle says, "He who loves his wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh." These things, then, are to be healed as our own, not condemned as alien. But Cain received God's command as a transgressor. As the vice of envy grew strong in him, he lay in wait for his brother and killed him. Such was the founder of the earthly city.[18] Cain also signified the Jews, by whom Christ was killed. Christ is the shepherd of sheep who are human beings, and he was prefigured by Abel, the shepherd of sheep that are

17 Galatians 5:17 (for the "fruits," or works, of the flesh, Galatians 5:19–21); Romans 7:17; Romans 6:13.
18 Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:28–29.

animals. How Cain signified them I refrain from saying now, since this belongs to prophetic allegory. I recall, too, that I have said something on this point against Faustus the Manichaean.[19]

WHY CAIN FOUNDED A CITY AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN RACE

Cain could found a city because the long-lived early generations multiplied greatly.

15.8 But now I think I must defend the historical account, lest Scripture be thought incredible. It says that a city was built by one man at a time when, after brother had killed brother, there seem to have been no more than four men on earth, or rather three. These were the first man, the father of all; Cain himself; and Cain's son Enoch, after whom the city itself was named. But those who are troubled by this fail to consider that the writer of this sacred history did not need to name everyone who could have existed then. He needed to name only those whom the plan of the work he had undertaken required. The Holy Spirit was acting through that writer. His purpose was to trace the succession of particular generations descended from one man until he reached Abraham, and then to move from Abraham's seed to the people of God. In this people, set apart from the other nations, everything was to be prefigured and foretold that was foreseen in the Spirit as coming to pass. This concerned the city whose kingdom will be eternal, and its king, who is also its founder, Christ. Yet he was not to be silent about the other society of human beings, which we call the earthly city. He was to say as much about it as was needed, so that the city of God might shine out more clearly by comparison even with its adversary. Divine Scripture also records the number of years those men lived. Where it does so, it ends by saying of the man it has been speaking about: "And he begot sons and daughters, and all the days of

19 Augustine's *Against Faustus the Manichaean* (c. AD 400) answers Faustus of Milevis, a Manichaean bishop; Book 12 treats Cain and Abel as figures of the Jews and Christ.

So-and-so that he lived were so many years, and he died." It does not name those sons and daughters. But should we therefore fail to understand that very many people could have been born over the many years that men then lived, in the first age of this world? Communities of these people could have founded even a great many cities. These things were written under God's inspiration, and it was his concern from the beginning to arrange and distinguish these two societies by their different generations. One set of generations belonged to men, that is, to those living according to man. Another, kept separate, belonged to the sons of God, that is, to men living according to God. Both were to be traced down to the flood, where the narrative tells of both the separation and the mingling of the two societies. There is separation because the generations of each are recorded separately: one line belongs to Cain the fratricide, the other to the man called Seth. (Seth too had been born of Adam, in place of the one his brother killed.) There is mingling because, as the good declined toward the worse, all became so corrupt that they were destroyed by the flood. The only exceptions were one righteous man, named Noah, together with his wife, his three sons, and as many daughters-in-law. These eight people were found worthy to escape through the ark from the destruction of all mortals.

It is written: "And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he was building a city in the name of his son Enoch." But it does not follow that we must believe this was his first son. We should not infer this from the statement that he "knew" his wife, as if he had then united with her in intercourse for the first time. For this was said of Adam himself, the father of all, not only when Cain was conceived, who seems to have been his firstborn. Later the same Scripture also says, "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and called his name Seth." From this we understand that Scripture regularly speaks this way. It does not do so every time we read in it that human beings were conceived. Still, it does not speak this way only when the two sexes unite for the first time.[20] Nor does the

20 Genesis 4:17; Genesis 4:25.

fact that the city was named after Enoch prove that we should consider him his father's firstborn. It is not unreasonable to think that his father, though he had other sons too, loved him more than the rest for some reason. After all, Judah was not the firstborn either, and yet Judea and the Jews took their name from him. And even if this son was the first born to the founder of that city, we should not suppose that his father gave his name to the city at the time he was born. One man could not establish a city then, since a city is nothing other than a multitude of human beings bound together by some bond of fellowship. But once that man's household had grown so numerous that it was already the size of a people, he could certainly have founded a city and given it the name of his firstborn. For the lives of those men were very long. Of those recorded there whose years are given, the one who lived the shortest time before the flood still reached seven hundred and fifty-three. Many even passed nine hundred years, though no one reached a thousand. Who, then, would doubt that within one man's lifetime the human race could have multiplied enough to establish not one city but a great many? This is very easy to infer from another fact. From one man, Abraham, the Hebrew nation grew so numerous in not much more than four hundred years that at the exodus of this people from Egypt there are said to have been six hundred thousand men of fighting age. And that leaves aside the nation of the Idumeans, which does not belong to the people of Israel and was fathered by Israel's brother Esau, Abraham's grandson. It also leaves aside other nations born of the seed of Abraham himself, though not through his wife Sarah.[21]

21 The shortest life was that of Lamech, Noah's father, 753 years in the Greek text Augustine used (Genesis 5:31). The Idumeans are the Edomites, traditionally descended from Esau.

THE LONG LIFE OF HUMAN BEINGS BEFORE THE FLOOD, AND THE GREATER SIZE OF HUMAN BODIES

Early humans lived far longer and had larger bodies, as ancient bones and writers attest.

15.9 So no sensible judge of things would doubt that Cain could have founded a city, and even a large one, when human life stretched over so long a time. Perhaps, though, some unbeliever will raise an objection to us from the very number of years our authoritative writings say people lived then, and will deny that this should be believed. In the same way, after all, such people refuse to believe that human bodies were then far larger than they are now. Their most celebrated poet, Virgil, writes of a huge stone set as a boundary marker between fields, which a brave man of those times seized in battle, ran with, whirled around, and hurled. "Scarcely," he says, "could twice six chosen men lift it onto their necks, men with such bodies as the earth produces now." He means that the earth used to produce larger bodies then.[22] How much larger, then, must bodies have been in the times when the world was still young, before that famous and widely reported flood! But as for the size of bodies, unbelievers are usually refuted by tombs laid bare by age, by the force of rivers, or by various accidents. Bones of the dead of incredible size have come to light in them or have fallen out of them. I myself saw, and not alone but with several others, a human molar on the shore at Utica. It was so enormous that, had it been cut up into pieces the size of our teeth, we thought it could have made a hundred. But I would think it belonged to some giant. For the bodies of everyone then were much larger than ours, and besides this the giants far surpassed the rest. In the same way, in later times and in our own, there have almost always been bodies that greatly exceeded the measure of others, though such bodies have been rare.[23] Pliny Secundus, a most learned

22 Virgil, *Aeneid* 12.899–900, where Turnus hurls a boundary stone at Aeneas.
23 Utica was an ancient city on the North African coast, northwest of Carthage.

man, testifies that the further the course of the ages runs on, the smaller the bodies nature produces. He mentions that Homer too often lamented this in his poetry. Pliny does not mock these laments as poetic fictions. As a writer on the wonders of nature, he accepts them as historical fact. But, as I said, bones that are found often reveal the size of ancient bodies even to much later ages, because bones last a long time. The great number of years that each person lived in those times, however, cannot now be put to the test by any such evidence. Yet that is no reason to withhold belief from this sacred history. The more surely we see its predictions fulfilled, the more shameless it would be for us to disbelieve its narratives. The same Pliny also says that there is still a nation where people live two hundred years. Places unknown to us are believed to have, even today, lifespans we have never experienced. Why, then, should we not believe that past times had them too?[24] Or is it credible that what is not here exists somewhere, and incredible that what does not exist now existed at some time?

THE DISCREPANCY IN THE NUMBERS OF YEARS BETWEEN THE HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS AND OURS

The Hebrew text and the Septuagint differ on the patriarchs' ages, though their totals mostly agree.

15.10 So although there seems to be some discrepancy between the Hebrew manuscripts and ours over the actual number of years, though how this came about I do not know, it is not so great that they disagree about those men having lived so long. For the first man himself, Adam, is found in our manuscripts to have lived two hundred and thirty years before he fathered the son who was called Seth, while the Hebrew gives one hundred and thirty. After he fathered him, however, we read in ours that he lived seven hundred years, but in theirs eight hundred. And

24 Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, AD 23/24–79), author of the *Natural History*; see *Natural History* 7.16.73–74 on shrinking bodies and 7.48.154 on the two-hundred-year lifespan.

so in both the grand total agrees. Then, through the following generations, the father is found in the Hebrew to have lived a hundred years less before the son who is mentioned as being born was fathered. After that same son was fathered, however, a hundred fewer are found in ours than in the Hebrew. And so, from either side, the total number comes out the same. In the sixth generation, however, the two sets of manuscripts nowhere differ. In the seventh, where Enoch was born, who is said not to have died but to have been taken up because he pleased God, there is the same discrepancy as in the five earlier ones: a hundred years before he fathered the son mentioned there. There is also a similar agreement in the total. For according to both sets of manuscripts he lived three hundred and sixty-five years before he was taken up. The eighth generation does show some difference, but a smaller one, and unlike the others. According to the Hebrew, Methuselah, whom Enoch fathered, lived not a hundred years less but twenty years more before fathering the one who follows him in that line. In ours these twenty are found added back after he fathered him, and in both the total of the whole number comes out the same. Only in the ninth generation, that is, in the years of Lamech, son of Methuselah and father of Noah, does the grand total differ, and not by much. For he is found to have lived twenty-four years more in the Hebrew than in our manuscripts. Before fathering the son who was called Noah, he has six fewer in the Hebrew than in ours. After fathering him, however, he has thirty more in the Hebrew than in ours. Subtract those six, and twenty-four remain, as has been said.

THE YEARS OF METHUSELAH, WHOSE AGE SEEMS TO EXTEND FOURTEEN YEARS BEYOND THE FLOOD

By the Septuagint's figures Methuselah outlived the flood by fourteen years, which Augustine examines.

15.11 Out of this discrepancy between the Hebrew manuscripts and ours arises that very famous problem, in which Methuselah is calculated to have lived fourteen years after the flood. Yet

Scripture records that of all who were then on earth only eight people escaped destruction by the flood in the ark, and Methuselah was not among them. For according to our manuscripts Methuselah lived one hundred and sixty-seven years before he fathered the son he called Lamech. Then Lamech himself lived one hundred and eighty-eight years before Noah was born of him. Together these make three hundred and fifty-five. To these are added Noah's six hundred, since the flood came in that year of his life. That makes nine hundred and fifty-five years from Methuselah's birth to the year of the flood. For all the years of Methuselah's life are reckoned at nine hundred and sixty-nine. Having lived one hundred and sixty-seven years and fathered the son called Lamech, he lived eight hundred and two years after fathering him, and all these together, as we said, make nine hundred and sixty-nine. So when the nine hundred and fifty-five from Methuselah's birth to the flood are subtracted, fourteen remain, during which he is believed to have lived after the flood. For this reason some suppose that for a while he was with his father, who had been taken up, and that he lived there until the flood had passed. He was not on earth, they say, for all flesh that nature does not allow to live in water is known to have been destroyed there. They do not wish to undermine the trustworthiness of the manuscripts which the Church has received as carrying the more widely recognized authority. They believe instead that it is the manuscripts of the Jews, rather than ours, that do not contain the truth. For they do not grant that an error of the translators is more likely to have occurred here than a falsehood in the language from which Scripture itself was translated into ours by way of Greek. Instead they say it is not credible that the seventy translators could have erred, since they translated at one and the same time and with one mind. Nor is it credible, they say, that these translators would have wished to lie where nothing was at stake for them. The Jews, on the other hand, were envious of us because the Law and the Prophets passed to us through translation, and so they altered certain things in their own manuscripts in order to diminish the author-

ity of ours. Let each person take this opinion, or suspicion, as he sees fit. It is certain, however, that Methuselah did not live after the flood but died in that same year, if what is found about the number of years in the Hebrew manuscripts is true.[25] What I think about those seventy translators must be set out more carefully in its proper place, when, with the Lord's help, we come to that period itself, to be recounted as far as the needs of this work require. For the present question it is enough that, according to both sets of manuscripts, the people of that age had lives so long that the human race could multiply even to the point of founding a city. It could do so within the lifetime of one man, the first son born of the two parents who were then the only ones on earth.

THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE IN THE EARLIEST TIMES LIVED AS LONG AS SCRIPTURE SAYS

Some claim ancient years were a tenth as long as ours; Augustine shows this leads to absurdities.

15.12 Nor should we by any means listen to those who think that years were reckoned differently in those times. They take these years to have been so short that one of our years is believed to have contained ten of them. "So," they say, "when anyone hears or reads that someone lived nine hundred years, he ought to understand ninety. For ten of those years are one of ours, and ten of ours were a hundred of theirs." So, as they suppose, Adam was twenty-three years old when he fathered Seth. Seth himself was twenty years and six months old when Enosh was born of him, which Scripture calls two hundred and five years. For, as those whose opinion we are setting out conjecture, people then divided one year of the kind we have now into ten parts and called these parts years. Each of these parts contains the square

25 The seventy translators produced the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures made at Alexandria in the 3rd century BC, from which the Old Latin Bible was translated.

of six, because God completed his works in six days so as to rest on the seventh (a subject I discussed as well as I could in Book Eleven). Six times six, the number that makes the square of six, is thirty-six days. Multiplied by ten, these come to three hundred and sixty days, that is, twelve lunar months. There remain the five days that complete the solar year, and the quarter of a day. Taken four times, that quarter adds one day in the year they call bissextile. On account of these, the ancients later added days so that the count of years would come out right, and the Romans called these intercalary days. Likewise Enosh, whom Seth fathered, was nineteen years old when his son Kenan was born of him, years which Scripture calls one hundred and ninety.[26] The same holds through all the generations before the flood in which people's ages are recorded. Virtually no one is found in our manuscripts who fathered a son when he was a hundred years old or less, or even a hundred and twenty, or not much more. Those who fathered children at the youngest age are reported to have been a hundred and sixty and something over. This is because, they say, no man of ten years can father children, and that number was what those people called a hundred years. At sixteen, however, puberty is mature and already fit for begetting offspring, and those times called that age a hundred and sixty years. To make it seem credible that the year was then reckoned differently, they add what is found in many historians: that the Egyptians had a year of four months, the Acarnanians one of six months, and the Lavinians one of thirteen months.[27] Pliny Secundus recorded what had been reported in writing: that a certain man lived a hundred and fifty-two years, and a woman ten years more; that others had lives of two hundred years, others of three hundred; that some reached five hundred, others six hundred, and some even eight hundred. He judged that all this arose from ignorance of how time was

26 The bissextile year is the Roman leap year, so called because the sixth day before the Kalends of March was counted twice.

27 The Acarnanians lived in western Greece; the Lavinians were the people of Lavinium, an ancient town in Latium.

reckoned. "For some," he says, "counted one year in summer and another in winter. Others counted by the four seasons, like the Arcadians," he says, "whose years were three months long." He added that the Egyptians, whose short years we said above were four months long, sometimes fixed the limit of a year by the end of the moon's cycle. "And so among them," he says, "people are reported to have lived even a thousand years each."[28]

Certain people have used these arguments as if they were plausible. They do not seek to destroy the trustworthiness of this sacred history but are trying to support it, so that it may not seem incredible that the ancients are reported to have lived so many years. They have persuaded themselves, and do not think it shameless to persuade others, that so small a span of time was then called a year that ten of those years make one of ours, and ten of ours a hundred of theirs. That this is utterly false is shown by the clearest proof. Before I present it, I think I should not pass over in silence what might be a more credible conjecture. We could certainly refute and disprove this claim from the Hebrew manuscripts, in which Adam is found to have been not two hundred and thirty but one hundred and thirty years old when he fathered his third son. If these years are thirteen of ours, then without doubt he was eleven years old, or not much more, when he fathered his first son. Who can beget a child at that age by the ordinary law of nature so familiar to us? But let us leave Adam aside, since perhaps he could do so even from the moment he was created; for it is not credible that he was made as small as our infants are. His son Seth was not two hundred and five, as we read, but one hundred and five when he fathered Enosh. So, according to these people, he was not yet eleven years old. What shall I say of Enosh's son Kenan? In our text he is found to have been one hundred and seventy when he fathered Mahalalel, but in the Hebrew we read that he was seventy. What man fathers a child at the age of seven, if what were then called seventy years were really seven?

28 *Natural History* 7.48.153–155.

WHETHER IN RECKONING YEARS WE SHOULD FOLLOW THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEBREW TEXT RATHER THAN THAT OF THE SEVENTY TRANSLATORS

The discrepancies probably go back to one copyist, and the Hebrew should be trusted for the numbers.

15.13 But when I say this, the reply will at once be that this is that lie of the Jews which has been dealt with sufficiently above. For the seventy translators, men deservedly celebrated, could not have lied. So I ask which of two things is more credible. Is it that the Jewish nation, spread so far and wide, could have conspired with one design to write down this lie, and so, in begrudging others authority, deprived themselves of the truth? Or is it that seventy men begrudged the truth itself to foreign nations and did this by common design? These men were themselves Jews too, and were gathered in one place because the Egyptian king Ptolemy had summoned them for this work. Who does not see which is more readily and easily believed?[29] But far be it from any sensible person to believe either of these things. He should not believe that the Jews, however perverse and malicious, could have done so much in so many manuscripts spread so far and wide. Nor should he believe that those seventy memorable men agreed on a single common design to begrudge the truth to the nations. It would be more credible, then, for someone to say that something of this sort could have happened when these texts first began to be copied from Ptolemy's library. It could have happened in a single manuscript, but in the one first copied from there, from which it then spread more widely; and there a copyist's error could also have occurred. It is not absurd to suspect this in the problem about Methuselah's life, and in that other case where the total does not agree, with twenty-four years too many. But there are other cases where the same pattern of error continues. Before the birth of the son who is

29 Ptolemy II Philadelphus, king of Egypt (285–246 BC), who according to tradition commissioned the Septuagint for the library at Alexandria.

entered in the line, there are a hundred years too many in one text and a hundred too few in the other. After his birth there are too many where there were too few, and too few where there were too many, so that the total agrees. This is found in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and seventh generations. In these cases the error itself seems to have a kind of consistency, if one may say so, and smells not of chance but of design.

So consider that difference in the numbers, which stand one way in the Greek and Latin manuscripts and another way in the Hebrew. In the Hebrew there is no such consistent pattern of a hundred years first added and later subtracted through so many generations. That difference should be attributed neither to the malice of the Jews nor to the diligence or wisdom of the seventy translators. It should be attributed to the error of the copyist who first received the manuscript from the library of the king mentioned above to copy. For even now, where numbers do not direct attention to anything that can easily be understood or that seems useful to learn, they are carelessly copied and still more carelessly corrected. Who would think he needs to learn how many thousands of men each of the tribes of Israel could have had? No one thinks it is of any use. And how few people there are to whom the depth of its usefulness is apparent! Here, however, the case is different. Through so many linked generations a hundred years are present in one text and missing in the other. After the birth of the son who was to be mentioned, they are missing where they had been present and present where they had been missing, so that the total agrees. Clearly the one who did this wanted to persuade people that the ancients had lived a great many years because they called very short periods years. He tried to show this from the maturity of puberty at which one becomes fit to beget children. So he thought that ten of our years should be suggested to the incredulous under those hundred years, so that they would not refuse to believe that people had lived so long. He therefore added a hundred where he did not find an age fit for begetting children, and subtracted the same hundred after the children were born, so that the total

would agree. In this way he wanted to make it credible that the ages for begetting offspring were suitable, while still not cheating the individuals of their full number of years. He did not do this in the sixth generation, and that very fact more strongly persuades us that he did it when the circumstance we describe required it, since he did not do it where it did not. For in that generation he found in the Hebrew that Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years before fathering Enoch. By that reckoning of short years, this makes sixteen years and a little less than two months, an age already fit for begetting. So there was no need to add a hundred short years to make twenty-six of ours. Nor was there any need to subtract after Enoch's birth what he had not added before it. That is how it came about that here there was no difference between the two sets of manuscripts.

But again it is puzzling why, in the eighth generation, before Lamech was born of Methuselah, the Hebrew reads one hundred and eighty-two years while twenty fewer are found in our manuscripts, where a hundred are usually added instead. After Lamech's birth these twenty are restored to complete the total, which does not differ between the two sets of manuscripts. For if he wanted one hundred and seventy years to be understood as seventeen, to account for mature puberty, then he ought to have subtracted nothing, just as he ought to have added nothing. He had found an age fit for begetting children, and it was for the lack of that age, in the other cases, that he added those hundred years. We would rightly suppose that the change of twenty years could have arisen by accident, were it not that he took care to restore them later, having subtracted them earlier, so that the total would agree in full. Or should we perhaps think that this was done more cunningly, to conceal the design by which a hundred years are usually first added and then subtracted? On this view, something of the same sort was done even where it had not been necessary. It was done not with a hundred years, admittedly, but with some small number first subtracted and later given back. However this is taken, whether it is believed to have been done this way or not, or finally whether it is so or not,

I would have no doubt at all about one thing. When something differs between the two sets of manuscripts, both cannot be true as a record of what happened. In that case it is right to trust the language from which translators made the translation into another. For in some manuscripts too, three Greek, one Latin and one Syriac, all agreeing with one another, Methuselah has been found to have died six years before the flood.

THAT YEARS WERE OF THE SAME LENGTH IN EARLIER AGES AS NOW

The dates of Noah's flood prove that days, months and years then were as long as ours.

15.14 Now let us see how it can be clearly shown that the years counted in the very long lives of those men were not so short that ten of them made one of ours. They were as long as the years we have now, which are, of course, the years that the circuit of the sun completes. Scripture says, after all, that the flood took place in the six hundredth year of Noah's life. Why, then, do we read there, "And the water of the flood came upon the earth in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month," if that year was a tiny one, of the kind ten of which make one of ours, and had thirty-six days? Such a little year, if it received this name by ancient usage, either has no months, or its month is three days long, so that it can have twelve months.[30] How, then, could it be said here, "in the six hundredth year, in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month," unless the months then were just like the months now? How else could the flood be said to have begun on the twenty-seventh day of the second month? Then later, at the end of the flood, we read: "And the ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the water went on decreasing until the eleventh month; and in the eleventh

30 Genesis 7:11. Augustine's text, following the Septuagint, reads "twenty-seventh" where the Hebrew has "seventeenth."

month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared." If, then, the months were like ours, the years too were certainly like the years we have now. For three-day months could not have had twenty-seven days.[31] Or suppose that a thirtieth part of three days was then called a day, so that everything is scaled down in proportion. In that case that enormous flood, which is recorded as lasting forty days and nights, did not last even four whole days of ours. Who could put up with such absurd nonsense? So let this error be removed. By false conjecture it tries to build up the credibility of our Scriptures in one place, only to demolish it in another. Quite simply, the day was as long then as it is now, bounded by twenty-four hours in its course through day and night. The month was as long as it is now, enclosed by the beginning and end of the moon. The year was as long as it is now, completed by twelve lunar months with five and a quarter days added to match the course of the sun. It was in the second month of such a year, the six hundredth of Noah's life, and on the twenty-seventh day of that month, that the flood began. During it, we are told, huge rains continued for forty days. Those days did not have just two hours and a little more each, but twenty-four, running through day and night. And so those ancients lived years just as long, up to more than nine hundred of them, as the years in which Abraham later lived a hundred and seventy, and after him his son Isaac a hundred and eighty, and his son Jacob nearly a hundred and fifty. They were as long as the years in which, after some interval of time, Moses lived a hundred and twenty, and as long as those in which people even now live seventy or eighty or not much more, of whom it is said, "And beyond that, their lot is toil and pain."[32]

As for the discrepancy in the numbers found between the Hebrew manuscripts and ours, it does not disagree about this longevity of the ancients. And if it contains anything so different that both cannot be true, the true account of events must be

31 Genesis 8:4–5.
32 Psalm 89:10 (90:10 in most English Bibles).

sought from the language from which our text was translated. Anyone anywhere in the world who wants this resource can have it. Yet it is not for nothing that no one has dared to correct the seventy translators from the Hebrew manuscripts in the many places where they seem to say something different. For that difference has not been regarded as corruption, and I do not think it should be so regarded in any way. Rather, where it is not a copyist's error, we must believe that they chose, by the divine Spirit, to say something differently, where the sense would agree with the truth and proclaim the truth. They did so not in the role of translators but with the freedom of prophets. That is why the authority of the apostles is rightly found, when it cites testimonies from Scripture, to use not only the Hebrew text but theirs as well. I have promised, God willing, to speak about this more carefully in a more suitable place. For now I will deal with the matter at hand. There is no need to doubt that, when people lived so long, a city could have been founded by the man who was the first to be born of the first man. It was an earthly city, of course, not the one called the city of God, which is the city we took up the labor of this great work to write about.

WHETHER IT IS BELIEVABLE THAT THE MEN OF THE FIRST AGE ABSTAINED FROM INTERCOURSE UNTIL THE AGE AT WHICH THEY ARE SAID TO HAVE FATHERED CHILDREN

The sons named in the genealogies need not be firstborn; others born earlier went unrecorded.

15.15 Someone will say, then: "Are we really to believe that a man who was going to father children, and who had no intention of living in continence, abstained from intercourse for a hundred years and more, or, according to the Hebrew, not much less, that is, eighty, seventy, or sixty years? Or, if he did not abstain, that he was unable to beget any offspring?" This question can be resolved in two ways. Either puberty came later in proportion as the whole life was longer. Or, what I think more credible, the sons mentioned here are not the firstborn, but those required by the line of succession, so that it might reach Noah. From Noah,

in turn, we see it reach Abraham, and then on to a certain point in time, as far as it was fitting to mark, by recording generations as well, the course of the most glorious city that is a pilgrim in this world and seeks its homeland above. What cannot be denied is that Cain was the first of all to be born from the union of male and female. Adam would not have said at Cain's birth what we read that he said, "I have acquired a man through God," unless Cain had been the first man added to those two by being born. After him came Abel, whom his elder brother killed. Abel was the first to show in advance a kind of prefiguring of the pilgrim city of God, in that it would suffer unjust persecutions from the wicked and, so to speak, earthborn. These are people who love their earthly origin and delight in the earthly happiness of the earthly city. But how old Adam was when he fathered them is not stated. From there the generations are set out in separate lines: some from Cain, others from the son whom Adam fathered to succeed the one his brother killed. Adam named him Seth, saying, as it is written, "For God has raised up for me another offspring in place of Abel, whom Cain killed."[33] These two lines of descent, then, one from Seth and the other from Cain, suggest in their distinct sequences the two cities we are discussing. One is heavenly and a pilgrim on earth. The other is earthly, gaping after earthly joys or clinging to them as if they were the only ones. Cain's progeny is enumerated down to the eighth generation, counting Adam, yet for none of them is it stated how old he was when he fathered the one listed after him. For the Spirit of God did not wish to mark the times before the flood in the generations of the earthly city, but preferred to do so in those of the heavenly city, as being more worthy of remembrance. Moreover, when Seth was born, his father's years are indeed not passed over in silence, but by then Adam had already fathered others. And who would dare to assert that these were only Cain and Abel? They alone are named because of the lines of descent that needed to be recorded. That should not make it seem to follow that they were the only children Adam had

33 Genesis 4:1 and 4:25.

fathered by then. We read that he fathered sons and daughters, while the names of all the others are covered in silence. Who, then, would presume to state how many children he had, if he wants to avoid the charge of rashness? Adam could well have said, under divine prompting, after Seth was born, "For God has raised up for me another offspring in place of Abel," because Seth was to be the kind of man who would fulfill Abel's holiness, not because he was the next to be born after Abel in order of time. Then again, it is written, "Seth lived two hundred and five years (or according to the Hebrew, one hundred and five years), and fathered Enosh." Who but a thoughtless person could assert that Enosh was his firstborn,[34] and so leave us rightly wondering how Seth remained free from marriage for so many years with no intention of continence, or, if married, fathered no children? After all, we read of him too: "And he fathered sons and daughters, and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died." And so on in turn: for those whose years are recorded, Scripture does not leave unsaid that they fathered sons and daughters. Consequently, it is not at all clear whether the son who is named as fathered was himself the firstborn. Indeed, it is not credible that those fathers, over so long a lifetime, were either below the age of puberty or without wives or offspring. Neither, then, is it credible that those sons of theirs were the first to be born to them.[35] But the writer of the sacred history intended to arrive at the birth and life of Noah, in whose time the flood took place, through the successions of generations with their times noted. So he naturally recorded not the generations that were first born to their parents, but those that came into the line of descent.

To make this clearer, let me insert an example, which will leave no one in doubt that what I say could have happened. The evangelist Matthew wanted to set down for remembrance the generation of the Lord's flesh through a series of ancestors. He began from father Abraham and aimed first to reach David.

34 Genesis 5:6.
35 Genesis 5:7–8.

"Abraham," he says, "fathered Isaac." Why did he not say Ishmael, whom Abraham fathered first? "And Isaac," he says, "fathered Jacob." Why did he not say Esau, who was Isaac's firstborn? Because, of course, he could not reach David through them. Then follows: "And Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers." Was Judah the firstborn? "Judah," he says, "fathered Perez and Zerah." Neither of these twins was Judah's firstborn either, for he had already fathered three before them. So Matthew kept in the line of generations those through whom he could reach David, and from there the goal he was aiming at.[36] From this we can understand that among the ancient men before the flood, too, those mentioned were not the firstborn. They were the ones through whom the line of succeeding generations would lead to the patriarch Noah. So the obscure and unnecessary question of their late puberty need not wear us out.

THE LAW OF MARRIAGE, WHICH IN THE FIRST MARRIAGES WAS DIFFERENT FROM LATER ONES

The first humans had to marry siblings; later, spreading kinship more widely made such marriages wrong.

15.16 After the first union of the man made from dust and his wife made from the man's side, the human race needed the union of males and females in order to multiply by procreation. And there were no human beings except those born from those two. So men took their sisters as wives. The more ancient this practice is, compelled by necessity, the more damnable it later became, once religion forbade it. For in this a perfectly right account was taken of love. People for whom harmony was useful and honorable were to be bound together by the ties of different relationships. No one person was to combine many relationships in one other person. Each relationship was to be assigned to a separate person, and so, to bind social life together more closely, a great many relationships would take in a great many people. "Father" and "father-in-law," after all, are the names of

36 Matthew 1:2–3.

two relationships. So when each person has one man as father and another as father-in-law, love extends itself to more people. But Adam alone was forced to be both of these to his sons and to his daughters, when brothers and sisters were joined in marriage. In the same way Eve his wife was both mother-in-law and mother to her children of both sexes. If these had been two women, one the mother and the other the mother-in-law, social love would have bound itself together more widely. Again, the sister herself, by also becoming a wife, held two relationships by herself. If these had been distributed one apiece, so that one woman was a sister and another a wife, the social bond of kinship would have been increased in the number of people it reached. But at that time there was no way to do this, since there were no human beings except the brothers and sisters born of those first two. It had to be done, then, as soon as it could be done. Once there were enough people, wives were to be taken from among those who were no longer sisters. Then not only was there no longer any necessity for that earlier practice, but if it were done, it would be a crime. Suppose that even the grandchildren of the first humans, who could by then take their cousins as wives, were joined in marriage to their sisters. Then there would be not two but three relationships in one person. Yet these relationships ought to have been spread out, one to each person, so that love might be bound together by a more numerous kinship. For one man would be father, father-in-law and uncle to his own children, a brother and sister married to each other. Likewise his wife would be mother, aunt and mother-in-law to those same children of theirs. And their children in turn would be to one another not only brother and sister and spouses, but also cousins, since they were the children of siblings. But all these relationships, which tied three people to one person, would tie nine if each were held by a different person. One person would have one woman as sister, another as wife and another as cousin; one man as father, another as uncle and another as father-in-law; one woman as mother, another as aunt and another as mother-in-law. In this way the social bond would

not be cramped within a small number, but would spread itself more widely and more numerously through many kinships.

As the human race grew and multiplied, we see this observed even among the ungodly worshipers of many false gods. Even where perverse laws permit marriages between brother and sister, better custom still prefers to shudder at that license. Taking sisters in marriage was entirely permitted in the earliest times of the human race, yet custom turns away from it as though it could never have been permitted. For custom has very great power either to attract or to offend human feeling. Since in this matter it restrains the excess of desire, it is rightly judged wicked to break and corrupt it. If it is wrong, out of greed for possession, to cross the boundary of another's fields, how much more wrong is it, out of lust for intercourse, to overturn the boundary of custom! We have also seen, even in our own times, how rarely custom permitted in practice what law permitted in marriages between cousins, because their degree of kinship is next to that of siblings. Divine law did not forbid such marriages, and human law had not yet forbidden them. Nevertheless, the act, though lawful, was shunned because it came so close to the unlawful. What was done with a cousin seemed almost to be done with a sister. For cousins, because of their close blood relationship, call one another brothers and sisters, and are almost true siblings. The ancient fathers, however, took religious care that kinship itself should not gradually divide itself through the generations of descent, drift too far away and cease to be kinship. So, before it had gone far, they bound it back again by the tie of marriage, and in a way called it back as it fled.[37] So even when the world was already full of people, they still liked to take wives from their own family line, though not sisters born of the same father or mother or of both parents. But who would doubt that it is more honorable that in our time even marriages between cousins have been forbidden? One reason is the one we have discussed: to multiply ties by marriage, so that

37 Marriage between first cousins was banned in Roman law by the emperor Theodosius I, around AD 384.

one person should not hold two relationships when two people could hold them and the number of kin could be increased. Another reason is that there is somehow in human modesty something natural and praiseworthy. Toward a woman to whom it owes the respect due to kinship, it holds back lust, procreative though lust is. We see that even the chastity of marriage blushes at that lust.

The union of male and female, then, is a kind of seedbed of the city, as far as the mortal race is concerned. But the earthly city needs only generation, while the heavenly city needs regeneration as well, in order to escape the guilt that comes with generation. Later, circumcision was commanded to Abraham. Whether there was any comparable bodily and visible sign of regeneration before the flood, or, if there was, what it was, the sacred history does not say. It does not keep silent, however, about the fact that even those most ancient people offered sacrifice to God. This was made clear in the case of the first two brothers, and we read that Noah, after the flood, when he had come out of the ark, offered victims to God. On this subject we have already said in the preceding books why the demons claim divinity for themselves and want to be believed gods. They demand sacrifice for themselves and delight in honors of this kind for one reason only: they know that true sacrifice is owed to the true God.

THE TWO FATHERS AND FOUNDERS BORN OF ONE PARENT

Cain means possession and Enoch dedication, signs of the earthly city; Seth means resurrection.

15.17 Adam, then, was the father of both lines: the line that belongs to the earthly city and the line that belongs to the heavenly city. When Abel was killed, and a wonderful mystery was set forth in his murder, two fathers were established, one for each line: Cain and Seth. In their sons, those whom it was fitting to record, the signs of these two cities among mortal humankind began to show more clearly. For Cain fathered Enoch, and

in his name he founded a city. It was an earthly city, of course, not one on pilgrimage in this world but one at rest in this world's temporal peace and happiness. Now Cain means "possession." Hence the words spoken when he was born, whether by his father or by his mother: "I have acquired a man through God." Enoch, on the other hand, means "dedication." For the earthly city is dedicated here, where it is founded, since it is here that it has the end it aims at and seeks.[38] Seth, further, means "resurrection," and his son Enosh means "man," though not in the way Adam does. That name too means "man," but in that language, Hebrew, it is said to be common to male and female. For this is what is written about him: "Male and female he made them, and he blessed them, and he named them Adam." So there is no doubt that the woman was called Eve as her own proper name, while Adam, which means "man," was the name of both. Enosh, however, means "man" in such a way that a woman cannot be called by it, as experts in that language assert. He is, as it were, the son of the resurrection, where they will neither marry nor take wives. For there will be no generation there, once regeneration has brought us there.[39] For this reason I think it worth noting, and not without purpose, that in the generations descended from the man called Seth no woman born among them is mentioned by name, although they are said to have fathered sons and daughters. In the generations descended from Cain, by contrast, at the very end to which they extend, the last person born who is named is a woman. For this is how it reads: "Methushael fathered Lamech. And Lamech took two wives; the name of one was Adah and the name of the second Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and keep livestock. And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the one who introduced the harp and the lyre. Zillah also bore Tubal; he was a hammerer, a smith of bronze and iron. And Tubal's sister was

38 Genesis 4:1.

39 Genesis 5:2. The phrase about not marrying alludes to Jesus' words in Luke 20:35.

Naamah."[40] This is as far as the generations from Cain are carried. There are eight of them in all from Adam, counting Adam himself: seven, that is, down to Lamech, who was the husband of two wives, while the eighth generation is in his children, among whom a woman is also recorded. Here it is elegantly signified that the earthly city will have, right up to its end, fleshly generations that come from the union of men and women. That is also why the wives of the man named here as the last father are themselves given their own names, something found nowhere before the flood except for Eve. Cain, which means "possession," was the founder of the earthly city, and his son Enoch, in whose name it was founded, means "dedication." Together they indicate that this city has both an earthly beginning and an earthly end, a city in which nothing more is hoped for than can be seen in this world. In the same way we must look at Seth, which means "resurrection." Since he is the father of the generations recorded separately, we must consider what this sacred history says about his son.

WHAT WAS SIGNIFIED IN ABEL, SETH, AND ENOSH THAT CLEARLY RELATES TO CHRIST AND HIS BODY, THE CHURCH

Abel, Seth and Enosh prefigure Christ's death and resurrection and the city that lives in hope.

15.18 "And to Seth," it says, "a son was born, and he named him Enosh; he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God." Here, surely, the testimony of truth cries aloud. Man, the son of the resurrection, lives in hope, then. As long as it is on pilgrimage here, the city of God lives in hope, the city that is born of faith in the resurrection of Christ. For in those two men, Abel, which means "grief," and his brother Seth, which means "resurrection," the death of Christ and his life from the dead are prefigured. From this faith the city of God is born here, that is, the man who hoped to call on the name of the Lord God. "For in hope we were saved," says the apostle. "But hope that is seen is

40 Genesis 4:18–22.

not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." Could anyone think that this lacks the depth of a mystery?[41] For did Abel not hope to call on the name of the Lord God, when Scripture records that his sacrifice was so acceptable to God? Did Seth himself not hope to call on the name of the Lord God, when of him it was said: "For God has raised up for me another offspring in place of Abel"? Why, then, is something attributed specifically to this man that is understood to be common to all the godly? It can only be because he is the first recorded as born from the father of the generations set apart for the better part, that is, for the city above. In him there had to be prefigured "man," that is, the society of human beings that lives not according to man, in the actual possession of earthly happiness, but according to God, in the hope of eternal happiness. Nor is it said, "He hoped in the Lord God," or "He called on the name of the Lord God." Instead it says: "He hoped to call on the name of the Lord God."[42] What does "He hoped to call" mean, if not that it is a prophecy that a people would arise who, according to the election of grace, would call on the name of the Lord God? This is what was said through another prophet, and the apostle understands it of this people that belongs to the grace of God: "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." For this very statement, "And he named him Enosh," which means "man," followed by the addition, "He hoped to call on the name of the Lord God," shows clearly enough that man should not place his hope in himself. For, as we read elsewhere, "cursed is everyone who places his hope in man." Neither, therefore, should he place it in himself, if he is to be a citizen of the other city. That city is not dedicated in this present time, after the manner of Cain's son, that is, in the passing course of this mortal world. It is dedicated in that immortality of everlasting happiness.[43]

41 Genesis 4:26; Romans 8:24–25.
42 Genesis 4:25.
43 Joel 2:32, quoted by Paul in Romans 10:13; Jeremiah 17:5.

WHAT IS SHOWN BY THE TAKING UP OF ENOCH

Enoch, taken up in the seventh generation, prefigures our own dedication, postponed until the end.

15.19 For this line too, whose father is Seth, has the name "dedication" in the generation that is seventh from Adam, counting Adam. The seventh born from him was Enoch, which means "dedication." But this is the Enoch who was taken up because he pleased God. He also stands at a notable number in the order of generations, the number by which the Sabbath was consecrated, namely the seventh from Adam. From Seth himself, the father of these generations that are distinguished from Cain's descendants, he is sixth, which corresponds to the day on which man was made and God completed all his works. But this Enoch's being taken up prefigures the postponement of our own dedication.[44] That dedication has indeed already taken place in Christ, our head, who rose again so as to die no more, and was himself also taken up. But there remains the other dedication, that of the whole house of which Christ himself is the foundation. It is postponed until the end, when there will be the resurrection of all, never to die again. Whether we say the house of God, or the temple of God, or the city of God, it is the same thing, and the expression is not foreign to Latin usage. Virgil too calls the city of supreme dominion "the house of Assaracus," meaning the Romans, who trace their origin from Assaracus through the Trojans. He also calls the same people "the house of Aeneas," because the Trojans came to Italy under his leadership and Rome was founded by them. That poet was imitating the sacred writings, in which the Hebrew people, already vast, is called "the house of Jacob."[45]

44 Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5.

45 Assaracus was a legendary king of Troy and ancestor of Aeneas; the phrases come from Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.284 and 3.97.

WHY CAIN'S LINE ENDS AT THE EIGHTH GENERATION FROM ADAM, WHILE AMONG THE DESCENDANTS OF THE SAME FATHER ADAM, NOAH IS FOUND IN THE TENTH

Augustine asks why Cain's line is traced only to the eighth generation, while Seth's runs to Noah.

15.20 Someone will object: "The writer of this history recorded the generations from Adam through his son Seth in order to reach Noah, in whose time the flood took place. From Noah the line of births would again be traced so as to reach Abraham, with whom the evangelist Matthew begins the generations by which he reaches Christ, the eternal king of the city of God. If that was his aim, what did he intend in the generations from Cain, and where did he want to take them?" The answer is: down to the flood, by which that whole race of the earthly city was destroyed, though it was restored from the sons of Noah. For this earthly city, this society of human beings living according to man, can never fail to exist until the end of this age, of which the Lord says: "The children of this age beget and are begotten."[46] But the city of God, on pilgrimage in this age, is led by regeneration to the other age, whose children neither beget nor are begotten. Here, then, being begotten and begetting are common to both cities. The city of God, it is true, has even here many thousands of citizens who abstain from the work of begetting. But the other city also has such people, through a kind of imitation, though they are people in error. To it belong also those who strayed from the faith of the city of God and founded various heresies, for they live according to man, not according to God. The gymnosophists of India, too, who are said to practice philosophy naked in the solitudes of India, abstain from eating food and from begetting. For this is not a good unless it is done in accordance with faith in the supreme good, which is God. Yet no one is found to have done this before the flood. Even Enoch himself, seventh from Adam, who is reported to have

46 Luke 20:34.

been taken up and not to have died, fathered sons and daughters before he was taken up. Among them was Methuselah, through whom the line of recorded generations runs.

Why, then, is so small a number of successions recorded in the generations from Cain, if they had to be carried down to the flood, and there was no long period before puberty that would leave a hundred years or more without offspring? Perhaps the author of this book had no one in view to whom he had to bring the series of generations, as in the line from Seth's seed he aimed to reach Noah, from whom the necessary line would continue once more. In that case, what need was there to pass over firstborn sons in order to arrive at Lamech, in whose children that sequence ends, namely in the eighth generation from Adam and the seventh from Cain? It is as though something were to be linked on from there, by which one might arrive either at the people of Israel, in whom even the earthly Jerusalem provided a prophetic figure of the heavenly city, or at Christ according to the flesh, "who is God over all, blessed forever," the builder and ruler of the Jerusalem above. Yet the whole progeny of Cain was wiped out by the flood.[47] From this it might seem that it was the firstborn who were recorded in this line of generations. Why, then, are there so few? Only so many generations could not have filled the time down to the flood unless puberty was then late in proportion to that long life span, so that the fathers were kept from the duty of begetting until a puberty at a hundred years. For suppose they were all thirty years old when they began to father children. Eight times thirty, since there are eight generations counting Adam and those whom Lamech fathered, makes two hundred and forty years. Are we to think that they did not beget at all during the whole time after that, down to the flood? For what reason, then, did the one who wrote this choose not to record the generations that followed? For from Adam to the flood, according to our manuscripts, the years are reckoned as two thousand two hundred and sixty-two, but according to the

47 Romans 9:5.

Hebrew, one thousand six hundred and fifty-six.[48] Suppose, then, that we take this smaller number to be the truer one, and subtract two hundred and forty years from the one thousand six hundred and fifty-six. Is it credible that during the fourteen hundred years and more that remain until the flood the progeny of Cain could have been without any generations?

But anyone troubled by this should remember an earlier question I raised: how we are to believe that those ancient men could have refrained from fathering children for so many years. That question was resolved in two ways. Either puberty came late, in proportion to so long a life, or the sons recorded in the generations were not the firstborn but those through whom it was possible to reach the person the author of the book had in view, as Noah is reached in the generations of Seth. Accordingly, in the generations of Cain, there may be no one who ought to be the goal, someone to be reached through those who are recorded by passing over the firstborn. If so, we are left to understand a late puberty. They would have become mature and capable of begetting some while after a hundred years, so that the line of generations ran through the firstborn and still matched so great a number of years down to the flood. It is possible, however, that for some more hidden reason which escapes me, this city, which we call earthly, is presented by bringing the sequence of generations down to Lamech and his children, and that the writer of the book then ceased to record the others that may have existed down to the flood. There may also be another reason why the line of generations was not traced through the firstborn, one that makes it unnecessary to believe in so late a puberty among those men. The very city which Cain founded in the name of his son Enoch may have reigned far and wide and had kings. These would not have ruled several at once but one at a time, each in his own period, and each reigning king would have fathered his successor. The first of these kings could have been Cain himself. The second could have been his son Enoch, in whose name the

48 Augustine's Latin Bible followed the Greek Septuagint, whose chronology of the early generations differs from the Hebrew text.

city was founded as the seat of the kingdom. The third could have been Irad, whom Enoch fathered; the fourth Mehujael, whom Irad fathered; the fifth Methushael, whom Mehujael fathered; and the sixth Lamech, whom Methushael fathered, who is seventh from Adam through Cain. But it did not follow that the firstborn sons of kings succeeded their reigning fathers. Rather, the successor would be the one whom merit for ruling singled out, through some virtue useful to the earthly city, or whom some chance selected. Or the son who succeeded his father by a sort of hereditary right to rule would be the one whom the father had loved above his other sons. And the flood could have come while Lamech was still alive and reigning, so that it found him there to destroy along with all other human beings, except those who were in the ark. Nor should it be surprising that, with differing numbers of years intervening over so long a span from Adam to the flood, the two lines did not have an equal number of generations, Cain's line seven and Seth's ten. For Lamech, as I have already said, is seventh from Adam, and Noah tenth. That is why not one son of Lamech is recorded, as with the others above, but several. It was uncertain who would succeed him at his death, if any time for reigning had remained between him and the flood.

ELEVEN, THE NUMBER OF SIN

Cain's line ends with eleven names, one beyond ten, the number of the law.

But however it may be with the line of generations from Cain, whether it runs through firstborn sons or through kings, there is one point that I think must by no means be passed over in silence. When Lamech had been found to be seventh from Adam, enough of his children were added to complete the number eleven, which signifies sin. For three sons and one daughter are added. The wives may signify something else, not the point that now seems worth drawing out. For we are now speaking of descendants, and where the wives came from is not stated. Since

the law, then, is proclaimed by the number ten, hence that memorable Decalogue, the number eleven surely signifies transgression of the law, and so sin, since it transgresses, or goes beyond, ten. That is why in the tabernacle of the testimony, which served as a kind of portable temple for God's people on their journey, eleven curtains of goats' hair were ordered to be made.[49] For haircloth calls sins to mind, because of the goats who are to stand on the left hand. So when we confess, we prostrate ourselves in haircloth, as if saying what is written in the psalm: "And my sin is ever before me." The progeny from Adam through the wicked Cain, then, ends with the number eleven, which signifies sin. And the number itself is completed by a woman, the sex from which the beginning of sin came, the sin through which we all die. And sin was committed with the result that the pleasure of the flesh, which resists the spirit, followed as well. For Lamech's daughter Naamah herself means "pleasure." But through Seth, from Adam to Noah, the lawful number ten is indicated.[50] To Noah are added three sons. One of them fell, and two were blessed by their father, so that, with the reprobate removed and the approved sons added to the number, the number twelve is also suggested. This number is notable both in the number of the patriarchs and in that of the apostles, because it is formed by multiplying the parts of seven by each other: three fours or four threes make twelve. This being so, I see that I must consider and recount how these two progenies, which by their distinct generations suggest two cities, one of the earthborn and the other of the reborn, later became so mixed and confused that the whole human race, except eight people, deserved to perish in the flood.[51]

49 The Decalogue is the Ten Commandments; the eleven curtains are prescribed in Exodus 26:7.

50 The goats on the left: Matthew 25:33. Psalm 50:5 (51:3 in most English Bibles).

WHY, AFTER ENOCH SON OF CAIN IS MENTIONED, THE ACCOUNT OF HIS WHOLE LINE CONTINUES TO THE FLOOD, WHILE AFTER ENOSH SON OF SETH IS MENTIONED, IT GOES BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN RACE

Scripture restarts the count from Adam with Seth's line, setting the two cities side by side.

15.21 First we should notice how the genealogy from Cain is handled. Among his descendants, the one in whose name the city was founded, Enoch, is mentioned first, and then the rest are listed in sequence down to the end I spoke of, when that race and all its offspring were wiped out by the flood. But when Enosh, a single son of Seth, has been mentioned, the others down to the flood are not yet added. Instead, a kind of break is inserted, and it says: "This is the book of the generation of human beings. On the day God made Adam, he made him in the image of God. Male and female he made them, and he blessed them, and he gave them the name Adam, on the day he made them."[52] This seems to me to have been inserted so that the reckoning of time could begin again from Adam himself. The writer chose not to make such a reckoning for the earthly city, as if God were prompting him not to count it. But why return to this recapitulation after mentioning Seth's son, the man who "hoped to call on the name of the Lord God"? Surely because this was the right way to set out these two cities: one running from a murderer to a murderer (for Lamech, too, confesses to his two wives that he has committed murder), the other running through the man who "hoped to call on the name of the Lord God." For this is the whole and supreme business of the city of God, on pilgrimage in this world, during this mortal life. It had to be commended through one man—a man born, as it were, of

51 The son who fell is Ham, whose offense led Noah to curse Ham's son Canaan and bless Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:20–27).
52 Genesis 5:1–2.

the resurrection of the one who was murdered.[53] For that one man represents the unity of the whole city above. That unity is not yet complete, but it is to be completed, as this prophetic prefiguration announced in advance. So let the son of Cain—that is, the son of possession (and what possession but an earthly one?)—have his name in the earthly city, since the city was founded in his name. For he is one of those of whom the psalm sings: "They will call their names after themselves in their lands." That is why what is written in another psalm follows them: "Lord, in your city you will bring their image to nothing."[54] But let the son of Seth—that is, the son of resurrection—hope to call on the name of the Lord God. For he prefigures that society of human beings which says: "But I, like a fruitful olive tree in the house of God, have hoped in the mercy of God." Let him not seek the empty glories of a name famous on earth. For "blessed is the man whose hope is the name of the Lord, and who has not looked to vanities and lying follies."[55] Two cities, then, have been set before us: one grounded in the reality of this world, the other in hope in God. Both have come out, as it were, through the common door of mortality that was opened in Adam, so that they may run forward and on toward their separate ends—each its own, each its due. And so the reckoning of time begins. In it further generations are added, after a recapitulation starting from Adam. From his condemned origin, as from a single lump handed over to the condemnation it deserved, God makes some vessels of wrath for dishonor and others vessels of mercy for honor. To the first he renders what is owed, as punishment; to the second he gives what is not owed, as grace. In this way the city above, which is on pilgrimage on earth, is to learn from the very comparison with the vessels of wrath not to trust in the freedom of its own will, but to "hope to call on the name of the

53 Genesis 4:26, in the Latin text Augustine used; Lamech's confession to his wives is in Genesis 4:23–24.

54 Psalm 48:12 (49:11 in most English Bibles); Psalm 72:20 (73:20 in most English Bibles).

55 Psalm 51:10 (52:8 in most English Bibles); Psalm 39:5 (40:4 in most English Bibles).

Lord God."[56] For the will exists in a nature that was made good by the good God, yet changeable by the unchangeable God, because it was made from nothing. So the will can turn away from good to do evil, and this happens by free choice; and it can turn away from evil to do good, but this does not happen without divine help.

THE FALL OF THE SONS OF GOD, CAPTIVATED BY LOVE OF FOREIGN WOMEN, FOR WHICH ALL EXCEPT EIGHT PEOPLE DESERVED TO PERISH IN THE FLOOD

The sons of God, Seth's descendants, loved the beautiful daughters of men, and the two cities mingled.

15.22 So, as the human race advanced and grew through this free choice of the will, the two cities became mingled, and through shared wickedness a kind of confusion of the two came about. Once again this evil found its cause in the female sex—though not in the way it did at the beginning. For these women had not been led astray by anyone's deceit, as Eve was, nor did they persuade the men to sin. Rather, women who had been of depraved character from the beginning, in the earthly city—that is, in the society of the earth-born—were loved for their physical beauty by the sons of God, that is, by the citizens of the other city, the one on pilgrimage in this world. Beauty is indeed a good and a gift of God; but he bestows it even on the wicked precisely so that the good may not think it a great good. So a great good, one that belongs to the good alone, was abandoned, and there was a fall to a very small good, one that does not belong to the good alone but is common to good and wicked alike. In this way the sons of God were captivated by love for the daughters of men, and in order to enjoy them as wives they slid into the ways of the earth-born society, abandoning the devotion they had kept in the holy society. For bodily beauty is a good made by God, but a temporal, fleshly and lowly one; and it is loved wrongly when God, the eternal, inward and everlasting good, is put after it. In

56 The vessels of wrath and mercy allude to Romans 9:21–23.

the same way gold is loved by the greedy at the cost of justice—through no sin of the gold, but of the man. This is how it is with every created thing. Since it is good, it can be loved either well or badly: well when order is kept, badly when order is overturned. I put this briefly in verse in a poem in praise of the candle: "These things are yours; they are good, because you, who are good, created them."[57] "Nothing in them is ours, except that we sin when, neglecting order, we love instead of you what is made by you." But if the Creator is truly loved—that is, if he himself is loved, and not something else in his place that is not he—he cannot be loved wrongly. For love itself must also be loved in an orderly way, the love by which we rightly love what ought to be loved, so that there may be in us the virtue by which we live rightly. This is why I think that a brief and true definition of virtue is "the order of love." That is why, in the holy Song of Songs, the bride of Christ, the city of God, sings: "Set love in order in me." So when the order of this love (*caritas*, that is, *dilectio* and *amor*) was thrown into disorder, the sons of God neglected God and loved the daughters of men. These two names are enough to distinguish the two cities.[58] Not that the former were not also sons of men by nature; but by grace they had begun to bear another name. For in the same Scripture, where the sons of God are said to have loved the daughters of men, these same sons of God are also called angels of God. That is why many think they were not humans at all, but angels.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT ANGELS, WHO ARE SPIRITUAL BEINGS, FELL IN LOVE WITH BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, MARRIED THEM, AND FATHERED GIANTS

The sons of God were men, not angels, and giants were born both before and after these marriages.

15.23 In the third book of this work we mentioned this question in passing and left it unresolved: whether angels, since they are

57 Augustine's verses in praise of the candle, probably the Easter candle blessed at the Easter Vigil, are known only from this quotation.

spirits, can have bodily intercourse with women. For it is written: "He makes his angels spirits"—that is, those who are spirits by nature he makes to be his angels by assigning them the task of bearing messages. For the word that in Greek is ἄγγελος [messenger], which takes the Latin form *angelus*, is rendered in Latin as *nuntius*, "messenger." But whether he goes on to refer to their bodies when he says, "and his ministers a burning fire," or means that his ministers ought to blaze with love as with a spiritual fire, is unclear. Still, the same utterly truthful Scripture testifies that angels have appeared to human beings in bodies such that they could not only be seen but also touched.[59] There is also a very widespread report, and many affirm that they have experienced it themselves or have heard it from people who had, people whose trustworthiness there was no reason to doubt. They say that Silvani and Pans, commonly called incubi, have often behaved shamelessly toward women, seeking to sleep with them and succeeding; and that certain demons, which the Gauls call Dusii, constantly attempt this impurity and carry it out. So many people, and of such a kind, assert this that it would seem impudent to deny it. Even so, I do not venture to decide on this basis whether some spirits with bodies made of the element of air (for even this element, when stirred by a fan, is felt by the bodily sense of touch) can also be subject to this lust, so that they can unite, in whatever way they are able, with women who feel them.[60] Yet I could never believe that God's holy angels could have fallen in that way at that time. Nor do I believe that the apostle Peter was speaking of them when he said: "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but thrust them down into the prisons of the darkness of the underworld and handed them over to be kept for punishment at the judgment." He was speaking rather of those who first apostatized

58 Song of Songs 2:4, in Augustine's Latin text.
59 The earlier mention is in Book 3, chapter 5. The quotation is Psalm 103:4 (104:4 in most English Bibles).
60 Silvanus and Pan were Roman and Greek gods of woods and fields; incubi were spirits thought to lie with sleeping women. The Dusii were Gallic spirits of the same kind.

from God and fell together with the devil, their chief, the one who out of envy brought down the first man by the serpent's deceit. But that men of God, too, have been called angels, the same holy Scripture is an abundant witness. For it is written of John: "See, I am sending my angel before your face, who will prepare your way." And the prophet Malachi was called an angel by a grace of his own, that is, one granted specifically to him.[61]

But some are troubled because we read that those called angels of God and the women they loved produced not human beings like those of our race, but giants. As if human bodies far exceeding our usual size, as I also mentioned above, had not been born even in our own times! A few years ago, when the destruction of the city of Rome at the hands of the Goths was approaching, was there not a woman living in Rome with her father and mother whose almost gigantic body towered far above everyone else? People came flocking from every side to see her, in astonishing numbers. And what amazed them most was that neither of her parents was even as tall as the tallest people we are used to seeing.[62] So giants could have been born even before the sons of God, who were also called angels of God, mingled with the daughters of men—that is, of those who live according to man: the sons of Seth, that is, with the children of Cain. For this is what canonical Scripture says, in the book where we read these things. Its words are these: "And it came to pass, after human beings began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, that the angels of God, seeing that the daughters of men were good, took for themselves wives from all whom they chose. And the Lord God said, 'My spirit shall not remain in these men forever, because they are flesh. Their days shall be a hundred and twenty years.'[63] Now there were giants on the earth in those days, and after that, when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, and they fathered children for

61 2 Peter 2:4; Mark 1:2, quoting Malachi 3:1 (the Latin *angelus* also means "messenger"). Malachi's name means "my messenger" in Hebrew.
62 The Goths under Alaric sacked Rome in AD 410.
63 Genesis 6:1–3.

themselves; these were the giants, men renowned from ancient times." These words of the divine book show clearly enough that there were already giants on the earth in those days, when the sons of God took the daughters of men as wives because they loved them as good, that is, beautiful. For it is this Scripture's custom to call those who are beautiful in body "good" as well. But giants were also born after this happened. For it says: "Now there were giants on the earth in those days, and after that, when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men." So there were giants both before, in those days, and after that.[64] And the words "they fathered children for themselves" show clearly enough that before the sons of God fell in this way, they fathered children for God, not for themselves. That is, lust for intercourse was not in command; it served the duty of propagation. They produced not a household for their own pride but citizens of the city of God. Like angels of God, they would tell these citizens to place their hope in God, like the man born of Seth, the son of resurrection, who "hoped to call on the name of the Lord God." In that hope they and their descendants would be joint heirs of eternal goods and, under God the Father, brothers of their own sons.

But Scripture itself declares without any ambiguity that they were not angels of God in the sense that they were not human, as some think, but were beyond doubt human beings. For after first stating that "the angels of God, seeing that the daughters of men were good, took for themselves wives from all whom they chose," it immediately adds: "And the Lord God said, 'My spirit shall not remain in these men forever, because they are flesh.'" It was by the Spirit of God that they had been made angels of God and sons of God. But by sinking to lower things they are called "men," a name of nature, not of grace. They are also called "flesh," as deserters of the Spirit who, by deserting, were deserted. The seventy translators, indeed, called them both angels of God and sons of God. Not all manuscripts have this, though, for some have only "sons of God." Aquila, however, whom the Jews

64 Genesis 6:4.

prefer to the other translators, rendered it neither "angels of God" nor "sons of God" but "sons of the gods." Both are true. For they were sons of God, under whom as Father they were also brothers of their own fathers. And they were sons of gods, since they had been born of gods, along with whom they themselves were gods, according to that saying of the psalm: "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.'" For the seventy translators are rightly believed to have received the prophetic Spirit, so that if by its authority they changed anything and said something different from the text they were translating, no one should doubt that this too was spoken by God. And indeed the Hebrew is said to be ambiguous here, so that it could be translated either "sons of God" or "sons of the gods."[65]

ENOCH AND THE APOCRYPHA

Books ascribed to Enoch lack canonical authority; the giants before the flood were human.

Let us pass over, then, the fables found in the writings called apocryphal, so called because their origin was hidden and not clear to the fathers, from whom the authority of the true Scriptures has come down to us through a most certain and well-known succession. Although some truth is found in these apocryphal writings, their many falsehoods deprive them of any canonical authority. We cannot deny that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, wrote some things by divine inspiration, since the apostle Jude says so in a canonical letter. But there is good reason why these writings are not in the canon of Scripture that was preserved in the temple of the Hebrew people through the care of successive priests. Because of their great age they were judged to be of doubtful reliability, and it could not be established whether these were the writings Enoch had composed, since those who produced them were not people who could be

65 Aquila was a convert to Judaism who made a very literal Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible in the 2nd century AD. The quotation is Psalm 81:6 (82:6 in most English Bibles).

shown to have preserved them properly through an unbroken line of succession.[66] Hence the writings put forward under his name, which contain those fables about giants—that they did not have human fathers—are rightly judged by prudent people not to be genuinely his. In the same way, heretics put forward many writings under the names of other prophets and, more recently, under the names of apostles; after careful examination, all of these have been excluded from canonical authority under the name of apocrypha. So, according to the canonical Scriptures, both Hebrew and Christian, there is no doubt that there were many giants before the flood, and that they were citizens of the earth-born society of human beings; and that the sons of God, descended from Seth according to the flesh, abandoned righteousness and sank into this society. Nor is it surprising that giants could be born even from them. For not all were giants then; but there were certainly many more of them then than in other times after the flood. It pleased the Creator to create them so that this too might show that not only beauty but also size and strength of body should not be valued highly by the wise. For the wise person is made happy by spiritual and immortal goods, which are far better and more lasting, and which belong to the good alone, not to good and wicked alike. Another prophet commends this point when he says: "There were the famous giants, who were of great stature from the beginning, skilled in war. The Lord did not choose these, nor did he give them the way of knowledge; but they perished because they had no wisdom; they were destroyed through their thoughtlessness."[67]

66 Jude 14–15 quotes the Book of Enoch, a Jewish apocalyptic work of the last centuries BC attributed to the patriarch Enoch.
67 Baruch 3:26–28.

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LORD SAID OF THOSE WHO WERE TO PERISH IN THE FLOOD: "THEIR DAYS SHALL BE A HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS"

The hundred and twenty years count the time left before the flood, not a limit on lifespans.

15.24 As for God's words, "Their days shall be a hundred and twenty years," they should not be taken as a prediction that from then on human beings would not live beyond a hundred and twenty years, since we find that even after the flood some lived more than five hundred. Rather, we should understand that God said this when Noah was nearing the end of his five hundred years—that is, when he was in the four hundred and eightieth year of his life. Scripture, in its usual way, calls this five hundred, often designating the largest part by the name of the whole. For the flood came in the second month of the six hundredth year of Noah's life. So a hundred and twenty years were foretold as the remaining lifetime of the people who were to perish; when these had passed, they would be wiped out by the flood. Nor is it without reason that the flood is believed to have come at a time when no one was left on earth who did not deserve to die the kind of death by which vengeance was taken on the wicked. Not that this kind of death would do anything to the good, who must die at some point anyway, that could harm them after death. Nevertheless, none of those whom holy Scripture records as descended from the seed of Seth died in the flood. Here is how the cause of the flood is told by divine inspiration: "The Lord God," it says, "seeing that the wickedness of human beings had multiplied on the earth, and that each and every one was diligently pondering evil in his heart all his days, God thought about having made man on the earth, and thought it over again, and God said, 'I will wipe out man, whom I have made, from the face of the earth, from man to beast, and from

creeping things to the birds of the sky, because I am angry that I made them.'"[68]

THE ANGER OF GOD, WHICH NO INFLAMMATION DISTURBS IN HIS UNCHANGEABLE CALM

God's anger and second thoughts are figures of speech for his unchanging judgment.

15.25 God's anger is not a disturbance of his mind. It is the judgment by which punishment is imposed on sin. His thinking and rethinking, likewise, is the unchangeable reason by which changeable things are changed. For God does not repent of anything he has done, as a human being does. His judgment on absolutely all things is as fixed as his foreknowledge is certain. But if Scripture did not use such words, it would not, so to speak, make itself more familiar to every kind of human being, whose good it wishes to serve. It wants to terrify the proud and rouse the careless, to exercise those who seek and nourish those who understand. It would not do this if it did not first stoop down and, in a way, descend to those who lie low. As for its announcing the destruction of all the animals of the land and the birds as well, it is declaring how great the coming disaster will be. It is not threatening destruction to creatures that lack reason, as though they too had sinned.

THAT THE ARK NOAH WAS ORDERED TO BUILD SIGNIFIES CHRIST AND THE CHURCH IN EVERY RESPECT

The ark's proportions, door and decks signify Christ's body and the Church.

15.26 Now God commands Noah to build an ark. Noah was a righteous man and, as truthful Scripture says of him, "perfect in his generation." This does not mean perfect in the way the citizens of the city of God are to be made perfect in that immortality in which they will be equal to the angels of God. It means perfect

68 Genesis 6:5–7.

in the way they can be on this pilgrimage. In the ark he was to be saved from the devastation of the flood together with his family, that is, his wife, his sons and his daughters-in-law, and with the animals that came to him into the ark at God's command. Without any doubt this is a figure of the city of God on pilgrimage in this world, that is, of the Church. The Church is saved by the wood on which hung "the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." For even the measurements of the ark's length, height and breadth signify the human body. It was in the reality of a human body that he was foretold to humanity as one who would come, and in it he came.[69] For the length of a human body, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, is six times its breadth from one side to the other. It is ten times its height, and that height is measured on the side, from back to belly. Suppose you measure a man lying on his back or face down. He is six times as long from head to feet as he is wide from right to left or from left to right, and ten times as long as he is high off the ground. That is why the ark was made three hundred cubits in length, fifty in breadth and thirty in height. And it was given a door in its side. Surely that is the wound made when the side of the crucified one was pierced by the lance. Through this door those who come to him enter, because from there flowed the sacraments by which believers are initiated.[70] It is ordered to be made of squared timbers, and this signifies the life of the saints, stable on every side. For whichever way you turn a square, it will stand. The other details given about the building of this ark are likewise signs of things in the Church.

But it would take too long to go through them now. I have already done this in the work I wrote against Faustus the Manichaean, who denied that anything was prophesied about Christ in the books of the Hebrews. It may well be that someone could explain these things more aptly than I have, and one person more aptly than another. The condition is that everything said must be referred to this city of God of which we are speaking,

69 Genesis 6:9; 1 Timothy 2:5.
70 Allusion to John 19:34.

which is on pilgrimage in this evil world as if in a flood. The interpreter must hold to this if he does not want to stray far from the meaning of the one who wrote these things. Take an example. Here it is written, "You shall make it with lower parts, two-storied and three-storied." Suppose someone does not want this understood as I explained it in that work. There I said that the Church is gathered from all nations, and so it is called two-storied because of the two kinds of people, namely the circumcision and the uncircumcision, whom the apostle elsewhere calls Jews and Greeks. It is called three-storied because all nations were restored after the flood from the three sons of Noah. That reader may say something else instead, so long as it is not foreign to the rule of faith.[71] God wanted the ark to have rooms not only on the lower level but also on the level above, and these he called two-storied. He also wanted rooms on the level above that, and these he called three-storied, so that a third dwelling rose from the bottom upward. Here we can understand those three things the apostle commends: faith, hope and love. Or, much more fittingly, we can understand the three yields of the gospel, thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold. Then married chastity dwells on the lowest level, the chastity of widows above it, and virginity higher still. Or there may be something better that can be understood and said in keeping with the faith of this city. I would say the same about the other things that need explaining here. Even if they are discussed in more than one way, they must still be brought back to the one harmony of the Catholic faith.[72]

71 Genesis 6:16.
72 Allusions to 1 Corinthians 13:13 and to the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:8).

THE ARK AND THE FLOOD: WE SHOULD AGREE NEITHER WITH THOSE WHO ACCEPT ONLY THE HISTORY WITHOUT ALLEGORICAL MEANING, NOR WITH THOSE WHO DEFEND ONLY THE FIGURES AND REJECT THE HISTORICAL TRUTH

The flood is both real history and a figure of the Church; objections about the ark are answered.

15.27 Still, no one should think that these things were written to no purpose. Nor should anyone think that we must seek here only the historical truth of events, without any allegorical meanings. Nor, on the contrary, that these events never happened at all and are merely figures of speech. Nor that, whatever they are, they have nothing to do with prophecy about the Church. For who but a person of perverse mind would contend that these books were written to no purpose, when they have been guarded for thousands of years with such reverence and such careful observance of an orderly succession? Who would claim that only the events are to be considered in them? To leave other points aside, consider this. If the number of animals required the ark to be made so large, what required unclean animals to be brought in by twos and clean ones by sevens, when both could have been preserved in equal numbers? Or was God, who commanded them to be preserved so that their kinds might be restored, unable to restore them in the same way he had first established them?

Then there are those who contend that these things did not happen and are merely figures signifying other things. First, they suppose that no flood could have been so great that the water rose fifteen cubits above the highest mountains. They point to the summit of Mount Olympus, above which clouds supposedly cannot form. The sky there is said to be already so high that there is none of the thicker air in which winds, mists and rains are produced. They fail to notice that earth, the densest of all the elements, could be up there. Or do they perhaps deny that a mountain's summit is earth? Why, then, do they contend that earth was allowed to rise up to those regions of the

sky, while water was not? After all, these measurers and weighers of the elements declare that water lies above earth and is lighter. So what reason do they give? Earth, which is heavier and lower, has occupied the region of the calmer sky through the course of so many years. Why, then, was water, which is lighter and higher, not permitted to do the same even for a short time?

They also say that the ark could not have held so many kinds of animals of both sexes, two of each unclean kind and seven of each clean kind. These people seem to me to count only the three hundred cubits of length and the fifty of breadth. They do not consider that there was as much again on the upper level, and as much again on the level above that. Multiplied by three, then, those cubits become nine hundred by one hundred and fifty. Origen also argued, with some elegance, that Moses could have meant geometrical cubits. Moses, the man of God, was, as it is written, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and the Egyptians loved geometry. One geometrical cubit, they assert, is worth six of ours. If we take this into account, who can fail to see how much a vessel of that size could hold?[73] They also argue that an ark of such size could not have been built. This is a most foolish quibble, since they know that immense cities have been constructed. They also forget the hundred years it took to build that ark. Can stone stick to stone, joined only by lime, so that a wall runs around for so many miles? And yet wood cannot be made to stick to wood by dovetails, pegs, nails and bitumen glue, so that an ark could be built stretching far and wide in straight lines rather than curved ones? No human effort had to launch it into the sea. The water lifted it when it came, by the natural order of weights. And divine providence rather than human prudence steered it as it floated, so that it would not run aground and be wrecked anywhere.

A further question is often raised, with excessive scruple, about the tiniest creatures. These include not only mice and geckos but also locusts, beetles, and even flies and fleas. Were

73 Origen (c. AD 185–254), the great biblical scholar of Alexandria. The quotation is Acts 7:22.

there not more of them in the ark than the number God fixed when he gave his command? Those who are troubled by this must first be reminded how to understand the words "that creep upon the earth." They mean that there was no need to preserve in the ark creatures that can live in water. This includes not only those that live under the water, like fish, but also those that float on its surface, like many birds.[74] Next, when it is said, "They shall be male and female," this is surely understood to refer to restoring the species. So there was no need for creatures to be there that can be born without mating, from various things or from the decay of things. Or, if they were there, they could have been there without any fixed number, as they commonly are in houses. Or suppose the most sacred mystery being enacted, the figure of so great a reality, could not be fulfilled in the truth of the event as well, unless every creature that by nature cannot live in water was there in that exact number. Even then, this was not the concern of that man or those men, but of God. For Noah did not catch the animals and bring them in. He let them in as they came and entered.[75] That is the point of the words, "They shall come in to you." They came, that is, not by human action but at God's bidding. Of course, it follows that we should not believe that creatures without sex were there, for it was prescribed and laid down: "They shall be male and female." Some creatures are born without mating from various things in such a way that they later mate and reproduce, like flies. Others have nothing of male and female, like bees. Then there are those that have sex but produce no offspring, like male and female mules. It would be surprising if they were there. It would more likely have been enough for their parents to be there, namely the horse and the donkey kinds. The same applies to any other creatures that produce a kind by crossing different kinds. But if this too belonged to the mystery, then they were there.[76] For this kind too has male and female.

74 Genesis 6:20.
75 Genesis 6:19.
76 Genesis 6:20.

Some people are also troubled about the kinds of food available in the ark to animals that are thought to eat nothing but meat. Were there animals beyond the prescribed number, without any breach of the command, which the need to feed the others had made it necessary to shut in there? Or, as is more to be believed, could there have been other foods besides meat that suited them all? For we know how many animals whose food is meat also eat grain and fruit, especially figs and chestnuts. So what wonder is it if that wise and righteous man, also instructed by God about what suited each one, prepared and stored suitable food for each kind without meat? And what would hunger not drive them to eat? What could God not make pleasant and wholesome? With divine ease he could have granted them to live without food at all, had it not been fitting that they be fed, as part of fulfilling the figure of so great a mystery. No one, unless he is merely quarrelsome, may suppose that such manifold signs in these events have nothing to do with prefiguring the Church. For the nations have already filled the Church, and clean and unclean are held together in the framework of its unity until the appointed end comes. This one point is so plain that it is not right to doubt the rest, even those things that are expressed rather more obscurely and are harder to recognize. This being so, no one, however obstinate, will dare to think that these things were written to no purpose. Nor can anyone plausibly say that they signify nothing even though they happened. Nor that they are only words with a meaning and not events. Nor that what they signify has nothing to do with the Church. Rather, we should believe four things. They were wisely committed to memory and to writing. They happened. They signify something. And that something has to do with prefiguring the Church. Now that this book has been brought this far, it must be closed. Then we can trace the course of both cities after the flood and through the events that follow: the earthly city, which lives according to man, and the heavenly city, which lives according to God.

Book XVI

Noah to David
The city of God traced from Noah through Abraham and the patriarchs to the kings.

WHETHER ANY FAMILIES LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD ARE FOUND AFTER THE FLOOD, FROM NOAH TO ABRAHAM

Scripture names no godly person between Noah and Abraham, except in Noah's blessing of Shem and Japheth.

16.1 After the flood the holy city went on its course. Did its footprints continue unbroken, or were they interrupted by periods of ungodliness, so that not a single human being worshiped the one true God? This is hard to determine clearly from what the Scriptures say. The reason is that in the canonical books, after Noah, we find no one, until Abraham, whose piety is proclaimed by an explicit word of God. Noah, with his wife, his three sons and as many daughters-in-law, earned deliverance through the ark from the devastation of the flood. The one exception is that Noah commends two of his sons, Shem and Japheth, with a prophetic blessing, looking ahead and foreseeing what was to happen long afterward. Hence it also came about that he cursed his middle son, younger than the firstborn and older than the last, who had sinned against his father. He cursed him not in his own person but in his son, Noah's grandson, with these words: "Cursed be Canaan the servant; he shall be a slave to his brothers."[1] Canaan, moreover, had been born of Ham, who had not covered his sleeping father's nakedness but had instead exposed

1 Genesis 9:25.

it. Next Noah added the blessing of his two other sons, the eldest and the youngest: "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant; may God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the houses of Shem." This blessing is pregnant with prophetic meanings and wrapped in veils, as is Noah's planting of the vineyard, his drunkenness from its fruit, his being uncovered as he slept, and everything else that was done and written down there.[2]

WHAT WAS PROPHETICALLY FORESHADOWED IN THE SONS OF NOAH

Shem, Japheth and Ham prefigure Christ, the Church of the nations, and the heretics.

16.2 But now that the outcome has come about in his descendants, what had been covered is plain enough. For who, attending to these things carefully and intelligently, would not recognize them in Christ? Shem, from whose seed Christ was born in the flesh, means "named." And what is more "named" than Christ, whose name now spreads its fragrance everywhere? So much so that in the Song of Songs, by a prophecy that went before, it is even compared to ointment poured out. And in his houses, that is, in the churches, the breadth of the nations dwells, for Japheth means "breadth." Ham, moreover, means "hot." He is Noah's middle son, as if separating himself from both and remaining between the two, belonging neither to the first fruits of the Israelites nor to the fullness of the nations. What does he signify but the hot breed of heretics? They are hot not with the spirit of wisdom but with the spirit of impatience, which commonly makes the hearts of heretics seethe and disturb the peace of the saints.[3] Yet these things turn to the benefit of those who are making progress, as the apostle says: "There must also be heresies, so that those who are approved may be made manifest among you." Hence it is also written: "The well-taught son will

2 Genesis 9:26–27.

3 Song of Songs 1:3: "your name is ointment poured out."

be wise, and he will make use of the foolish servant." For many points of the catholic faith are stirred up by the hot restlessness of heretics. Then, so that they can be defended against them, they are examined more carefully, understood more clearly and preached more insistently, and a question raised by an adversary becomes an occasion for learning. Yet Noah's middle son can reasonably be seen as a figure not only of those who have most openly separated themselves. He also figures all who glory in the name of Christian and live dissolute lives. For they proclaim Christ's passion, which was signified by that man's nakedness, by professing it, and they dishonor it by doing evil. Of such people, then, it was said: "By their fruits you will know them."[4] That is why Ham was cursed in his son, as in his fruit, that is, in his work. So, fittingly, his son Canaan's name means "their movement," and what is that but their work? Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, are like the circumcision and the uncircumcision, or, as the apostle calls them in another way, Jews and Greeks, but those who are called and justified. In some way they learned of their father's nakedness, which signified the Savior's passion. Then they took a garment and laid it on their backs, went in with their faces turned away and covered their father's nakedness, and they did not see what they covered out of reverence. For in a certain way, in Christ's passion, we both honor what was done for us and turn away from the crime of the Jews. The garment signifies the sacrament; their backs signify the memory of things past. For the Church celebrates Christ's passion as already accomplished, no longer looking forward to it as still to come. It does so now, in the time when Japheth dwells in the houses of Shem and the bad brother lives in their midst.

But the bad brother, in his son, that is, in his work, is a servant, that is, a slave, to his good brothers. This happens when the good knowingly make use of the bad to exercise their patience or to grow in wisdom. For, as the apostle testifies, there are those who proclaim Christ without pure motives; "but

4 1 Corinthians 11:19; Proverbs 10:4 in the Greek version; Matthew 7:16.

whether in pretense," he says, "or in truth, let Christ be proclaimed." For he himself planted the vineyard of which the prophet says: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." And he drank of its wine (whether we understand here that cup of which he says, "Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink?"[5] and, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass," by which he undoubtedly signifies his passion; or whether, since wine is the fruit of the vine, the meaning is rather that he took on flesh and blood for us from that very vineyard, that is, from the race of the Israelites, so that he could suffer). And he became drunk, that is, he suffered, and he was uncovered. For there his weakness was uncovered, that is, it appeared. Of this weakness the apostle says: "Even though he was crucified out of weakness." Hence the same apostle says: "The weakness of God is stronger than human beings, and the foolishness of God is wiser than human beings." Scripture, after saying "And he was uncovered," added "in his house." With this it neatly shows that he was going to suffer the cross and death at the hands of the people of his own flesh, the household of his own blood, namely the Jews.[6] The reprobate proclaim this passion of Christ outwardly, in the mere sound of their voices, for they do not understand what they proclaim. The upright, however, hold so great a mystery in the inner self. Inwardly, in their hearts, they honor the weakness and foolishness of God, because it is stronger and wiser than human beings. This is figured by the fact that Ham went out and reported it outside. Shem and Japheth, by contrast, went in to veil it, that is, to honor it; in other words, they did it inwardly.

We search out these secrets of divine Scripture as best we can, some more aptly and some less so than others. Yet we faithfully hold as certain that these things were not done or written down without some prefiguring of what was to come. We also hold that they are to be referred only to Christ and his Church, which is the city of God. From the beginning of the human race this

5 Philippians 1:18; Isaiah 5:7; Matthew 20:22.
6 Matthew 26:39; 2 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Corinthians 1:25.

city has never lacked proclamation, and we see that proclamation fulfilled in every respect. So after the blessing of Noah's two sons and the cursing of the one between them, there is silence for more than a thousand years, down to Abraham. Scripture does not mention any righteous people who worshiped God devoutly. I would not believe that there were none. But if all of them were recorded, it would take too long, and this would be the diligence of history rather than the foresight of prophecy. So the writer of these sacred books, or rather the Spirit of God through him, pursues those things through which future events are foretold and not merely past ones narrated, provided they concern the city of God. For whatever is said here even about people who are not its citizens is said so that, by the contrast, the city may either profit or stand out. Not everything that is narrated as having happened, of course, should be thought to signify something as well. But for the sake of the things that do signify something, those that signify nothing are woven in too. For only the plowshare cuts into the earth, yet for this to be possible the other parts of the plow are also needed. And only the strings of lyres and similar musical instruments are fitted for making music. Yet so that they can be fitted, the framework of the instruments also contains other parts which the players do not strike, but to which the parts that resound when struck are attached. In the same way, prophetic history also tells some things that signify nothing, but to which the things that do signify something are attached and, in a sense, tied.

THE GENERATIONS OF THE THREE SONS OF NOAH

The seventy-three descendants of Noah's sons are listed; they are nations, not single men.

16.3 Next, then, we must consider the generations of Noah's sons. Whatever seems worth saying about them must be woven into this work, which sets out the course of both cities through time, the earthly and the heavenly. The account of them begins with the youngest son, who was called Japheth. Eight of his sons are

named, and seven grandsons from two of those sons, three from one and four from the other, making fifteen in all. The sons of Ham, Noah's middle son, are four. There are five grandsons from one of his sons and two great-grandsons from one grandson, so their total comes to eleven. After these have been listed, the text returns, as it were, to the head of the line and says: "Cush fathered Nimrod; he began to be a giant on the earth. He was a giant hunter against the Lord God. That is why they say, 'Like Nimrod, a giant hunter against the Lord.'[7] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From that land Asshur went out and built Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: this is the great city." Now this Cush, father of the giant Nimrod, is named first among the sons of Ham, and his five sons and two grandsons had already been counted. Either he fathered this giant after his grandsons were born, or, more plausibly, Scripture spoke of the giant separately because of his eminence. After all, his kingdom is also mentioned. Its beginning was that most renowned city of Babylon, together with the cities or regions mentioned beside it.[8] The text also says that Asshur went out from that land, the land of Shinar, which belonged to Nimrod's kingdom, and built Nineveh and the other cities listed with it. That happened long afterward. Scripture touched on it in passing on this occasion because of the fame of the Assyrian kingdom. That kingdom was marvelously enlarged by Ninus son of Belus, the founder of the great city of Nineveh, whose name was derived from his: it was called Nineveh after Ninus. Asshur, however, from whom the Assyrians descend, was not among the sons of Ham, Noah's middle son. He is found among the sons of Shem, who was Noah's eldest son. Hence it appears that those who later took possession of that giant's kingdom sprang from the progeny of Shem. From there they went out and founded other cities, the first of which

7 Genesis 10:8–9. Augustine's Latin, following the Greek Septuagint, reads "giant" and "against the Lord."
8 Genesis 10:10–12.

was called Nineveh after Ninus.[9] From here the text returns to another son of Ham, called Mizraim, and lists those he fathered. They are not individual men but seven nations. From the sixth of these, as if from a sixth son, a people called the Philistines is said to have come, making eight. Then the text returns again to Canaan, the son in whom Ham was cursed, and names the eleven he fathered. Next it states how far their territories reached, naming certain cities. And so, counting sons and grandsons, the text records thirty-one descendants of Ham. It remains to mention the sons of Shem, Noah's eldest son, for the account of these generations, which began with the youngest, reaches him step by step. But the point where the list of Shem's sons begins contains an obscurity that needs explanation to clear it up, since it bears greatly on the matter we are investigating. For it reads thus: "And to Shem was born, to him also, the father of all the sons, Eber; to the elder brother of Japheth." The order of the words is: "And to Shem was born Eber"; "also to him," that is, to Shem himself, "was born Eber"; and Shem is the father of all the sons. So Scripture meant Shem to be understood as the patriarch of all who sprang from his stock, whom it is about to list, whether sons, or grandsons and great-grandsons, and all those descended from the same source after them. Shem did not, of course, father this Eber directly. Eber is found fifth from him in the line of descent. For among other sons Shem fathered Arphaxad, Arphaxad fathered Cainan, Cainan fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber.[10] So it is not for nothing that Eber is named first in the progeny descending from Shem, ranked even ahead of the sons, though he is a descendant of the fifth generation. The reason can only be that the tradition is true that the Hebrews took their name from him, as *Heberaei*. Another opinion is possible, that they were called "Abrahamites," as it were, after Abraham. But surely the truth is that they were called *Heberaei* after Eber, and then, with one letter worn

9 In Greek tradition Ninus, son of Belus, was the legendary founder of the Assyrian empire.

10 Genesis 10:21. Augustine reads Eber as the one "born" to Shem.

away, *Hebraei*, Hebrews. Only the people of Israel were able to keep this language. In that people the city of God was on pilgrimage in the saints and was foreshadowed in all of them by sacramental signs. So first six sons of Shem are named. Then four grandsons of his were born from one of them. Likewise another of Shem's sons fathered a grandson of his, and from him in turn a great-grandson was born, and from him a great-great-grandson, who is Eber.[11] Eber fathered two sons, one of whom he called Peleg, which means "dividing." Then Scripture adds the reason for this name: "For in his days," it says, "the earth was divided." What this means will become clear later. The other son born to Eber fathered twelve sons, and so all the descendants of Shem come to twenty-seven. In total, then, the descendants of Noah's three sons come to seventy-three: fifteen from Japheth, thirty-one from Ham, twenty-seven from Shem. Then Scripture goes on: "These are the sons of Shem by their tribes, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations." And likewise of all of them: "These," it says, "are the tribes of the sons of Noah according to their generations, according to their nations. From them the islands of the nations were scattered over the earth after the flood."[12] From this we gather that there were then seventy-three nations, or rather seventy-two, as will be shown later, and that these were nations, not individual men. For earlier too, when the sons of Japheth had been listed, the conclusion was: "From these the islands of the nations were separated in their land, each according to its language, in their tribes and in their nations."[13]

Among the sons of Ham, moreover, nations are mentioned more openly in one place, as I showed above. Mizraim fathered those called the Ludim, and so on with the rest, up to seven nations. And after listing them all, Scripture concludes: "These are the sons of Ham by their tribes, according to their lan-

11 In Augustine's Latin Eber is spelled Heber, which makes the derivation of *Hebraei* (Hebrews) plain.
12 Genesis 10:25, 31–32.
13 Genesis 10:5.

guages, in their lands and in their nations." This, then, is why the sons of many are not mentioned. By their birth they were added to other nations, but they were unable to form nations themselves. For what other reason could there be? Eight sons of Japheth are listed, yet sons are mentioned as born to only two of them. Four sons of Ham are named, yet only the sons of three are added. Six sons of Shem are named, yet the posterity of only two is woven in. Did the rest remain without sons?[14] Heaven forbid we should believe that! But they certainly did not form nations that would make them worth mentioning, because, as they were born, they were added to other nations.

THE DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND THE BEGINNING OF BABYLON

Genesis tells how one language became many at Babylon, the city of Nimrod, "a giant hunter against the Lord."

16.4 These nations, then, are reported to have each had their own languages. Even so, the narrator returns to the time when there was one language for all, and from there he explains what happened to give rise to the diversity of languages. "And the whole earth," he says, "was one lip, and there was one speech for all. And it came about, as they moved from the East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they settled there. And a man said to his neighbor, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake them with fire.' And they had bricks for stone, and bitumen was their mortar. And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top will reach to heaven, and let us make a name for ourselves before we are scattered over the face of the whole earth.' And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.[15] And the Lord God said, 'Look, they are one race, and all of them have one lip. They have begun to do this, and now nothing that they attempt to do will fail them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language

14 Genesis 10:20.
15 Genesis 11:1–9.

there, so that none of them hears his neighbor's voice.' And the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city and the tower. For this reason its name was called Confusion, because there the Lord confused the lips of the whole earth; and from there the Lord God scattered them over the face of the whole earth." This city that was called Confusion is Babylon, whose marvelous construction is praised even in pagan history. For Babylon means "confusion." From this we gather that the giant Nimrod was its founder. This had been briefly hinted above, where Scripture, speaking of him, said that the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon. That is to say, Babylon held the leadership over the other cities and was the seat of the kingdom, as in a metropolis. It was not, however, completed to the extent that proud ungodliness had in mind. For the planned height was excessive; it was said to reach to heaven. This may refer to one tower of the city, which they were building as the chief among the others. Or it may refer to all the towers, signified by the singular number, just as one says "the soldier" and means thousands of soldiers, or "the frog," or "the locust." For that is how the multitude of frogs and of locusts was named in the plagues with which the Egyptians were struck through Moses. But what would empty human presumption have accomplished, however high it raised a mass of any kind into the sky against God? What if it overtopped all the mountains, or rose beyond the region of this cloudy air? In the end, what harm could any exaltation do to God, however great, whether spiritual or bodily? It is humility that builds a safe and true road to heaven, lifting up the heart to the Lord, not against the Lord, as this giant is called a hunter against the Lord. Some, not understanding this, were misled by an ambiguous Greek word, so that they translated not "against the Lord" but "before the Lord." For ἐναντίον [enantion] means both "against" and "before." This is the word in the psalm: "And let us weep before the Lord who made us." It is also the word in the book of Job, where it is written: "You have burst out in fury against the Lord." This, then, is how we should understand this

giant: a hunter against the Lord.[16] And what does this word "hunter" signify here but a deceiver, oppressor and destroyer of earthborn creatures? So he and his peoples were raising a tower against God, and that tower signifies ungodly pride. Rightly is an evil intent punished, even when it does not achieve its effect. And what kind of punishment was it? A ruler's domination lies in his tongue, so that was where pride was condemned. He would not understand God's commands so as to obey them, and so he was not understood when he gave commands to human beings. Thus that conspiracy was dissolved. Each one withdrew from the one he did not understand and joined himself only to the one he could speak with. And the nations were divided by languages and scattered across the lands, as it pleased God, who did this in hidden ways beyond our comprehension.

THE LORD'S COMING DOWN TO CONFUSE THE LANGUAGE OF THE TOWER BUILDERS

God does not move from place to place; he "comes down" by acting on earth, perhaps through angels.

16.5 Scripture says, "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built." The "sons of men" are not the sons of God but that society which lives according to man, the one we call the earthly city. Yet God does not move from place to place, since he is always wholly present everywhere. He is said to "come down" when he does something on earth that is done wondrously, outside the usual course of nature, and so in some way shows his presence. Nor does he learn anything at a particular time by seeing it, since he can never be ignorant of anything. He is said to see and know at a particular time what he causes to be seen and known. So that city was not being seen in the way God caused it to be seen when he showed how much it displeased him.[17] It could also be understood that God came down to that city because his angels,

16 Psalm 94:6 (95:6 in most English Bibles); Job 15:13.
17 Genesis 11:5.

in whom he dwells, came down. On this reading, what is added —"And the Lord God said, 'Look, they are one race, and all of them have one lip,'" and so on—and then the further words, "Come, let us go down and confuse their language there," would be a recapitulation, showing how the thing came about that had already been stated: "The Lord came down." For if he had already come down, what does "Come, let us go down and confuse" mean (words understood to be addressed to the angels), unless that he was coming down through the angels, since he was in the angels who came down? And it is fitting that he does not say, "Come, go down and confuse," but, "Let us confuse their language there." He shows in this way that he works through his ministers in such a manner that they too are God's co-workers, as the apostle says: "For we are God's fellow workers."[18]

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE SPEECH BY WHICH GOD SPEAKS TO THE ANGELS

"Let us make" points to the Trinity; God speaks to angels in his own ineffable way.

16.6 The words spoken when man was made, "Let us make man," could also have been understood of the angels, since he did not say, "Let me make." But what follows is "in our image," and it is not right to believe that man was made in the image of the angels, or that the angels and God share the same image. So the plural there is rightly understood as the plurality of the Trinity. Yet because this Trinity is one God, even after saying, "Let us make," Scripture says, "And God made man in the image of God." It did not say, "The gods made," or "in the image of the gods."[19] Here too the same Trinity could be understood, as though the Father had said to the Son and the Holy Spirit, "Come, let us go down and confuse their language there"—if there were anything that ruled out understanding it of the angels. But it is more fitting for the angels to come to God by holy movements, that is,

18 Genesis 11:6–7; 1 Corinthians 3:9.
19 Genesis 1:26–27.

by devout thoughts, through which they consult the unchangeable Truth as the eternal law in that heavenly senate-house of theirs. For they are not their own truth. Rather, as sharers in the creating Truth they move toward it as toward the fountain of life, so as to receive from it what they do not have from themselves. And this movement by which they come is a steady one in those who never draw away. Nor does God speak to the angels as we speak to one another, or to God, or to the angels, or as the angels speak to us, or God speaks to us through them. He speaks in his own ineffable way, and this is conveyed to us in our way. For God's loftier speech, prior to his act, is the unchangeable rationale of that very act. It has no noisy, passing sound, but a power that abides eternally and works in time. With this he speaks to the holy angels, but to us, who are set far off, in another way. And when we too catch something of such speech with our inner ears, we draw near to the angels. So I need not keep giving an account in this work of how God speaks. For either the unchangeable Truth speaks ineffably through itself to the minds of rational creatures, or it speaks through a changeable creature, whether by spiritual images to our spirit or by bodily voices to the bodily sense.

As for the words, "And now they will not fall short in anything they have tried to do," they were not said as a statement but as a kind of question, the way people making threats tend to speak. So someone says, "Will they not get their weapons ready and pursue from all over the city?" This is how the passage must be taken, as if he had said, "Will they not fall short in everything they have tried to do?" But put that way, it does not convey the threatening tone. For the benefit of slower readers, though, we have added a particle, namely *ne*, so as to say *nonne* ["will they not?"], since we cannot write down the tone of the speaker's voice.[20]

From those three men, then, the sons of Noah, seventy-three nations—or rather, as reasoning will show, seventy-two—and as

20 Genesis 11:6; the quotation is Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.592, Dido's words as Aeneas sails away.

many languages began to exist throughout the earth, and as they grew they filled even the islands. But the number of nations increased far more than that of languages. For in Africa too we know of a great many foreign peoples who share a single language. And who would doubt that, once the human race had multiplied, people could have crossed by ship to settle the islands?

WHETHER EVEN THE MOST REMOTE ISLANDS RECEIVED EVERY KIND OF ANIMAL FROM THOSE SAVED IN THE ARK FROM THE FLOOD

Wild animals may have reached distant islands by human transport, angels, or new births from the earth.

16.7 But there is a question about all the kinds of beasts that are not under human care and are not born from the earth, as frogs are, but propagate only through the mating of male and female, such as wolves and others of that sort. After the flood, in which everything that was not in the ark was destroyed, how could they have existed even on islands, if they were restored only from those whose kinds the ark preserved in both sexes? They could, of course, be thought to have swum across to islands, but only to nearby ones. Yet some islands lie so far from the mainland that it seems none of the beasts could have swum to them. It is not incredible that people captured them and brought them along, and in this way established their kinds where they lived, out of a passion for hunting. Nor should it be denied that they could have been carried across by the work of angels, at God's command or with his permission. But if they sprang from the earth according to their first origin, when God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature," then it becomes much clearer that all the kinds were in the ark not so much to restore the animals as to prefigure the various nations, for the sake of the mystery of the Church—that is, if the earth brought forth many animals on islands to which they could not cross.[21]

21 Genesis 1:24.

WHETHER CERTAIN MONSTROUS RACES OF HUMAN BEINGS DESCENDED FROM ADAM OR FROM THE SONS OF NOAH

Any race that is truly rational and mortal, however strange its body, descends from Adam.

16.8 It is also asked whether we should believe that certain monstrous races of human beings, which the histories of the nations tell of, descended from the sons of Noah, or rather from that one man from whom they too came. Some are said to have a single eye in the middle of the forehead; some to have the soles of their feet turned backward behind their legs; some to have the nature of both sexes, with the right breast a man's and the left a woman's, and by taking turns in intercourse with one another both to beget and to bear. Others are said to have no mouths and to live only by breathing through their noses; others to be a cubit tall, whom the Greeks call Pygmies from the word for cubit; and elsewhere the women are said to conceive at five and not to live beyond their eighth year.[22] They also say there is a people who have a single leg below the knee, which they do not bend, and who are wonderfully fast. They call them Sciapods, because in hot weather they lie on their backs on the ground and shade themselves with their feet. Others are said to have no neck and to have their eyes in their shoulders. And there are the other races of human beings, or near-human beings, depicted in mosaic on the seafront promenade at Carthage, drawn from books of what passes for more curious history. What shall I say of the Cynocephali, whose dog's heads and very barking proclaim them beasts rather than human beings? But there is no need to believe in all the races of human beings that are said to exist. Yet whoever is born anywhere as a human being—that is, a rational mortal animal—however unusual to our senses the shape of his body, or his color, or movement, or voice, or however unusual his nature in any power, any part, any quality, none of the faithful will doubt that he traces his origin from that

22 The Greek *pygmē* is a measure of length from the elbow to the knuckles.

one first-formed man.[23] Still, it is clear what nature has established in the majority, and what is remarkable precisely because it is rare.

The same account that is given of monstrous human births among us can be given of certain monstrous races. For God is the creator of all things. He himself knows where and when anything should be or should have been created, since he knows from which parts, by likeness or by difference, he weaves the beauty of the universe. But someone who cannot see the whole is offended by what looks like the deformity of a part, because he does not know what it fits with or what it relates to. We know of people born with more than five fingers on their hands and toes on their feet. This is a slighter deviation than any other. Still, heaven forbid that anyone should be so foolish as to think the Creator made a mistake in the number of human fingers, even if he does not know why he did this. So even if a greater diversity arises, he knows what he has done, whose works no one rightly finds fault with. At Hippo Zaritus there is a man whose soles are crescent-shaped, with only two toes on each, and his hands are similar. If there were a whole people like this, it would be added to that curious and wonder-filled history. Shall we then deny, on this account, that this man descended from that one man who was created first? Androgynes, whom people also call hermaphrodites, are very rare, yet it is hard for any age to be without them. In them both sexes appear in such a way that it is uncertain from which they ought to take their name. Yet the custom of speech has prevailed of naming them from the better one, that is, the masculine. For no one has ever called them *androgynaecae* or *hermaphroditae*. Some years ago, certainly within our memory, a person was born in the East who was double in the upper parts of the body and single in the lower.[24] There were two heads, two chests, four hands, but one belly and two feet, as in a single person. And he lived long

23 Sciapods means "shade-feet"; Cynocephali means "dog-heads."
24 Hippo Zaritus (Hippo Diarrhytus) is modern Bizerte in Tunisia. The Latin forms Augustine cites would be feminine ones.

enough for his fame to draw many people to see him. But who could list all the human offspring that are very unlike those from whom they were quite certainly born? Just as it cannot be denied that these trace their origin from that one man, so too with whatever races are reported to have, as it were, strayed in their bodily differences from the usual course of nature that most, indeed almost all, keep to. If they fall under that definition—that they are rational and mortal animals—it must be admitted that they draw their lineage from that same one first father of all. That is, if what is reported about the variety of those peoples, and their great difference from one another and from us, is true. For if we did not know that apes, long-tailed monkeys and sphinxes are not human beings but beasts, those historians who boast of their curiosity could lie to us with impunity and pass them off as races of human beings. But if those about whom such wonders have been written are human, what if God chose to create even some whole races this way so that we would not think that his wisdom, by which he shapes human nature, had erred like the skill of some less accomplished craftsman in the case of the monsters that must be born of human beings among us? So it should not seem absurd to us that, just as within each individual nation there are certain human monsters, so within the whole human race there are certain monstrous nations.[25] So, to close this question step by step and with caution: either what has been written about certain races of this kind is entirely without foundation; or, if such races exist, they are not human; or, if they are human, they are descended from Adam.

25 The ancients used "sphinx" for a kind of ape, perhaps a baboon.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE THAT THE LOWER PART OF THE EARTH, OPPOSITE TO WHERE WE LIVE, HAS ANTIPODES

Augustine rejects belief in people living on the opposite side of the earth.

16.9 As for the tale that there are antipodes—that is, people on the opposite side of the earth, where the sun rises when it sets for us, who plant their footsteps opposite to our feet—there is no reason at all to believe it. Those who claim this do not say they learned it from any historical knowledge. They conjecture it by a sort of reasoning: the earth is suspended within the vault of the sky, and the same place in the universe is both the lowest and the middle; from this they suppose that the other part of the earth, the part below, cannot be without human inhabitants. They do not notice that even if the universe is believed, or shown by some argument, to be spherical and round, it does not follow that the earth on that side is bare of the mass of waters. And then, even if it is bare, it does not immediately follow that it has people on it. For this Scripture in no way lies; it wins belief for its account of the past because its predictions are being fulfilled. And it is quite absurd to say that some people could have sailed from this side to that, crossing the immensity of the Ocean, and arrived there, so that a human race was established there too from that one first man. So let us look among those peoples of that time, who we gather were divided into seventy-two nations and as many languages, to see if we can find the city of God on its pilgrimage on earth. It was carried through to the flood and the ark, and is shown to have continued in the sons of Noah through their blessings—most of all in the eldest, who was named Shem, since Japheth was blessed in such a way that he would dwell in the houses of this brother of his.[26]

26 See Genesis 9:26–27.

THE DESCENDANTS OF SHEM, IN WHOSE LINE THE ORDER OF THE CITY OF GOD IS DIRECTED TOWARD ABRAHAM

The line from Shem to Abraham is traced, with the years from the flood to Abraham.

16.10 We must therefore keep to the line of generations from Shem himself, so that it may show us the city of God after the flood, just as the line of generations from the one named Seth showed it before the flood. That is why divine Scripture, after showing the earthly city in Babylon—that is, in "confusion"—goes back by way of recapitulation to the patriarch Shem and traces the generations from him down to Abraham. It also records the number of years: how old each man was when he fathered the son belonging to this line, and how long he lived. Here we must certainly recognize what I promised earlier, so that it becomes clear why it was said of the sons of Eber, "The name of one was Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided." For what else are we to understand by the earth being divided but the diversity of languages?[27] So the other sons of Shem, who are not relevant to this matter, are left out, and those are linked in the order of generations through whom Abraham can be reached—just as before the flood those were linked through whom Noah was reached by the generations descended from the son of Adam named Seth. This, then, is how this chain of generations begins: "These are the generations of Shem. Shem was a hundred years old when he fathered Arphaxad, in the second year after the flood. And Shem lived five hundred years after he fathered Arphaxad, and fathered sons and daughters, and died."[28] In the same way it goes through the others, saying in what year of his life each fathered the son belonging to this order of generations that extends to Abraham, and how many years he lived afterward, mentioning that he fathered sons and daughters. This is so that we may understand how the peoples

27 Genesis 10:25.
28 Genesis 11:10–11.

could have grown, and not get stuck childishly on the few men who are mentioned, wondering how such great expanses of lands and kingdoms could have been filled from the race of Shem—especially because of the kingdom of the Assyrians. From it came the famous Ninus, conqueror of the peoples of the East far and wide, who reigned with immense success and handed down to his descendants a vast and well-founded kingdom, destined to last a long time.[29]

But to avoid dwelling on this longer than necessary, we record in this order not how many years each man in this line of generations lived, but only in what year of his life he fathered his son. In this way we can add up the number of years from the end of the flood to Abraham, and also touch briefly and in passing on other matters for the sake of those on which necessity compels us to dwell. So in the second year after the flood Shem fathered Arphaxad. Arphaxad, when he was a hundred and thirty-five, fathered Cainan. Cainan, at a hundred and thirty, fathered Shelah. Shelah too was the same age when he fathered Eber. Eber was a hundred and thirty-four when he fathered Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided. Peleg himself lived a hundred and thirty years and fathered Reu; Reu, a hundred and thirty-two, and fathered Serug; Serug, a hundred and thirty, and fathered Nahor; Nahor, seventy-nine, and fathered Terah; Terah, seventy, and fathered Abram, whose name God later changed to Abraham. So the years from the flood to Abraham come to one thousand and seventy-two according to the common edition, that is, the edition of the Seventy translators.[30] In the Hebrew manuscripts, however, far fewer years are said to be found, and for this they give either no explanation or a very difficult one.

So when we look for the city of God among those seventy-two nations, we cannot assert that at the time when they had one language, that is, one speech, the human race had already

29 Ninus was the legendary founder of the Assyrian empire and of Nineveh.
30 The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible traditionally ascribed to seventy (or seventy-two) translators.

turned away from the worship of the true God, so that true piety survived only in these generations that descend from the seed of Shem through Arphaxad and lead to Abraham. But from the time of that pride in building a tower up to heaven, which signifies ungodly self-exaltation, a city—that is, a society—of the ungodly appeared. Whether it did not exist before or was hidden, or rather whether both cities continued—the godly one in the two sons of Noah who were blessed and in their descendants, and the ungodly one in the son who was cursed and in his offspring, from whom arose the giant who was a hunter against the Lord—is not easy to decide. For perhaps—and this is certainly more believable—even then, before Babylon began to be founded, there were despisers of God among the sons of those two, and worshipers of God among the sons of Ham. Yet we must believe that the earth has never lacked either kind of people. For when it was said, "All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one," in both psalms where these words occur we also read this: "Will not all who work iniquity come to know, those who devour my people as they eat bread?" So even then there was a people of God. Hence the words "There is no one who does good, not even one" were said of the sons of men, not of the sons of God.[31] For it was said beforehand: "God looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is anyone who understands or seeks God." Then come those words which show that all the sons of men—that is, those who belong to the city that lives according to man and not according to God—are reprobate.[32]

31 Psalm 13:3–4 (14:3–4 in most English Bibles); compare Psalm 52 (53).
32 Psalm 13:2 (14:2 in most English Bibles).

THAT THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF HUMANITY WAS THE ONE LATER CALLED HEBREW AFTER EBER, AND THAT IT REMAINED IN HIS FAMILY WHEN LANGUAGES WERE DIVIDED

The first common language survived in Eber's household and was later called Hebrew.

16.11 Therefore, just as the sons of pestilence were not lacking when all people had one language (for before the flood, too, there was one language, and yet everyone except the single household of righteous Noah deserved to be wiped out by the flood), so, when the nations were punished for their more arrogant impiety by the diversity of languages and were divided, and the city of the ungodly received the name of confusion, that is, was called Babylon, the household of Eber was not lacking. In it the language that had formerly belonged to all could remain. This is why, as I mentioned above, when the list of Shem's sons began, each of whom founded a nation, Eber was singled out first, although he was Shem's great-great-grandson, that is, he is found to be fifth in descent from him. So, because this language remained in his family while the other nations were divided among other languages, this language, which is believed, not without reason, to have been common to the human race before, was from then on called Hebrew.[33] For at that point it needed to be distinguished from the other languages by a name of its own, just as the others were also called by names of their own. But when there was only one, it was called nothing other than the human language, or human speech, since it was the only one in which the whole human race spoke.

Someone might say: "If the earth was divided by languages in the days of Peleg, Eber's son (that is, the people then on the earth were divided), then the language that had previously been common to all should rather have been named after him." But

33 Eber (Latin Heber) is the ancestor from whose name Augustine derives "Hebrew" (Genesis 10:21–25). Babylon (Babel) was taken to mean "confusion" (Genesis 11:9).

we must understand that Eber gave his son the name Peleg, which means "division," precisely because the boy was born to him when the earth was divided by languages, that is, at that very time. This is the meaning of the words: "In his days the earth was divided." For if Eber had not still been alive when the multitude of languages came about, the language that was able to remain with him would not have taken its name from his.[34] And so this must be believed to have been that first common language, since the multiplication and change of languages came as a punishment, and the people of God surely ought to have been exempt from this punishment. Nor is it without reason that this is the language Abraham kept. He could not pass it on to all his sons, but only to those who, descended through Jacob and growing together more conspicuously and prominently into the people of God, were able to have God's covenants and the lineage of Christ. Nor did Eber himself pour out this same language on all his descendants, but only on the line whose generations lead down to Abraham. Therefore, even if Scripture does not plainly state that there was some godly race of men when Babylon was being founded by the ungodly, this obscurity served not to cheat the inquirer's effort but rather to exercise it. For we read that originally there was one language for all. Eber is singled out before all the sons of Shem, although he arose fifth from him. And the language is called Hebrew, the language that the authority of the patriarchs and prophets preserved not only in their speech but also in the sacred writings. So when we ask where, at the division of languages, the formerly common language could have remained (and wherever it remained, beyond any doubt, the punishment that came through the change of languages did not fall there), what else suggests itself? Surely it remained in the nation of the man from whose name it took its name. And this was no small trace of the righteousness of this nation: when other nations were struck by the change of languages, no such penalty reached it.

But one point still troubles us: how Eber and his son Peleg could each have founded a nation if one language remained for both. And certainly there is one Hebrew nation, descended from Eber down to Abraham and through him thereafter, until Israel became a great people. How, then, did all the listed sons of the three sons of Noah each found a nation, if Eber and Peleg did not each found one? The more probable explanation, surely, is that the giant Nimrod also founded his own nation. He was named separately and more prominently because of the eminence of his dominion and his body, so that the number of seventy-two nations and languages still holds. Peleg, on the other hand, was mentioned not because he founded a nation (for his nation is the very same Hebrew one, with the same language), but because of the notable time: in his days the earth was divided.[35] Nor should it trouble us how the giant Nimrod could have lived to the time when Babylon was founded, when the confusion of languages took place and, as a result, the division of nations. Eber is sixth from Noah and Nimrod is fourth, but that does not mean they could not have been alive at the same time. This came about because people lived longer in the line where there are fewer generations and less long where there are more, or else those in the line with fewer generations were born later and those in the line with more were born earlier. Clearly we must understand that when the earth was divided, the other sons of Noah's sons, who are recorded as fathers of nations, were not only already born but were also old enough to have numerous families worthy of the names of nations. Hence we should by no means suppose that they were born in the order in which we read them listed. Otherwise, how could the twelve sons of Joktan, another son of Eber and brother of Peleg, already have founded nations, if Joktan was born after his brother Peleg, as he is listed after him? After all, the earth was divided at the time Peleg was born. So we must understand that Peleg was indeed

34 Genesis 10:25.

35 Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10:8–9), whom Augustine's Latin Bible calls a giant.

named first but was born long after his brother Joktan, whose twelve sons already had such large families that they could be divided into languages of their own. For the one who was younger could be mentioned first, just as, among the three sons of Noah, the sons of Japheth, the youngest of them, were listed first; then the sons of Ham, the middle one; and last the sons of Shem, the first and eldest. Some of the names of those nations have remained, so that even today one can see where they came from, as the Assyrians from Asshur and the Hebrews from Eber. Others have changed over the long course of time, so that even the most learned men, searching the most ancient histories, have barely been able to find the origins, not of all these nations, but of some of them. When the Egyptians are said to have sprung from Ham's son called Mizraim, for example, no echo of the original name sounds here. Nor does one sound in the case of the Ethiopians, who are said to belong to Ham's son named Cush. And if everything is considered, more names appear to have changed than to have remained.

THE POINT IN TIME AT ABRAHAM, FROM WHOM A NEW ORDER OF HOLY SUCCESSION IS TRACED

With Abraham the city of God becomes clearer; Terah's household alone kept true worship.

16.12 Let us now look at the progress of the city of God from the juncture of time marked by our father Abraham. From there our knowledge of it begins to be clearer, and there we read plainer divine promises, which we now see fulfilled in Christ. As we have learned, then, from holy Scripture, Abraham was born in the region of the Chaldeans, a land that belonged to the Assyrian kingdom. And among the Chaldeans, even then, ungodly superstitions prevailed, as they did among the other nations. There was, therefore, only one household, that of Terah, Abraham's father, in which the worship of the one true God had remained. In it alone, so far as can be believed, the Hebrew language had also survived by then, while the rest of Eber's descendants were gradually drifting away into other languages and other nations.

(Terah himself, however, is reported by Joshua son of Nun to have served foreign gods in Mesopotamia, just as the people of God, by then more clearly identified, did in Egypt.) So, just as in the flood of waters the one household of Noah had remained to restore the human race, so in the flood of many superstitions throughout the whole world the one household of Terah had remained, and in it the seedling of the city of God was preserved.[36] Earlier, after the generations down to Noah had been listed with their numbers of years and the cause of the flood had been explained, Scripture says, before God began to speak to Noah about building the ark: "These are the generations of Noah." Here, likewise, after the generations from Noah's son, the one called Shem, down to Abraham have been listed, a notable juncture is marked in the same way, with the words: "These are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram and Nahor and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land in which he was born, in the region of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran." This Haran was the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah, and this Iscah is believed to be the same as Sarah, Abraham's wife.[37]

WHY NO MENTION IS MADE OF NAHOR, SON OF TERAH, WHEN TERAH LEFT THE CHALDEANS AND MOVED TO MESOPOTAMIA

Nahor is left out of the move to Haran, probably because he had lapsed into Chaldean superstition.

16.13 Next it is told how Terah left the region of the Chaldeans with his family, came into Mesopotamia and settled in Haran. Nothing is said, however, of one of his sons, named Nahor, as if Terah had not taken him along. For the account runs thus: "And

36 Joshua 24:2.

37 Genesis 6:9 and 11:27–29. Before God renamed them (16.28), Abraham and Sarah were called Abram and Sarai.

Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and led them out of the region of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. And he came to Haran and settled there." Nahor and his wife Milcah are not named anywhere here. But later, when Abraham sent his servant to get a wife for his son Isaac, we find this written: "And the servant took ten camels from his master's camels, and some of all his master's goods with him, and he rose and set out for Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor."[38] This and other testimonies of this sacred history show that Nahor, Abraham's brother, also left the region of the Chaldeans and settled in Mesopotamia, where Abraham had lived with his father. Why, then, did Scripture not mention him when Terah set out from the Chaldean nation with his family and settled in Mesopotamia? There it mentions not only his son Abraham but also his daughter-in-law Sarah and his grandson Lot as having been taken with him. Why, do we suppose, unless perhaps because Nahor had fallen away from the godliness of his father and brother and attached himself to the superstition of the Chaldeans? Afterward he emigrated too, either out of repentance or because he was suspected and suffered persecution. For in the book entitled Judith, when Holofernes, the enemy of the Israelites, asked what nation that was and whether he should make war on it, Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, answered him: "Let my lord hear a word from the mouth of his servant, and I will tell you the truth about the people who live near you in this hill country, and no lie will come out of your servant's mouth. For this race is descended from the people of the Chaldeans, and formerly they lived in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, who were glorious in the land of the Chaldeans. Instead, they turned aside from the way of their ancestors and worshiped the God of heaven, whom they had come to know. And the Chaldeans cast them out from the presence of their gods, and they fled to Meso-

38 Genesis 11:31 and 24:10. The city of Haran (Latin Charra) is distinct from Terah's son Haran (Latin Arran).

potamia and lived there many days.[39] And their God told them to leave their dwelling place and go into the land of Canaan, and they lived there," and so on, as Achior the Ammonite tells it. From this it is clear that the household of Terah suffered persecution from the Chaldeans for the true godliness with which they worshiped the one true God.

THE YEARS OF TERAH, WHO COMPLETED HIS LIFE IN HARAN

Terah lived two hundred and five years and completed his life in Haran.

16.14 Terah died in Mesopotamia, where he is said to have lived two hundred and five years, and after his death Scripture begins to set out the promises God made to Abraham. It is written thus: "And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran." This is not to be taken to mean that he spent all these days there, but that he completed there all the days of his life, which came to two hundred and five years. Otherwise we would not know how many years Terah lived, since we do not read in what year of his life he came to Haran. And it is absurd to suppose that in this series of generations, where the number of years each man lived is carefully recorded, the number of years of this one man's life alone was not committed to memory.[40] For some people mentioned by the same Scripture have their years passed over in silence, but they are not in this line, in which the reckoning of time is woven together from the passing of fathers and the succession of sons. This line, running from Adam to Noah and from there to Abraham, contains no one without the number of years of his life.

39 Judith 5:5–9 in Augustine's Latin Bible. Holofernes is the Assyrian general whose siege of an Israelite town is the subject of the book.
40 Genesis 11:32.

THE TIME OF ABRAHAM'S DEPARTURE, WHEN AT GOD'S COMMAND HE LEFT HARAN

Abraham left Haran at seventy-five, while his father was still alive; Stephen's account agrees.

16.15 After the death of Terah, Abraham's father, has been recorded, we then read: "And the Lord said to Abram: 'Leave your country and your kindred and your father's house,'" and so on. But we must not suppose that, because this follows in the text of the book, it also followed in the time of the events. If that were so, the problem would be insoluble. For after these words of God addressed to Abraham, Scripture says: "And Abram went out, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he went out from Haran." How can this be true if he left Haran after his father's death?[41] For Terah was seventy years old when he fathered Abraham, as was indicated above. Add to this number the seventy-five years Abraham had when he left Haran, and the total is one hundred and forty-five. Terah, then, was that old when Abraham left that city of Mesopotamia. Abraham was in his seventy-fifth year, and therefore his father, who had fathered him in his own seventieth year, was, as has been said, in his hundred and forty-fifth. So Abraham did not leave there after his father's death, that is, after the two hundred and five years his father lived. Rather, the year of his departure from that place was his own seventy-fifth, and so it is beyond doubt that it was the hundred and forty-fifth of his father, who had fathered him in his seventieth year. So we must understand that Scripture, as is its custom, went back to a time that the narrative had already passed. Earlier, in the same way, after mentioning the sons of Noah's sons, it said that they were in their languages and nations. Yet afterward, as though this also followed in the order of time, it says: "And the whole earth was one lip, and there was one speech for all." How, then, were they divided according to their nations and according to their lan-

41 Genesis 12:1 and 12:4.

guages, if there was one language for all? Only because the narrative went back to recapitulate what it had already passed.[42] So here, too, Scripture first says: "And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran." It had passed over the next event so as to finish what it had begun about Terah, and now it goes back to it and says: "And the Lord said to Abram: 'Leave your country,'" and so on. After these words of God it adds: "And Abram went out, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he went out from Haran." So this happened when his father was in his hundred and forty-fifth year of age, for that was Abraham's seventy-fifth. This problem has also been solved in another way. On this view, Abraham's seventy-five years when he left Haran are counted from the time he was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans, not from his birth, as if he should be regarded as having been born at that point instead.[43]

But blessed Stephen, when telling these events in the Acts of the Apostles, says: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him: 'Leave your country and your kindred and your father's house, and come into the land that I will show you.'" According to these words of Stephen, God did not speak to Abraham after the death of his father, who certainly died in Haran, where his son lived with him. He spoke to him before he lived in that city, although he was already in Mesopotamia. So Abraham had already left the Chaldeans.[44] So when Stephen adds, "Then Abraham went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran," he is not saying what happened after God spoke to him. For Abraham did not leave the land of the Chaldeans after those words of God, since Stephen says that God spoke to him when he was in Mesopotamia. Rather, the word "Then" refers to that whole period, that is, from the time he left

42 Genesis 10:31 and 11:1.
43 A Jewish tradition read "Ur of the Chaldeans" as "the fire of the Chaldeans" (Hebrew *ur*, "fire") and told of Abraham's rescue from a furnace.
44 Acts 7:2–3.

the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. Likewise, in what follows, "And from there, after his father died, he settled him in this land in which you and your fathers now live," Stephen does not say, "After his father died, he left Haran," but, "From there he settled him here, after his father died."[45] We must understand, therefore, that God spoke to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. Abraham then came to Haran with his father, keeping God's command to himself, and left from there in his own seventy-fifth year, his father's hundred and forty-fifth. Stephen says that it was his settlement in the land of Canaan, not his departure from Haran, that took place after his father's death, because his father was already dead when Abraham bought land there and began to own it as his own property. When Abraham was already established in Mesopotamia, that is, had already left the land of the Chaldeans, God said to him: "Leave your country and your kindred and your father's house." This was said not so that he should remove his body from there, which he had already done, but so that he should tear his mind away. For he had not left there in his mind if he was still held by the hope of returning and by longing for it. That hope and that longing had to be cut off, by God's command and help and by Abraham's obedience. It is certainly not incredible to suppose that, after Nahor later followed his father, Abraham then fulfilled the Lord's command to leave Haran with his wife Sarah and his brother's son Lot.

THE ORDER AND NATURE OF GOD'S PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM

God promised Abraham two things: the land of Canaan for his seed, and blessing for all nations.

16.16 Now we must consider the promises God made to Abraham. For in them clearer oracles of our God, that is, of the true God, began to appear concerning the people of the godly, whom prophetic authority foretold. The first of these reads as follows:

45 Acts 7:4.

"And the Lord said to Abram: 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and from your father's house into the land that I will show you; and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be blessed; and I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse; and in you all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.'"[46] We should note, then, that two things were promised to Abraham. One was that his seed would possess the land of Canaan. This is signified where it is said: "Go into the land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation." The other, far more excellent, concerns not the carnal but the spiritual seed, through which he is the father not of the one nation of Israel but of all the nations that follow in the footsteps of his faith. This promise began to be made in these words: "And in you all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed." Eusebius thinks this promise was made in the seventy-fifth year of Abraham's life, as though Abraham left Haran as soon as it was made, since Scripture cannot be contradicted where we read: "Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran." But if this promise was made in that year, then Abraham was certainly already living in Haran with his father.[47] For he could not have left it unless he had first lived there. Is Stephen, then, contradicted when he says: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran"? But we must understand that everything happened in the same year: God's promise before Abraham lived in Haran, his stay in Haran, and his departure from there. We know this not only because Eusebius in his chronicles counts from the year of this promise and shows that the exodus from Egypt, when the law was given, came four hundred and thirty years later, but also because the apostle Paul mentions it.[48]

46 Genesis 12:1–3.
47 Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 260–339), church historian, whose *Chronicle* Augustine follows for biblical and world dates. The quotation is Genesis 12:4.
48 Acts 7:2.

THE THREE OUTSTANDING KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS, ONE OF WHICH, THE ASSYRIAN, WAS ALREADY PREEMINENT WHEN ABRAHAM WAS BORN

In Abraham's time the Sicyonian, Egyptian and Assyrian kingdoms flourished; Assyria under Ninus was supreme.

16.17 In that same period there were eminent kingdoms of the nations, in which the city of the earth-born—that is, the fellowship of people who live according to man—stood out most conspicuously under the dominion of the angels who had deserted God. These were three kingdoms: those of the Sicyonians, the Egyptians, and the Assyrians. But the kingdom of the Assyrians was far more powerful and exalted. For the famous king Ninus, son of Belus, had subjugated the peoples of all Asia except India. By Asia I now mean not that part which is one province of this greater Asia, but what is called Asia as a whole. Some have placed it as one of two parts of the whole world, but most as one of three, so that the parts altogether are Asia, Europe, and Africa —though they did not make the division equal. For the part called Asia reaches from the south through the east to the north; Europe from the north to the west; and Africa from there, from the west to the south.[49] So it seems that two, Europe and Africa, hold half the world, and Asia alone the other half. But those two have been made separate parts because between them flows in from the Ocean all the water that runs among the lands, and this forms for us the Great Sea. Therefore, if you divide the world into two parts, East and West, Asia will be in one, and Europe and Africa in the other. So of the three kingdoms that then excelled, that of the Sicyonians was not under the Assyrians, since it lies in Europe. But how could that of the Egyptians not be subject to those who held all Asia, with only the Indians, as is reported, excepted? In Assyria, therefore, the dominion of the

49 Sicyon was a city in the northern Peloponnese whose list of kings ancient chronographers counted among the oldest. Ninus was the legendary founder of the Assyrian empire, son of Belus.

ungodly city had prevailed. Its capital was that Babylon whose name, meaning "confusion," is most fitting for the earth-born city.[50] There Ninus was already reigning after the death of his father Belus, who had been the first to reign there, for sixty-five years. His son Ninus, who succeeded his father on the throne after his death, reigned fifty-two years, and was in the forty-third year of his reign when Abraham was born. That was about the twelve hundredth year before the founding of Rome, which is, as it were, a second Babylon in the west.

GOD'S SECOND ADDRESS TO ABRAHAM, IN WHICH THE LAND OF CANAAN IS PROMISED TO HIM AND HIS OFFSPRING

At Shechem God promises the land to Abraham's seed according to the flesh.

16.18 So Abraham left Haran in the seventy-fifth year of his life and the hundred and forty-fifth of his father's, and went on with Lot, his brother's son, and Sarah his wife into the land of Canaan. He came as far as Shechem, where he again received a divine oracle, of which it is written: "And the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him: 'To your seed I will give this land.'" Nothing is said here about that seed through which he was made the father of all nations, but only about the seed through which he is the father of the one nation of Israel; for it was by this seed that that land was possessed.[51]

SARAH'S CHASTITY, PROTECTED BY GOD IN EGYPT, WHEN ABRAHAM HAD SAID SHE WAS NOT HIS WIFE BUT HIS SISTER

In Egypt Abraham calls Sarah his sister, and God protects her from Pharaoh.

16.19 Then, having built an altar there and called upon God, Abraham set out from there and lived in the desert, and from there

50 The Great Sea is the Mediterranean.
51 Genesis 12:7.

he was forced by the pressure of famine to go into Egypt. There he called his wife his sister, without telling any lie; for she was that too, since she was a close blood relative—just as Lot, by the same kind of kinship, being his brother's son, is called his brother. So he kept silent that she was his wife, but did not deny it. He entrusted the protection of his wife's chastity to God, while as a man he guarded against human treachery; for if he had not guarded against the danger as far as it could be guarded against, he would have been tempting God rather than hoping in God. I have said enough about this matter in reply to the slanders of Faustus the Manichaean. In the end, what Abraham had presumed of the Lord came to pass. For Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who had taken her as his wife, was severely afflicted and gave her back to her husband.[52] Far be it from us to believe that she was defiled here by intercourse with another man; for it is much more credible that Pharaoh was prevented from doing this by great afflictions.

THE PARTING OF LOT AND ABRAHAM, AGREED ON WITH THEIR LOVE UNBROKEN

Abraham and Lot part peacefully, and the elder divides while the younger chooses.

16.20 So when Abraham had returned from Egypt to the place from which he had come, Lot, his brother's son, now parted from him for the land of Sodom, with their love unimpaired. For they had grown rich and had begun to have many herdsmen for their livestock; and since these were quarreling among themselves, they avoided in this way a combative discord between their households. For from this, human nature being what it is, some quarrel might also have arisen between the two of them. Accordingly, these are the words Abraham spoke to Lot to guard against this evil: "Let there be no quarrel between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are

52 Augustine's *Against Faustus the Manichaean* (Book 22) defends the patriarchs against the attacks of Faustus, a Manichaean bishop.

brothers. Look, is not the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, I will go to the left."[53] Perhaps it is from this that the peaceable custom arose among people that, when some earthly property has to be shared, the elder divides and the younger chooses.

GOD'S THIRD PROMISE, IN WHICH HE PLEDGES THE LAND OF CANAAN TO ABRAHAM AND HIS OFFSPRING FOREVER

God promises Abraham's seed the land forever and numbers as many as the sand.

16.21 So Abraham and Lot parted and lived separately—out of the need to support their households, not from the ugliness of discord—Abraham in the land of Canaan and Lot in Sodom. Then the Lord said to Abraham in a third oracle: "Look around with your eyes and see, from the place where you now are, toward the north and the southwest and the east and the sea; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed forever, and I will make your seed like the sand of the earth. If anyone can count the sand of the earth, your seed too will be counted. Rise and walk through the land in its length and in its breadth, for I will give it to you." Whether this promise also includes the one by which he was made the father of all nations is not clearly evident.[54] For this might seem to refer to it: "And I will make your seed like the sand of the earth." This is said in the figure of speech the Greeks call *hyperbole*, which is certainly figurative, not literal. No one who has studied Scripture doubts that it habitually uses this figure, as it does the others. This figure—that is, this manner of speaking—occurs when what is said is far greater than what is meant by it. For who does not see how incomparably larger the number of grains of sand is than the number of all human beings could be, from Adam himself to the end of the world? How much larger, then, than the seed of Abraham—not only the seed that belongs to the nation of Israel,

53 Genesis 13:8–9.
54 Genesis 13:14–17.

but also the seed that exists and will exist throughout the whole world among all nations by imitation of his faith! Compared with the multitude of the ungodly, this seed is surely found among few; yet even these few form a countless multitude of their own, which is signified by hyperbole through the sand of the earth. Of course, this multitude promised to Abraham is countless not to God but to human beings; to God not even the sand of the earth is countless. Therefore, since not only the nation of Israel but the whole seed of Abraham—which includes the promise of many children not according to the flesh but according to the spirit—is more fittingly compared to the multitude of the sand, the promise can be understood here as made about both. But we said that this is not clearly evident because the multitude of that single nation too, born of Abraham according to the flesh through his grandson Jacob, has grown so much that it has filled almost every part of the world. So it too could be compared by hyperbole to the multitude of the sand, since it alone is also countless to a human being. Certainly no one doubts that only the land called Canaan is meant. But the words "I will give it to you and to your seed forever" may trouble some, if they understand "forever" as meaning for eternity. But if they take "forever" here in the sense that, as we faithfully hold, the beginning of the age to come starts from the end of the present one, nothing will trouble them. For although the Israelites have been expelled from Jerusalem, they still remain in other cities of the land of Canaan and will remain there until the end; and when that whole land is inhabited by Christians, they too are the seed of Abraham.[55]

55 The Latin *usque in saeculum* ("forever," literally "until the age") can mean either for all eternity or for the whole of this present age.

ABRAHAM'S VICTORY OVER THE ENEMIES OF SODOM, WHEN HE RESCUED LOT FROM CAPTIVITY AND WAS BLESSED BY THE PRIEST MELCHIZEDEK

Abraham rescues Lot and is blessed by Melchizedek, a figure of the Christian sacrifice.

16.22 Having received this promise in answer, Abraham moved and settled in another place in the same land, by the oak of Mamre, which was at Hebron. Later, five kings were waging war against four; the people of Sodom were defeated, and Lot too was taken captive. Abraham freed him from the enemies who had attacked Sodom, leading into battle three hundred and eighteen slaves born in his household. He won the victory for the kings of Sodom and refused to take any of the spoils, though the king for whom he had won it offered them. And it was then that he was blessed by Melchizedek, who was a priest of God Most High. Many great things are written about him in the epistle entitled To the Hebrews, which many say is by the apostle Paul, though some deny it.[56] For there first appeared the sacrifice that is now offered to God by Christians throughout the whole world. And so is fulfilled what was said long after this event, through prophecy, to Christ, who was still to come in the flesh: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"—not, that is, according to the order of Aaron, an order that was to be removed when the realities dawned that were foreshadowed by those shadows.[57]

56 Melchizedek, king of Salem, appears in Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 5–7 interprets him as a figure of Christ.
57 Psalm 109:4 (110:4 in most English Bibles).

THE LORD'S WORD TO ABRAHAM PROMISING HIM DESCENDANTS AS MANY AS THE STARS; BELIEVING IT, HE WAS JUSTIFIED WHILE STILL UNCIRCUMCISED

Abraham's seed will be like the stars; his faith is reckoned as righteousness before circumcision.

16.23 Then too the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. When God promised him protection and a very great reward, Abraham, anxious about his posterity, said that a certain Eliezer, a slave born in his household, would be his heir. At once an heir was promised him—not that household slave, but one who would come forth from Abraham himself—and again a countless seed, not like the sand of the earth but like the stars of heaven. Here, it seems to me, what is promised is rather a posterity exalted in heavenly happiness. For as far as number goes, what are the stars of heaven compared with the sand of the earth? Unless someone says that this comparison too is apt insofar as the stars also cannot be counted, since we must believe that not all of them can be seen. For the more keenly one looks, the more one sees.[58] So it is rightly thought that some are hidden even from those with the sharpest sight, not to mention the stars that are said to rise and set in another part of the world very far from us. Finally, all who boast of having grasped and recorded the whole number of the stars, like Aratus or Eudoxus or any others there may be, are set at nothing by the authority of this book. Here, of course, is placed the statement the apostle recalls in order to commend the grace of God: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"—so that the circumcision should not boast and refuse to admit the uncircumcised nations to faith in Christ. For when this happened, when Abraham believed and his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, he had not yet been circumcised.[59]

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58 Genesis 15:1–5.

59 Aratus (3rd century BC) wrote the astronomical poem *Phaenomena*; Eudoxus of Cnidus (4th century BC) was an astronomer and mathematician. The quotation is Genesis 15:6, cited in Romans 4:3.

THE MEANING OF THE SACRIFICE ABRAHAM WAS COMMANDED TO OFFER WHEN HE ASKED TO BE TAUGHT ABOUT WHAT HE HAD BELIEVED

The heifer, goat, ram and birds of Abraham's sacrifice prefigure Israel, the spiritual, and the last judgment.

16.24 In the same vision, as God was speaking to him, he also said this to him: "I am God, who brought you out of the region of the Chaldeans, to give you this land, that you may be its heir." When Abraham asked by what he would know that he would be its heir, God said to him: "Take for me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a dove." He took all these for him, divided them in the middle, and laid each half facing the other; but the birds he did not divide. And, as it is written, "birds came down upon the bodies that had been divided, and Abram sat down by them."[60] "About sunset a dread fell upon Abram, and behold, a great dark fear came upon him; and it was said to Abram: 'Know for certain that your seed will be a stranger in a land not its own, and they will reduce them to slavery and afflict them for four hundred years; but the nation they serve I will judge. After this they will come out to this place with many possessions. But you shall go to your fathers in peace, nourished in a good old age. In the fourth generation they will return here. For the sins of the Amorites are not yet complete up to now.' And when the sun was already setting, a flame appeared, and behold, a smoking furnace and lamps of fire, which passed through between those divided pieces."[61] "On that day the Lord God made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your seed I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the

60 Genesis 15:7–11.
61 Genesis 15:12–17.

Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.'"[62]

All these things were done and said by God in a vision. To discuss each of them in detail would take too long and would go beyond the purpose of this work. So we ought to know what is enough: that after it was said that Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, he did not lapse in faith when he said, "Lord and Master, by what shall I know that I will be its heir?" (for it was the inheritance of that land that had been promised). For he does not say, "How shall I know?" as though he did not yet believe; he says, "By what shall I know?"—asking that some likeness be applied to the thing he had believed, by which its manner might be recognized. In the same way, it is no distrust on the part of the Virgin Mary when she says: "How shall this be, since I do not know a man?"[63] for she was certain about what would happen; she was asking about the manner in which it would happen, and when she had asked, she heard it. So here too a likeness was given from the animals—a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, and two birds, a turtledove and a dove—so that he might know that what he no longer doubted would happen would happen in accordance with these. Perhaps the heifer signifies the people placed under the yoke of the law; the she-goat the same people, destined to be sinful; the ram the same people, destined also to reign. (These animals are said to be three years old because there are notable junctures of time from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to David—who, after Saul was rejected, was the first established by the Lord's will in the kingship of the nation of Israel—and in this third period, which extends from Abraham to David, that people grew up, as if passing through its third stage of life.) Or perhaps these things signify something else more fitting. Either way, I would in no way doubt that the spiritual were prefigured in them by the addition of the turtledove and the dove. That is why it is said, "But the birds he did not divide": the carnal are divided

62 Genesis 15:18–21.
63 Luke 1:34.

among themselves, but the spiritual in no way—whether they withdraw from the busy dealings of human life, like the turtledove, or live in their midst, like the dove. Yet both birds are simple and harmless, signifying that even within the people of Israel itself, to whom that land was to be given, there would be undivided children of the promise and heirs of the kingdom who would abide in eternal happiness. The birds descending upon the bodies that had been divided indicate nothing good, but rather the spirits of this air, seeking some food of their own in the division of the carnal. And Abraham's sitting down by them signifies that even amid those divisions of the carnal the true faithful will persevere to the end. And the dread that fell upon Abraham about sunset, and the great dark fear, signify that about the end of this age there will be great turmoil and tribulation for the faithful, of which the Lord says in the gospel: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning."[64]

As for what was said to Abraham—"Know for certain that your seed will be a stranger in a land not its own, and they will reduce them to slavery and afflict them for four hundred years"—this is a very plain prophecy about the people of Israel, who were to be enslaved in Egypt. It does not mean that this people was to spend four hundred years in that slavery under the oppressing Egyptians, but that this would happen within those four hundred years. For it is written of Terah, Abraham's father, "And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years," not because they were all spent there, but because they were completed there. In the same way, the words "and they will reduce them to slavery and afflict them for four hundred years" were inserted here because this number was completed during that affliction, not because it was spent there in its entirety.[65] The years are said to be four hundred, of course, as a full, round number, though they are somewhat more, whether they are counted from the time when these things were prom-

64 Matthew 24:21.
65 Genesis 11:32.

ised to Abraham, or from the birth of Isaac, because of the seed of Abraham of which these things are foretold. For, as we have already said above, from Abraham's seventy-fifth year, when the first promise was made to him, to Israel's exodus from Egypt, four hundred and thirty years are counted. The apostle mentions them in this way: "This is what I mean," he says: "the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not annul a covenant confirmed by God, so as to nullify the promise."[66] So these four hundred and thirty years could already be called four hundred, since they are not many more. How much more so, since some of this number had already passed when those things were shown and spoken to Abraham in the vision, or when Isaac was born to his hundred-year-old father, twenty-five years after the first promise. At that point four hundred and five of those four hundred and thirty years remained, and these God chose to call four hundred. And no one would doubt that the rest of what follows in God's prediction refers to the people of Israel.

Then what is added—"And when the sun was already setting, a flame appeared, and behold, a smoking furnace and lamps of fire, which passed through between those divided pieces"—signifies that at the end of the world the carnal will be judged by fire. For the affliction of the city of God, such as has never been before, which is expected to come under the Antichrist, is signified by Abraham's dark fear about sunset, that is, when the end of the world is already drawing near. In the same way, at sunset, that is, at the very end, this fire signifies the day of judgment, which separates the carnal who are to be saved through fire from those who are to be damned in fire. Next, the covenant made with Abraham specifically points out the land of Canaan and names eleven nations in it, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. So it is not from the great river of Egypt,

66 Galatians 3:17.

that is, the Nile, but from the small one that divides Egypt from Palestine, where the city of Rhinocorura stands.[67]

HAGAR, SARAH'S SLAVE WOMAN, WHOM SARAH HERSELF WANTED TO BE ABRAHAM'S CONCUBINE

Abraham took Hagar to have children at Sarah's wish, not out of lust.

16.25 From here on follow the times of Abraham's sons, one by Hagar the slave woman and the other by Sarah the free woman. We have already spoken of them in the previous book. As for what was actually done, Abraham must in no way be branded with any crime on account of this concubine. For he used her to beget offspring, not to satisfy lust. He did so not to insult his wife but rather in obedience to her. She believed it would be a consolation for her barrenness if, since nature could not make the fertile womb of her slave woman her own, she could do so by her will. By that right of which the apostle says, "Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does," a wife might use another woman to bear what she could not bear herself. Here there is no craving for wantonness, no foulness of wickedness.[68] The slave woman is handed over by the wife to the husband for the sake of offspring, and she is received by the husband for the sake of offspring. Both seek not the indulgence of guilt but the fruit of nature. Later, once the slave woman was pregnant, she grew proud toward her barren mistress, and Sarah, with a woman's suspicion, chose to blame her husband for it. Even then Abraham showed that he had been not an enslaved lover but a free begetter. He showed that in Hagar he had guarded the chastity of his marriage to Sarah, and had fulfilled not his own pleasure but her will. He had received her, not sought her; gone in to her, not clung to her; sown seed, not loved. For he says, "Look, your slave woman is in your hands; treat her as you please." What a man, using women in a

67 Rhinocorura is modern El-Arish on the coast of Sinai. The stream there, the Wadi el-Arish, is the biblical "Brook of Egypt."
68 1 Corinthians 7:4.

manly way: his wife temperately, his slave woman compliantly, none intemperately![69]

GOD'S ASSURANCE TO ABRAHAM, IN WHICH HE PROMISES THE OLD MAN A SON BY BARREN SARAH, MAKES HIM FATHER OF NATIONS, AND SEALS THE PROMISE WITH THE SACRAMENT OF CIRCUMCISION

God renames Abram, promises Isaac and the nations, and commands circumcision on the eighth day.

16.26 After this Ishmael was born of Hagar. In him Abraham might have thought that the promise made to him had been fulfilled. That promise came when he had wished to adopt his home-born slave, and God said, "This man shall not be your heir; but the one who will come out of you, he shall be your heir." So that he would not think this promise fulfilled in the slave woman's son, the Lord appeared to him when he was already ninety-nine years old. He said to him: "I am God; be pleasing in my sight and be blameless, and I will set my covenant between me and you, and I will fill you to abundance." And Abraham fell on his face.[70] "And God spoke to him, saying: 'As for me, see, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. Your name shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, because I have made you the father of many nations. I will increase you very greatly, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come out of you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and between your seed after you throughout their generations as an eternal covenant, to be God to you and to your seed after you. And I will give to you and to your seed after you the land in which you are a sojourner, all the land of Canaan, as an eternal possession, and I will be their God.' And God said to Abraham: 'But you shall keep my covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. And this is the covenant that you shall keep between

69 Genesis 16:6.

70 Genesis 15:4; 17:1–3. Augustine's word for "covenant," *testamentum*, also means "testament," as in the Old and New Testaments.

me and you, and between your seed after you throughout their generations: every male among you shall be circumcised, and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. A child of eight days shall be circumcised, every male among you throughout your generations. The home-born slave and the one bought from any foreigner who is not of your seed—both the slave born in your house and the one bought shall be circumcised with circumcision. And my covenant shall be in your flesh as an eternal covenant. And the male who has not been circumcised, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin on the eighth day—that soul shall perish from its people, because he has broken my covenant.' And God said to Abraham: 'Sarai your wife—her name shall not be called Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.[71] I will bless her and give you a son by her, and I will bless him, and he shall become nations, and kings of nations shall come from him.' And Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart: 'Shall a child be born to me, who am a hundred years old, and shall Sarah, at ninety years, give birth?' And Abraham said to God: 'Let this Ishmael live in your sight.' And God said to Abraham: 'Yes. See, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an eternal covenant, to be God to him and to his seed after him. As for Ishmael, see, I have heard you; see, I have blessed him, and I will enlarge him and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve nations, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.'"

Here the promises about the calling of the nations in Isaac—that is, in the son of the promise—are made plainer. In him grace is signified, not nature, because the son is promised from an old man and a barren old woman. God also works the natural course of procreation. Yet where the work of God is evident because nature is impaired and has ceased, there grace is more

71 Augustine's Latin spells the names Sara and Sarra; English Bibles have Sarai and Sarah.

evidently recognized. This was to come about not through generation but through regeneration. That is why circumcision was commanded now, when a son was promised from Sarah. He orders that all be circumcised—not only sons but also slaves, whether born in the house or bought. By this he testifies that this grace belongs to all. For what else does circumcision signify but nature renewed by stripping off its oldness? And what else does the eighth day signify but Christ, who rose again when the week was complete, that is, after the Sabbath? Even the parents' names are changed. Everything rings with newness, and in the old covenant the new is foreshadowed. For what is what we call the Old Testament but the concealment of the New? And what is what we call the New but the revelation of the Old? Abraham's laughter is the exultation of one who rejoices, not the mockery of one who distrusts. His words in his heart are likewise not those of one who doubts but of one who marvels: "Shall a son be born to me, who am a hundred years old, and shall Sarah, at ninety years, give birth?" But someone may be troubled by what was said: "And I will give to you and to your seed after you the land in which you are a sojourner, all the land of Canaan, as an eternal possession." He may ask how it is to be taken as fulfilled, or whether it is still awaited to be fulfilled, since no earthly possession of any kind can be eternal for any nation. Let him know this. Our translators render as "eternal" what the Greeks call αἰώνιον [*aiōnion*], which is derived from the word for "age," for in Greek αἰών [*aiōn*] means "age." But the Latin translators did not dare to call it *saeculare* ["of the age"], for fear of sending the meaning far off in another direction. For many things are called *saecularia* ["worldly"] that are done in this age in such a way that they pass away even in a short time. But what is called αἰώνιον either has no end or extends to the end of this age.

THE MALE WHO, IF NOT CIRCUMCISED ON THE EIGHTH DAY, IS CUT OFF BECAUSE HE HAS BROKEN GOD'S COVENANT

An uncircumcised infant "breaks the covenant" through original sin, the first covenant broken in Adam.

16.27 Again, one may be troubled about how we should understand what was said here: "The male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin on the eighth day—that soul shall perish from its people, because he has broken my covenant." This is no fault of the little child whose soul he said would perish. Nor did the child himself break God's covenant; his elders did, who did not take care to circumcise him. Unless the answer is that even little children have all broken God's covenant in that one man in whom all sinned—not by anything personal to their own lives, but by the common origin of the human race. Many things are called covenants of God besides those two great ones, the old and the new, as anyone may learn by reading. But the first covenant, made with the first man, is surely this: "On the day you eat, you shall die the death." Hence it is written in the book called Ecclesiasticus: "All flesh grows old like a garment.[72] For the covenant from the beginning of the age is: 'You shall die the death.'" A clearer law was given later, and the apostle says, "But where there is no law, there is no transgression." How, then, is what we read in the psalm true, "I have counted all the sinners of the earth as transgressors"? Only because all who are held bound by any sin are guilty of transgressing some law. As the true faith holds, even little children are born sinners, not personally but by origin, which is why we confess that they need the grace of the forgiveness of sins. If so, then surely, in the same way that they are sinners, they are also recognized as transgressors of that law which was given in paradise. Thus both things that are written are true: "I have counted all the sinners

72 Genesis 2:17; Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 14:17. "In whom all sinned" echoes Romans 5:12 in Augustine's Latin.

of the earth as transgressors," and "Where there is no law, there is no transgression."[73] And so circumcision was a sign of regeneration. Generation, because of the original sin by which God's first covenant was broken, will not undeservedly destroy a little child unless regeneration sets him free. These divine words should therefore be understood as if it had been said: "Whoever has not been regenerated, that soul shall perish from its people, because he has broken God's covenant," since he too sinned in Adam together with all. For if he had said, "Because he has broken this covenant of mine," it would compel us to understand it only of this circumcision. As it is, he did not specify what kind of covenant the little child had broken. So we are free to understand it as said of that covenant whose breaking could apply to a little child. But someone may contend that this was said only of this circumcision—that the little child broke God's covenant in it by not being circumcised. If so, let him look for some manner of speaking by which it could be understood, without absurdity, that the child broke the covenant because, though it was not broken by him, it was nevertheless broken in him. But even so, we must note that the soul of an uncircumcised little child, in whom there is no negligence of his own, would perish unjustly, were it not for the bond of original sin.

THE CHANGE OF THE NAMES OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH, WHO RECEIVED THE GIFT OF FERTILITY THOUGH THEY COULD NOT HAVE CHILDREN, SHE BECAUSE OF BARRENNESS AND BOTH BECAUSE OF OLD AGE

Abraham and Sarah receive new names and, though old and barren, the power to have a child.

16.28 So then, a promise so great and so clear was made to Abraham, to whom it was said most plainly: "I have made you the father of many nations; and I will increase you very greatly, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come out of you. And I will give you a son by Sarah, and I will bless him, and he

73 Romans 4:15; Psalm 118:119 (119:119 in most English Bibles).

shall become nations, and kings of nations shall come from him." (We now see this promise being fulfilled in Christ.) From that point on the couple are no longer called in the Scriptures what they were called before, Abram and Sarai. They are called what we have called them from the beginning, since that is now how everyone calls them: Abraham and Sarah. The reason why Abraham's name was changed is given: "Because," he says, "I have made you the father of many nations." This, then, is what the name must be understood to mean, whereas Abram, as he was called before, means "exalted father." No reason is given for the change of Sarah's name. But according to those who have written interpretations of the Hebrew names contained in these sacred writings, Sarai means "my princess," and Sarah means "strength." Hence it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews: "By faith Sarah herself also received strength for the emission of seed." Both were old, as Scripture testifies. But she was also barren and had already ceased to have menstrual blood, so that she could no longer bear children even if she had not been barren. Moreover, a woman may be well advanced in age yet still have the usual courses of women. Such a woman can bear by a young man but not by an old one. Yet that old man can still beget, though only by a young girl. Thus Abraham could beget by Keturah after Sarah's death, because he found her of vigorous age.[74] This, then, is what the apostle commends as wonderful. That is why he says that Abraham's body was already as good as dead: at that age he could no longer beget by just any woman who still had some last remaining time for bearing. We must understand his body as dead in a certain respect, not in every respect. If it were dead in every respect, it would no longer be the old age of a living man but the corpse of a dead one. This question is also commonly resolved another way. Some say that Abraham afterward begot children by Keturah because the gift of begetting that he had received from the Lord remained even after his wife's death. But the solution we have followed seems

74 Hebrews 11:11. The standard work on the Hebrew names was Jerome's *Book of Hebrew Names*.

to me preferable, for this reason. An old man of a hundred in our time can indeed beget by no woman. But it was not so then, when people still lived so long that a hundred years did not yet make a man decrepit with age.[75]

THE THREE MEN OR ANGELS IN WHOM THE LORD IS SAID TO HAVE APPEARED TO ABRAHAM AT THE OAK OF MAMRE

The three visitors at Mamre were angels, in whom Abraham and Lot recognized the Lord.

16.29 Again, God appeared to Abraham at the oak of Mamre in three men. There can be no doubt that they were angels, although some think that one of them was the Lord Christ, claiming that he was visible even before he put on flesh. It does indeed belong to the divine power, and to an invisible, incorporeal and unchangeable nature, to appear even to mortal sight without any change in itself. It appears not through what it is but through something subject to it. And what is not subject to it?[76] Some affirm that one of these three was Christ on the grounds that Abraham, though he had seen three, spoke to the Lord in the singular. For so it is written: "And behold, three men stood over him, and seeing them he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and bowed down to the ground and said: 'Lord, if I have found favor before you,'" and so on. If so, why do they not also notice something else? Two of them came to destroy the people of Sodom while Abraham was still speaking to one. He called him Lord and interceded with him not to destroy the righteous along with the wicked in Sodom. And Lot received those two in such a way that he too, in his conversation with them, addresses them as Lord in the singular.[77] He had said to them in the plural, "Look, my lords, turn aside into your servant's house," and the rest that is said there. Yet afterward we read: "And the angels took his hand and his wife's hand and the

75 Romans 4:19.
76 Genesis 18:1–2.
77 Genesis 18:2–3.

hands of his two daughters, because the Lord was sparing him. And as soon as they had brought him outside, they said: 'Save your life; do not look back, and do not stop anywhere in the whole region; save yourself on the mountain, lest you be caught.' And Lot said to them: 'I pray you, Lord, since your servant has found mercy before you,'" and what follows. Then, after these words, the Lord too answers him in the singular, though he was in two angels, saying, "See, I have shown regard for your face," and the rest.[78] So it is much more credible that both Abraham in the three men and Lot in the two recognized the Lord, whom they addressed in the singular, even while they thought them to be men. For they received them as they did, serving them as mortals in need of human refreshment, for no other reason. But there was surely something by which they so excelled, even as men, that those who showed them hospitality could not doubt that the Lord was in them, as he usually is in the prophets. That is why they sometimes addressed the men themselves in the plural, and sometimes addressed the Lord in them in the singular. But Scripture testifies that they were angels. It does so not only in this book of Genesis, where these events are narrated, but also in the Letter to the Hebrews, which says in praise of hospitality: "Through this some have even entertained angels without knowing it."[79] So through those three men, when Abraham was again promised a son, Isaac, to be born of Sarah, a divine answer was also given in these words: "Abraham shall become a great and numerous nation, and in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Here two things are promised, most briefly and most fully: the nation of Israel according to the flesh, and all the nations according to faith.[80]

78 Genesis 19:2, 16–21.
79 Hebrews 13:2.
80 Genesis 18:18.

LOT'S DELIVERANCE FROM SODOM, THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM BY FIRE FROM HEAVEN, AND ABIMELECH, WHOSE DESIRE COULD NOT HARM SARAH'S CHASTITY

Sodom is destroyed, Lot's wife becomes salt, and Sarah stays untouched by Abimelech.

16.30 After this promise, Lot was rescued from Sodom, and a fiery rain came down from heaven. That whole region of the ungodly city was turned to ashes, a city where sexual violation of males had grown into so established a custom that it enjoyed as much license as laws usually grant to other acts. Yet this punishment of theirs was also a preview of the divine judgment to come. For why were those whom the angels were rescuing forbidden to look back, if not because we must not return in spirit to the old life, which one who is reborn through grace puts off, if we mean to escape the final judgment? Lot's wife, indeed, stayed where she was when she looked back. Turned into salt, she gave the faithful a kind of seasoning, to give them the savor of wisdom to beware of that example.[81]

After this, at Gerar, Abraham again did with Abimelech, the king of that city, what he had done in Egypt concerning his wife, and she was likewise returned to him untouched. There, when the king reproached him for keeping silent that she was his wife and calling her his sister, Abraham explained what he had feared and added this as well: "And indeed she truly is my sister, on my father's side, but not on my mother's." For she was Abraham's sister through her father, and through him she was related to Abraham. She was so beautiful that even at that age she could be desired.[82]

81 The Latin verb *sapere* means both "to have flavor" and "to be wise."
82 Genesis 20:12.

ISAAC, BORN ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE, WHOSE NAME CAME FROM THE LAUGHTER OF BOTH PARENTS

Isaac, "laughter," is born; Hagar and Ishmael are sent away, figures of the two covenants.

16.31 After this a son was born to Abraham by Sarah, according to God's promise, and he named him Isaac, which means "laughter." For his father had laughed when the son was promised to him, marveling in joy. His mother too had laughed when he was promised again through those three men, doubting in joy. The angel reproached her because that laughter, though it was a laughter of joy, was not one of full faith. Afterward, however, she was confirmed in faith by that same angel. It was from this, then, that the boy received his name. For when Isaac was born and called by that name, Sarah showed that the laughter belonged not to scornful mockery but to celebrating joy. She said: "The Lord has made laughter for me; whoever hears of it will rejoice with me."[83] But some time later the slave woman is driven out of the house with her son. According to the apostle, these two women signify the two covenants, the old and the new, and in this Sarah is a figure of the Jerusalem above, that is, of the city of God.[84]

ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE AND FAITH, TESTED BY THE COMMAND TO SACRIFICE HIS SON, AND THE DEATH OF SARAH

Abraham is ready to sacrifice Isaac, trusting God to raise him; the ram prefigures Christ.

16.32 Among these events, which would take too long to recount in full, Abraham is tested by the command to sacrifice his most beloved son, Isaac himself. This was so that his devout obedience might be proved and brought to the knowledge of the ages,

83 Genesis 21:6.
84 Galatians 4:22–26.

not of God. For not every testing is to be blamed; indeed, the testing that yields proof is to be welcomed. Very often the human mind cannot come to know itself in any other way. Testing, as it were, questions it, and it must answer about its own strength, not in words but by experience. Then, if it acknowledges God's gift, it is devout. It is made solid by the firmness of grace, not puffed up by the emptiness of boasting. Abraham, of course, would never have believed that God delighted in human victims. Yet when a divine command thunders forth, one must obey, not argue. Still, Abraham deserves praise for believing at once that his son, once sacrificed, would rise again. For God had said to him, when he was unwilling to carry out his wife's wish that the slave woman and her son be driven out: "In Isaac your seed shall be called." Certainly what follows there says: "And the son of this slave woman I will also make into a great nation, because he is your seed." How, then, is it said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," when God called Ishmael his seed too? The apostle explains what "In Isaac your seed shall be called" means: "That is," he says, "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as seed." And so the children of the promise, in order to be Abraham's seed, are called in Isaac. That is, they are gathered together in Christ as grace calls them.[85] So the devout father held faithfully to this promise. Since it had to be fulfilled through the very son whom God was commanding him to kill, he did not doubt that the son who could be given when no one hoped for him could be given back to him after being sacrificed. This is how it is understood and explained in the Letter to the Hebrews as well. "By faith," it says, "Abraham, when he was tested, went before Isaac and offered his only son. He had received the promises, and it was to him that it had been said: 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' He reasoned that God is able to raise even from the dead." Then it added: "For this reason he also brought him as a likeness." A likeness of whom, if not of the one of whom the apostle says: "He did not spare his own Son,

85 Genesis 21:12–13; Romans 9:8.

but handed him over for us all"? That is why Isaac, just as the Lord carried his cross, himself carried to the place of sacrifice the wood on which he was to be laid.[86] Finally, since Isaac was not to be killed and his father was forbidden to strike, who was that ram whose sacrifice completed the offering with symbolic blood? Surely, when Abraham saw it, it was caught by its horns in a thicket. Who, then, was prefigured by it, if not Jesus, crowned with the thorns of the Jews before he was sacrificed?

But let us rather listen to the divine words spoken through the angel. Scripture says: "And Abraham stretched out his hand to take the knife, to kill his son. And the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said: 'Abraham!' And he said: 'Here I am.' And he said: 'Do not lay your hand on the boy, and do nothing to him. For now I know that you fear your God, and you have not spared your beloved son for my sake.'" "Now I know" is said for "now I have made it known," since it is not that God did not yet know this. Then, after that ram had been sacrificed in place of his son Isaac, Abraham, as we read, called the name of that place "The Lord saw," so that people say today: "On the mountain the Lord appeared."[87] Just as "Now I know" is said in place of "now I have made it known," so here "The Lord saw" is said in place of "The Lord appeared," that is, "made himself seen." "And the angel of the Lord called Abraham a second time from heaven, saying: 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not spared your beloved son for my sake: I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your seed like the stars of heaven and like the sand on the seashore. And your seed shall possess as an inheritance the cities of its enemies, and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you obeyed my voice.'" In this way, after the burnt offering that signified Christ, the promise about the calling of the nations in the seed of Abraham was confirmed even by an oath of God. For he had often promised, but he had never

86 Hebrews 11:17–19; Romans 8:32.
87 Genesis 22:10–14.

sworn.[88] And what is the oath of the true and truthful God, if not a confirmation of what he promised and a kind of rebuke to those who do not believe?

After this Sarah died, in the hundred and twenty-seventh year of her life and the hundred and thirty-seventh of her husband's. For he was ten years older than she, as he himself said when a son by her was promised to him: "Shall a son be born to me when I am a hundred years old, and shall Sarah give birth at ninety?" Then Abraham bought a field and buried his wife in it. It was then, according to Stephen's account, that he was settled in that land, since he then began to own property there. This was after the death of his father, who, we may infer, had died two years earlier.[89]

REBEKAH, GRANDDAUGHTER OF NAHOR, WHOM ISAAC TOOK AS HIS WIFE

Isaac marries Rebekah; Abraham's oath under his thigh points to Christ's flesh.

16.33 Next, when Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the granddaughter of his uncle Nahor. This was in the hundred and fortieth year of his father's life, three years after his mother's death. So that he might marry her, his father sent a servant to Mesopotamia. Abraham said to that servant: "Put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the Lord of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites." What else did this show, if not that the Lord, the God of heaven and the Lord of the earth, was to come in the flesh descended from that thigh? Are these small signs of the truth foretold, which we see fulfilled in Christ?[90]

88 Genesis 22:16–18.
89 Genesis 17:17; for Stephen's account, Acts 7:4.
90 Genesis 24:2–3.

WHAT WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND BY ABRAHAM TAKING KETURAH AS HIS WIFE AFTER SARAH'S DEATH

Abraham's late marriage to Keturah may signify carnal Christians, or show that remarriage is no sin.

16.34 And what does it mean that after Sarah's death Abraham took Keturah as his wife? Far be it from us to suspect lack of self-control here, especially at that age and with that holiness of faith. Or was he still seeking to beget children? Yet he already held, with a faith thoroughly proven, God's promise of so great a multiplication of children from Isaac, like the stars of heaven and the sand of the earth. But surely, if Hagar and Ishmael, as the apostle teaches, signified the carnal people of the old covenant, why should Keturah and her sons not signify the carnal people who think they belong to the new covenant? For both women were called both wives and concubines of Abraham, whereas Sarah was never called a concubine. For when Hagar was given to Abraham, it is written thus: "And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband as his wife." And of Keturah, whom he took after Sarah's death, we read this: "And Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah." See, both are called wives. Yet both are found to have been concubines, since Scripture later says: "Abraham gave all his property to his son Isaac. And to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac toward the east, to the land of the east."[91] So the sons of the concubines do receive some gifts, but they do not attain the promised kingdom. Neither do the heretics, nor the carnal Jews, because apart from Isaac there is no heir, and "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as seed." Of this seed it was said: "In Isaac your seed shall be called." For I do not see why Keturah too, though mar-

91 Genesis 16:3; 25:1; 25:5–6.

ried after his wife's death, should have been called a concubine, except for the sake of this mystery. But whoever does not want to take these things in these symbolic senses should not slander Abraham. For what if this too was provided against heretics yet to come, opponents of second marriages? In the very father of many nations it would be shown that to marry again after one's spouse has died is no sin. And Abraham died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five. He therefore left behind his son Isaac at seventy-five, having fathered him at a hundred.

WHAT THE DIVINE ANSWER INDICATED ABOUT THE TWINS STILL IN THEIR MOTHER REBEKAH'S WOMB

God tells Rebekah that the elder twin will serve the younger, a sign of grace.

16.35 Now let us see how, from this point on, the times of the city of God run their course through Abraham's descendants. From the first year of Isaac's life to the sixtieth, when sons were born to him, one thing is worth recalling. He asked God that his wife, who was barren, might bear a child. The Lord granted what he asked, and she conceived, and the twins still enclosed in her womb were struggling. Distressed by this trouble, she asked the Lord and received this answer: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your body. One people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."[92] The apostle Paul wants this to be understood as a great proof of grace. Before they were born, and before they had done anything good or bad, the younger is chosen without any good merits and the elder is rejected. Yet beyond doubt, as far as original sin is concerned, both were equal, and as far as personal sin is concerned, neither had any. But the plan of the present work does not allow me to say anything more at length on this subject now, and I have already said much about it in other works. As for the words "The elder shall serve the younger," hardly anyone among us has understood them other-

92 Genesis 25:23.

wise than that the elder people, the Jews, would serve the younger, Christian people. This might indeed seem to have been fulfilled in the nation of the Idumaeans, which was born of the elder son. He had two names, being called both Esau and Edom, and from Edom come the Idumaeans. That nation was later to be overcome by the people that sprang from the younger son, that is, the Israelite people, and was to be subject to it. Still, it is more fitting to believe that the prophecy in which it was said, "One people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger," was aimed at something greater. And what is this, if not what is evidently fulfilled in the Jews and the Christians?[93]

THE ORACLE AND BLESSING THAT ISAAC RECEIVED JUST AS HIS FATHER HAD, LOVED FOR HIS FATHER'S SAKE

God renews to Isaac the promises made to Abraham, for his father's sake.

16.36 Isaac also received an oracle like those his father had received several times. Of this oracle it is written thus: "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the famine that had occurred earlier in the time of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. And the Lord appeared to him and said: 'Do not go down into Egypt. Live in the land that I will tell you of, and dwell as a stranger in this land. I will be with you and will bless you.[94] For to you and to your seed I will give all this land, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your seed like the stars of heaven, and I will give all this land to your seed, and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham your father obeyed my voice and kept my precepts, my commandments, my ordinances, and my statutes.'" This patriarch had no other wife and no concubine. He was content with the offspring of twins begotten from a single union. He too, of course, feared danger on account of his wife's beauty

93 The Idumaeans, or Edomites, were the people of Edom, south of the Dead Sea.
94 Genesis 26:1–5.

when he was living among foreigners. He did as his father had done: he called her his sister and kept silent that she was his wife, for she was related to him by both his father's and his mother's blood. But she too remained untouched by the foreigners once they learned that she was his wife. Yet we should not rank him above his father simply because he knew no woman but his one wife. For his father's merits of faith and obedience were beyond doubt greater, so much so that God says it is for Abraham's sake that he does Isaac the good he does. "In your seed," he says, "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham your father obeyed my voice and kept my precepts, my commandments, my ordinances, and my statutes." And again, in another oracle: "I am," he says, "the God of Abraham your father. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I have blessed you and will multiply your seed for the sake of Abraham your father." This is so that we may understand how chastely Abraham acted in a matter that shameless people think he did out of lust, since they look to the holy Scriptures for a defense of their own wickedness. It is also so that we may learn not to compare people with one another by single good qualities, but to consider everything in each one. For it can happen that someone has something in his life and character in which he surpasses another, and that this is far more excellent than the quality in which the other surpasses him.[95] And so, by sound and true judgment, although celibacy is ranked above marriage, a married believer is still better than a celibate unbeliever. Indeed, the unbeliever is not only less to be praised but utterly to be detested. Let us suppose that both are good. Even so, surely, a married man who is most faithful and most obedient to God is better than a celibate one of less faith and less obedience. But if all else is equal, who would hesitate to rank the celibate above the married?

95 Genesis 26:24.

WHAT WAS MYSTICALLY FORESHADOWED IN ESAU AND JACOB

Jacob receives Isaac's blessing in place of Esau, a mystery of Christ blessed among the nations.

16.37 So the two sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, grow up together. The elder's primacy passes to the younger by an agreement and bargain between them. The elder craved too greedily the lentils that the younger had prepared as food, and for that price he sold his birthright to his brother, with an oath sworn. From this we learn that in eating, a person is to be blamed not for the kind of food but for immoderate greed. Isaac grows old, and with old age the sight of his eyes is taken from him. He wants to bless his elder son, and without knowing it he blesses the younger instead. The younger put himself under his father's hands in place of his hairy elder brother, having fitted himself with little goatskins, as if bearing the sins of another. Scripture took care that this guile of Jacob's would not be thought fraudulent guile, and that the mystery of a great matter would be sought in it. So it had said beforehand: "And Esau was a man skilled in hunting, a man of the fields; but Jacob was a simple man, living at home." Some of our translators have rendered this "without guile."[96] But whether he is called "without guile," or "simple," or rather "without pretense"—in Greek ἄπλαστος [unfeigned]—what guile is there when a man without guile receives this blessing? What guile belongs to the simple, what pretense to one who does not lie, if not a deep mystery of the truth? And what kind of blessing is it? "See," he says, "the smell of my son is like the smell of a full field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the richness of the earth, and abundance of grain and wine. Let nations serve you, and princes bow down to you. Be lord of your brother, and your father's sons shall bow down to you. Whoever curses you, let him be cursed; and whoever blesses you, let him be blessed." The blessing of Jacob, then, is

96 Genesis 25:27.

the proclamation of Christ among all the nations. This is happening; this is being done now.[97] Isaac is the Law and prophecy. Even through the mouth of the Jews Christ is blessed by it, as if by one who does not know, because the Law itself is not understood. The world, like a field, is filled with the fragrance of Christ's name. His is the blessing of the dew of heaven, that is, of the rain of divine words, and of the richness of the earth, that is, of the gathering of the peoples. His is the abundance of grain and wine, that is, the multitude that grain and wine gather together in the sacrament of his body and blood. The nations serve him; princes bow down to him. He is lord of his brother, because his people rules over the Jews. The sons of his father bow down to him, that is, the sons of Abraham according to faith, because he himself is also a son of Abraham according to the flesh. Whoever curses him is cursed, and whoever blesses him is blessed. Our Christ, I say, is blessed even from the mouth of the Jews. Though they are in error, they still sing the Law and the Prophets, and so through them he is blessed, that is, spoken of truly. Yet they think it is another who is being blessed, the one they in their error are waiting for. Look: when the elder son asks for the promised blessing, Isaac is terrified and realizes that he has blessed one son in place of the other. He wonders and asks who it could have been. Yet he does not complain that he was deceived. On the contrary, the great mystery is at once revealed to him inwardly, in his heart, and he holds back his indignation and confirms the blessing. "Who, then," he says, "was it that hunted game for me and brought it to me, and I ate of it all before you came? I blessed him, and blessed he shall be." Who would not have expected an angry man's curse here instead, if these things were being done not by inspiration from above but in an earthly way? O deeds truly done, but done prophetically; on earth, but from heaven; by human beings, but by God![98] If each of these details, so rich in great mysteries, were examined one by one, many volumes would have to be filled. But the

97 Genesis 27:27–29.
98 Genesis 27:33.

measured limit that must be set on this work compels us to hurry on to other matters.

JACOB'S BEING SENT TO MESOPOTAMIA TO TAKE A WIFE, THE VISION HE DREAMED ON THE WAY, AND HIS FOUR WOMEN, THOUGH HE HAD ASKED FOR ONE WIFE

Jacob sees the ladder to heaven and marries four women, but sought only one wife.

16.38 Jacob is sent by his parents to Mesopotamia to take a wife there. These are the words of his father as he sends him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites. Rise and flee to Mesopotamia, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife for yourself from there, from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. And may my God bless you and increase you and multiply you, and you shall become a gathering of nations. And may he give you the blessing of Abraham your father, to you and to your seed after you, so that you may become heir of the land where you sojourn, which God gave to Abraham." Here we now understand that the seed of Jacob has been set apart from the other seed of Isaac, the one that came through Esau.[99] When it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," that seed belonged, of course, to the city of God. Another seed of Abraham was then separated from it: the one in the son of the slave woman, and the one that would be in the sons of Keturah. But it was still uncertain whether that blessing belonged to both of Isaac's twin sons or to only one of them, and if to one, which of them it was. This has now been made clear, when Jacob is prophetically blessed by his father and is told: "And you shall become a gathering of nations, and may he give you the blessing of Abraham your father."[100]

So, as Jacob was on his way to Mesopotamia, he received an oracle in a dream, of which it is written: "And Jacob went out from the well of the oath and set out for Haran. He came to a

99 Genesis 28:1–4.
100 Genesis 21:12. The slave woman's son is Ishmael, son of Hagar.

place and slept there, for the sun had set. He took some of the stones of the place, put them at his head, slept in that place, and dreamed. And there was a ladder set up on the earth, whose top reached to heaven; and the angels[101] of God were going up and coming down on it, and the Lord was leaning over it, and he said: 'I am the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; do not be afraid. The land on which you are sleeping I will give to you and to your seed. Your seed shall be like the sand of the earth, and it shall spread out over the sea, and to the southwest, and to the north, and to the east; and in you and in your seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed. And see, I am with you, guarding you on every road you take, and I will bring you back to this land; for I will not abandon you until I have done all that I have spoken to you.' And Jacob rose from his sleep and said, 'The Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome this place is! This is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' And Jacob rose and took the stone that he had put under his head there, set it up as a monument, and poured oil on its top; and Jacob called the name of that place House of God." This belongs to prophecy. Jacob did not pour oil over the stone in the manner of idolatry, as if making it a god; for he neither worshiped that stone nor sacrificed to it. But since the name of Christ comes from *chrisma*, that is, from anointing, something was surely prefigured here that pertains to a great mystery.[102] This ladder, moreover, is understood to be what the Savior himself recalls to our minds in the gospel. He had said of Nathanael, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit," because Israel had seen this vision (for Israel is Jacob). In the same passage he then says: "Truly, truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."[103]

So Jacob went on to Mesopotamia to take a wife from there. How it came about that he had four women, by whom he

101 Genesis 28:10–19. The "well of the oath" is Beersheba.
102 Greek *christos* means "anointed."

fathered twelve sons and one daughter, though he had desired none of them unlawfully, divine Scripture makes known. He had come, after all, to take one; but when another had been substituted for her, he did not send that one away either, since he had had relations with her unknowingly in the night, lest he seem to have made a mockery of her. And at a time when no law forbade several wives for the sake of multiplying posterity, he also took the one to whom alone he had already pledged his future marriage. Since she was barren, she gave her slave woman to her husband, so that she herself might have children by her. Her elder sister, though she had borne children, did the same in imitation, because she wanted to multiply her offspring.[104] We do not read that Jacob sought any woman but one, nor that he had relations with several except for the duty of begetting offspring, keeping to the rights of marriage; so that he would not have done even this unless his wives had demanded it, since they had lawful authority over their husband's body. So he fathered twelve sons and one daughter by four women. Then he entered Egypt through his son Joseph, who had been sold by his envious brothers, taken there, and raised to high rank in that very place.

WHY JACOB WAS ALSO CALLED ISRAEL

Jacob wrestles with an angel and is named Israel, blessed and lamed at once.

16.39 Jacob, as I said a little earlier, was also called Israel, a name that came to belong more to the people descended from him. This name was given to him by the angel who wrestled with him on the road as he was returning from Mesopotamia, and who quite plainly bore the figure of Christ. For the fact that Jacob prevailed over him—who was of course willing, so as to prefigure a mystery—signifies the passion of Christ, when the Jews

103 John 1:47, 51.

104 Leah was substituted for Rachel; their slave women were Zilpah and Bilhah (Genesis 29–30).

seemed to prevail over him. And yet Jacob obtained a blessing from the very angel he had overcome; and so the giving of this name was itself a blessing. Now *Israel* means "seeing God," which will be the reward of all the saints at the end. Moreover, the same angel touched him, as though he were the one prevailing, on the broad part of his thigh, and in this way made him lame. So one and the same Jacob was both blessed and lame: blessed in those of that same people who believed in Christ, and lame in the unbelievers.[105] For the broad part of the thigh is the multitude of the race. Indeed, the greater part of that stock are those of whom it was prophetically foretold: "And they limped away from their paths."[106]

HOW JACOB IS SAID TO HAVE ENTERED EGYPT WITH SEVENTY-FIVE SOULS, THOUGH MOST OF THOSE LISTED WERE BORN LATER

The seventy-five who "entered Egypt" include descendants born during Joseph's lifetime.

16.40 So we are told that seventy-five people entered Egypt together with Jacob himself, counting him with his sons. In this number only two women are mentioned, one a daughter, the other a granddaughter. But when the matter is carefully considered, it does not indicate that Jacob's descendants numbered so many on the day or in the year when he entered Egypt. For among them are listed even Joseph's great-grandsons, who could not possibly have existed by then, since Jacob was then a hundred and thirty years old and his son Joseph thirty-nine. Since it is established that Joseph took a wife in his thirtieth year or later, how could he within nine years have great-grandsons through the sons he had by that same wife?[107] Since, then, Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, had no sons of their own, but Jacob on entering Egypt found them boys under nine years old,

105 Genesis 32:24–32.
106 Psalm 17:46 (18:45 in most English Bibles).
107 Genesis 46:8–27 in the Greek Septuagint, which gives seventy-five (the Hebrew text has seventy).

how is it that not only their sons but even their grandsons are counted among those seventy-five who entered Egypt with Jacob at that time? For listed there is Machir, son of Manasseh and grandson of Joseph, and Machir's son Gilead, grandson of Manasseh and great-grandson of Joseph. There too is the son whom Ephraim, Joseph's other son, fathered, Utalaam, grandson of Joseph, and Utalaam's son Edem, grandson of Ephraim and great-grandson of Joseph. These could not possibly have existed when Jacob came to Egypt and found Joseph's sons—his own grandsons, the grandfathers of these men—to be boys under nine.[108] But clearly Jacob's entry into Egypt, when Scripture records it as an entry of seventy-five people, is not one day or one year, but the whole period during which Joseph lived, through whom it came about that they entered. For of Joseph himself the same Scripture says: "And Joseph lived in Egypt, he and his brothers and all his father's household; and he lived a hundred and ten years, and Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation." That is his great-grandson, the third from Ephraim; for by the third generation it means son, grandson and great-grandson. Then it continues: "And the sons of Machir, son of Manasseh, were born upon Joseph's knees." And this is that very grandson of Manasseh, great-grandson of Joseph.[109] They are referred to in the plural, as Scripture customarily does; it even called Jacob's one daughter "daughters," just as in Latin usage one's children are called *liberi*, a plural, even when there is no more than one. Since, then, Joseph's happiness is proclaimed precisely in that he was able to see great-grandsons, they are by no means to be thought to have already existed in the thirty-ninth year of their great-grandfather Joseph, when his father Jacob came to him in Egypt. What misleads those who look at these things less carefully is that it is written: "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who entered Egypt together with Jacob their father." This is said because seventy-five are

108 Augustine's Utalaam and Edem correspond to Shuthelah and Eran in most English Bibles (Numbers 26:35–36).
109 Genesis 50:22–23.

counted together with him, not because they were all already together with him when he himself entered Egypt. Rather, as I said, the whole period during which Joseph lived, through whom the entry appears to have taken place, is treated as the time of his entry.[110]

THE BLESSING JACOB PROMISED TO HIS SON JUDAH

Jacob's blessing of Judah foretells Christ's death, resurrection and rule.

16.41 Therefore, for the sake of the Christian people, in whom the city of God is a pilgrim on earth, if we look for the flesh of Christ in Abraham's seed, setting aside the sons of the concubines, we come upon Isaac; if in Isaac's seed, setting aside Esau, who is also Edom, we come upon Jacob, who is also Israel; if in the seed of Israel himself, setting aside the rest, we come upon Judah, because Christ sprang from the tribe of Judah. And so, when Israel was about to die in Egypt and was blessing his sons, let us hear how he blessed Judah prophetically. "Judah," he says, "your brothers shall praise you. Your hands shall be on the back of your enemies; your father's sons shall worship you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the shoot, my son, you have gone up. Lying down you have slept like a lion and like a lion's cub; who will rouse him?[111] A ruler shall not be lacking from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until the things stored up for him come; and he is the expectation of the nations. Binding his colt to the vine, and the colt of his donkey with haircloth, he will wash his robe in wine and his garment in the blood of the grape. His eyes are tawny with wine, and his teeth whiter than milk." I have expounded this in my disputation against the Manichaean Faustus, and I think that is enough, so clearly does the truth of this prophecy shine out. Here the death of Christ is foretold by the word "sleep," and by the name "lion" his death is shown to be not necessity but power. This power he himself proclaims in the gospel, saying: "I have power to lay down my life, and I have

110 Genesis 46:8.
111 Genesis 49:8–12.

power to take it up again. No one takes it from me; but I lay it down of myself, and I take it up again." So the lion roared; so he fulfilled what he said.[112] For to that power belongs what is added about his resurrection: "Who will rouse him?" That is, no human being, but only he himself, who also said of his own body: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." The very manner of his death, that is, the height of the cross, is understood in the single word "You have gone up." And what he adds, "Lying down you have slept," the evangelist explains when he says: "And bowing his head he gave up his spirit." Or else his burial is meant, in which he lay down sleeping, and from which no human being raised him, as prophets raised some or as he himself raised others; rather, he rose by himself, as if from sleep.[113] Further, his robe, which he washes in wine—that is, cleanses from sins in his own blood, the sacrament of which blood the baptized know, and so he adds, "and his garment in the blood of the grape"—what is it but the Church? "And his eyes tawny with wine" are his spiritual ones, made drunk by his cup, of which the psalm sings: "And your cup that makes drunk, how splendid it is!" "And his teeth whiter than milk": that milk which, in the apostle, the little ones drink—nourishing words, that is, for those not yet ready for solid food. He, then, is the one in whom the promises to Judah were stored up; and until they came, rulers—that is, kings of Israel—were never lacking from that stock. "And he is the expectation of the nations": this is clearer to see than it is to explain.[114]

THE SONS OF JOSEPH, WHOM JACOB BLESSED BY PROPHETICALLY CROSSING HIS HANDS

Jacob crosses his hands to bless Joseph's younger son above the elder.

16.42 The two sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, provided a figure of two peoples, the Jews and the Christians—although, as far as

112 John 10:18.
113 John 2:19; John 19:30.
114 Psalm 22:5 (23:5 in most English Bibles); the apostle is Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:2.

physical descent goes, it was not the Jews who came from the seed of Esau but the Idumaeans, nor the Christian nations who came from Jacob but rather the Jews; for the figure held good only for what was said: "The elder shall serve the younger." In the same way, this also happened with the two sons of Joseph: the elder bore the figure of the Jews, the younger that of the Christians. When Jacob was blessing them, he placed his right hand on the younger, whom he had on his left, and his left hand on the elder, whom he had on his right. Their father thought this wrong, and he warned his own father, as though correcting his mistake and showing him which of them was the elder. But Jacob refused to change his hands, and said: "I know, my son, I know.[115] He too shall become a people, and he too shall be exalted; but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." Here too he points to those two promises: the one is to become a people, the other a multitude of nations. What could be more evident than that these two promises comprise, in the seed of Abraham, the people of Israel and the whole world—the one according to the flesh, the other according to faith?

THE TIMES OF MOSES, OF JOSHUA SON OF NUN, OF THE JUDGES, AND THEN OF THE KINGS, OF WHOM SAUL WAS THE FIRST BUT DAVID THE CHIEF, BOTH IN SACRAMENTAL MEANING AND IN MERIT

From Moses to David: the exodus, the law, the conquest, the judges and the first kings.

16.43 After Jacob died, and Joseph died too, during the remaining hundred and forty-four years until the departure from the land of Egypt, that nation grew to an incredible degree, even though it was worn down by persecutions so severe that at one time its newborn males were put to death, since the Egyptians were astonished and terrified by that people's excessive growth. Then Moses, secretly rescued from the slaughterers of infants,

115 Genesis 25:23; the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh is in Genesis 48:13–19.

reached the royal house, as God was preparing great things through him. Raised and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Pharaoh was the name of all the kings in Egypt), he grew into so great a man that he himself brought that wonderfully multiplied nation out from the extremely hard and heavy yoke of slavery it bore there—or rather, God did so through him, God who had promised this to Abraham. Earlier he had fled from there, because in defending an Israelite he had killed an Egyptian and had become afraid; afterwards, sent by God, in the power of the Spirit of God he overcame Pharaoh's magicians who resisted him. Then through him ten memorable plagues were brought upon the Egyptians when they refused to let God's people go: water turned into blood, frogs and gnats, dog-flies, the death of livestock, sores, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn. Finally, the Egyptians, who, broken by so many great plagues, had at long last let the Israelites go, were destroyed in the Red Sea while pursuing them. For as the Israelites departed, the sea divided and made a way for them; but as the Egyptians pursued, the waters flowed back together and drowned them. Then for forty years God's people were led through the desert under Moses' leadership. It was then that the tabernacle of the testimony received its name, where God was worshiped with sacrifices that foretold things to come; this was after the law had already been given on the mountain in a most terrifying way, for the divinity bore witness with most evident wondrous signs and voices. This happened as soon as they had come out of Egypt and the people began their life in the desert, on the fiftieth day after the Passover had been celebrated by the sacrifice of a sheep. The Passover is so clearly a figure of Christ, foretelling that through the sacrifice of his passion he would pass from this world to the Father (for in Hebrew *Pascha* means "passing over"), that when the new covenant was revealed, after Christ our Passover had been sacrificed, the Holy Spirit came from heaven on the fiftieth day. He is the one called in the gospel "the finger of God," and he came then to call our minds back to the memory of that first event which prefigured it, since the tablets

of the law too are said to have been written by the finger of God.[116]

After Moses died, Joshua son of Nun ruled the people, led them into the land of promise, and divided it among them. Under these two wonderful leaders wars too were waged with great success and in wonderful ways, God bearing witness that those victories came to them not so much because of the merits of the Hebrew people as because of the sins of the nations that were being conquered. After these leaders there were judges, the people now being settled in the land of promise, so that the first promise to Abraham might meanwhile begin to be fulfilled: the promise about one nation, the Hebrews, and the land of Canaan, not yet the promise about all nations and the whole world. That was to be fulfilled by the coming of Christ in the flesh, and not by the observances of the old law but by the faith of the gospel. A prefiguration of this was given when it was not Moses, who had received the law for the people on Mount Sinai, but Jesus—whose name had been changed at God's command so that he would be called Jesus—who led the people into the land of promise. In the times of the judges, success and defeat in war alternated, according to the state of the people's sins and of God's mercy.[117]

From there we come to the times of the kings, the first of whom to reign was Saul. When he had been rejected and laid low by defeat in battle, and his line had been cast off so that no kings should arise from it, David succeeded to the kingdom, and it is above all as his son that Christ is spoken of. With him a kind of turning point was reached and, in a sense, the beginning of the youth of the people of God; for a kind of adolescence of this race had run from Abraham himself down to this David. It was not without reason that Matthew the evangelist listed the generations in such a way as to mark off this first interval with four-

116 "Christ our Passover" echoes 1 Corinthians 5:7; "finger of God" is from Luke 11:20 and Exodus 31:18.

117 In Latin and Greek, Joshua and Jesus are the same name (*Iesus*); Moses renamed Hoshea as Joshua (Numbers 13:16).

teen generations, namely from Abraham to David. For it is in adolescence that a human being becomes able to generate; and so he began the generations from Abraham, who was also made father of the nations when he received his changed name.[118] Before him, then, from Noah down to Abraham himself, there was a kind of childhood of this race, the people of God; and that is why it is found in possession of a language, namely Hebrew. For a human being begins to speak in childhood, after infancy, which takes its name from the fact that it cannot speak. That first age is surely drowned in forgetfulness, just as the first age of the human race was wiped out by the flood; for how many people remember their infancy? Therefore, in this onward course of the city of God, just as the previous book contained one age, the first, so this book is to contain two, the second and the third. In this third age, in keeping with the three-year-old heifer, the three-year-old she-goat and the three-year-old ram, the yoke of the law was imposed, an abundance of sins appeared, and the beginning of the earthly kingdom arose. Yet spiritual people were not lacking in it, whose mystery was prefigured in the turtledove and the dove.[119]

118 Matthew 1:17; Abram was renamed Abraham, "father of many nations," in Genesis 17:5.

119 Latin *infans* literally means "not speaking." The animals and birds are those of Abraham's sacrifice in Genesis 15:9.

Book XVII

The age of the prophets
Prophecies of Christ and the Church in Samuel, the Psalms, and the books of the kings.

THE TIMES OF THE PROPHETS

From Samuel to the return from Babylon is the age of the prophets.

17.1 We have learned that God promised Abraham two things for his seed: the Israelite nation according to the flesh, and all nations according to faith. How these promises of God made to Abraham are fulfilled, the city of God will show as it runs its course through the order of the ages. The previous book ended at the reign of David. So now, beginning from that reign, we take up the rest of what follows, as far as seems sufficient for the work we have undertaken. The period from the time when holy Samuel began to prophesy, and onward until the people of Israel were led captive into Babylon and, in accordance with the prophecy of holy Jeremiah, the Israelites returned after seventy years and the house of God was rebuilt—that whole period is the age of the prophets.[1] Certainly we may with good reason call the patriarch Noah himself a prophet, in whose days the whole earth was washed away by the flood. We may also call others prophets, both before him and after him, up to the time when kings began to rule among God's people. Through them certain future things concerning the city of God and the kingdom of heaven were in some way signified or foretold. This is especially true since we read that some of them, such as Abraham and

1 Jeremiah foretold seventy years of exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11–12; 29:10).

Moses, were explicitly given that name. Nevertheless, the days of the prophets are chiefly and above all said to be those from the time when Samuel began to prophesy. At God's command Samuel anointed as king first Saul and then, when Saul had been rejected, David himself. From David's stock the rest were to succeed, for as long as it was fitting that they should succeed in this way. Throughout these times the city of God was running its course, its members departing by death and succeeding by birth. If I wished to record everything the prophets foretold about Christ during them, I would go on without end. First, this scripture sets out the kings, their deeds and their fortunes in order, and so it seems to be occupied, with something like a historian's diligence, in narrating events. Yet if it is examined and treated with the help of God's Spirit, it will be found to be intent on foretelling the future more than—or at any rate no less than—on reporting the past. (And who that thinks about these things even moderately does not know how laborious and lengthy it is, and how many volumes it would require, to search this out by investigation and to demonstrate it by discussion?) Second, the passages that undoubtedly belong to prophecy are so many, concerning Christ and the kingdom of heaven, which is the city of God, that laying them open would require a longer discussion than the scale of this work demands. Therefore, if I can, I shall so restrain my pen that, in completing this work according to God's will, I neither say what is superfluous nor leave out what is necessary.

WHEN GOD'S PROMISE ABOUT THE LAND OF CANAAN, WHICH EVEN FLESHLY ISRAEL RECEIVED AS A POSSESSION, WAS FULFILLED

The promise of Canaan was fulfilled under David and Solomon; the spiritual promise awaited Christ.

17.2 In the preceding book we said that from the beginning of God's promises to Abraham two things were promised. One was that his seed would possess the land of Canaan; this is signified where it is said: "Go into the land which I will show you, and I

will make you into a great nation." The other, far more excellent, concerned not his carnal but his spiritual seed. Through this seed he is father not of the one Israelite nation but of all the nations that follow in the footsteps of his faith. This second promise began to be made in these words: "And in you all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed." And we went on to show by a great many other testimonies that these two things were promised.[2] So the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, that is, the people of Israel, was now in the promised land. There it had already begun to reign, not only by holding and possessing the cities of its adversaries but also by having kings. By this time God's promises concerning that people had in large part been fulfilled. These included not only the promises made to those three fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and any others made in their times, but also those made through Moses himself in his own times, when he was leading the people through the desert. It was through Moses that this same people was freed from slavery in Egypt, and through him that all past events were revealed. Joshua son of Nun was an illustrious leader. Through him that people was led into the promised land, and after conquering the nations he divided the land among the twelve tribes, as God had commanded, and then died. But God's promise about the land of Canaan, stretching from a certain river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, had not been fulfilled through him, nor after him during the whole period of the judges. Yet it was no longer being prophesied as something to come; it was being awaited as something to be fulfilled. It was fulfilled through David and his son Solomon, whose kingdom was extended over as wide an area as had been promised. For they subdued all those peoples and made them pay tribute. Under these kings, then, the seed of Abraham had been established in the promised land according to the flesh, that is, in the land of Canaan. Nothing more remained for that earthly promise of God to be fulfilled except this: that the Hebrew nation, so far as temporal prosperity is concerned, should remain in that same land in an

2 Genesis 12:1–3.

unshaken state through the succession of its descendants until the end of this mortal age, if it obeyed the laws of the Lord its God. But God knew that it would not do this. So he used even temporal punishments on it, to train the few faithful he had in it, and to give warning to those who would later be found among all the nations. They needed this warning, for in them he was going to fulfill the other promise, when the new covenant was revealed through the incarnation of Christ.

THE THREE KINDS OF MEANING IN THE PROPHETS, WHICH REFER NOW TO THE EARTHLY JERUSALEM, NOW TO THE HEAVENLY, AND NOW TO BOTH

Prophecies refer to the earthly Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, or both.

17.3 Consider the divine oracles given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and whatever other prophetic signs or sayings appear in the earlier sacred writings. In the same way, the rest of the prophecies from this time of the kings onward relate partly to the nation descended from Abraham's flesh. Partly, however, they relate to that seed of his in which all the nations are blessed as co-heirs of Christ through the new covenant, to possess eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. Partly, then, they relate to the slave woman who bears children into slavery, that is, the earthly Jerusalem, "which is in slavery with her children." Partly they relate to the free city of God, that is, the true Jerusalem, eternal in the heavens, whose children are people living according to God as pilgrims on earth. But there are some among them that are understood to relate to both: to the slave woman literally, and to the free woman figuratively.[3]

The utterances of the prophets, then, are found to be of three kinds: some look to the earthly Jerusalem, some to the heavenly, and some to both. I see that I must prove what I say by examples. The prophet Nathan was sent to rebuke King David

3 Galatians 4:22–26, where Paul treats Hagar and Sarah as figures of the two covenants and the two Jerusalems.

for a grave sin and to foretell to him the evils that would follow. Some such utterances are public, that is, for the welfare or benefit of the people. Others are private, when someone earned divine utterances for his own affairs, so that he might know something of the future for the needs of temporal life. Who would doubt that these, and things like them, belonged to the earthly city?[4] But we also read: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant for the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I arranged for their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not remain in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will establish for the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: putting my laws into their mind, I will also write them upon their hearts; and I will look upon them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Here, without doubt, it is the Jerusalem above that is prophesied. God himself is its reward, and to have him and to be his is there the supreme and entire good.[5] Some things, however, relate to both cities. Jerusalem is called the city of God, and it is prophesied that the house of God will be in it. That prophecy appears to be fulfilled when King Solomon builds that most renowned temple. For these things both happened in the earthly Jerusalem as history and were figures of the heavenly Jerusalem. This kind of prophecy, compounded and mingled, as it were, of both, carries very great weight in the old canonical books that contain narratives of past events. It has greatly exercised, and still exercises, the minds of those who search the sacred writings. When they read of something historically foretold and fulfilled in the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, they inquire what it may also signify allegorically, as something to be fulfilled in the seed of Abraham according to faith. Some have gone so far as to think that there is nothing in those books that

4 2 Samuel 12, after David's adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband Uriah.
5 Jeremiah 31:31–33.

does not hint at something to be referred, by figurative meaning, to the city of God above and to her children who are pilgrims in this life. This applies, they say, whether a thing was foretold and accomplished or accomplished without being foretold. But if this is so, the utterances of the prophets will be of two kinds, not three. Or rather, this will be true of all the scriptures that are classed under the name of the Old Testament. For there will be nothing there that relates to the earthly Jerusalem alone, if whatever is said and fulfilled there about it or because of it signifies something that is also to be referred to the heavenly Jerusalem by allegorical prefiguration. There will be only two kinds: one relating to the free Jerusalem, the other to both. Some think that the events recorded in that kind of literature signify nothing beyond the fact that they happened as they did; to me they seem to err greatly. Others maintain that absolutely everything there is wrapped in allegorical meanings; to me they seem very bold. That is why I have said there are three kinds, not two. This is my view. Yet I do not blame those who have been able to carve out a spiritual sense from any event there, provided only that the truth of the history is preserved first. On the other hand, some things are said in such a way that they cannot fit any events done or to be done by human or divine agency. What believer would doubt that these were not said idly? Who would not refer them to a spiritual understanding if he could, or else admit that they must be so referred by someone who can?

THE FORESHADOWED CHANGE OF ISRAEL'S KINGSHIP AND PRIESTHOOD, AND WHAT HANNAH, MOTHER OF SAMUEL, PROPHESIED IN THE PERSON OF THE CHURCH

Samuel replacing Eli and David replacing Saul prefigure the new priest and king; Hannah's song begins.

17.4 So the onward course of the city of God reached the times of the kings, when David, after Saul's rejection, first obtained the kingdom in such a way that his descendants afterward reigned in the earthly Jerusalem in a long succession. At that point it

gave a figure, signifying and foretelling by an actual event something that must not be passed over in silence. This was the change of things to come with respect to the two covenants, the old and the new, when priesthood and kingship were changed by a new and eternal priest who is also king, Christ Jesus. For when the priest Eli was rejected, Samuel was put in his place in God's service and performed the office of priest and judge at once. And when Saul was cast off, King David was established in the kingdom. Both these events prefigured what I am speaking of.[6] Samuel's mother Hannah, too, had at first been barren and later rejoiced in fruitfulness. She seems to prophesy nothing else when she pours out her thanksgiving to the Lord in exultation, as she gives that same boy, now born and weaned, back to God with the same devotion with which she had vowed him. For she says: "My heart is strengthened in the Lord; my horn is exalted in my God. My mouth is enlarged over my enemies; I have rejoiced in your salvation. For there is none holy as the Lord, and none just as our God; there is none holy besides you. Do not boast, and do not speak lofty things, and let no proud talk come out of your mouth. For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and a God who prepares his own designs. He has made the bow of the mighty weak, and the weak are girded with strength. Those who were full of bread have been lessened, and the hungry have passed beyond the earth.[7] For the barren woman has borne seven, and she who had many children has grown weak. The Lord puts to death and gives life; he brings down to the underworld and brings back. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he humbles and exalts. He raises the poor man from the earth and lifts the needy from the dunghill, to set him with the mighty of the people, giving them a throne of glory as their inheritance; giving the vow to the one who vows; and he has blessed the years of the just, for it is not by strength that a man is mighty. The Lord will make his adversary weak, the Lord who is holy. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the mighty

6 Eli was the priest at Shiloh whose house God rejected (1 Samuel 2–4).
7 1 Samuel 2:1–10, the Song of Hannah.

man glory in his might, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to do judgment and justice in the midst of the earth. The Lord has gone up into the heavens and thundered; he will judge the ends of the earth, for he is just; and he gives strength to our kings, and will exalt the horn of his anointed."[8]

HANNAH'S SONG AS THE CHURCH'S VOICE

Hannah's song speaks for the Church: the proud fall, the humble rise, the barren bears seven.

Are these words, then, to be thought the words of a mere woman rejoicing over a son born to her? Is the human mind so turned away from the light of truth that it does not perceive that the words this woman poured out go beyond the measure of a woman? Moreover, anyone who is fittingly moved by the very events that have already begun to be fulfilled even in this earthly pilgrimage will attend, and look, and recognize what spoke through this woman. Her very name, Hannah, means "his grace." Through her it was the Christian religion itself, the city of God itself, whose king and founder is Christ, in short the grace of God itself, that spoke in this way by the prophetic spirit. From this grace the proud are estranged so that they fall; by it the humble are filled so that they rise. And this is what the hymn has proclaimed above all. Unless, perhaps, someone is going to say that this woman prophesied nothing, but only praised God in exultant proclamation because of the son she had obtained by her prayers. What, then, does she mean when she says: "He has made the bow of the mighty weak, and the weak are girded with strength; those who were full of bread have been lessened, and the hungry have passed beyond the earth; for the barren woman has borne seven, and she who had many children has grown weak"? Had she herself borne seven,

8 "His anointed" translates the Latin *christus*, "anointed one," the word from which the title Christ comes.

although she had been barren? She had only one when she said this. And even later she did not bear seven, nor six, so that Samuel himself would make the seventh, but three sons and two daughters. Again, no one was yet reigning among that people. So where did the words she placed at the end come from—"He gives strength to our kings, and will exalt the horn of his anointed"—if she was not prophesying?

Let the Church of Christ, then, the city of the great king, full of grace, fruitful in offspring, say what she recognizes was prophesied about herself so long before through the mouth of this devout mother: "My heart is strengthened in the Lord; my horn is exalted in my God." The heart is truly strengthened and the horn truly exalted, because this is not in herself but in the Lord her God. "My mouth is enlarged over my enemies"; for even in the straits of affliction the word of God is not bound, not even in heralds who are bound. "I have rejoiced," she says, "in your salvation." This salvation is Christ Jesus. As we read in the Gospel, old Simeon embraced him as a little child while recognizing him as great, and said: "Now, Lord, you let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation."[9] Let the Church say, then: "I have rejoiced in your salvation; for there is none holy as the Lord, and none just as our God"—as the one who is holy and makes holy, just and makes just. "There is none holy besides you," because no one becomes holy except through you. Then comes: "Do not boast, and do not speak lofty things, and let no proud talk go out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge." He knows you, even where no one else knows; for "whoever thinks he is something, when he is nothing, deceives himself."[10] These things are said to the adversaries of the city of God, those who belong to Babylon, who presume on their own strength and glory in themselves, not in the Lord. Among them are also the carnal Israelites, earth-born citizens of the earthly Jerusalem. As the apostle says, "being ignorant of God's justice"—that is, the justice that God gives to man, he who

9 Luke 2:29–30.
10 Galatians 6:3.

alone is just and makes just—"and seeking to establish their own"—that is, a justice obtained, as it were, by themselves for themselves, not bestowed by him—"they have not submitted to God's justice." This is surely because they are proud. They think they can please God by what is their own, not by what is God's. But he is the God of knowledge, and therefore also the judge of consciences. There he sees the thoughts of human beings, that they are vain if they are merely human and do not come from him. "And a God," she says, "who prepares his own designs." What designs do we suppose these are, except that the proud should fall and the humble rise?[11] She goes on to describe these designs, saying: "The bow of the mighty has been weakened, and the weak are girded with strength." The bow is weakened—that is, the aim of those who think themselves so mighty that they can fulfill the divine commandments by human sufficiency, without God's gift and help. And those are girded with strength whose inner voice is: "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak." "Those who were full of bread," she says, "have been lessened, and the hungry have passed beyond the earth." Who are to be understood as full of bread, if not those same people who were seemingly mighty, the Israelites, to whom the oracles of God were entrusted? But among that people the children of the slave woman were lessened. (The Latin word here, *minorati*, is not good Latin, but it expresses well that from greater they were made lesser.) For even in the bread itself—that is, in the divine oracles, which at that time the Israelites alone of all the nations received—they savor earthly things.[12] But the nations, to whom that law had not been given, came to those oracles through the new covenant, and afterward, hungering greatly, passed beyond the earth. For in those oracles they savored not earthly but heavenly things. And as if the cause of this were being asked, she says: "For the barren woman has borne seven, and she who had many children has grown weak." Here the whole of what was being prophesied shines out to those who

11 Romans 10:3.
12 Psalm 6:2.

recognize the number seven, which signifies the perfection of the universal Church. That is why the apostle John, too, writes to seven churches, showing in this way that he is writing to the fullness of the one Church. And in the Proverbs of Solomon this was prefigured long before: "Wisdom has built herself a house and propped it up with seven pillars." For the city of God was barren among all the nations before this offspring that we now see came to birth.[13] We also see that the earthly Jerusalem, which had many children, is now weakened. For whatever children of the free woman were in her were her strength. But now, since the letter is there and the spirit is not, she has lost her strength and grown weak.

THE LORD PUTS TO DEATH AND GIVES LIFE

The Lord kills and gives life, raises the poor, and will judge the ends of the earth.

"The Lord puts to death and gives life." He put to death her who had many children, and gave life to this barren one who has borne seven. It can, however, be understood more fittingly that he gives life to the very ones he has put to death. For she repeats the thought, as it were, by adding: "He brings down to the underworld and brings back." The apostle says to some: "If you have died with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." These are surely put to death by the Lord for their salvation. And to them he adds: "Savor the things that are above, not those on earth," so that they are the very ones who, hungering, passed beyond the earth. "For you have died," he says—see how God puts to death for salvation. Then follows: "and your life is hidden with Christ in God"—see how God gives life to these same people. But did he bring these same people down to the underworld and bring them back?[14] Believers agree without dispute that we see both of these fulfilled rather in him who is our head, with whom, the

13 Revelation 1:4; Proverbs 9:1.
14 Colossians 3:1–3.

apostle said, our life is hidden in God. For when "he did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all," in that way he certainly put him to death. And because he raised him from the dead, he gave the same one life again. And because his voice is recognized in the prophecy, "You will not leave my soul in the underworld," he brought the same one down to the underworld and brought him back. By this poverty of his we have been made rich. For "the Lord makes poor and makes rich." To know what this means, let us listen to what follows: "He humbles and exalts"—that is, he humbles the proud and exalts the humble. What we read elsewhere, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble," is the whole content of the song of this woman whose name means "his grace."[15]

Next it adds: "He raises the poor man from the earth." I understand this of no one better than of him who, "though he was rich, became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty," as was said a little earlier, "we might be made rich." For God raised him from the earth so quickly that his flesh did not see corruption. Nor shall I separate from him what is added: "and lifts the needy from the dunghill." The needy one is the same as the poor one. And the dunghill from which he was lifted is most rightly understood as the persecuting Jews. The apostle counted himself among their number when he said that he had persecuted the Church: "What things were gain to me," he says, "these I have counted as loss for Christ's sake; and not only as losses, but I have considered them dung, that I might gain Christ."[16] So that poor man was raised from the earth above all the rich, and that needy man was lifted from that dunghill above all the wealthy, "to sit with the mighty of the people." To them he says: "You will sit upon twelve thrones," "giving them a throne of glory as their inheritance." For those mighty ones had said: "See, we have left everything and followed you." This vow they had vowed most mightily. But where did they get this, if not from him of whom it is said here immediately after: "giving the vow to the one who

15 Romans 8:32; Psalm 15:10 (16:10 in most English Bibles); James 4:6.
16 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 3:7–8.

vows"? Otherwise they would belong to those mighty ones whose bow was weakened. "Giving," she says, "the vow to the one who vows." For no one would vow anything right to the Lord unless he received from him what he vowed. Then follows: "and he has blessed the years of the just"—that is, so that the just may live without end with him to whom it was said: "and your years will not fail."[17] For there the years stand still, but here they pass away—or rather, they perish. Before they come, they do not yet exist; and once they have come, they will no longer exist, because they come bringing their own end with them. Of these two phrases, "giving the vow to the one who vows" and "he has blessed the years of the just," the first is something we do and the second something we receive. But the second is not received from God as giver unless the first is first accomplished with God as helper. "For it is not by strength that a man is mighty. The Lord will make his adversary weak"—that is, the one who envies and resists a person making a vow, so that he may not be able to fulfill what he vowed. Because the Greek is ambiguous, it can also be understood as "his own adversary." For when the Lord has begun to possess us, the adversary who was ours certainly becomes his. And he will be overcome by us, but not by our own powers, because "it is not by strength that a man is mighty."[18] So the Lord will make his own adversary weak—the holy Lord—so that the adversary may be overcome by the holy ones, whom the Lord, the Holy One of the holy, makes holy.

And so, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the mighty man glory in his might, and let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to do judgment and justice in the midst of the earth." Whoever understands and knows that even this—to understand and know the Lord—is given to him by the Lord understands and knows the Lord in no small measure. "For what do you have," says the apostle, "that you did not

17 Matthew 19:28 and 19:27; Psalm 101:28 (102:27 in most English Bibles).
18 1 Samuel 2:9–10, from the song of Hannah (1 Kings in Augustine's Latin Bible). The Greek pronoun can refer either to the man or to the Lord.

receive? And if you received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?" That is, why glory as though what you glory in came to you from yourself? Now, the one who does judgment and justice is the one who lives rightly.[19] And the one who lives rightly is the one who obeys God when he commands. "The end of the commandment"—that is, what the commandment is directed toward—"is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith." Moreover, this love, as the apostle John testifies, "is from God." Therefore to do judgment and justice is from God. But what does "in the midst of the earth" mean? Surely those who live at the ends of the earth are not excused from doing judgment and justice. Who would say that? Why, then, was "in the midst of the earth" added? If it had not been added, and the text had said only "to do judgment and justice," this commandment would apply all the more to both kinds of people, those of the midlands and those of the coasts.[20] But someone might think that after the end of this life, which is lived in this body, there is still time left to do the judgment and justice he failed to do while he was in the flesh, and that in this way the divine judgment can be escaped. To prevent this, it seems to me, "in the midst of the earth" was said of the time when each person lives in the body. For in this life each of us carries his own earth around with him. When a person dies, the common earth takes it back, and will certainly give it back when he rises again. Therefore it is "in the midst of the earth"—that is, while our soul is enclosed in this earthly body—that judgment and justice must be done. This will benefit us hereafter, when "each one receives according to what he has done through the body, whether good or evil." For there, by "through the body," the apostle meant through the time during which a person lived in the body.[21] For if someone blasphemes with a malicious mind and impious thoughts, but does not carry it out with any member of his body, he will not there-

19 This passage stands in the Greek version of Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:10) and closely matches Jeremiah 9:23–24. The apostle is Paul, 1 Corinthians 4:7.
20 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 John 4:7.
21 2 Corinthians 5:10.

fore be guiltless just because he did not do it by a movement of the body. He carried it out during the time in which he also carried his body. In this way we can also fittingly understand what we read in the psalm: "But God our King, before the ages, has worked salvation in the midst of the earth." Here the Lord Jesus is to be understood as our God, who is before the ages—since the ages were made through him—and who worked our salvation in the midst of the earth when the Word became flesh and dwelt in an earthly body.[22]

Then, after these words of Hannah have prophesied how the one who glories ought to glory—not in himself, of course, but in the Lord—on account of the reward to come on the day of judgment, she says: "The Lord ascended into the heavens and thundered; he will judge the ends of the earth, because he is just." She has kept precisely to the order of the believers' confession of faith. For the Lord Christ ascended into heaven, and from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. For, as the apostle says, "Who ascended, if not the one who also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who also ascended above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things." So he thundered through his clouds, which he filled with the Holy Spirit when he had ascended. It was with these clouds that, through the prophet Isaiah, he threatened the handmaid Jerusalem—that is, the ungrateful vineyard—that they would rain no rain upon her.[23] Now, "He will judge the ends of the earth" was said as if it meant "even the ends of the earth." For he who will undoubtedly judge all people will not leave the other parts unjudged. But "the ends of the earth" are better understood as the end of a human being. For what will be judged is not what changes for better or worse in the meantime, but the final state in which the one to be judged is found. That is why it was said: "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved." So whoever perseveres in doing judgment and justice in the

22 Psalm 73:12 (74:12 in most English Bibles).
23 1 Samuel 2:10 in the Greek version; Ephesians 4:9–10; Isaiah 5:6, from the song of the vineyard.

midst of the earth will not be condemned when the ends of the earth are judged. "And he gives strength," she says, "to our kings"—so that in judging he does not condemn them. He gives them strength by which, like kings, they may rule the flesh and, in him who shed his blood for them, overcome the world. "And he will exalt the horn of his christ." How will Christ exalt the horn of his christ?[24] For the one of whom it was said above, "The Lord ascended into the heavens," and who was understood to be the Lord Christ, is the same one who, as is said here, "will exalt the horn of his christ." Who, then, is the christ of Christ? Will he exalt the horn of each of his faithful ones, as Hannah herself says at the beginning of this hymn: "My horn is exalted in my God"? For we can rightly call all who are anointed with his chrism christs; and yet this whole body, together with its head, is one Christ. These things were prophesied by Hannah, the mother of Samuel, a holy and much-praised man. In him the change of the old priesthood was prefigured at that time, and it is fulfilled now, when "she who had many children has grown weak," so that the barren woman who has borne seven might have a new priesthood in Christ.[25]

WHAT THE MAN OF GOD, SPEAKING BY THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, SAID TO THE PRIEST ELI, SIGNIFYING THAT THE PRIESTHOOD ESTABLISHED AFTER AARON WOULD BE TAKEN AWAY

A man of God tells Eli that the priesthood of Aaron's house will be taken away.

17.5 But a man of God who was sent to Eli the priest himself speaks of this more plainly. His name is not given, but from his office and ministry he is understood without any doubt to be a prophet. For it is written: "And a man of God came to Eli and said, 'Thus says the Lord: I revealed myself, I revealed myself to your father's house when they were slaves in the land of Egypt

24 Matthew 10:22. In Latin *christus* is also the ordinary word for "anointed one," and Augustine plays on the title and the common noun.
25 1 Samuel 2:1 and 2:5.

in Pharaoh's house. I chose your father's house out of all the scepters of Israel to serve me as priests, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear the ephod. And I gave your father's house as food all the fire offerings of the children of Israel. Why then have you looked upon my incense and my sacrifice with a shameless eye, and honored your sons above me, letting them bless the firstfruits of every sacrifice in Israel in my sight?[26] Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I said, Your house and your father's house shall pass before me forever. But now the Lord says: Not at all; rather, those who glorify me I will glorify, and whoever despises me shall be despised. Behold, the days are coming when I will root out your seed and the seed of your father's house, and you will have no elder in my house all the days. I will root out a man of yours from my altar, so that his eyes fail and his soul wastes away; and all of your house who survive shall fall by the sword of men. And this shall be a sign to you, which will come upon these two sons of yours, Hophni and Phinehas: both of them shall die on one day. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do all that is in my heart and in my soul; and I will build him a faithful house, and it shall pass before my Christ all the days. And it shall be that whoever survives in your house will come to worship him with a silver obol, saying: Cast me into a single share of your priesthood, to eat bread.'"[27]

There are no grounds for saying that this prophecy, in which the change of the old priesthood was foretold so clearly, was fulfilled in Samuel. (Samuel was indeed from no other tribe than the one the Lord had appointed to serve the altar; yet he was not one of the sons of Aaron, whose descendants had been designated as the line from which priests were to come. And so in this event, too, the same change that was to come through Christ Jesus was foreshadowed. This too was a prophecy—a prophecy of deed, not of word—which belonged literally to the Old Testament but figuratively to the New. By a deed it signified what was

26 1 Samuel 2:27–36 (1 Kings in Augustine's Latin Bible).
27 An obol was a small coin of little value.

said in words to Eli the priest through the prophet.) For afterward there were priests of the line of Aaron, such as Zadok and Abiathar in the reign of David, and others after them, before the time came when the things foretold so long beforehand about the change of the priesthood were to be accomplished through Christ. But who now, looking at these things with the eye of faith, does not see that they have been fulfilled? For the Jews have been left no tabernacle, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice, and therefore no priest either—though God's law had commanded them to ordain their priest from the seed of Aaron. This too is mentioned here, when the prophet says: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I said, Your house and your father's house shall pass before me forever. But now the Lord says: Not at all; rather, those who glorify me I will glorify, and whoever despises me shall be despised."[28] When he speaks of his father's house, the earlier words show that he does not mean Eli's immediate father, but Aaron, who was appointed the first priest, from whose descendants the rest were to follow. For he says: "I revealed myself to your father's house when they were slaves in the land of Egypt in Pharaoh's house, and I chose your father's house out of all the scepters of Israel to serve me as priests." Which of Eli's forefathers was in that Egyptian slavery and, after they had been freed from it, was chosen for the priesthood, if not Aaron? It is of his stock, then, that he said in this passage that the time would come when they would no longer be priests—and this we now see fulfilled. Let faith keep watch: the facts are before us; they are seen, they are grasped, and they are thrust before the eyes of those who do not want to see. "Behold," he says, "the days are coming when I will root out your seed and the seed of your father's house, and you will have no elder in my house all the days. I will root out a man of yours from my altar, so that his eyes fail and his soul wastes away." Behold, the days that were foretold have now come. There is no priest according to the order of Aaron. And whenever any man of his line sees the sacrifice of the Christians flourishing throughout the world,

28 Zadok and Abiathar served together as high priests under King David.

while that great honor has been taken away from himself, his eyes fail and his soul wastes away, consumed by grief.

THE FAITHFUL PRIEST AND HIS HOUSE

The faithful priest is Christ, and the survivor who begs a share of his priesthood is the believer.

But what follows applies properly to the house of this Eli to whom these things were said: "And all of your house who survive shall fall by the sword of men. And this shall be a sign to you, which will come upon these two sons of yours, Hophni and Phinehas: both of them shall die on one day." This, then, became the sign that the priesthood was to be transferred from his house, and by this sign it was signified that the priesthood of the house of Aaron was to be changed. For the death of Eli's sons signified the death not of men but of the priesthood itself among the sons of Aaron. What comes next, however, concerns that priest whose figure Samuel bore by succeeding Eli. Accordingly, the words that follow are said of Christ Jesus, the true priest of the New Testament: "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do all that is in my heart and in my soul; and I will build him a faithful house." That house is the eternal Jerusalem above. "And it shall pass," he says, "before my Christ all the days." By "it shall pass" he meant "it shall go about its life," just as he had said earlier about the house of Aaron: "I said, Your house and your father's house shall pass before me forever." But when he says, "It shall pass before my Christ," this must certainly be understood of the house itself, not of that priest who is Christ himself, the mediator and Savior. So it is his house that will pass before him. "It shall pass" can also be understood as passing from death to life, through all the days in which this mortal condition runs its course until the end of this age. And when God says, "who shall do all that is in my heart and in my soul," let us not suppose that God has a soul, since he is the creator of the soul. Rather, this is said of God figuratively, not literally, just as hands and feet and the other members of the body

are. And so that no one may conclude from this that man was made in the image of God in the shape of this flesh of ours, wings are also attributed to God—which man certainly does not have—and it is said to God: "Under the shadow of your wings you will protect me." In this way people may understand that these things are said of that ineffable nature using not the literal but the transferred names of things.[29]

Now the words that are added—"And it shall be that whoever survives in your house will come to worship him"—are said not properly of the house of this Eli, but of the house of Aaron. People of that house remained until the coming of Jesus Christ, and even now there are still some of that line. For about this house of Eli it had already been said above: "And all of your house who survive shall fall by the sword of men." How, then, could it truly be said here, "And it shall be that whoever survives in your house will come to worship him," if it is true that no one from that house survived the avenging sword? Only if he meant us to understand those who belong to the stock—but the stock of that whole priesthood according to the order of Aaron. So suppose this refers to that predestined remnant of which another prophet said, "The remnant shall be saved" (which is why the apostle too says, "So too at this present time a remnant has come into being, chosen by grace"). Since the one of whom it was said, "whoever survives in your house," is rightly understood to belong to such a remnant, he surely believes in Christ—just as in the time of the apostles a great many of that very nation believed, and even now there are some who believe, though very rarely. And in him is fulfilled what this man of God immediately went on to add: "He will come to worship him with a silver obol." To worship whom, if not that supreme priest who is also God? For in that priesthood according to the order of Aaron people did not come to the temple or to the altar of God in order to worship the priest.[30] And what does he mean by "with a silver obol," if not the brevity of the word of faith? The apostle recalls

29 Psalm 16:8 (17:8 in most English Bibles).
30 Isaiah 10:22, quoted by Paul in Romans 9:27; Romans 11:5.

the saying about it: "The Lord will accomplish a word upon the earth, completing it and cutting it short." That silver stands for speech, a psalm bears witness, where it is sung: "The words of the Lord are pure words, silver tested in the fire."[31]

What, then, does he say, this one who comes to worship the priest of God, the priest who is God? "Cast me into a share of your priesthood, to eat bread." I do not wish to be placed in the honor of my fathers, which is nothing; cast me into a share of your priesthood. For "I have chosen to be cast down in the house of God"; I long to be a member of your priesthood, whatever kind of member, however small. For by "priesthood" here he means the people itself, of which that priest is the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." It is to this people that the apostle Peter says: "A holy people, a royal priesthood." Some, it is true, have translated it "of your sacrifice," not "of your priesthood"; but this nonetheless signifies the same Christian people. That is why the apostle Paul says: "We, though many, are one bread, one body."[32] So when he added "to eat bread," he also aptly expressed the very kind of sacrifice of which the priest himself says: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." This is the sacrifice—not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek. Let the reader understand. Brief, then, and wholesomely humble is this confession that says, "Cast me into a share of your priesthood, to eat bread." It is itself the silver obol, for it is both brief and the word of the Lord who dwells in the heart of the believer. He had said earlier that he had given the house of Aaron food from the victims of the Old Testament, when he said, "I gave your father's house as food all the fire offerings of the children of Israel" (for these had been the sacrifices of the Jews). That is why here he said "to eat bread," which in the New Testament is the sacrifice of the Christians.[33]

31 Romans 9:28, quoting Isaiah 10:23; Psalm 11:7 (12:6 in most English Bibles).
32 Psalm 83:11 (84:10 in most English Bibles); 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:17.
33 John 6:51. Melchizedek is the priest-king of Genesis 14, whose order is invoked in Psalm 109:4 (110:4 in most English Bibles).

THE JEWISH PRIESTHOOD AND KINGSHIP, WHICH, THOUGH SAID TO BE ESTABLISHED FOREVER, DID NOT LAST, SO THAT OTHER THINGS MIGHT BE UNDERSTOOD WHOSE ETERNITY IS PROMISED

The "eternal" priesthood and kingdom of Israel were shadows of the eternal ones to come.

17.6 These things were foretold back then with such depth, and they now shine out with such clarity. Even so, someone may with good reason be troubled and say: "How can we be confident that everything those books foretold will come to pass, if this very thing that was divinely spoken there, 'Your house and your father's house shall pass before me forever,' could not take effect? For we see that this priesthood has been changed. What was promised to that house cannot be hoped ever to be fulfilled, since what is proclaimed eternal is rather the priesthood that succeeded it once it was rejected and changed." Whoever says this does not yet understand, or does not remember, that the priesthood after the order of Aaron was itself established as a shadow of the eternal priesthood to come. So when eternity was promised to it, the promise was made not to the shadow and figure itself but to what was foreshadowed and prefigured through it.[34] But so that no one would think the shadow itself was going to last, its change also had to be prophesied.

In the same way, the kingdom of Saul himself, who was certainly rejected and cast off, was a shadow of a kingdom to come that would last for eternity. For the oil with which he was anointed, the anointing from which he was called "christ," that is, "anointed," must be taken in a mystical sense and understood as a great sacred sign. David himself revered it so deeply in Saul that his heart was struck with dread. Hidden in a dark cave, which Saul had also entered to relieve himself, David secretly cut off a small piece of Saul's garment from behind. He did this so that he would have proof of how he had spared him when he

34 1 Samuel 2:30.

could have killed him, and so might remove the suspicion that made Saul think holy David his enemy and hunt him down so fiercely. Yet he was afraid that by touching even Saul's clothing in this way he had made himself guilty of violating so great a sacred sign in Saul. For this is what is written: "And David's heart struck him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's cloak." His men were urging him to kill Saul, now delivered into his hands. But he said to them, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, and lay my hand on him, for he is the Lord's anointed." Such great reverence was shown to this shadow of what was to come, then, not for its own sake but for the sake of what it prefigured.[35] Samuel also said to Saul: "Because you have not kept my command, which the Lord commanded you—just as the Lord had now prepared your kingdom over Israel forever—now your kingdom will not stand for you. The Lord will seek for himself a man after his own heart, and the Lord will command him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." This is not to be taken as if God had prepared Saul himself to reign forever and later chose not to keep that promise because Saul sinned, for God was not unaware that he would sin. Rather, God had prepared Saul's kingdom so that it would contain a figure of the eternal kingdom. That is why he added, "Now your kingdom will not stand for you."[36] What was signified in Saul has stood, then, and will stand. But it will not stand for him, because neither he nor his offspring was going to reign forever, so that the word "forever" might at least seem fulfilled through descendants succeeding one another. "And the Lord," he says, "will seek for himself a man." This signifies either David or the Mediator of the new covenant himself, who was also prefigured in the anointing with which David and his offspring were anointed. God does not seek a man for himself as if he did not know where to find one. He speaks through a man in the way men speak, because by speaking in this way he is seeking us. For we

35 1 Samuel 24:5–6.
36 1 Samuel 13:13–14.

were already so well known, not only to God the Father but also to his only-begotten Son, who "came to seek what was lost," that we were chosen in him "before the foundation of the world." So when he said "he will seek for himself," he meant "he will have as his own."[37] That is why in Latin this verb takes a prefix and becomes *adquirit*, "he acquires," and its meaning is clear enough. Yet even without the added prefix, *quaerere*, "to seek," is understood as "to acquire." This is why gains are also called *quaestus*.

THE SPLITTING OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, FORESHADOWING THE PERMANENT DIVISION OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL FROM FLESHLY ISRAEL

Saul's torn cloak foretells Israel's permanent division into those for and against Christ.

17.7 Saul sinned again through disobedience, and again Samuel said to him in the word of the Lord: "Because you have despised the word of the Lord, the Lord has despised you, so that you shall not be king over Israel." Saul then confessed this same sin, begged for pardon, and asked Samuel to go back with him to appease God. Again Samuel said: "I will not go back with you. Because you have despised the word of the Lord, the Lord will despise you, so that you shall not be king over Israel." And Samuel turned his face to go away, and Saul took hold of the edge of his cloak and tore it. And Samuel said to him: "The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel out of your hand today, and he will give it to your neighbor, who is good above you. And Israel will be divided in two. He will not turn back, nor will he repent, for he is not like a man, that he should repent. He threatens, and does not abide by it."[38] This man, to whom it was said, "The Lord will despise you, so that you shall not be king over Israel," and "The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel out of your hand today," reigned over Israel for forty years—just as long a time as

37 Luke 19:10; Ephesians 1:4.
38 1 Samuel 15:23, 26–29.

David himself. He heard these words early in his reign. We are meant to understand that this was said because no one from his line would reign, and to look instead to the line of David. From that line, according to the flesh, came "the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."[39]

Scripture does not have what we read in most Latin manuscripts, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel out of your hand." It has what I have quoted, as found in the Greek: "The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel out of your hand." So "out of your hand" is to be understood as meaning "from Israel." This man, then, figuratively represented the people of Israel. That people was going to lose the kingdom, since Christ Jesus our Lord was to reign through the new covenant, not in a carnal but in a spiritual way. When it is said of him, "and he will give it to your neighbor," this refers to kinship in the flesh. For Christ came from Israel according to the flesh, and so did Saul. The added words "who is good above you" can indeed be understood as "better than you," and some have translated them that way. But it is better to take "good above you" to mean that because he is good, he is therefore above you. This agrees with that other prophetic saying: "Until I put all your enemies under your feet." Among these enemies is Israel, Christ's persecutor, from whom Christ took away the kingdom. Yet there was also an Israel there "in whom there was no guile," a kind of grain among that chaff. For the apostles certainly came from there, and so did many martyrs, the first of whom was Stephen. So did the many churches that the apostle Paul mentions as glorifying God for his conversion.[40]

I have no doubt that what follows is to be understood of this: "And Israel will be divided in two." That is, into an Israel hostile to Christ and an Israel holding fast to Christ, into an Israel that belongs to the slave woman and an Israel that belongs to the free woman. At first these two kinds were together, as if Abraham

39 1 Timothy 2:5. Saul's forty-year reign comes from Acts 13:21.
40 Psalm 109:1 (110:1 in most English Bibles); John 1:47; Galatians 1:24. Stephen was the first Christian martyr (Acts 7).

were still attached to the slave woman. Then the barren woman, made fruitful by the grace of Christ, cried out: "Cast out the slave woman and her son." We know, of course, that because of Solomon's sin Israel was divided in two in the reign of his son Rehoboam. It remained so, each part having its own kings, until the whole nation was overthrown by the Chaldeans in a great devastation and carried off into exile. But what does that have to do with Saul? If any such thing was to be threatened, it would rather have been threatened against David himself, whose son Solomon was.[41] Finally, the Hebrew nation is not now divided within itself. It is scattered across the lands, all alike in the fellowship of the same error. But the division that God threatened against that kingdom and people, in the person of Saul who represented them figuratively, was shown to be eternal and unchangeable by the added words: "He will not turn back, nor will he repent, for he is not like a man, that he should repent. He threatens, and does not abide by it." That is, a man threatens and does not abide by it—but not God, who does not repent as a man does. For where we read that he repents, a change in things is meant, while God's foreknowledge remains unchangeable. So where he is said not to repent, it is understood that he does not change.

We see, then, that through these words a divine sentence was pronounced on this division of the people of Israel, one that cannot be undone and is entirely permanent. For all who have crossed over, are crossing over, or will cross over from there to Christ were not of that people in God's foreknowledge, whatever they were by the one nature shared by the human race. All those Israelites who hold fast to Christ and persevere in him will never be with those Israelites who persist in being his enemies to the end of this life. They will remain forever in the division foretold here. For the old covenant from Mount Sinai, which bears children into slavery, is of no use except in that it bears witness to the new covenant. Otherwise, "as long as Moses is

41 Genesis 21:10, read through Paul's allegory in Galatians 4:21–31. The kingdom split under Rehoboam is told in 1 Kings 12.

read, a veil lies over their hearts; but when anyone crosses over from there to Christ, the veil will be taken away."[42] For the very intention of those who cross over is changed from the old to the new, so that each no longer aims at receiving a carnal happiness but a spiritual one. This is why the great prophet Samuel acted as he did before he anointed Saul king. He cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. While he was offering a burnt offering, foreigners came to fight against the people of God, and the Lord thundered over them. They were thrown into confusion, stumbled before Israel, and were defeated. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between new Mizpah and old Mizpah. He called it Ebenezer, which in Latin means "stone of the helper," and said: "Thus far the Lord has helped us." Mizpah means "intention."[43] That stone of the helper is the mediation of the Savior. Through him we must cross over from old Mizpah to new, that is, from the intention that expected a false, carnal happiness in a carnal kingdom to the intention that, through the new covenant, expects the truest, spiritual happiness in the kingdom of heaven. Since nothing is better than this, it is thus far that God helps us.

THE PROMISES MADE TO DAVID ABOUT HIS SON, WHICH ARE NOT AT ALL FULFILLED IN SOLOMON BUT MOST FULLY IN CHRIST

Nathan's promise of a son and an eternal house for David points to Christ, not Solomon.

17.8 Now I think I must show what God promised to David himself, as far as it bears on our subject. David succeeded Saul in the kingship, and in that change the final change was prefigured, the one for whose sake everything was divinely spoken and everything written down. After King David had enjoyed much success, he planned to build a house for God—the famous temple, renowned far and wide, that was later built by his son,

42 Galatians 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:15–16.
43 1 Samuel 7:9–12. Augustine's Latin has the forms Massephat and Abennezer.

King Solomon. While he was planning this, the word of God came to the prophet Nathan, for him to carry to the king. There God said that his house would not be built by David himself, and that in all that time he had not commanded anyone among his people to build him a house of cedar. Then he said: "And now you shall say this to my servant David: This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the sheepfold to be leader over my people, over Israel. I was with you in everything you undertook, and I destroyed all your enemies before you, and I made you renowned like the great ones who are on the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, and they will dwell apart and will no longer be anxious. The son of wickedness will no more oppress them, as he did from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies, and the Lord will tell you that you will build a house for him."[44] "And when your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who will come from your own body, and I will prepare his kingdom. He will build me a house for my name, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me. And if he falls into wrongdoing, I will rebuke him with the rod of men and with the touches of the sons of men. But I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it away from those from whom I turned away my face. His house and his kingdom will be faithful forever before me, and his throne will be set up forever."

Whoever thinks that this great promise was fulfilled in Solomon is badly mistaken. He pays attention to the words "He will build me a house," because Solomon built that famous temple. But he pays no attention to "His house and his kingdom will be faithful forever before me." Let him pay attention, then, and look at Solomon's house, full of foreign women worshiping false gods. Let him look at the king himself, once wise, led astray by them into the same idolatry and brought down. And let him not dare to think either that God made this promise

44 2 Samuel 7:8–16, Nathan's prophecy to David.

falsely or that he could not foreknow what Solomon and his house would become. Even if we did not already see these things fulfilled in Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, we ought not to be in doubt on this point. Otherwise we would vainly and pointlessly look for someone else here, as the carnal-minded Jews do.[45] For even they understand that the son they read of as promised to King David in this passage was not Solomon. They are so sure of it that, now that the one promised has been revealed so plainly, they still say, with astonishing blindness, that they are hoping for another. There was indeed some image of what was to come in Solomon too. He built the temple and had peace in keeping with his name, for "Solomon" means *pacificus*, "the peaceable one," in Latin. At the start of his reign he was wonderfully praiseworthy. But in his own person, as a shadow of what was to come, he foretold Christ the Lord; he did not present him. That is why some things are written about him as if these predictions concerned Solomon himself. For holy Scripture, which prophesies even through historical events, in a sense sketches in him the figure of things to come. Besides the books of sacred history that tell of his reign, Psalm 71 also bears his name in its title. It says so many things that cannot possibly fit him, but that fit Christ the Lord with perfect clarity, that it is plainly evident that in Solomon some sort of figure was sketched in shadow, while in Christ the truth itself was presented. For it is well known within what borders Solomon's kingdom was confined. Yet in that psalm we read, to say nothing of other things: "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." We see this fulfilled in Christ. For he began his rule from the river. There he was baptized by John, and when John pointed him out he began to be recognized by the disciples, who called him not only Teacher but also Lord.[46]

Solomon began to reign while his father David was still alive, something that happened to none of those kings. This was for no

45 Romans 1:3. Solomon's foreign wives and his idolatry are told in 1 Kings 11.
46 Psalm 71:8 (72:8 in most English Bibles); compare John 13:13.

other reason than to make it quite clear, from this fact as well, that he is not the one whom this prophecy foreshadows. For the prophecy speaks to his father and says: "And when your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who will come from your own body, and I will prepare his kingdom." How, then, can Solomon be thought the subject of the prophecy because of what follows, "He will build me a house"? Should we not rather, because of what comes before—"When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you"—understand that another peaceable one was promised, one who was foretold to be raised up not before David's death, as Solomon was, but after it?[47] For however long the interval before Jesus Christ came, it was beyond doubt necessary that he come after the death of King David, to whom he had been promised in this way. He was the one who would build a house for God, not of wood and stones but of human beings, such a house as we rejoice to see him building. For it is to this house, that is, to Christ's faithful, that the apostle says: "For God's temple is holy, and that temple is you."[48]

HOW LIKE THE PROPHECY ABOUT CHRIST IN PSALM 88 IS TO THE PROMISES MADE THROUGH THE PROPHET NATHAN IN THE BOOKS OF KINGS

Psalm 88 repeats the promises to David, fulfilled in Christ and his body the Church.

17.9 That is why Psalm 88, whose title is "Of understanding, for Ethan the Israelite," also recalls the promises God made to King David. Some of what it says there is similar to what is set down in the book of Kingdoms, such as: "I have sworn to David my servant: I will prepare your seed forever." And again: "Then you spoke in the sight of your sons and said: I have laid help upon one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from my people. I

47 Solomon's accession during David's lifetime is told in 1 Kings 1.
48 1 Corinthians 3:17.

have found David my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him. For my hand will help him, and my arm will strengthen him. The enemy will gain no advantage over him, and the son of iniquity will not go on to harm him. And I will cut down his enemies before his face, and I will put to flight those who hate him. And my truth and my mercy will be with him, and in my name his horn will be exalted."[49] "And I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He will call upon me: You are my Father, my God and the upholder of my salvation. And I will make him my firstborn, high among the kings of the earth. I will keep my mercy for him forever, and my covenant will be faithful to him. And I will establish his seed forever and ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." All these things are understood of the Lord Jesus, when they are rightly understood. They are said under the name of David because of the form of a servant that the same Mediator took from the seed of David, from a virgin. Immediately afterward, something is also said about the sins of his sons. It is much like what is set down in the book of Kingdoms, which is more readily taken as though it were about Solomon. For there, that is, in the book of Kingdoms, he says: "And if his iniquity comes, I will rebuke him with the rod of men and with the touches of the sons of men; but my mercy I will not take away from him." By "touches" he means the blows of correction. Hence the saying: "Do not touch my anointed ones." What does this mean but "Do not harm them"? In the psalm, however, when he was speaking as if about David, so as to say something of the same kind there too, he says: "If his sons forsake my law and do not walk in my judgments; if they profane my statutes and do not keep my commandments, I will visit their iniquities with the rod and their offenses with scourges; but my mercy I will not scatter from him." He did not say "from them," although he was speaking of his sons, not of him; he said "from him," which, rightly understood, amounts to the same

49 Psalm 88 (89 in most English Bibles). The "book of Kingdoms" is Augustine's name for the books now called 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings; the promise to David is in 2 Samuel 7.

thing.[50] For no sins could be found in Christ himself, who is the head of the Church, that would need to be restrained by God through human correction while his mercy was preserved. Such sins are found in his body and members, which is his people. That is why the book of Kingdoms says "his iniquity," but the psalm says "of his sons": so that we may understand that what is said of his body is in a certain way said of him. For this reason, too, when Saul was persecuting his body, which is his faithful, he himself said from heaven: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Then, in what follows in the psalm, he says: "Nor will I do harm against my truth, nor will I profane my covenant, and what proceeds from my lips I will not reject. Once I have sworn by my holiness, if I lie to David"—that is, I will by no means lie to David. For this is how Scripture usually speaks.[51] And what it is that he will not lie about, he adds, saying: "His seed endures forever, and his throne is like the sun in my sight, and like the full moon forever, and a faithful witness in heaven."

HOW DIFFERENT THE EVENTS IN THE KINGDOM OF THE EARTHLY JERUSALEM WERE FROM WHAT GOD HAD PROMISED, SO THAT THE TRUTH OF THE PROMISE MIGHT BE UNDERSTOOD TO CONCERN THE GLORY OF ANOTHER KING AND KINGDOM

The fall of David's earthly kingdom shows that the promised anointed one was still to come.

17.10 After these mighty pillars of so great a promise, so that they would not be thought to have been fulfilled in Solomon—as if that were what was hoped for and yet was not found there—he says: "But you have rejected and brought to nothing, O Lord." This indeed happened to the kingdom of Solomon in his descendants, down to the overthrow of the earthly Jerusalem itself, which was the seat of that kingdom, and above all to the ruin of the very temple that Solomon had built. But so that God would

50 2 Samuel 7:14–15; "Do not touch my anointed ones" is Psalm 104:15 (105:15 in most English Bibles).
51 Acts 9:4.

not be thought on this account to have acted against his promises, he immediately added: "You have put off your anointed." So that anointed one is not Solomon, nor even David himself, if the Lord's anointed has been put off. For all the kings consecrated with that mystical chrism were called his anointed—not only from King David onward, but also that Saul who was the first king anointed over that same people (David himself, in fact, calls him the Lord's anointed). Yet there was one true Christ, whose figure they bore by their prophetic anointing. In the opinion of men, who thought he was to be understood as David or Solomon, he was being put off for a long time; but in God's plan he was being made ready to come in his own time. Meanwhile, while he is put off, what became of the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem, where he was certainly expected to reign, the psalm goes on to add, saying: "You have overturned the covenant of your servant; you have profaned his holiness on the earth. You have destroyed all his walls; you have turned his strongholds into dread. All who pass along the way have plundered him; he has become a reproach to his neighbors. You have exalted the right hand of his enemies; you have made all his enemies rejoice. You have turned back the help of his sword and have not aided him in battle. You have cut him off from cleansing; you have dashed his throne to the ground. You have shortened the days of his throne; you have covered him with confusion." All these things came upon Jerusalem the slave woman. In her some sons of the free woman also reigned: they held that kingdom under a temporary dispensation, but they possessed the kingdom of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose sons they were, in true faith, and they hoped in the true Christ. How these things came upon that kingdom, the history of events, if one reads it, makes plain.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST THROUGH HIS TAKING ON FLESH, WHO ALONE HAD POWER TO RESCUE HIS OWN SOUL FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The psalmist prays; Christ, the substance of Israel, alone rescued his soul from the underworld.

17.11 After these prophecies, the prophet turns to prayer to God; but the prayer itself is also a prophecy. "How long, O Lord, do you turn away to the end?" Understood here is "your face," as is said elsewhere: "How long will you turn your face away from me?" That is why some manuscripts here do not have "do you turn away" but "are you turned away"; although it could also be understood as "do you turn away your mercy, which you promised David." And when he said "to the end," what does it mean but "until the end"? This end is to be understood as the last time, when that nation too will believe in Christ Jesus. Before that end, the miseries he lamented above had to take place. Because of them, here too there follows: "Your anger blazes like fire: remember what my substance is." Nothing is better understood here than Jesus himself as the substance of his people, from which people his flesh takes its nature.[52] "For not in vain," he says, "have you established all the sons of men." For unless there were one Son of man as the substance of Israel, one Son of man through whom many sons of men would be set free, all the sons of men would certainly have been established in vain. As it is, the whole of human nature has indeed fallen from truth into vanity through the sin of the first man—which is why another psalm says: "Man has become like vanity; his days pass away like a shadow." But God has not established all the sons of men in vain. He frees many from vanity through Jesus the mediator; and those whom he foreknew would not be freed he has established—certainly not in vain—within the most beautiful and most just ordering of the whole rational creation, for the benefit

52 Psalm 12:1 (13:1 in most English Bibles).

of those who are to be freed and for the contrast between the two cities set against each other. Then follows: "Who is the man who will live and not see death, who will rescue his soul from the hand of the underworld?"[53] Who is this but that substance of Israel from the seed of David, Christ Jesus? Of him the apostle says that, rising from the dead, he dies no more, and death will no longer have dominion over him. For he will live and not see death in such a way that he nevertheless died, but rescued his soul from the hand of the underworld, into which he had descended to loosen the bonds of the underworld for some. And he rescued it by that power of which he speaks in the Gospel: "I have power to lay down my soul, and I have power to take it up again."[54]

TO WHOM THE PLEA FOR THE PROMISES BELONGS, OF WHICH THE PSALM SAYS, "WHERE ARE YOUR MERCIES OF OLD, LORD," AND THE REST

"Where are your mercies of old?" is best heard as the prayer of persecuted Christians.

17.12 As for the rest of this psalm, which runs: "Where are your mercies of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in your truth? Remember, O Lord, the reproach of your servants from many nations, which I have held in my bosom; with which your enemies have reproached, O Lord; with which they have reproached the change of your Christ"—one may rightly ask whether these words are spoken in the person of those Israelites who longed for the promise made to David to be fulfilled for them, or rather in the person of the Christians, who are Israelites not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. For these words were spoken or written at the time when Ethan lived, from whose name this psalm took its title; and that was also the time of David's reign. So it would not be said, "Where are your mercies of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in

53 Psalm 143:4 (144:4 in most English Bibles).
54 Romans 6:9; John 10:18.

your truth?" unless the prophet were taking on himself the person of those who were to come long afterward, for whom the time when these promises were made to King David would be ancient. It can also be understood that many nations, when they were persecuting the Christians, reproached them with the passion of Christ, which Scripture calls a "change," since by dying he became immortal. The "change of Christ" can also be taken as a reproach against the Israelites in this sense: that although he was expected to be theirs, he became the nations'. And many nations who have believed in him through the new covenant now reproach them with this, while they remain in the old. On this reading the words "Remember, O Lord, the reproach of your servants" are said because the Lord does not forget them but rather has mercy on them, and they too will believe after this reproach. But the sense I gave first seems to me more fitting. For the words "Remember, O Lord, the reproach of your servants" are ill suited to the enemies of Christ, who are reproached with the fact that Christ left them and passed over to the nations; for such Jews are not to be called servants of God. These words fit rather those who, while they suffered the heavy humiliations of persecution for the name of Christ, could remember that a lofty kingdom had been promised to the seed of David. Longing for it, they could say—not in despair, but asking, seeking, knocking: "Where are your mercies of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in your truth? Remember, O Lord, the reproach of your servants from many nations, which I have held in my bosom" (that is, which I have patiently endured within myself), "with which your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the change of your Christ"—for they thought it was not a change but an extinction.[55] And what does "Remember, O Lord" mean, if not that you should have mercy and, in return for my humiliation patiently endured, give back the loftiness that you swore to David in your truth? If, however, we assign these words to the Jews, those servants of God could have said such things who were led into captivity after the earthly Jer-

55 "Asking, seeking, knocking" echoes Matthew 7:7.

usalem was conquered, before Jesus Christ was born as a man. They understood the change of Christ: namely, that through him one was faithfully to expect not an earthly and carnal happiness, such as appeared for a few years under King Solomon, but a heavenly and spiritual one. The unbelief of the nations, ignorant of this at the time, exulted and insulted God's people for being captive. What else was it reproaching them with but the change of Christ—though in its ignorance it reproached those who knew? And so what follows, where this psalm closes—"The blessing of the Lord forever: so be it, so be it"—fits well enough the whole people of God belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem: both those who lay hidden in the old covenant before the new was revealed, and those who, now that the new covenant has been revealed, are plainly seen to belong to Christ. For the Lord's blessing in the seed of David is to be hoped for not for some period of time, such as appeared in the days of Solomon, but forever; and in that most certain hope it is said, "So be it, so be it." For the repetition of this word is the confirmation of that hope. Understanding this, then, David says in the second book of Kingdoms, from which we digressed to this psalm: "And you have spoken concerning the house of your servant for a long time to come."[56] A little later he says, "Now begin, and bless the house of your servant forever," and so on, because he was then about to beget a son from whom his line would be carried down to Christ, through whom his house was to be eternal and at the same time the house of God. It is the house of David because of David's lineage; but the very same house is the house of God because of the temple of God made of human beings, not of stones. There the people will dwell forever with God and in their God, and God with his people and in his people; so that God fills his people, and the people are full of their God, when God will be all in all—he who is our courage in war will himself be our reward in peace.[57] That is why, when it was said in the words of Nathan, "And the Lord will announce to you that you will build

56 2 Samuel 7:19.
57 2 Samuel 7:29; "all in all" is from 1 Corinthians 15:28.

him a house," it was afterward said in the words of David, "For you, O Lord almighty, God of Israel, have opened the ear of your servant, saying: I will build you a house." For we too build this house by living well, and God builds it by helping us to live well; for "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." When the final dedication of this house comes, then will be fulfilled what God spoke here through Nathan, saying: "And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, and they will dwell apart, and they will no longer be anxious, and the son of iniquity will not again humble them, as from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel."[58]

WHETHER THE TRUTH OF THE PROMISED PEACE CAN BE ASCRIBED TO THE TIMES THAT PASSED UNDER SOLOMON

The promised peace was not Solomon's; it is the secure dwelling of the eternal Jerusalem.

17.13 Whoever hopes for so great a good in this world and on this earth is foolish in his wisdom. Or will anyone think it was fulfilled in the peace of Solomon's reign? Scripture does indeed commend that peace with outstanding praise, as a shadow of what was to come. But this suspicion has been watchfully headed off: after the words "And the son of iniquity will not again humble them," there was immediately added, "as from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel." For judges had been appointed over that people, before there began to be kings there, from the time it received the land of promise. And certainly the son of iniquity—that is, a foreign enemy—did humble them at intervals, during which, as we read, periods of peace alternated with wars. And periods of peace are found there that were longer than the one Solomon had, who reigned forty years; for under the judge called Ehud there were eighty years of peace. Far be it, then, that Solomon's times should be believed to have been foretold in this promise;

58 2 Samuel 7:11, 7:27 and 7:10–11; Psalm 126:1 (127:1 in most English Bibles).

much less, then, the times of any other king. For none of them reigned in as much peace as he did; nor did that nation ever hold its kingdom in such a way that it was not anxious about being subjected to enemies. For amid such great mutability of human affairs, no people has ever been granted such security that it did not fear hostile incursions upon this life.[59] This place, then, the promise of so peaceful and secure a dwelling, is eternal, and it is owed to the eternal, in Jerusalem, our free mother, where there will truly be the people of Israel; for this name means "seeing God." In longing for that reward, we must lead a devout life by faith in this toilsome pilgrimage.[60]

DAVID'S CARE IN ARRANGING THE PSALMS AND THEIR MYSTERY

David arranged the psalms as a musical figure of the well-ordered city; he wrote all of them.

17.14 So, as the city of God ran its course through time, David reigned, at first in a shadow of what was to come—that is, in the earthly Jerusalem. David was a man skilled in song. He loved musical harmony not from a vulgar pleasure but from a faithful purpose, and with it he served his God, who is the true God, by mystically prefiguring a great reality. For the rational and measured blending of different sounds, held together in harmonious variety, suggests the unity of a well-ordered city. In fact, almost all his prophecy is in the psalms. There are one hundred and fifty of them, contained in the book we call the Book of Psalms. Some hold that, of these, only the ones headed with his name were composed by David. There are also those who think that only the ones headed "Of David himself" were composed by him, while those that have "For David himself" in their titles were composed by others and adapted to his person.[61] This opin-

59 Ehud (Latin *Aod*) was one of the judges of Israel; the eighty years of peace are in Judges 3:30.
60 Galatians 4:26.
61 The Latin titles distinguish *ipsius David* (genitive, "of David") from *ipsi David* (dative, "to" or "for David").

ion is refuted by the words of the Savior himself in the Gospel, where he says that David himself, in the Spirit, called Christ his Lord. For Psalm 109 begins: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet." And this same psalm certainly does not have "Of David himself" in its title, but "For David himself," like most of them. To me, however, the more credible view seems to be held by those who attribute all one hundred and fifty psalms to his work. On their view, he headed some psalms with the names of others as well, names that prefigure something relevant to the matter, while he chose to have no man's name in the titles of the rest. In this he followed the Lord, who inspired him to arrange this variety, which is obscure but not meaningless.[62] Nor should anyone be led to disbelieve this by the fact that the names of some prophets who lived long after King David's time are found written over certain psalms in that book, so that what is said there seems to be said by them. For the prophetic Spirit was certainly able to reveal to King David, as he prophesied, even these names of future prophets, so that something fitting their persons might be sung prophetically. In the same way King Josiah was revealed by name to a certain prophet, who also foretold his future deeds, though Josiah was to arise and reign more than three hundred years later.[63]

WHETHER EVERYTHING THE PSALMS PROPHESY ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE COURSE OF THIS WORK

Augustine explains why he cannot expound every psalm that prophesies Christ.

17.15 Now I can see that at this point in this book I am expected to reveal what David prophesied in the psalms about the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church. If I do not do this in the way that this very expectation seems to demand (though I have already

62 Psalm 109 (110 in most English Bibles); Jesus cites it in Matthew 22:43–45.
63 The unnamed "man of God" from Judah in 1 Kings 13:2 foretold Josiah by name.

done so in one case), it is abundance rather than scarcity that hinders me. The need to avoid excessive length prevents me from setting everything down. Yet I fear that if I choose some passages, I may seem to many who know them to have passed over more essential ones. Then too, any testimony that is cited ought to have the support of the whole psalm's context, or at least nothing in the psalm should contradict it, even if not everything supports it. Otherwise we might seem, in the manner of patchwork poems, to be plucking out little verses for the point we want, as if from a long poem that turns out to have been written not about that subject but about another, very different one.[64] But to show this for any psalm, the whole psalm must be expounded. How great a labor that is, the volumes of others, and my own in which I have done it, show well enough. So let anyone who wishes and is able read them. He will find how many and how great were the prophecies that David, who was both king and prophet, made about Christ and his Church—that is, about the king and the city he founded.[65]

WHAT IN PSALM 44 IS SAID, OPENLY OR FIGURATIVELY, ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Psalm 44 celebrates Christ the anointed king and the Church his bride and queen.

17.16 For however literal and plain prophetic statements may be on any subject, figurative ones are inevitably mixed in with them. It is these, chiefly for the sake of slower readers, that impose on teachers the laborious task of discussion and exposition. Some passages, however, point to Christ and the Church at first sight, as soon as they are spoken, even if the parts of them that are less understood remain to be explained at leisure. Such is this passage in the same Book of Psalms: "My heart has poured forth a good word; I speak my works to the king. My

64 A cento was a poem stitched together from lines of an earlier poet, often Virgil, to say something new.

65 Augustine refers to his own *Expositions of the Psalms*, which cover the entire Psalter.

tongue is the pen of a scribe who writes swiftly. You are beautiful in form beyond the sons of men; grace is poured out on your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O most mighty one, in your splendor and your beauty; press on, advance prosperously, and reign, for the sake of truth and gentleness and justice, and your right hand will lead you wonderfully.[66] Your arrows are sharp, most mighty one (the peoples will fall beneath you), in the hearts of the king's enemies. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. You have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. Myrrh and balm and cassia waft from your garments, from the ivory houses; with them the daughters of kings have delighted you in your honor." However slow a reader may be, who would not recognize here the Christ whom we preach and in whom we believe? He hears of God, whose throne is forever and ever, and of one anointed by God—anointed, of course, as God anoints, not with a visible chrism but with a spiritual and intelligible one. For who is so untaught in this religion, or so deaf to its fame spread far and wide, as not to know that Christ is named from chrism, that is, from anointing? Once Christ the king is recognized, let anyone who is now subject to him who reigns for the sake of truth and gentleness and justice inquire at leisure into the rest of what is said here figuratively. He may ask how Christ is beautiful in form beyond the sons of men, with a beauty all the more to be loved and admired the less bodily it is. He may ask what his sword is, what his arrows are, and the other things set down in this way, not literally but figuratively.

Then let him look upon Christ's Church, joined to so great a husband in spiritual marriage and divine love. Of her it is said in the words that follow: "The queen stands at your right hand in a robe of gold, clothed all around in many colors. Hear, daughter, and see, and incline your ear; and forget your people and your father's house; for the king has desired your beauty, because he

66 Psalm 44 (45 in most English Bibles).

is your God. And the daughters of Tyre will worship him with gifts; the rich among the people will entreat your face. All the glory of the king's daughter is within, in golden fringes, clothed all around in many colors. Virgins will be brought to the king after her; her companions will be brought to you. They will be brought with joy and gladness; they will be led into the king's temple. In place of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you will make them princes over all the earth. They will remember your name from generation to generation. Therefore the peoples will give you praise forever, and forever and ever." I do not suppose anyone is so foolish as to believe that some ordinary woman is being praised and described here. She is the wife, of course, of him to whom it was said: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. You have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions"—that is, Christ above Christians. For these are his companions, and from their unity and concord among all the nations this queen is formed. As another psalm says of her: "The city of the great king." In the spiritual sense she is Zion, a name that in Latin means "watching." For she watches for the great good of the age to come, since that is where her attention is directed. In the same spiritual sense she is also Jerusalem, about which we have already said much.[67] Her enemy is the devil's city, Babylon, a name that means "confusion." Yet out of that Babylon this queen, among all the nations, is set free by regeneration and passes from the worst of kings to the best of kings, that is, from the devil to Christ. That is why she is told: "Forget your people and your father's house." Those who are Israelites by flesh alone, and not by faith, are also part of that wicked city. They too are enemies of this great king and of his queen. For Christ came to them and was killed by them, and so became instead the possession of others, whom he did not see in the flesh. Hence our king himself says, through the prophecy of a certain psalm: "You will rescue me from the con-

67 Psalm 47:3 (48:2 in most English Bibles).

tradictions of the people; you will make me head of the nations. A people I did not know has served me; at the hearing of the ear it has obeyed me."[68] This people of the nations, then, did not know Christ by his bodily presence. Yet it believed in Christ when he was proclaimed to it, so that it could rightly be said of it, "At the hearing of the ear it has obeyed me," since "faith comes from hearing." This people, I say, joined to those who are true Israelites both in flesh and in faith, is the city of God. It is this city that also gave birth to Christ himself according to the flesh, when it existed only in those Israelites. For from them came the virgin Mary, in whom Christ took on flesh in order to be a man. Of this city another psalm says: "'Mother Zion,' a man will say, and a man was made in her, and the Most High himself founded her." Who is this Most High but God? And so Christ, who is God, himself founded that city in the patriarchs and prophets before he became man in it through Mary.[69] So this queen, the city of God, was told by prophecy, so long beforehand, what we now see fulfilled: "In place of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you will make them princes over all the earth." (For it is from among her sons that her leaders and fathers come, throughout the whole earth, as the peoples give her praise, flocking together to that acknowledgment of eternal praise forever and ever.) Since this is so, there can be no doubt that whatever is said here somewhat obscurely in figurative expressions, however it is understood, must agree with these most evident facts.

WHAT IN PSALM 109 RELATES TO CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD, AND WHAT IN PSALM 21 TO HIS PASSION

Psalm 109 shows Christ the eternal priest; Psalm 21 foretells the crucifixion in detail.

17.17 The same holds for that psalm in which Christ is proclaimed most openly as priest, just as he is proclaimed here as king: "The

68 Psalm 17:44–45 (18:43–44 in most English Bibles).
69 Romans 10:17; Psalm 86:5 (87:5 in most English Bibles).

Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet." That Christ sits at the Father's right hand is believed, not seen. That his enemies are being put under his feet is also not yet evident. This is under way, and it will become evident at the end. This too is now believed; later it will be seen. But what follows—"The Lord will send forth the rod of your power from Zion; rule in the midst of your enemies"—is so clear that to deny it would be not only faithless and luckless, but shameless as well. For even his enemies admit that the law of Christ, which we call the gospel, was sent out from Zion, and we recognize it as the rod of his power. And that he rules in the midst of his enemies, those very enemies among whom he rules bear witness by gnashing their teeth, by wasting away, and by being powerless against him. Then there is what the psalm says a little later: "The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent." By these words it indicates that what it adds will be unchangeable: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The priesthood and sacrifice according to the order of Aaron now exist nowhere. Meanwhile, everywhere under Christ as priest there is offered what Melchizedek brought out when he blessed Abraham. Who, then, can be allowed to doubt of whom these things are said? So the things set down somewhat more obscurely in the same psalm, when rightly understood, are to be referred to these evident ones. I have already done this in my sermons to the people.[70] So too in that psalm in which Christ, through prophecy, speaks of the humiliation of his passion, saying: "They pierced my hands and feet; they counted all my bones; and they looked and stared at me." By these words he signified his body stretched out on the cross, his hands and feet fastened and pierced through by the driving of the nails. He also signified that in this way he made himself a spectacle for those who looked and stared. He adds as well: "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." How this prophecy was fulfilled is told in the Gospel narrative. Surely, then, the other things said less openly

70 What Melchizedek brought out was bread and wine (Genesis 14:18).

in that psalm are rightly understood when they agree with these, which have shone forth so plainly. This is especially so because there are things we do not believe as past but behold as present. Just as we read them foretold so long before in the same psalm, so we now see them displayed throughout the whole world.[71] For a little later it says there: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the homelands of the nations will worship in his sight; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he will rule over the nations."

PSALMS 3, 40, 15, AND 67, IN WHICH THE LORD'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION ARE PROPHESIED

Psalms 3, 40, 15 and 67 foretell Christ's betrayal, death and resurrection.

17.18 Nor were the oracles of the psalms silent about his resurrection. For what else is meant by what is sung in his person in the third psalm: "I slept and took my rest; I rose up, for the Lord upheld me"? Is anyone so foolish as to believe that the prophet wanted to tell us something great by saying that he slept and got up? That would only be so if that sleep was death and that awakening the resurrection, which it was fitting to prophesy of Christ in this way. And in the fortieth psalm this is shown much more plainly. There, in the person of the same Mediator, things that were being prophesied as future are told, in the usual way, as if they were past. For what was to come had, in God's predestination and foreknowledge, already been done, as it were. "My enemies," it says, "spoke evil against me: 'When will he die, and his name perish?' And if one came in to see me, his heart spoke empty words; it heaped up iniquity for itself."[72] "He went outside, and they spoke together as one. All my enemies whispered against me; against me they plotted evil for me. They devised a wicked word against me: 'Will he who sleeps not rise again?'" Here these words are certainly so placed that they can only be

71 Psalm 21 (22 in most English Bibles); the casting of lots is told in John 19:23–24.
72 Psalm 3:6 (3:5 in most English Bibles); Psalm 40 (41 in most English Bibles).

understood to mean what he would have meant had he said, "Will he who dies not come to life again?" For the preceding verses show that his enemies plotted and arranged his death, and that this was done through the one who came in to see and went out to betray. And to whom does Judas not come to mind here, who turned from being his disciple into his betrayer? They were going to do what they were plotting, that is, they were going to kill him. So, to show that in their empty malice they would kill in vain one who would rise again, he added this verse, as if to say: "What are you doing, you vain men? What will be your crime will be my sleep: 'Will he who sleeps not rise again?'" And yet in the verses that follow he indicates that they would not commit so great an outrage unpunished. He says: "For even the man of my peace, in whom I hoped, who ate my bread, has raised his heel high against me"—that is, has trampled on me. "But you, Lord," he says, "have mercy on me and raise me up, and I will repay them." Who would now deny this, when he sees that after Christ's passion and resurrection the Jews were uprooted from their homes by the slaughter and destruction of war? For, killed by them, he rose again and has meanwhile repaid them with a temporal chastisement. This is apart from what he holds in store for those who are not set right, when he will judge the living and the dead.[73] Indeed the Lord Jesus himself, when he pointed out this very betrayer to the apostles by the bread he handed him, also quoted this verse of this psalm and said it was fulfilled in him: "He who ate my bread has raised his heel against me." But the words "in whom I hoped" do not fit the head, but the body. For the Savior himself was not ignorant of the man of whom he had already said, "One of you is a devil." But he often takes on himself the person of his members and attributes to himself what belongs to them, because head and body are one Christ. Hence the saying in the Gospel, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat," which he explains by saying, "When you did it to one of the least of mine, you did it

73 Augustine has in mind the Roman suppression of the Jewish revolts, including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

to me." So he said that he had hoped what his disciples had hoped about Judas when he was counted among the apostles.[74]

The Jews, however, do not expect that the Christ they are expecting will die. That is why they do not think that the one whom the Law and the Prophets announced is ours. They think he is some figure of their own, whom they imagine as exempt from suffering death. That is why, with astonishing emptiness and blindness, they maintain that the words I have cited signified not death and resurrection, but sleep and waking. But the fifteenth psalm, too, cries out to them: "Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh too will rest in hope; for you will not abandon my soul in the underworld, nor let your holy one see corruption." Who could say that his flesh had rested in this hope? The hope was that his soul would not be abandoned in the underworld but would quickly return to his flesh, so that his flesh would come back to life and not decay, as corpses usually decay. Who could say this, except the one who rose on the third day?[75] And this they certainly cannot say of David, prophet and king. The sixty-seventh psalm cries out too: "Our God is the God of saving, and the Lord's ways out are those of death." What could be said more plainly? For the God of saving is the Lord Jesus, a name that means "savior" or "saving." The reason for this name was given when it was said, before he was born of the virgin: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for he will save his people from their sins." Since his blood was shed for the forgiveness of those sins, it was surely not fitting for him to have any other ways out of this life than those of death. That is why, after it had been said, "Our God is the God of saving," there was added at once, "and the Lord's ways out are those of death." This was to show that he would save by dying.[76] But "and the Lord's" is said in a tone of wonder, as if it were said: "Such is this life of mortals that not even the Lord himself would leave it except by death."

74 John 13:18, 26; John 6:70; Matthew 25:35, 40.
75 Psalm 15:9–10 (16:9–10 in most English Bibles).
76 Psalm 67:21 (68:20 in most English Bibles); Matthew 1:21.

PSALM 68, IN WHICH THE UNBELIEF AND OBSTINACY OF THE JEWS ARE DECLARED

Psalm 68 foretells the Jews' blindness to the plain fulfillment of prophecy.

17.19 But the fact that the Jews refuse to yield at all to such plain testimonies of this prophecy, even when events have brought it to so clear and certain a fulfillment, surely means that in them is fulfilled what is written in the psalm that follows this one. For there too, when things belonging to his passion were being spoken prophetically in the person of Christ, mention was made of what became plain in the gospel: "They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." And, as if after such a banquet, and such a feast set before him, he went on at once: "Let their table become a snare before them, and a retribution, and a stumbling block; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their back always," and the rest. These words were not spoken as a wish. They were foretold by prophecy in the form of a wish.[77] Why then is it any wonder if they do not see these plain things, when their eyes have been darkened so that they cannot see? Why any wonder if they do not look up to heavenly things, when their back is always bent, so that they stoop toward earthly ones? For in these words, transferred from the body, the vices of the mind are signified. Let this be enough said about the psalms, that is, about the prophecy of King David, so that there may be some limit. Those who read this and already know all those passages must forgive me. And they must not complain about passages, perhaps stronger ones, that they know or suppose I have left out.

77 Psalm 68:22–24 (69:21–23 in most English Bibles).

THE REIGN AND MERIT OF DAVID, HIS SON SOLOMON, AND THE PROPHECY RELATING TO CHRIST FOUND EITHER IN THE BOOKS JOINED TO SOLOMON'S WRITINGS OR IN THOSE THAT ARE UNDOUBTEDLY HIS

David repents and reigns; Solomon's books and those attributed to him foretell Christ.

17.20 So David reigned in the earthly Jerusalem, a son of the heavenly Jerusalem, greatly praised by divine testimony. For even his sins were overcome by such great devotion, through the most wholesome humility of repentance, that he is certainly among those of whom he himself says: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered." After him his son Solomon reigned over the same whole people. As was said above, he began to reign while his father was still alive. He made good beginnings but came to a bad end. For prosperity, which wears down the minds of the wise, did him more harm than his very wisdom did him good—a wisdom memorable even now and for ages to come, and praised far and wide in his own time. He too is found to have prophesied in his books, three of which have been received into canonical authority: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.[78] The other two books, one called Wisdom and the other Ecclesiasticus, have come by custom to be called Solomon's because of a certain resemblance of style. But the more learned have no doubt that they are not his. Yet the Church, especially in the West, received them into authority from ancient times. In one of them, which is called the Wisdom of Solomon, the passion of Christ is prophesied most openly. For his wicked killers are recorded as saying: "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is disagreeable to us and opposed to our deeds. He reproaches us with sins against the law, and spreads abroad against us the sins of our upbringing. He professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a son of God. He has become a reproof of our thoughts. He is a

78 Psalm 31:1 (32:1 in most English Bibles).

burden to us even to look at, for his life is unlike that of others, and his ways are different.[79] "We are regarded by him as frivolous, and he keeps away from our ways as from filth. He extols the final end of the righteous and boasts that he has God for his father. Let us see, then, whether his words are true, and let us test what will happen to him, and we shall know what his end will be. For if the righteous man is God's son, God will take him up and deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us examine him with insult and torture, so that we may learn his reverence and prove his patience. Let us condemn him to a most shameful death, for, by his own words, he will be watched over." They thought these things and went astray, for their own malice blinded them. In Ecclesiasticus, the faith of the nations that was to come is foretold in this way: "Have mercy on us, Lord God of all, and send your fear upon all the nations. Lift up your hand against the foreign nations, and let them see your power.[80] "As you have been sanctified in us before their eyes, so may you be magnified in them before our eyes. And let them acknowledge you, as we too have acknowledged you, that there is no God besides you, Lord." This prophecy, in the form of a wish and a prayer, we see fulfilled through Jesus Christ. But writings that are not in the canon of the Jews do not carry such weight when they are brought forward against those who contradict us.

In those three books, however, which are agreed to be Solomon's and which the Jews hold as canonical, a laborious discussion is needed to show that what is found in them of this kind belongs to Christ and the Church. If that discussion were undertaken now, it would carry us further than is fitting. Still, there is what we read in Proverbs, that wicked men say: "Let us hide the righteous man in the earth unjustly; let us swallow him alive like the underworld, and take away his memory from the earth; let us seize his precious possession." This is not so obscure that it cannot be understood, without laborious exposi-

79 Wisdom 2:12–21. Ecclesiasticus is also known as Sirach or the Wisdom of Ben Sira.

80 Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 36:1–5.

tion, of Christ and of his possession, the Church. For the Lord Jesus himself, too, through a parable in the gospel, showed that the wicked tenants said something like this: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours."[81] Likewise there is the passage in the same book which we touched on earlier, when we were dealing with the barren woman who bore seven. As soon as it has been read out, it is customarily understood only of Christ and the Church by those who know that Christ is the Wisdom of God: "Wisdom has built herself a house and has set up seven pillars. She has slaughtered her victims, mixed her wine in the bowl, and prepared her table. She has sent out her servants, calling with a loud proclamation to the bowl, saying: 'Who is foolish? Let him turn aside to me.' And to those lacking sense she said: 'Come, eat of my bread and drink the wine that I have mixed for you.'"[82] Here we certainly recognize that the Wisdom of God, that is, the Word coeternal with the Father, built himself a house, a human body, in the virgin's womb. He joined the Church to it, as members to a head. He slaughtered the victims of the martyrs. He prepared a table with wine and bread—and here the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek also appears. He called the foolish and those lacking sense, because, as the apostle says, he chose the weak things of this world to put to shame the strong. Yet to these weak ones he says what follows: "Leave foolishness behind, that you may live, and seek prudence, that you may have life." And to become a partaker of that table is itself to begin to have life.[83] So too in the other book, called Ecclesiastes, he says: "There is nothing good for a man except what he will eat and drink." What can he more credibly be understood to mean than what pertains to sharing in this table? This is the table which the priest himself, the Mediator of the new covenant, provides according to the order of Melchizedek from his own body and blood. For that

81 Proverbs 1:11–13, in Augustine's Latin text; Matthew 21:38.
82 Proverbs 9:1–5. The barren woman who bore seven comes from Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:5), discussed in 17.4.
83 The apostle is Paul (1 Corinthians 1:27); the quotation is Proverbs 9:6.

sacrifice succeeded all those sacrifices of the old covenant which were offered as a shadow of what was to come. That is why we also recognize the voice of the same Mediator, speaking through prophecy, in the thirty-ninth psalm: "Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but a body you have prepared for me." For in place of all those sacrifices and offerings his body is offered and served to those who partake.[84] This Ecclesiastes often repeats this saying about eating and drinking and strongly commends it. But he does not have in mind the feasts of carnal pleasure, as he shows clearly enough where he says: "It is better to go into the house of mourning than to go into the house of drinking"; and a little later: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, and the heart of the foolish in the house of feasting." But I think it more worth mentioning the passage from this book that pertains to the two cities, one the devil's and the other Christ's, and to their kings, the devil and Christ: "Woe to you, O land," he says, "whose king is a youth, and whose princes eat in the morning. Happy are you, O land, whose king is the son of the freeborn, and whose princes eat at the proper time, in strength and not in confusion."[85] He called the devil a youth because of the folly, pride, rashness, insolence, and other vices that usually abound at that age. But he called Christ the son of the freeborn, namely of the holy patriarchs, who belong to the free city and from whom he was born in the flesh. The princes of that other city eat in the morning, that is, before the proper hour, because they do not wait for the happiness that comes in its due time, the true happiness, in the world to come. In their haste they desire to be made happy by the celebrations of this world. But the princes of Christ's city patiently wait for the time of a happiness that does not deceive. This is what he means by "in strength and not in confusion," because they are not deceived by the hope of which the apostle says: "And hope does not confound"; and the psalm too says: "For those who wait for

84 Ecclesiastes 8:15; Psalm 39:7 (40:6 in most English Bibles), in the Greek-based form also quoted in Hebrews 10:5.
85 Ecclesiastes 7:2–4 and 10:16–17.

you shall not be confounded." Now the Song of Songs is a kind of spiritual delight of holy minds in the marriage of that king and queen of the city—that is, Christ and the Church.[86] But this delight is wrapped in allegorical coverings, so that it may be longed for more ardently and uncovered more joyfully. And so the bridegroom appears, to whom it is said in the same Song: "Uprightness has loved you," and the bride, who hears there: "Love is in your delights." We pass over many things in silence out of concern to finish this work.[87]

THE KINGS AFTER SOLOMON, IN JUDAH AND IN ISRAEL

After Solomon the kingdom splits into Judah and Israel, by God's will.

17.21 The other kings of the Hebrews after Solomon, whether in Judah or in Israel, are scarcely found to have prophesied anything pertaining to Christ and the Church through any riddles in their sayings or deeds. For these were the names given to the parts of that people from the time when it was divided by God's punishment for Solomon's offense. This happened in the time of his son Rehoboam, who succeeded his father on the throne. Thus the ten tribes received by Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, who was made their king in Samaria, were properly called Israel, although this was the name of that whole people. The two tribes, namely Judah and Benjamin, had remained subject to the city of Jerusalem for David's sake, so that the kingdom of his line should not be entirely uprooted. They bore the name Judah, because that was the tribe from which David came. The other tribe, Benjamin, which, as I said, belonged to the same kingdom, was the one from which Saul came, the king before David.[88] But together these two tribes, as was said, were called Judah, and by this name were distinguished from Israel, which was the name properly given to the ten tribes that had their own king. For the tribe of Levi, since it was priestly and devoted to

86 Romans 5:5; Psalm 24:3 (25:3 in most English Bibles).
87 Song of Songs 1:4 and 7:6, in Augustine's Latin text.
88 The division of the kingdom is told in 1 Kings 11–12.

the service of God, not of kings, was counted as the thirteenth. Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Israel, produced not one tribe, as each of the others did, but two, Ephraim and Manasseh. Yet even the tribe of Levi belonged rather to the kingdom of Jerusalem, where the temple of God was, which it served. When the people had been divided, then, the first to reign in Jerusalem was Rehoboam, king of Judah, Solomon's son, and in Samaria Jeroboam, king of Israel, Solomon's servant. And when Rehoboam wanted to make war on that breakaway part, as though on a usurper's rule, the people were forbidden to fight against their brothers, for God said through a prophet that he himself had done this.[89] From this it became clear that there had been no sin in this matter on the part of either the king of Israel or the people, but that the will of God in punishing had been carried out. Once this was known, both parts settled down at peace with each other. For the division that had been made was not one of religion, but of the kingdom.

JEROBOAM, WHO PROFANED THE PEOPLE UNDER HIM WITH THE IMPIETY OF IDOLATRY, THOUGH GOD DID NOT CEASE TO INSPIRE PROPHETS AMONG THEM AND TO KEEP MANY FROM THE CRIME OF IDOLATRY

Jeroboam leads Israel into idolatry, yet God sends prophets like Elijah and Elisha.

17.22 But Jeroboam, king of Israel, with a perverse mind, did not trust God, though he had proved him truthful when the kingdom was promised and given to him. According to the divine law, that whole nation had to come to God's temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice. Jeroboam feared that by coming there the people would be drawn away from him and returned to David's line as the royal seed. So he established idolatry in his kingdom and, with abominable impiety, deceived God's people, binding them along with himself to the worship of images. Yet God did not by any means cease to rebuke through prophets not only

89 The prophet was Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22–24).

that king, but also his successors and imitators in impiety, and the people themselves.[90] For it was there that those great and distinguished prophets arose who also performed many wonders, Elijah and Elisha his disciple. There too, when Elijah said: "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have dug up your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life," the answer was that there were seven thousand men there who had not bowed the knee before Baal.[91]

THE CHANGING STATE OF BOTH HEBREW KINGDOMS UNTIL BOTH PEOPLES WERE LED INTO CAPTIVITY AT DIFFERENT TIMES, JUDAH BEING AFTERWARD RESTORED TO ITS KINGDOM, WHICH AT LAST PASSED INTO THE POWER OF THE ROMANS

Both kingdoms rise and fall until captivity; Judah returns but ends under Rome.

17.23 Likewise in the kingdom of Judah, which belonged to Jerusalem, there was no lack of prophets in the times of the succeeding kings. God was pleased to send them, either to foretell what was needed or to rebuke sins and enjoin righteousness. For there too, though far less than in Israel, kings arose who gravely offended God by their impieties and were punished with moderate scourges along with a people like them. Certainly the merits of the godly kings there receive no small praise. But in Israel, as we read, the kings were all reprobate, some more, some less. Each part, then, as divine providence commanded or permitted, was raised up by various kinds of prosperity and pressed down by adversities. It was afflicted not only by foreign wars but also by civil wars among themselves, so that, as definite causes arose, the mercy or the wrath of God was made manifest. This went on until, as his indignation grew, the Chaldeans conquered that whole nation. It was not only overthrown in its own homeland but also, for the most part, carried off into the lands of the

90 Jeroboam set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:26–33).
91 1 Kings 19:10, 18, in the form quoted by Paul in Romans 11:3–4.

Assyrians: first the part called Israel, in the ten tribes, and later Judah too, when Jerusalem and that most famous temple were destroyed. In those lands it spent seventy years in captive idleness.[92] Released from there after those years, the nation restored the temple that had been destroyed. Very many of its people lived in the lands of foreigners. Even so, it no longer had two parts of the kingdom with two different kings, one in each part. Instead there was one ruler of theirs in Jerusalem, and all of them came at fixed times to the temple of God that was there, from everywhere, wherever they were and from wherever they could. But not even then did they lack enemies and conquerors from other nations. Indeed, when Christ came he found them already paying tribute to the Romans.

THE LAST PROPHETS AMONG THE JEWS, AND THOSE WHOM THE GOSPEL HISTORY SHOWS AROUND THE TIME OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

After Malachi there are no prophets until those around Christ's birth, ending with John.

17.24 In all that time after they returned from Babylon, after Malachi, Haggai and Zechariah, who prophesied then, and Ezra, they had no prophets until the Savior's coming. The exceptions were another Zechariah, the father of John, and his wife Elizabeth, when Christ's birth was already very near. After he was born, there were the aged Simeon, and Anna, a widow already far advanced in years, and John himself, the last of all. John, as a young man, pointed out Christ, also a young man. He did not foretell him as one still to come, but by prophetic knowledge he revealed him while he was still unrecognized. That is why the Lord himself says: "The law and the prophets were until John." But the prophecy of these five is known to us from the gospel, where the virgin mother of the Lord herself is also found to have prophesied before John. The reprobate Jews do not accept the

92 Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC; Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by the Babylonians (Chaldeans) in 587/586 BC.

prophecy of these people. But it was accepted by the countless numbers of them who believed the gospel.[93] For it was then that Israel was truly divided in two, by that division which the prophet Samuel foretold to King Saul as unchangeable. Malachi, Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra, however, even the reprobate Jews hold to be the last ones received into canonical authority. For these men also left writings, as did the others—the very few, out of the great multitude of prophets, who wrote works that would obtain canonical authority. I see that some of their predictions concerning Christ and his Church must be set out in this work. With the Lord's help, this will be done more conveniently in the next book, so as not to burden this one, already so long, any further.[94]

93 Luke 16:16; the figures named appear in Luke 1–3.
94 Samuel's prophecy to Saul is in 1 Samuel 15:28–29, discussed in 17.7.

Book XVIII

The two cities side by side
World history from Abraham to Christ, with the prophets, the Sibyl, and the Septuagint.

WHAT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED IN SEVENTEEN BOOKS, UP TO THE TIMES OF THE SAVIOR

Augustine reviews his plan and turns back to trace the earthly city from Abraham.

18.1 I promised to write about the rise, the progress and the appointed ends of the two cities. One of them is God's; the other is this world's, and in this world the city of God, as far as the human race is concerned, is now living as a pilgrim. But I promised to do this only after I had first refuted, so far as his grace helped me, the enemies of the city of God, who prefer their own gods to Christ its founder and, with a malice that is deadly to themselves, fiercely resent the Christians. This I did in the first ten books. Of the threefold promise I have just mentioned, the rise of both cities was set out in the four books that follow the tenth. Their progress from the first man to the flood was set out in one book, the fifteenth of this work. From there to Abraham, both cities again ran their course together, in my writing just as in time itself. But from our father Abraham to the time of the kings of Israel, where I finished the sixteenth book, and from there to the coming of the Savior himself in the flesh, which is as far as the seventeenth book reaches, the city of God seems to have run its course alone under my pen. Yet in this world it did not run alone. Both cities, as from the beginning, certainly shaped the changing ages together by their course through the

human race. I did this, however, for a reason. From the time when God's promises began to be clearer, up to his birth from the virgin, in whom what had first been promised was to be fulfilled, I wanted this city, the one that is God's, to appear more distinctly as it ran its course, without interruption from the opposing city—although until the revelation of the New Testament it ran its course not in light but in shadow. Now, then, I see that I must do what I had left aside. I must touch on how that other city, too, ran its course from the times of Abraham, as far as seems sufficient, so that readers may consider the two cities and compare them with each other.

THE KINGS AND TIMES OF THE EARTHLY CITY THAT CORRESPOND TO THE TIMES OF THE SAINTS RECKONED FROM THE BIRTH OF ABRAHAM

Human society is divided by conquest; Assyria and Rome are the two great kingdoms.

18.2 The society of mortals, then, is spread everywhere over the earth, and for all the diversity of its places it is bound together by a certain fellowship of one and the same nature. Yet each pursues his own interests and desires, and what is sought is enough either for no one or not for all, because it is not the Selfsame. So this society is for the most part divided against itself, and the part that prevails oppresses the other. For the conquered part submits to the conquering one, preferring peace and survival on any terms to dominion, or even to liberty. That is why those who chose to perish rather than be slaves have been so greatly admired. For in almost all nations the voice of nature has somehow rung out: those who happen to be conquered prefer to be subjugated to the victors rather than be wiped out by the total devastation of war. Hence it has come about, not without the providence of God, in whose power it lies whether anyone in war subjugates or is subjugated, that some have been granted

kingdoms and others made subject to those who reign.[1] Among the very many kingdoms of the earth into which the society of earthly interest or desire is divided (the society we call, by a general term, the city of this world), we see two that have turned out far more illustrious than the rest. The first is that of the Assyrians, then that of the Romans, set in order and kept distinct from each other in place as in time. For just as the one came earlier and the other later, so the one arose in the East and the other in the West. And in the end, the beginning of the latter followed immediately on the end of the former. The other kingdoms and kings I would call mere appendages of these.

Ninus, then, was already the second king of the Assyrians, having succeeded his father Belus, the first king of that realm, when Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldeans. At that time there was also the very small kingdom of the Sicyonians. Marcus Varro, a man learned in every field, began from it, as from a time of remote antiquity, when he wrote about the origin of the Roman people. For from these Sicyonian kings he passes to the Athenians, from them to the Latins, and from there to the Romans. But before Rome was founded, these kingdoms are recorded as very slight compared with the kingdom of the Assyrians. Even Sallust, the Roman historian, admits that the Athenians were exceedingly renowned in Greece, but more in fame than in reality. Speaking of them, he says: "The deeds of the Athenians, in my judgment, were ample and magnificent enough, but nevertheless somewhat less than fame reports them.[2] "But because writers of great talent arose there, the deeds of the Athenians are celebrated throughout the world as the greatest. So the virtue of those who performed them is held to be as great as brilliant minds were able to exalt it in words." This city also gains no small glory from its literature and philosophers, because such studies flourished there above all. As far

1 "The Selfsame" (*id ipsum*) is Augustine's term for God, the unchanging being who alone can satisfy all who seek him.

2 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) was Rome's most learned antiquarian; the work is his *On the Origin of the Roman People*. Sallust (86–35 BC) was a Roman historian; the quotation is from *The War with Catiline* 8.

as empire is concerned, however, none in the earliest times was greater than that of the Assyrians, nor spread so far and wide. King Ninus, son of Belus, is said to have subdued all Asia as far as the borders of Libya. In the number of its parts Asia is called a third of the whole world, but in size it is found to be half. In the regions of the East the Indians alone were not under his rule, and after his death his wife Semiramis made war on them. So it came about that whatever peoples or kings there were in those lands obeyed the kingdom and authority of the Assyrians and carried out whatever was commanded. Abraham, then, was born in that kingdom, among the Chaldeans, in the time of Ninus. But Greek history is far better known to us than Assyrian. Those who have probed the ancient origins of the Roman people have also traced the sequence of the ages through the Greeks to the Latins, and then to the Romans, who are themselves Latins as well. For this reason we must mention the Assyrian kings where necessary, so that it may be clear how Babylon, a kind of first Rome, runs its course alongside the city of God, which is a pilgrim in this world. But the material that must be inserted into this work for the sake of comparing the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, we should take mostly from the Greeks and Latins, among whom Rome itself is a kind of second Babylon.

When Abraham was born, then, the second kings were Ninus among the Assyrians and Europs among the Sicyonians; the first had been Belus in the one kingdom and Aegialeus in the other. When Abraham had left Babylonia, God promised him that a great nation would come from him and that in his seed all nations would be blessed. At that time the Assyrians had their fourth king and the Sicyonians their fifth. Among the Assyrians the son of Ninus was reigning after his mother Semiramis. She is said to have been killed by him when she, his own mother, dared to defile her son by incestuous intercourse. Some think that she founded Babylon, though she may in fact have restored it. When or how it was founded I discussed in the sixteenth book. The son of Ninus and Semiramis, who succeeded his

mother on the throne, is called by some Ninus as well, and by others Ninyas, a name derived from his father's. The kingdom of the Sicyonians at that time was held by Telxion. Under his reign the times there were so gentle and happy that, when he died, they worshiped him as a god, offering sacrifices and celebrating games, which are said to have been instituted first in his honor.

WHO REIGNED OVER THE ASSYRIANS AND THE SICYONIANS WHEN ISAAC WAS BORN BY PROMISE TO ABRAHAM AT A HUNDRED, AND WHEN THE TWINS ESAU AND JACOB WERE BORN TO REBEKAH WHEN ISAAC WAS SIXTY

Kings reigning in Assyria, Sicyon and Argos at the births of Isaac, Esau and Jacob.

18.3 In his times Isaac, too, was born by God's promise. He was the son of Abraham, who was then a hundred years old, by his wife Sarah, who, being barren and old, had already lost hope of offspring. At that time Arrius was the fifth king of the Assyrians. When Isaac himself was sixty, twins were born to him, Esau and Jacob, whom his wife Rebekah bore him. Their grandfather Abraham was still alive and in his hundred and sixtieth year. Abraham died when he had completed a hundred and seventy-five years, during the reigns of the seventh kings: among the Assyrians the elder Xerxes, who was also called Baleus, and among the Sicyonians Thuriacus, whose name some write as Thurimachus. The kingdom of the Argives arose at the same time as Abraham's grandsons, and its first king was Inachus. One point should not be passed over: Varro reports that the Sicyonians used to offer sacrifice even at the tomb of Thuriacus, their seventh king. Then, during the reigns of the eighth kings—Armamitres of the Assyrians and Leucippus of the Sicyonians—and of Inachus, the first king of the Argives, God spoke to Isaac. He promised him, too, the same two things he had promised his father: the land of Canaan to his seed, and in his seed the blessing of all nations. These same things were promised also to Isaac's son, Abraham's grandson, who was first called Jacob and later Israel. Belocus was then reigning as the ninth king of

Assyria, and Phoroneus, son of Inachus, as the second king of the Argives, while Leucippus still continued among the Sicyonians. In these times Greece, under Phoroneus king of Argos, became more renowned for certain institutions of laws and courts. Yet when Phegous, the younger brother of this Phoroneus, died, a temple was established at his tomb, where he was to be worshiped as a god and oxen sacrificed to him. I suppose they thought him worthy of so great an honor because in his part of the kingdom (their father had assigned each of them territories to rule during his lifetime) he had set up shrines for the worship of the gods. He had also taught people to keep track of time by months and years, and how far they should measure and count each of these. Marveling at these novelties in him, people who were still unsophisticated either supposed, or chose to believe, that after his death he had become a god. For Io, too, is said to have been the daughter of Inachus. She was later called Isis and worshiped as a great goddess in Egypt. Others, however, write that she came into Egypt from Ethiopia as a queen. Because she ruled widely and justly and established many benefits for the Egyptians, including writing, this divine honor was paid to her after she died there. So great was the honor that anyone who said she had been a human being was charged with a capital crime.

THE TIMES OF JACOB AND HIS SON JOSEPH

Isaac dies; Joseph is sold, rises in Egypt, and Jacob joins him.

18.4 Baleus was reigning as the tenth king of the Assyrians and Messapus as the ninth of the Sicyonians. Some record that Messapus was also called Cephisus—if indeed one man had two names, and it is not rather that the writers who put the other name in their works thought it was a different man. Apis was then the third king of the Argives. At that time Isaac died at the age of a hundred and eighty, leaving his twins aged a hundred and twenty. The younger of them, Jacob, belonged to the city of God of which we are writing, while the elder was rejected. Jacob

had twelve sons. One of them, named Joseph, had been sold by his brothers to merchants on their way to Egypt while their grandfather Isaac was still alive. Joseph stood before Pharaoh at the age of thirty, when he was raised to high position from the humiliation he had endured. By interpreting the king's dreams through divine inspiration, he had foretold that seven years of plenty were coming, and that seven barren years following them would consume their overflowing abundance. For this the king had freed him from prison and set him over Egypt. He had been thrown into that prison because of the integrity of his chastity. Steadfastly preserving it, he would not consent to adultery with his mistress, who loved him wickedly and was going to lie to his master, who would wrongly believe her. He even left his garment in her hands as she pulled at him, and fled. In the second of the seven barren years Jacob came into Egypt with all his household to his son. He was a hundred and thirty, as he himself told the king when asked. Joseph was then thirty-nine: to the thirty years he was when the king honored him, add the seven years of plenty and two of famine.

APIS, KING OF THE ARGIVES, WHOM THE EGYPTIANS WORSHIPED WITH DIVINE HONOR UNDER THE NAME SERAPIS

Apis of Argos became the Egyptian god Serapis, and demons deceived Egypt with the Apis bull.

18.5 In these times Apis, king of the Argives, crossed by ship into Egypt. When he died there, he became Serapis, the greatest of all the gods of the Egyptians. As for the name—why after his death he was called not Apis but Serapis—Varro gave a very simple explanation. The chest in which a dead person is laid, which everyone now calls a sarcophagus, is called σορὸς [coffin] in Greek. They had begun to venerate him buried in such a chest before his temple was built. So he was at first called Sorapis, as if from *soros* and Apis, and then, by the change of one letter, as commonly happens, Serapis. In his case, too, it was decreed that anyone who said he had been a man would pay the death pen-

alty. In almost all the temples where Isis and Serapis were worshiped there was also a statue that seemed, with a finger pressed to its lips, to warn that silence should be kept. Varro likewise thinks that this signified that silence should be kept about their having been human beings. The bull, on the other hand, which Egypt, deceived by an astonishing folly, kept in his honor amid overflowing luxury, was called Apis, not Serapis, because they venerated it while alive, without a sarcophagus. When that bull died, they would seek and find a calf of the same coloring, that is, marked in the same way with certain white spots. They believed that this was something marvelous, divinely provided for them. Yet it was no great feat for the demons, in order to deceive them, to show a cow, as she conceived and while she was pregnant, an image of such a bull that she alone could see. From it the mother's desire would draw what would then appear in bodily form in her offspring—just as Jacob, with his streaked rods, brought it about that spotted sheep and goats were born.[3] For what human beings can do with real colors and real objects, demons can very easily present to animals as they conceive by means of illusory shapes.

WHO WAS KING OF THE ARGIVES AND OF THE ASSYRIANS WHEN JACOB DIED IN EGYPT

Jacob dies in Egypt prophesying Christ; Argus and others are deified in Greece.

18.6 Apis, then, a king not of the Egyptians but of the Argives, died in Egypt. His son Argus succeeded him on the throne, and from his name both Argos and, from that, the Argives were named. Under the earlier kings neither the place nor the people yet had this name. While Argus was reigning among the Argives and Eratus among the Sicyonians, and Baleus still remained king among the Assyrians, Jacob died in Egypt at the age of a hundred and forty-seven. Before he died he blessed his sons and his grandsons by Joseph, and he prophesied Christ most plainly,

3 Jacob's rods: Genesis 30:37–39.

saying in the blessing of Judah: "A ruler shall not be lacking from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until the things stored up for him come; and he is the expectation of the nations." During the reign of Argus Greece began to use its own crops and to have harvests from farming, after seeds had been brought in from elsewhere. Argus, too, came to be regarded as a god after his death, honored with a temple and sacrifices.[4] During his reign this honor had already been conferred, before it was given to him, on a private man struck by lightning, one Homogyrus, because he was the first to yoke oxen to the plow.

IN WHOSE REIGNS JOSEPH DIED IN EGYPT

Joseph dies, and Israel multiplies in Egypt under oppression.

18.7 Mamythus was reigning as the twelfth king of the Assyrians and Plemmeus as the eleventh of the Sicyonians, and Argus still remained king at Argos, when Joseph died in Egypt at the age of a hundred and ten. After his death the people of God, growing wonderfully, remained in Egypt for a hundred and forty-five years. At first they lived in peace, until those who had known Joseph died. Then, because their growth was envied and regarded with suspicion, they were oppressed, until they were set free from there, by persecutions and by the toil of an intolerable slavery—though even amid these persecutions they kept growing, their numbers multiplied by God's gift of fruitfulness. Meanwhile, during the same period, the same kingdoms continued in Assyria and Greece.

IN WHOSE REIGNS MOSES WAS BORN, AND THE WORSHIP OF WHICH GODS BEGAN AT THAT TIME

Moses is born; Greece begins making gods of Prometheus, Atlas, Mercury, Hercules and Minerva.

18.8 When, then, Saphrus was reigning as the fourteenth king of the Assyrians, Orthopolis as the twelfth of the Sicyonians, and

4 Genesis 49:10.

Criasus as the fifth of the Argives, Moses was born in Egypt. Through him the people of God was freed from slavery in Egypt, a slavery in which it had to be tested in this way so that it would long for the help of its Creator. Some believe that Prometheus lived during the reigns of these kings. They say he formed human beings out of clay because he is reported to have been an excellent teacher of wisdom; yet no one shows who the wise men of his time were. His brother Atlas is said to have been a great astronomer. From this the myth found occasion to invent the story that he carries the sky—though a mountain is named after him, and it seems more likely that its height gave rise to the popular belief that he carries the sky. Many other myths, too, began to be invented in Greece from those times on. Up to the reign of Cecrops, king of the Athenians—in whose reign that city also received its name, and in whose reign God led his people out of Egypt through Moses—a number of the dead were enrolled among the gods by the blind and empty custom and superstition of the Greeks. Among them were Melantomice, wife of King Criasus, and Phorbas their son, who after his father became the sixth king of the Argives; Iasus, son of Triopas the seventh king; and the ninth king, Sthenelas or Stheneleus or Sthenelus, for the name appears in various forms in different authors. In these times, too, Mercury is said to have lived, the grandson of Atlas through his daughter Maia, as even the more popular literature proclaims. He was renowned for his skill in many arts, which he also passed on to human beings. Because of this merit they chose to make him a god after his death—or even believed that he was one.[5] Hercules is said to have come later, though he still belongs to the same period of Argive history. Some, however, place him earlier than Mercury, but I think they are mistaken. Whenever they were born, serious historians who have committed these ancient matters to writing agree that both were human beings, and that they earned divine honors from mortals because they conferred many benefits on them for making this life more comfortable. Minerva, however, is far older

5 Cecrops was the legendary first king of Athens.

than these. In the times of Ogygus she is said to have appeared, in the form of a maiden, by the lake called Triton, and for this reason she was also named Tritonia. She was certainly the inventor of many crafts, and she was believed to be a goddess all the more readily the less her origin was known. As for the poets' song that she was born from Jupiter's head, that must be assigned to poetry and myth, not to history and actual events.[6] When Ogygus himself lived, however, is not agreed among writers of history. In his time a great flood also took place. It was not that greatest flood, from which no human beings escaped except those who could fit in the ark, a flood of which neither Greek nor Latin history of the nations knows anything. Yet it was greater than the later one in the time of Deucalion. Varro began from there the book I mentioned above, and as his starting point for reaching Roman history he sets before himself nothing older than the flood of Ogygus, that is, the flood that took place in the times of Ogygus. But our own writers of chronicles—first Eusebius, then Jerome—who certainly followed some earlier historians in this view, record that the flood of Ogygus occurred more than three hundred years later, when Phoroneus, the second king of the Argives, was already reigning.[7] But whenever it happened, Minerva was already being worshiped as a goddess when Cecrops reigned over the Athenians. Under this king, they say, the city itself was either restored or founded.

WHEN THE CITY OF ATHENS WAS FOUNDED, AND WHAT REASON VARRO GIVES FOR ITS NAME

Athens is named after Minerva by a vote of the women, who are then punished.

18.9 For Varro gives the following reason why the city came to be called Athens, a name that certainly comes from Minerva, who in Greek is called Ἀθηνᾶ [Athena]. An olive tree had suddenly

6 Ogygus (Ogyges) was a legendary primeval king of Greece, in whose time a great flood was said to have occurred.

7 Jerome (c. AD 347–420) translated Eusebius's *Chronicle* into Latin and continued it.

appeared there, and in another place water had burst forth. These prodigies troubled the king, and he sent to Delphic Apollo to ask what they meant and what should be done. Apollo replied that the olive signified Minerva and the water Neptune, and that it was up to the citizens to decide which of the two gods, whose signs these were, the city should rather be named after. On receiving this oracle Cecrops called together all the citizens of both sexes to cast their votes, for at that time it was the custom in those parts for women also to take part in public deliberations. So the people were consulted: the men voted for Neptune, the women for Minerva, and because the women were found to outnumber the men by one, Minerva won. Then Neptune, in his anger, laid waste the lands of the Athenians with surging waves of the sea, for it is not hard for demons to spread any waters they please over a wider area. To appease his wrath, the same author says, the Athenians inflicted a threefold punishment on the women: they were never to vote again, no child born was to take its mother's name, and no one was to call them Athenians. So that city, the mother or nurse of the liberal arts and of so many great philosophers, the most famous and noble thing that Greece possessed, received the name Athens through a mockery staged by demons. It came from a quarrel between its gods, a male and a female, and from the victory of the female won by the females. And then, injured by the loser, the city was forced to punish the very victory of the winner, since it feared Neptune's waters more than Minerva's arms. For in the women who were punished in this way, Minerva, who had won, was defeated as well. She did not stand by the women who had voted for her. They lost the right to vote from then on, and their sons were cut off from their mothers' names; yet she did not even secure for them the right to be called Athenians and to earn the name of the goddess whom they had made victorious over the male god by casting their votes. How much, and what, could be said on this point, if my discussion were not hurrying on to other matters!

WHAT VARRO REPORTS ABOUT THE NAMING OF THE AREOPAGUS AND ABOUT THE FLOOD OF DEUCALION

Varro rejects myths about the Areopagus but tells the flood of Deucalion as history.

18.10 And yet Marcus Varro does not want to put faith in mythical fictions that discredit the gods, lest he think something unworthy of the dignity of their majesty. Take the Areopagus, where the apostle Paul debated with the Athenians, and from which the members of that city's council are called Areopagites. Varro will not allow that it took its name from the following story: Mars, who in Greek is called Ἄρης [Ares], was put on trial for the crime of homicide, and on that hill, with twelve gods sitting as judges, he was acquitted by six votes (for when the votes were evenly divided, acquittal was customarily preferred to condemnation).[8] Instead, against this view, which is far more widely celebrated, he tries to build up some other explanation of the name from his knowledge of obscure writings. He does not want people to believe that the Athenians named the Areopagus from the names of Mars and "hill," as if it were "Mars' hill." That, of course, would insult the deities, to whom he thinks lawsuits and trials are foreign. He asserts that this story about Mars is no less false than the one about the three goddesses, Juno, Minerva and Venus. They are said to have competed before Paris as judge over which of them was most beautiful, to win the golden apple; and their story is sung and danced amid the applause of the theater at the games held to appease the gods, who take delight in these crimes of theirs, whether true or false. Varro does not believe these things, lest he believe something unbecoming to the nature or character of the gods. And yet, giving not a mythical but a historical account of the name of Athens, he inserts into his writings a quarrel between Neptune and Minerva over whose name the city should rather take, so fierce that, when

8 The Areopagus, the "Hill of Ares" in Athens, was the seat of the city's ancient council; Paul's speech there is recounted in Acts 17.

they contended by displaying prodigies, not even Apollo dared to judge between them when he was consulted. Instead, just as Jupiter sent the three goddesses I mentioned to Paris, so Apollo too sent the gods' dispute to human beings to settle. There Minerva won by the votes and was defeated in the punishment of the women who voted for her. She could secure Athens against her opponents, the men, but she could not keep her friends, the women, as Athenians. In these times, as Varro writes, when Cranaus, Cecrops' successor, was reigning over the Athenians—or, according to our own Eusebius and Jerome, while Cecrops himself was still on the throne—there occurred the flood that has been called Deucalion's, because he was ruling in those parts of the world where it chiefly took place. But this flood in no way reached Egypt or the regions near it.

WHEN MOSES LED THE PEOPLE OF GOD OUT OF EGYPT, AND IN WHOSE REIGNS JOSHUA SON OF NUN, HIS SUCCESSOR, DIED

Moses leads Israel out and gives the law; Joshua settles the land and dies.

18.11 Moses, then, led the people of God out of Egypt at the very end of the reign of Cecrops, king of the Athenians, when Ascatades was reigning among the Assyrians, Marathus among the Sicyonians, and Triopas among the Argives. After leading the people out, he handed down on Mount Sinai the law he had received from God. This is called the Old Testament, because it contains earthly promises; and through Jesus Christ there was to come the New Testament, in which the kingdom of heaven would be promised. For this order had to be kept, just as in each individual who advances toward God there takes place what the apostle describes: "It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual." For, as he says, and truly, "the first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven."[9] Moses ruled the people for forty years in the

9 1 Corinthians 15:46–47.

desert and died at the age of one hundred and twenty. He too had prophesied Christ, through the figures of the bodily observances in the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices and a great many other mystical commandments. Moses was succeeded by Joshua son of Nun, who brought the people into the land of promise and settled them there by divine authority, after defeating the nations that held those regions. He ruled the people for twenty-seven years after Moses' death and then he too died, when Amyntas, the eighteenth king, was reigning among the Assyrians, Corax, the sixteenth, among the Sicyonians, Danaus, the tenth, among the Argives, and Erichthonius, the fourth, among the Athenians.

THE RITES OF FALSE GODS INSTITUTED BY THE KINGS OF GREECE IN THE PERIOD FROM ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT TO THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

Greek kings found rites recalling the flood; Dionysus, Apollo's games and Hercules appear.

18.12 During these times—that is, from Israel's departure from Egypt to the death of Joshua son of Nun, through whom that people received the land of promise—the kings of Greece instituted rites to false gods. With solemn festivals these rites recalled the memory of the flood, of humanity's deliverance from it, and of the hard life of that time, when people moved now to the heights, now to the plains. Indeed, they interpret the ascent and descent of the Luperci along the Sacred Way as signifying the people who made for the mountaintops because of the flood waters and came back down to the lowlands when the waters subsided. In these times, they say, Dionysus, who was also called Father Liber and was regarded as a god after his death, showed the vine to his host in Attica.[10] At that time musical games were instituted for Delphic Apollo to appease his anger. They believed that the regions of Greece had been struck

10 The Luperci were the priests of the Roman festival of the Lupercalia; the Sacred Way was the main street through the Roman Forum.

with barrenness by that anger because they had not defended his temple, which King Danaus had burned when he invaded those lands in war. It was his oracle that advised them to institute these games. In Attica, King Erichthonius was the first to institute games for him—and not only for him but also for Minerva, at which oil was offered as the prize for the victors, because they record Minerva as the discoverer of the olive's fruit, as they record Liber as the discoverer of wine. During those years Europa is said to have been carried off by Xanthus, king of the Cretans (we find him called by another name in other authors), and from that union were born Rhadamanthus, Sarpedon and Minos, who are more commonly said to be sons of Jupiter by the same woman. But the worshipers of such gods assign what we said about the king of the Cretans to historical truth, while what the poets sing about Jupiter, what the theaters ring with and the people celebrate, they put down to the emptiness of myths—so that there might be material for games to appease the deities, even with crimes of theirs that are false. In these times Hercules was renowned in Syria—but evidently another Hercules, not the one we spoke of above. For in more recondite history there are said to have been several figures named Father Liber and several named Hercules. As for this Hercules, whose twelve mighty labors they count—among which they do not include the killing of Antaeus the African, since that deed belongs to the other Hercules—their writings record that he burned himself to death on Mount Oeta, because, for all the strength with which he had overcome so much, he could not bear the disease from which he was suffering. At that time Busiris, a king or rather a tyrant, used to sacrifice his guests to his gods. They say he was the son of Neptune by Libya, the daughter of Epaphus. But let no one believe that Neptune committed this illicit act, lest the gods be accused; let such things be assigned to the poets and the theaters, so that there may be material for appeasing the gods. Vulcan and Minerva are said to have been the parents of Erichthonius, king of the Athenians, in whose last years Joshua son of Nun is found to have died. But

since they want Minerva to be a virgin, they say that during a struggle between the two, Vulcan, in his arousal, spilled his seed on the ground, and that the human being born from it was given this name for that reason. For in Greek ἔρις means "struggle" and χθών means "earth," and the name Erichthonius is compounded from these two words. But, it must be admitted, the more learned refute these stories and keep them away from their gods. They say this mythical notion arose because in the temple of Vulcan and Minerva, which the two shared at Athens, an exposed baby boy was found with a serpent coiled around him, which signified that he would become great. Because of the shared temple, and since his parents were unknown, he was called the son of Vulcan and Minerva. Yet the origin of his name is explained by that myth rather than by this history. But what does it matter to us? Let the history, in truthful books, instruct religious people; let the myth, in lying shows, delight unclean demons. Yet those same religious people worship these demons as gods. And when they deny such things about them, they cannot clear them of all guilt, because they put on shows at the demons' demand, in which the very things they so wisely deny are acted out shamefully, and the gods are appeased by these false and shameful performances. There, even if the myth sings of a false crime of the deities, to take delight in a false crime is a real crime.

WHAT FABLES WERE INVENTED AT THE TIME WHEN JUDGES BEGAN TO RULE THE HEBREWS

In the time of the judges the Greeks invent famous myths and deify more men.

18.13 After the death of Joshua son of Nun, the people of God had judges. In those times they experienced by turns the humiliation of hardships because of their sins and the prosperity of consolations because of God's mercy. In these times myths were invented: about Triptolemus, that at Ceres' command he was carried by winged serpents and, flying through the air, brought grain to lands in need; about the Minotaur, that it was a beast

shut up in the Labyrinth, and that people who went in could not find their way out because its maze was impossible to untangle; about the Centaurs, that in them the nature of horses and humans was combined; about Cerberus, that he is the three-headed dog of the underworld; about Phrixus and his sister Helle, that they flew through the air riding on a ram; about the Gorgon, that her hair was made of snakes and that she turned those who looked at her to stone; about Bellerophon, that he rode a horse that flew on wings, the horse being called Pegasus; about Amphion, that by the sweetness of his lyre he charmed and drew stones to him; about Daedalus the craftsman and his son Icarus, that they flew with wings they had fitted to themselves; about Oedipus, that he forced a certain monster called the Sphinx, a four-footed creature with a human face, to throw herself to her death, by solving the riddle she used to pose as if it could not be solved; about Antaeus, whom Hercules killed, that he was the son of the Earth, and that for this reason whenever he fell to the ground he would rise up stronger; and any others I may have passed over. These myths, down to the Trojan War, where Marcus Varro ended his second book *On the Race of the Roman People*, were invented by human ingenuity, taking their occasion from histories that record what truly happened, in such a way that they did not attach slanders to the deities. But consider whoever invented the story that Jupiter abducted the beautiful boy Ganymede to violate him—a wicked deed that King Tantalus committed and the myth attributed to Jupiter—or that he sought to lie with Danaë by means of a shower of gold, which is understood to mean that a woman's chastity was corrupted by gold. Whether these things were done or invented in those times, or done by others and invented about Jupiter, it is impossible to say how much evil such people presumed to be in human hearts, to think that they could patiently tolerate such lies. And yet people even embraced them gladly. Surely the more devoutly they worship Jupiter, the more severely they ought to have punished those who dared to say

such things about him.[11] As it is, not only are they not angry with those who invented these things, but they were afraid instead of having the gods themselves angry with them, so that they even acted out such fictions in the theaters. In these times Latona gave birth to Apollo—not the one whose oracles we spoke of above as being regularly consulted, but the one who, together with Hercules, was a servant to Admetus. Yet he was so far believed to be a god that most people, indeed almost everyone, think there was one and the same Apollo. At that time, too, Father Liber waged war in India, with many women in his army, called Bacchae, noted not so much for courage as for frenzy. Some, indeed, write that this Liber was both vanquished and chained; some even that he was killed in battle by Perseus, and they do not keep quiet about where he was buried. And yet in his name, as if he were a god, unclean demons brought about the institution of the Bacchanalian rites—or rather sacrileges—whose raving obscenity, so many years later, so shamed the senate that it banned them from the city of Rome. During those times, after Perseus and his wife Andromeda died, people believed they had been received into heaven, so much so that they felt neither shame nor fear in marking out their images in the stars and calling those stars by their names.[12]

THE THEOLOGICAL POETS

Orpheus, Musaeus and Linus sing of the gods; Ino and Melicertes become gods.

18.14 During the same period there arose poets who were also called theologians, because they composed poems about the gods. But these were gods of a certain kind: either men—great men, but still men—or elements of this world, which the true God made, or beings set among the principalities and powers according to the Creator's will and their own merits. And if, amid much that was empty and false, they sang something

11 This work of Varro is lost.
12 The Roman senate suppressed the Bacchanalia by decree in 186 BC.

about the one true God, they certainly did not serve him rightly, since they worshiped alongside him others who are not gods and paid them the service owed to the one God alone; nor could they keep even themselves from the mythical disgrace of their gods. These poets were Orpheus, Musaeus and Linus. But these theologians worshiped gods; they were not worshiped as gods—although the city of the ungodly does, somehow or other, make Orpheus the presiding figure of the rites, or rather the sacrileges, of the underworld.[13] The wife of King Athamas, whose name was Ino, and her son Melicertes perished by deliberately throwing themselves into the sea, and in popular belief they were enrolled among the gods, as were other people of their time, Castor and Pollux. That mother of Melicertes the Greeks called Leucothea and the Latins Matuta, but both peoples considered her a goddess.

THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM OF THE ARGIVES, AT THE TIME WHEN PICUS SON OF SATURN FIRST RECEIVED THE KINGDOM AMONG THE LAURENTINES

The Laurentine kingdom begins with Picus, son of Saturn, while Deborah judges Israel.

18.15 During those times the kingdom of the Argives came to an end and was transferred to Mycenae, the home of Agamemnon. And the kingdom of the Laurentines arose, where Picus son of Saturn was the first to receive the throne, while a woman, Deborah, was judging among the Hebrews. But it was the Spirit of God who was acting through her, for she was also a prophetess—though her prophecy is too obscure for us to show, without a long explanation, that it was spoken about Christ. So the Laurentines were by then reigning in Italy, and it is from them, after the Greeks, that the origin of Rome is more clearly traced. And yet the Assyrian kingdom still endured, where Lampares was the twenty-third king when Picus became the first

13 Orpheus, Musaeus and Linus were legendary early Greek poets and singers to whom religious poems were attributed.

king of the Laurentines. As for Picus' father, Saturn, let the worshipers of such gods, who deny he was a man, decide what they think. Others too have written of him that, before[14] his son Picus, he himself reigned in Italy; and Virgil says, in better-known writings: "He brought together the unruly race, scattered over the high mountains, and gave them laws, and chose that the land be called Latium, since he had lain hidden safely on these shores. Under that king were the ages they call golden."[15]

But let them think these are poetic fictions, and let them insist instead that Picus' father was Sterces, a highly skilled farmer, who, they say, discovered that fields could be made fertile with animal dung, which is called *stercus* after his name; some say he was called Stercutius. Whatever reason they had for wanting to call him Saturn, they certainly made this Sterces, or Stercutius, a god for his services to agriculture. Likewise they admitted his son Picus into the number of such gods, claiming that he was an outstanding augur and warrior. Picus fathered Faunus, the second king of the Laurentines; he too is, or was, a god to them. These dead men they honored with divine honors before the Trojan War.

DIOMEDES, MADE A GOD AFTER THE FALL OF TROY, WHOSE COMPANIONS WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO BIRDS

After Troy, Diomedes is deified and his companions are said to have become birds.

18.16 Then Troy was overthrown, in that destruction sung of everywhere and familiar to every schoolchild. Both by its own magnitude and through the brilliant pens of writers it has become famous and widely known. It happened when Latinus son of Faunus was already reigning, after whom the kingdom began to be called that of the Latins, and the name of the

14 Deborah's story is told in Judges 4–5.
15 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.321–325; the name Latium is derived from *latuisset*, "he had lain hidden."

Laurentines ceased. The victorious Greeks, leaving Troy in ruins and returning home, were torn apart and crushed by various horrible disasters; and yet from among them, too, they increased the number of their gods. For they made Diomedes a god, though they say that, by a punishment sent from heaven, he never returned to his people. And they affirm, not with mythical and poetic falsehood but with historical testimony, that his companions were turned into birds. Yet Diomedes, though made a god, as they suppose, could not restore them to human nature himself, nor did he obtain this from Jupiter, his king, as a newcomer among the dwellers in heaven. They even say that his temple stands on the island of Diomedea, not far from Mount Garganus in Apulia, and that these birds fly around this temple and dwell in it with such wonderful devotion that they take up water and sprinkle it. If Greeks or people of Greek descent come there, the birds are not only calm but even fawn on them; but if they see foreigners, they fly up at their heads and wound them with such heavy blows that they even kill them. For they are said to be well armed for these battles with hard, large beaks.

WHAT VARRO REPORTS ABOUT UNBELIEVABLE TRANSFORMATIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS

Varro tells of Circe and of Arcadians turned into wolves.

18.17 To support this, Varro relates other things no less incredible about that most notorious sorceress Circe, who also changed the companions of Ulysses into beasts. He also tells of the Arcadians who, chosen by lot, used to swim across a certain pool, were turned into wolves there, and lived with wild animals like themselves in the wilderness of that region. If they did not eat human flesh, after nine years they swam back across the same pool and were changed back into men. He even names one particular man, Demaenetus. Demaenetus, he says, tasted the sacrifice that the Arcadians used to offer to their god Lycaeus by slaughtering a boy, and was changed into a wolf. In the tenth year he was restored to his own shape, trained as a boxer, and won at the

Olympic games.[16] The same historian thinks that the name "Lycaean" was given in Arcadia to Pan Lycaeus and Jupiter Lycaeus for no other reason than this transformation of men into wolves, because people thought it could happen only by divine power. For a wolf is called λύκος [*lykos*] in Greek, and the name Lycaeus is evidently derived from it. He also says that the Roman Luperci sprang, as it were, from the seed of those mysteries.

WHAT WE SHOULD BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRANSFORMATIONS THAT SEEM TO HAPPEN TO HUMAN BEINGS THROUGH THE ART OF DEMONS

Demons cannot truly transform bodies; they create illusions through a person's phantom image.

18.18 But those who read this may perhaps expect us to say something about such great trickery on the part of the demons. And what shall we say, except that we must flee from the midst of Babylon? This prophetic command is understood spiritually. It means that we should flee from the city of this world, which is in fact a fellowship of ungodly angels and men. We flee by advancing toward the living God with the steps of faith, which works through love. For the greater the power of the demons we see in these lower regions, the more firmly we must cling to the Mediator, through whom we climb from the lowest to the highest. If we say that these things are not to be believed, there are even now people who claim to have heard of such things on the surest authority, or even to have experienced them.[17] For when we were in Italy, we too used to hear such things about a certain region in those parts. People said that women who kept inns there, steeped in these wicked arts, would give something in cheese to whatever travelers they wished or could. The travelers were at once turned into beasts of burden and carried

16 Lycaeus is Zeus (Jupiter) of Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia. Legend linked his cult with human sacrifice and with men turned into wolves.

17 Jeremiah 51:6 (compare Isaiah 48:20). "Faith, which works through love" is from Galatians 5:6.

whatever was needed, and after the work was done they returned to themselves again. Yet their minds did not become bestial but remained rational and human. In the same way Apuleius, in the books he entitled *The Golden Ass*, either reported or invented that it happened to him that, after taking a potion, he became an ass while keeping his human mind.[18]

These things are either false or so extraordinary that they are rightly disbelieved. Yet we must believe most firmly that almighty God can do whatever he wills, whether in punishing or in bestowing favor. We must also believe that demons accomplish nothing by the power of their nature except what he permits. That nature too is an angelic creation, though it has become evil by its own fault. Many of God's judgments are hidden, but none is unjust. Nor do demons create natures, if they do anything of the kind this question concerns. Rather, they change things created by the true God in appearance only, so that they seem to be what they are not. I would not believe, then, on any account, that the art or power of demons could really transform not only the mind but even the body into the limbs and features of a beast. What I believe is this. There is a person's phantom self, which takes on the shapes of countless kinds of things even in thought or in dreams. Though it is not a body, it takes on forms like bodies with marvelous speed. While the person's bodily senses are lulled or suppressed, this phantom can, in some indescribable way, be conveyed in bodily shape to the senses of others. The people's actual bodies lie somewhere, alive indeed, but with their senses shut off far more heavily and forcibly than in sleep. Meanwhile that phantom, as if embodied, appears to the senses of others in the likeness of some animal. The man even seems to himself to be such an animal, as he might seem so to himself in dreams, and to carry loads. If these loads are real bodies, they are carried by the demons, so as to deceive people who see partly the real bodies of the loads and partly the false bodies of the pack animals. A

18 Apuleius was a North African writer of the 2nd century AD. His novel, also called the *Metamorphoses*, tells of a man turned into an ass.

man named Praestantius used to tell what had happened to his father. In his own house his father took that drug in cheese and lay in his bed as if asleep, yet nothing could wake him. After several days, he said, his father woke up, as it were, and told what he had experienced as though it had been a dream. He said that he had become a horse and, along with other pack animals, had carried supplies for the soldiers—the provisions called Raetian, because they are carried to Raetia. It was found that this had happened just as he told it, yet to him it seemed to have been his own dream. Another man also reported something. In his own house at night, before he went to sleep, he saw a philosopher whom he knew very well come to him and explain some Platonic doctrines that he had earlier refused to explain when asked.[19] That same philosopher was asked why he had done in the other man's house what he had refused to do in his own house when asked. He said, "I did not do it, but I dreamed that I did." And so what one man saw in his dreams was presented to the other, while awake, by means of a phantom image.

These stories reached us not from just anyone, from people we would think unworthy of belief, but from those who we judged would not have lied to us. People say, and it has been committed to writing, that Arcadians used to be turned into wolves by the gods, or rather by demons, and that "Circe changed the companions of Ulysses by her spells." It seems to me that such things could have happened in the way I have described, if indeed they happened at all. As for the birds of Diomedes, their species is said to continue through successive generations. So I believe they were not made by changing men, but were substituted for men who had been removed, as a deer was substituted for Iphigenia, daughter of King Agamemnon. Deceptions of this kind could not have been difficult for demons when God's judgment permitted them. But because that maiden was later found alive, it was easily recognized that a deer had

19 Raetia was a Roman province in the Alps, roughly modern eastern Switzerland and southern Germany.

been substituted for her.[20] The companions of Diomedes suddenly vanished and afterward appeared nowhere, because the evil angels destroyed them as avengers. For this reason they are believed to have been turned into those birds. In fact the birds were secretly brought to those places from other places where this species lives, and suddenly put in their place. The birds carry water in their beaks to the temple of Diomedes and sprinkle it, and they fawn on those of Greek descent and attack foreigners. It is no wonder that this happens at the instigation of demons. It is in their interest to persuade people that Diomedes was made a god, in order to deceive them. In this way people worship many false gods, to the insult of the true God, and serve dead men, who did not truly live even when they were alive, with temples and altars, sacrifices and priests. When these things are rightly offered, all of them are owed only to the one living and true God.

THAT AENEAS CAME TO ITALY WHEN ABDON WAS JUDGE OVER THE HEBREWS

Aeneas reaches Italy and is deified; Codrus dies for Athens.

18.19 At that time, after Troy had been captured and destroyed, Aeneas came to Italy with twenty ships carrying what remained of the Trojans. Latinus was reigning there, Menestheus among the Athenians, Polyphides among the Sicyonians, and Tautanes among the Assyrians, while among the Hebrews Abdon was judge. When Latinus died, Aeneas reigned for three years. The same kings remained in the places mentioned, except that the Sicyonians now had Pelasgus and the Hebrews had Samson as judge. Because Samson was marvelously strong, he was thought to be Hercules. Aeneas vanished when he died, and so the Latins made him their god. The Sabines also enrolled their first king, Sancus, or Sanctus as some call him, among the gods. About the same time Codrus, king of the Athenians, offered himself in dis-

20 The quoted line is from Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.70. In the legend, Artemis replaced Iphigenia with a deer at the moment of her sacrifice at Aulis.

guise to be killed by the Peloponnesians, who were enemies of that city, and so it was done. In this way, they proclaim, he set his country free.[21] The Peloponnesians had received an oracle that they would win only if they did not kill the Athenians' king. So Codrus deceived them by appearing dressed as a poor man and provoking them, by a quarrel, to kill him. Hence Virgil speaks of "the quarrels of Codrus." And the Athenians worshiped him as a god with the honor of sacrifices. The fourth king of the Latins was Silvius, son of Aeneas. He was not the son of Creusa, mother of Ascanius, who reigned there third, but of Lavinia, daughter of Latinus; Aeneas is said to have had him as a posthumous son. The twenty-ninth king of the Assyrians was Oneus, the sixteenth king of the Athenians was Melanthus, and the judge of the Hebrews was Eli the priest. At that time the kingdom of the Sicyonians came to an end, having lasted, it is said, for nine hundred and fifty-nine years.[22]

THE SUCCESSION OF THE ROYAL LINE AMONG THE ISRAELITES AFTER THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

Israel's kings begin with Saul; the Silvii rule in Latium and Alba is founded.

18.20 Soon afterward, while the same kings were reigning in the places mentioned, the period of the judges ended and the kingdom of the Israelites began with King Saul. At that time Samuel was the prophet. From that time, then, began the kings of the Latins whom they surnamed Silvii. The son of Aeneas was the first to be called Silvius. The kings who followed him were given their own names, but none lacked this surname, just as much later those who succeeded Caesar Augustus were surnamed Caesars. Saul was rejected, so that none of his line should reign. After his death David succeeded to the kingdom, forty years after the start of Saul's rule. At that time the Athenians, after the death of Codrus, ceased to have kings and began to have magis-

21 Abdon (Augustine's "Labdon") was a judge of Israel; see Judges 12:13–15.
22 Virgil, *Eclogues* 5.11.

trates to administer the commonwealth. After David, who also reigned forty years, his son Solomon was king of the Israelites. Solomon built that most renowned temple of God in Jerusalem. In his time Alba was founded among the Latins. From then on its kings began to be called kings not of the Latins but of the Albans, though still in the same Latium. Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, under whom that people was divided into two kingdoms, and each part began to have its own kings.

THE KINGS OF LATIUM, OF WHOM THE FIRST, AENEAS, AND THE TWELFTH, AVENTINUS, WERE MADE GODS

Latium's kings lead to Romulus; the Assyrian empire ends and Romulus and Remus are born.

18.21 After Aeneas, whom they made a god, Latium had eleven kings, and none of them was made a god. Aventinus, however, who comes twelfth after Aeneas, was struck down in war and buried on the hill that still bears his name. He was added to the number of gods of the kind they made for themselves. Some, indeed, would not write that he was killed in battle, but said that he vanished. They also said that the hill was not named after him but was called the Aventine from the coming (*adventus*) of birds. After him no one was made a god in Latium except Romulus, the founder of Rome. Between these two, however, we find two kings. The first of them, to put it in a line of Virgil, is:

"Next is Procas, glory of the Trojan race." In his time Rome was already, in a way, in labor to be born, and that greatest of all kingdoms, the Assyrian, came to the end of its long duration. For it passed to the Medes after about one thousand three hundred and five years, if we also count the reign of Belus. Belus fathered Ninus and was the first king there, content with a small empire. Procas reigned before Amulius. Amulius had made a Vestal virgin of his brother Numitor's daughter, named Rhea and also called Ilia, who was the mother of Romulus. They claim that she conceived twins by Mars, and in this way they honor or excuse her loss of chastity. As proof they offer the story that a

she-wolf nursed the infants when they had been exposed.[23] For they consider this kind of animal to belong to Mars. So the she-wolf is evidently believed to have offered her teats to the little ones because she recognized them as the sons of her master Mars. Yet some say otherwise. They say that when the infants lay crying after being exposed, they were first picked up by some prostitute or other and sucked her breasts first. Prostitutes used to be called *lupae*, "she-wolves," which is why their shameful houses are still called *lupanaria*. Afterward, they say, the twins came to the shepherd Faustulus and were nursed by his wife Acca. And yet God may have wished to rebuke the human king who had cruelly ordered them thrown into the water. He may have chosen to aid, through a nursing wild animal, those infants whom he had divinely rescued from the water and through whom so great a city was to be founded. What is surprising about that? Amulius was succeeded in the kingdom of Latium by his brother Numitor, grandfather of Romulus. Rome was founded in the first year of this Numitor, and so from then on he reigned together with his grandson, that is, Romulus.

THAT ROME WAS FOUNDED AT THE TIME THE ASSYRIAN KINGDOM CAME TO AN END AND HEZEKIAH WAS REIGNING IN JUDAH

Rome, a second Babylon, is founded to subdue and unite the world.

18.22 To be brief: the city of Rome was founded like a second Babylon, the daughter, as it were, of the former Babylon. Through Rome it pleased God to subdue the world and to pacify it far and wide by bringing it into a single fellowship of commonwealth and laws. For by then there were strong and vigorous peoples and nations trained in arms, who would not easily yield. They had to be overcome at great risk, with no small devastation on both sides and with dreadful toil. When the kingdom of the Assyrians subjugated almost all of Asia, this was done by warfare, but it could be done without very harsh and difficult

23 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.767.

wars. The nations were still unskilled at resistance, and they were neither so many nor so great. That greatest, universal flood, when only eight people escaped in Noah's ark, had happened not much more than a thousand years before Ninus subjugated all of Asia except India. Rome, however, did not subdue so quickly or easily the many nations of East and West that we see subject to Roman rule. It grew little by little, and wherever it expanded it found them strong and warlike. At the time when Rome was founded, then, the people of Israel had been in the promised land for seven hundred and eighteen years. Of these, twenty-seven belong to Joshua son of Nun, and then three hundred and twenty-nine to the period of the judges. Since kings had begun to reign there, three hundred and sixty-two years had passed. At that time the king in Judah was named Ahaz, or, as others reckon, it was his successor Hezekiah. It is agreed that Hezekiah, an excellent and most devout king, reigned in the time of Romulus. In the part of the Hebrew people called Israel, Hoshea had begun to reign.

THE ERYTHRAEAN SIBYL, WHO IS KNOWN AMONG THE OTHER SIBYLS FOR HAVING SUNG MANY THINGS CLEARLY ABOUT CHRIST

The Erythraean Sibyl's acrostic spells "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" and forms the fish sign.

18.23 Some say that the Erythraean Sibyl prophesied at this same time. Varro, however, reports that there were several Sibyls, not one. This Erythraean Sibyl certainly wrote some things clearly about Christ. We first read this in Latin, in poor Latin verses that did not scan, the work of some incompetent translator or other, as we later learned. For the distinguished Flaccianus, who was also proconsul, a man of most fluent eloquence and great learning, once brought out a Greek manuscript when we were talking about Christ. He said it contained the poems of the Erythraean Sibyl. In one passage he showed us that the letters at the beginnings of the lines were arranged so that these words could be read in them: Ἰησοῦς Χρειστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς σωτήρ [*Iēsous Chreistos*

Theou huios sōtēr], which in Latin is "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."[24] Someone has translated these lines into Latin verses that do scan. The first letters of the lines yield the sense we have mentioned, and they run as follows: "I In sign of judgment the earth will be drenched with sweat. H From heaven will come the King who is to reign through the ages, Σ present in the flesh, that is, to judge the world. O Hence unbeliever and believer alike will see God Y on high with his saints, now at the very end of time. Σ So souls will be present with their flesh, and he himself judges them, X when the world lies untilled amid thick thorns. P Men will cast away their idols and all their treasure too. E Fire will burn up the lands, the sea and the sky, I and, searching, will break down the gates of grim Avernus. Σ But the light of freedom will be given to all the flesh of the saints; T the guilty the eternal flame will burn."[25] "O Uncovering hidden deeds, each will then speak Σ his secrets, and God will open hearts to the light. Θ Then there will be weeping, and all will gnash their teeth. E The sun's radiance is snatched away, and the dance of the stars dies. O The sky will be rolled up, and the moon's brightness will perish. Y He will cast down the hills and raise the valleys from the depths. Y Nothing in human affairs will be lofty or high. I Now the mountains are leveled with the plains, and the blue expanses of the sea, O all things will cease; the earth will be shattered and perish. Σ So springs and rivers alike are scorched by fire. Σ But then the trumpet will send down a mournful sound from the heights Ω of heaven, lamenting wretched crime and manifold toils, T and the earth, gaping open, will reveal the chaos of Tartarus. H And here, before the Lord, kings will stand, every one of them. P From heaven will fall both fire and a river of sulfur."

In these Latin verses, translated from the Greek after a fashion, the sense that emerges when the letters at the beginnings of the lines are joined could not come through where the letter Y

24 The Erythraean Sibyl was a prophetess of Erythrae in Asia Minor; the verses come from the *Sibylline Oracles* (book 8). Flaccianus was proconsul of Africa in AD 393.

25 Avernus, a lake near Cumae, was thought to be an entrance to the underworld.

[upsilon] stands in the Greek. No Latin words could be found that begin with that letter and fit the meaning. There are three such lines: the fifth, the eighteenth and the nineteenth. So if, in joining the letters at the beginnings of all the lines, we do not read the letters written at the head of these three, but recall instead the letter Y, as if it stood in those places, five words come out: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior"—but only when this is said in Greek, not in Latin. And there are twenty-seven lines, a number that is the square of three made solid—three cubed. For three taken three times makes nine. If nine itself is taken three times, so that the figure rises from breadth into height, it comes to twenty-seven. Now join the first letters of these five Greek words, Ἰησοῦς Χρειστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς σωτήρ, which in Latin is "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." You will get ἰχθύς [*ichthys*], that is, "fish." In this name Christ is understood in a mystical sense, because in the abyss of this mortality, as in the depths of the waters, he was able to stay alive, that is, to be without sin.

This Sibyl may be the Erythraean or, as some rather believe, the Cumaean. Either way, in her entire poem, of which this is a tiny part, she has nothing that relates to the worship of false or man-made gods. On the contrary, she speaks so strongly against them and against their worshipers that she seems to deserve to be counted among those who belong to the city of God. Lactantius also includes in his work certain prophecies of the Sibyl about Christ, though he does not specify which Sibyl. He cited them as several short passages, set down separately. I have thought it best to set them down together, as if they were one long passage. "Afterward," she says, "he will come into the hands of the unbelievers. They will strike God with unholy hands and spit poisonous spittle from polluted mouths, but he will simply offer his holy back to the lashes.[26] "And he will be silent as he receives the blows, so that no one may recognize what Word he is or where he comes from, and so that he may speak to the dead below and be crowned with a crown of thorns. For food they

26 Lactantius (c. AD 250–325) was a Christian rhetorician; the passages come from his *Divine Institutes*, book 4.

gave him gall, and for his thirst vinegar; this is the table of inhospitality they will show him. For you yourself, foolish one, did not understand your God, who was playing with the minds of mortals. Instead you crowned him with thorns and mixed bitter gall for him. The veil of the temple will be torn, and at midday there will be night, exceedingly dark, for three hours. And he will die a death, taking sleep for three days. Then, returning from the dead, he will come to the light, the first to show the beginning of the resurrection to those called back." Lactantius used these Sibylline testimonies piecemeal, at intervals in his argument, as the points he meant to prove seemed to require. We have inserted nothing, but have set them out joined in a single sequence. We have taken care to mark them off only by initial letters, provided the copyists do not neglect to preserve these in the future. Some, indeed, have written that the Erythraean Sibyl lived not in the time of Romulus but in the time of the Trojan War.

THAT THE SEVEN SAGES FLOURISHED IN THE REIGN OF ROMULUS, WHEN THE TEN TRIBES CALLED ISRAEL WERE LED INTO CAPTIVITY BY THE CHALDEANS, AND THAT ROMULUS WAS GIVEN DIVINE HONOR AT HIS DEATH

Thales lives under Romulus, Israel's ten tribes are exiled, and Romulus is deified.

18.24 Thales of Miletus is said to have lived during the reign of this same Romulus. He was one of the seven sages. After the theologian poets, among whom Orpheus was the most renowned of all, these men were called σοφοί [wise men], which in Latin is *sapientes*. About the same time the ten tribes that were called Israel when the people was divided were conquered by the Chaldeans and led captive into their lands. The two tribes that bore the name of Judah, and had Jerusalem as the seat of their kingdom, remained in the land of Judea.[27] When Romulus died,

27 Thales of Miletus (6th century BC) was traditionally counted the first Greek natural philosopher.

the Romans enrolled him among the gods, since he too had vanished from sight. This is very widely known. But by then the practice had so far fallen out of use that Cicero counts it greatly to Romulus's praise that he earned these honors not in rough and unlearned times, when people were easily deceived, but in times already refined and educated—though the subtle and sharp talkativeness of the philosophers had not yet boiled up and sprouted. Afterward it was done again only in the times of the Caesars, and then out of flattery, not error.[28] Later times did not make gods of dead men. Even so, they did not stop worshiping as gods, and treating as gods, those whom the ancients had made gods. They even added images, which the people of old did not have, and so increased the allure of a vain and impious superstition. The unclean demons brought this about in their hearts, deceiving them also through lying oracles. As a result, even the mythical crimes of the gods were shamefully acted out in the games, in homage to these same false divinities, although in a more cultivated age they were no longer being invented. After Romulus, Numa reigned. He believed that city ought to be fortified with a great number of gods, false ones of course. Yet when he died he himself did not earn a place in that same crowd. It was as if he were thought to have packed heaven so tightly with a multitude of divinities that he could find no room there. While he reigned at Rome, and at the beginning of the reign of Manasseh among the Hebrews, the Sibyl of Samos is said to have lived. Manasseh was the impious king by whom the prophet Isaiah is said to have been killed.[29]

28 Cicero makes this point in *On the Republic*, Book 2.

29 A Jewish tradition, preserved in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, held that Isaiah was martyred under King Manasseh.

THE PHILOSOPHERS WHO BECAME FAMOUS WHEN TARQUINIUS PRISCUS REIGNED AT ROME AND ZEDEKIAH AMONG THE HEBREWS, WHEN JERUSALEM WAS TAKEN AND THE TEMPLE DESTROYED

Jerusalem falls to Babylon; the Seven Sages and the first natural philosophers flourish.

18.25 Zedekiah was reigning among the Hebrews, and Tarquinius Priscus, who had succeeded Ancus Marcius, among the Romans, when Jerusalem was overthrown together with the temple Solomon had built, and the Jewish people were led captive into Babylonia. The prophets had rebuked them for their iniquities and impieties and had foretold that these things would come upon them. Jeremiah did so above all, and he even fixed the number of years. At that time Pittacus of Mytilene, another of the seven sages, is said to have lived. Thales, mentioned above, and this Pittacus are joined by five others to make the seven, and Eusebius writes that these five lived at the time when God's people were held captive in Babylonia. They are Solon of Athens, Chilon of Sparta, Periander of Corinth, Cleobulus of Lindos and Bias of Priene. All these men, called the seven sages, became famous after the theologian poets. They excelled other people by a certain praiseworthy way of life, and they summed up a number of moral precepts in brief maxims. As far as written works go, however, they left no monuments to posterity, except that Solon is said to have given certain laws to the Athenians. Thales, though, was a natural philosopher and left books setting out his doctrines. In that time of the Jewish captivity the natural philosophers Anaximander, Anaximenes and Xenophanes also became famous. So did Pythagoras, from whom people began to be called philosophers.[30]

30 Pythagoras was said to have called himself a *philosophos*, a "lover of wisdom," rather than a wise man.

THAT AT THE TIME WHEN THE CAPTIVITY OF THE JEWS ENDED AFTER SEVENTY YEARS, THE ROMANS TOO WERE FREED FROM THE RULE OF KINGS

Cyrus frees the Jews, and Rome expels its kings at about the same time.

18.26 About the same time Cyrus, king of the Persians, who also ruled the Chaldeans and Assyrians, eased the captivity of the Jews somewhat and had fifty thousand of them return to restore the temple. They managed only to lay the first foundations and build the altar. Enemies kept raiding them, so they could make no further progress with the building, and the work was put off until the time of Darius. The events recorded in the book of Judith also took place about this time. The Jews, however, are said not to have accepted that book into the canon of the scriptures. So under Darius, king of the Persians, when the seventy years foretold by the prophet Jeremiah were completed, the captivity was ended and freedom was restored to the Jews. At Rome, Tarquin, the seventh king of the Romans, was then reigning. When he was driven out, the Romans too began to be free of the domination of their kings.[31] Up to this time the people of Israel had prophets. There were many of them, but the canonical writings of only a few are preserved, both among the Jews and among us. When I was closing the previous book, I promised that I would set down something about them in this one, and I see that this must now be done.

31 Judith, the story of a Jewish widow who saves her people by killing the enemy general Holofernes, is not in the Hebrew Bible.

THE TIMES OF THE PROPHETS WHOSE ORACLES ARE CONTAINED IN BOOKS AND WHO SANG MUCH ABOUT THE CALLING OF THE NATIONS WHEN THE ROMAN KINGDOM BEGAN AND THE ASSYRIAN CAME TO AN END

Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jonah and Joel prophesy as Rome begins and Assyria ends.

18.27 So that we can take note of their times, let us go back a little. At the head of the book of the prophet Hosea, who is placed first among the twelve, it is written: "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Amos also writes that he prophesied in the days of King Uzziah, and he adds Jeroboam, king of Israel, who lived in those same days. Isaiah son of Amos, too, names at the head of his book the same four kings Hosea named, and states that he prophesied in their days. His father was either the prophet just mentioned or, as is more generally held, another man of the same name who was not a prophet. Micah also records the same times for his prophecy, after the days of Uzziah. For he names the three kings who follow, whom Hosea also named: Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.[32] These are the prophets who, according to their own writings, prophesied together at the same time. To them are added Jonah, in the reign of the same King Uzziah, and Joel, when Jotham, who succeeded Uzziah, was already reigning. But we were able to find the times of these two prophets only in the chronicles, not in their books, since they say nothing about their own days. These days stretch from Proca, king of the Latins, or from his predecessor Aventinus, to Romulus, who was by then king of the Romans, or even to the beginning of the reign of his successor Numa Pompilius, since Hezekiah, king of Judah, reigned until then. So in those times, when the Assyrian kingdom came to an end and the Roman began, these prophets burst out together like springs of prophecy. Abraham had appeared in

32 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1. In Hebrew, Isaiah's father Amoz and the prophet Amos have different names, but Augustine's Latin Bible spells both "Amos."

the first period of the Assyrian kingdom, and to him were made the clearest promises that all nations would be blessed in his offspring. In the same way, at the beginning of the western Babylon, under whose rule Christ was to come and fulfill those promises, the oracles of the prophets were to be let loose, prophets who not only spoke but also wrote, as testimony to so great an event to come.[33] For prophets had almost never been lacking to the people of Israel from the time they began to have kings, but these prophets served only their own use, not that of the nations. When scripture of a more openly prophetic kind was being composed, which would one day benefit the nations, it was fitting that it should begin when this city was being founded, the city that would rule the nations.

WHAT HOSEA AND AMOS PROPHESIED THAT RELATES TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Hosea foretells the calling of the nations and the third-day resurrection; Amos the rebuilt tent of David.

18.28 The deeper the prophet Hosea speaks, the harder he is to fathom. But something must be taken from him and set down here, as I promised. "And it shall be," he says, "that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they too shall be called children of the living God." The apostles also understood this prophetic testimony as referring to the calling of the people of the nations, which formerly did not belong to God. And because the people of the nations is itself, spiritually, among the children of Abraham, and so is rightly called Israel, the prophet goes on to say: "And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together into one, and they shall appoint for themselves one leadership, and they shall go up from the land." If we tried to explain this any further, we would blunt the savor of the prophetic language.[34] Still, let us

33 Proca and Aventinus were legendary kings of Alba Longa. "The western Babylon" is Augustine's name for Rome.

34 Hosea 1:10–11, applied to the Gentiles in Romans 9:25–26 and 1 Peter 2:10.

recall that cornerstone and the two walls, one from the Jews and the other from the nations. Let the one be recognized under the name "children of Judah," the other under the name "children of Israel," both resting together on their one same leadership and going up from the land. As for those who are Israelites according to the flesh and now refuse to believe in Christ, the same prophet testifies that they will believe later, that is, their descendants will, for these themselves will of course pass by death to their own place. He says: "For many days the children of Israel shall sit without king, without prince, without sacrifice, without altar, without priesthood, without manifestations." Who does not see that this is the state of the Jews now? But let us hear what he adds: "And afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they shall stand in awe of the Lord and of his good gifts in the last days."[35] Nothing is clearer than this prophecy, once we understand that Christ is signified by the name of King David, because, as the apostle says, he was "made from the seed of David according to the flesh." This prophet also foretold that Christ would rise again on the third day, foretelling it as was fitting, with prophetic depth, when he says: "He will heal us after two days; on the third day we shall rise again." It is in keeping with this that the apostle says to us: "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above."[36] Amos too prophesies about such things in this way: "Prepare yourself, Israel, to call upon your God. For see, I am the one who makes the thunder firm and creates the wind, and announces his Christ among men." And in another place he says: "On that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen, and I will rebuild what of it has fallen, and I will raise up what of it was destroyed, and I will rebuild it as in the days of old, so that the rest of humankind may seek me, and all the nations

35 The cornerstone joining two walls alludes to Ephesians 2:14–20. The prophecy is Hosea 3:4–5.
36 Romans 1:3; Hosea 6:2; Colossians 3:1.

over whom my name has been called, says the Lord who does these things."[37]

WHAT ISAIAH FORETOLD ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Isaiah's suffering servant foretells Christ's passion, and the barren woman the Church.

18.29 The prophet Isaiah is not in the book of the Twelve Prophets. These are called minor because their discourses are short compared with those of the prophets called major, who composed long books. Isaiah is one of the major prophets, and I add him to the two just mentioned because he prophesied at the same time. Isaiah, then, along with his denunciations of wickedness, his commands of what is just, and his warnings of the evils to come upon a sinful people, also prophesied far more than the others about Christ and the Church, that is, about the King and the city he founded. Indeed, some have said he should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet. But so that this work may be brought to an end, I will set down here only one passage out of many. Speaking in the person of God the Father, he says: "See, my servant shall understand, and he shall be exalted and greatly glorified.[38] Just as many shall be astonished at you, so your appearance shall be robbed of glory by men, and your glory by men. So many nations shall marvel at him, and kings shall shut their mouths. For those to whom nothing was announced about him shall see, and those who have not heard shall understand. Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We made our announcement before him like an infant, like a root in thirsty ground. He has no form or glory. And we saw him, and he had no form or beauty. His appearance was without honor, falling short of all men. He was a man stricken with a blow, who knew how to bear weakness. Because his face was turned away, he was dishonored and held

37 Amos 4:12–13 and 9:11–12.

38 Jerome called Isaiah an evangelist rather than a prophet. The passage that follows is Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

of no account. He bears our sins and suffers pain for us, and we thought that he was in pain, stricken, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities and weakened for our sins. The discipline that brings us peace was upon him; by his bruises we are healed. All of us have gone astray like sheep; each man has strayed from his way. And the Lord handed him over for our sins, and he, because he was afflicted, did not open his mouth. He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb that is silent before its shearer, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will tell of his generation? For his life shall be taken from the earth. Because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death. And I will give the wicked for his burial, and the rich for his death. For he did no iniquity, and there was no deceit in his mouth. And the Lord wills to cleanse him of his wound. If you give your soul for sin, you shall see a long-lived offspring. And the Lord wills to take his soul away from pain, to show him light and to form understanding, to justify the just one who serves many well. And he himself shall bear their sins. Therefore he shall inherit many and shall divide the spoils of the strong, because his soul was handed over to death, and he was counted among the wicked, and he bore the sins of many, and for their sins he was handed over." This is about Christ. Now let us hear what follows about the Church. "Rejoice," he says, "you barren one, who do not bear; break out and cry aloud, you who are not in labor; for the children of the desolate woman are more than those of her who has a husband.[39] Enlarge the place of your tent and of your curtains. Fix them firmly, do not hold back. Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. Spread out still further to the right and to the left. And your offspring shall inherit the nations, and you shall inhabit the deserted cities. Do not be afraid because you have been put to shame, and do not be dismayed because you have been reproached. For you shall forget your everlasting shame and shall no longer remember the reproach of your widowhood. For the Lord is the one who makes you; the Lord of

39 Isaiah 54:1–5.

Hosts is his name. And he who rescues you, the God of Israel himself, shall be called God of the whole earth," and so on. But let this be enough. Some things in it would need explaining, but I think it is enough to give passages so plain that even our enemies are forced to understand them against their will.

WHAT MICAH, JONAH, AND JOEL PROPHESIED IN AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Micah foretells Bethlehem, Jonah's three days figure the resurrection, and Joel the Spirit's outpouring.

18.30 The prophet Micah, presenting Christ under the figure of a great mountain, says this: "In the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be made manifest, established on the tops of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills. And peoples shall hasten to it, and many nations shall go and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob. He will show us his way, and we will walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples and rebuke mighty nations far away." This prophet also foretells the place where Christ was born: "And you, Bethlehem, house of Ephrathah," he says, "are the least among the thousands of Judah. From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.[40] Therefore he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor gives birth, and the rest of his brothers shall turn back to the children of Israel. And he shall stand and see, and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, and they shall dwell in the honor of the name of the Lord their God. For now he shall be magnified to the ends of the earth." The prophet Jonah, however, prophesied Christ not so much by his words as by something he suffered, and he did so more plainly than if he had proclaimed Christ's death and resurrection aloud. For why was he taken into the belly of the sea monster and given back on the

40 Micah 4:1–3 and 5:2–4.

third day, if not to signify that Christ would return on the third day from the depths of the underworld?

Everything Joel prophesies requires many words of explanation if what concerns Christ and the Church is to come to light. But there is one passage I will not pass over, which the apostles too recalled when the Holy Spirit came down from above upon the assembled believers, as Christ had promised. "And it shall come to pass after this," he says, "that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon my menservants and maidservants I will pour out my spirit in those days."[41]

WHAT IS FOUND FORETOLD IN OBADIAH, NAHUM, AND HABAKKUK ABOUT THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD IN CHRIST

Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk foretell salvation through Christ for the nations.

18.31 Three of the minor prophets, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk, do not state their own times, and the chronicles of Eusebius and Jerome do not show when they prophesied either. Obadiah is indeed placed there with Micah, but not at the point where the dates are noted at which Micah, according to his own writing, is known to have prophesied. I think this happened through the error of people who carelessly copy the work of others. The other two I could not find mentioned in the copies of the chronicles we had. Still, since they are contained in the canon, we should not pass them over either. Obadiah, whose writing is the shortest of all the prophets, speaks against Idumea, that is, against the nation of Esau. Esau was the elder of the twin sons of Isaac, Abraham's grandsons, and he was the one rejected. Now suppose we take Idumea as standing for the nations, by the figure of speech in which the whole is understood from a part. Then we can recognize what refers to Christ

41 Joel 2:28–29, quoted by Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2:17–18.

when he says, among other things: "But on Mount Zion there shall be salvation, and there shall be what is holy." A little later, at the end of the prophecy, he says: "And those who are saved again shall go up from Mount Zion to defend Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Clearly this was fulfilled when those saved again from Mount Zion went up to defend Mount Esau. These were the believers in Christ from Judea, among whom the apostles are recognized above all. How would they defend it, except by saving, through the preaching of the gospel, those who believed, so that they might be rescued from the power of darkness and brought over into the kingdom of God? This is what he went on to express by adding: "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's."[42] For Mount Zion signifies Judea, where salvation and what is holy, namely Christ Jesus, were foretold to come. Mount Esau is Idumea, which signifies the Church of the nations. As I have explained, those saved again from Mount Zion defended it, so that the kingdom might be the Lord's. This was obscure before it happened. Now that it has happened, what believer would not recognize it?

The prophet Nahum, or rather God through him, says: "I will destroy the carved and molten images; I will make your burial. For see, upon the mountains are the swift feet of one who brings good news and proclaims peace. Celebrate your feast days, Judah, pay your vows; for never again will they go on to pass into oldness. It is finished, it is consumed, it is taken away. He has gone up who breathes into your face, rescuing you from tribulation." Who it was that rose from the underworld and breathed the Holy Spirit into the face of Judah, that is, of the Jewish disciples, anyone who remembers the gospel may recall. For these words belong to the new covenant, whose feast days are so spiritually renewed that they cannot pass into oldness. Furthermore, we now see that through the gospel the carved and molten images, that is, the idols of the false gods, have been destroyed and handed over to oblivion as to a burial. So we

42 Obadiah 17 and 21.

recognize that in this matter too the prophecy has been fulfilled.[43]

About what else but the coming of Christ, which was still to happen, is Habakkuk understood to be speaking when he says: "And the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision plainly on a tablet of boxwood, so that whoever reads it may grasp it. For the vision is still for its appointed time; it will rise at the end, and not in vain. If he delays, wait for him, for he will surely come and will not linger"?[44]

THE PROPHECY CONTAINED IN THE PRAYER AND SONG OF HABAKKUK

Habakkuk's prayer is read line by line as a prophecy of Christ and the Church.

18.32 In his prayer with a song, moreover, to whom but the Lord Christ does he say, "Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid; Lord, I have considered your works, and I was terrified"? What is this but the inexpressible wonder of one who foresaw the new and sudden salvation of humankind? "In the midst of two living creatures you will be known." What is this but either in the midst of the two testaments, or in the midst of the two robbers, or in the midst of Moses and Elijah talking with him on the mountain? "As the years draw near, you will be known; at the coming of the time you will be shown." This needs no explaining. "When my soul is troubled at him, in wrath you will remember mercy." What is this but that he put himself in the place of the Jews, to whose nation he belonged? For when they, troubled with great wrath, crucified Christ, he remembered mercy and said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."[45] "God will come from Teman, and the Holy One from the shady and densely wooded mountain."

43 Nahum 1:14–15 and 2:1 in Augustine's text. The risen Christ breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples in John 20:22.
44 Habakkuk 2:2–3.
45 Habakkuk 3:2. Augustine's Latin follows the Greek Septuagint, which differs considerably from the Hebrew; the last words are Luke 23:34.

Where it says here, "He will come from Teman," others have translated "from the south wind" or "from the southwest wind." This signifies noon, that is, the heat of love and the brilliance of truth. As for the shady and densely wooded mountain, although it can be understood in many ways, I would prefer to take it as the depth of the divine Scriptures, in which Christ was prophesied. For there are many shady and dense places there, to exercise the mind of the one who searches. And he comes from there when the one who understands finds him there. "His power covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise." What is this but what is also said in the psalm: "Be exalted above the heavens, O God, and your glory over all the earth"? "His brightness will be like the light." What is this but that his fame will enlighten believers? "Horns are in his hands." What is this but the trophy of the cross?[46] "And he established the firm love of his strength." This needs no explaining. "The word will go before his face, and will go out into the field behind his feet." What is this but that he was foretold before he came here, and proclaimed after he returned from here? "He stood, and the earth was shaken." What is this but that he stood to bring help, and the earth was shaken into believing? "He looked, and the nations melted away"—that is, he had mercy and made the peoples repent. "The mountains were shattered by violence"—that is, by miracles that acted with force the pride of the haughty was shattered. "The everlasting hills flowed down"—that is, they were humbled for a time, so as to be raised up forever. "I saw his eternal goings in return for labors"—that is, I saw that the labor of love is not without the reward of eternity. "The tents of the Ethiopians will be terrified, and the tents of the land of Midian"—that is, nations suddenly struck with terror at the news of your wonders, even those that are not under Roman law, will be among the Christian people. "Were you angry at the rivers, Lord, or was your fury against the rivers, or your onslaught against the sea?" This is said because he does not come now to judge the world, but so that the world may be saved through

46 Psalm 56:6 (57:5 in most English Bibles).

him. "For you will mount your horses, and your riding is salvation"—that is, your evangelists, who are guided by you, will carry you, and your gospel will be salvation for those who believe in you. "Bending, you will bend your bow against scepters, says the Lord"—that is, you will threaten even the kings of the earth with your judgment. "The earth will be split by rivers"—that is, by the inflowing words of those who preach you, human hearts will be opened to confession, the hearts to which it was said, "Tear your hearts and not your garments." What is "The peoples will see you and grieve," but that by mourning they may be blessed? What is "Scattering waters as you go," but that, walking in those who proclaim you everywhere, you scatter the streams of teaching this way and that? What is "The abyss gave forth its voice," but that the depth of the human heart expressed what appeared to it? "The depth of its imagination" is, as it were, an explanation of the previous line, for the abyss is a depth. And where he says "of its imagination," we should understand "it gave forth its voice"—that is, as we said, it expressed what appeared to it. For an imagination is a vision, which it did not hold back or conceal, but poured out in confession.[47] "The sun was lifted up, and the moon stood in its order"—that is, Christ ascended into heaven, and the Church was set in order under its king. "Your darts will go into the light"—that is, your words will be sent out not in secret but in the open. "Into the brightness of the flashing of your weapons"—we should understand "your darts will go." For he had said to his own, "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light." "In threatening you will diminish the earth"—that is, by threatening you will humble human beings. "And in fury you will cast down the nations"—because by punishing them you will crush those who exalt themselves. "You went out for the salvation of your people, to save your anointed ones; you sent death upon the heads of the wicked." None of this needs explaining. "You raised up bonds as far as the neck." Here too good bonds can be understood, the bonds of wisdom, so that the feet may be put into its fetters and

47 Joel 2:13.

the neck into its collar.[48] "You cut them off in amazement of mind." We understand "bonds": for he raised up the good bonds and cut off the bad, of which it is said to him, "You have broken my bonds"—and this "in amazement of mind," that is, wondrously. "The heads of the mighty will be moved in it"—in that amazement, of course. "They will open their jaws like a poor man eating in secret." For some powerful men among the Jews came to the Lord, marveling at his deeds and words, and, being hungry, they ate the bread of his teaching in secret for fear of the Jews, as the gospel has revealed. "And you sent your horses into the sea, troubling many waters"—which are nothing other than many peoples. For some would not have been converted through fear, and others would not have persecuted through fury, unless all had been troubled. "I watched, and my belly trembled at the voice of the prayer of my lips; and trembling entered into my bones, and my whole being was troubled beneath me."[49] He turned his attention to what he was saying, and was terrified by his own prayer, which he was pouring out prophetically and in which he saw things to come. For when the many peoples were troubled, he saw the tribulations that threatened the Church. And at once he recognized himself as a member of it and said, "I will rest in the day of tribulation," as one belonging to those who are "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." "That I may go up," he says, "to the people of my pilgrimage"—withdrawing, of course, from the wicked people of his kin according to the flesh, who were not pilgrims in this land and did not seek the heavenly homeland. "For the fig tree will not bear fruit," he says, "and there will be no yield in the vines; the work of the olive will fail, and the fields will produce no food. The sheep have failed for lack of food, and no oxen are left in the stalls."[50] He saw that the nation which was going to kill Christ would lose its abundance of spiritual riches, which, in the prophetic manner, he represented by the fertility of the earth.

48 Matthew 10:27. The bonds of wisdom allude to Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 6:24.
49 Psalm 115:16 (116:16 in most English Bibles).
50 Romans 12:12.

And because that nation suffered such wrath of God precisely because, being ignorant of God's righteousness, it wanted to establish its own, he at once says: "But I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in God my Savior. The Lord my God is my strength; he will set my feet firm to the end; he will set me upon the heights, so that I may conquer in his song." That song, of course, about which some similar things are said in the psalm: "He set my feet upon a rock and directed my steps, and he put a new song in my mouth, a hymn to our God." So the one who conquers in the Lord's song is the one who takes pleasure in God's praise, not his own, so that "whoever glories should glory in the Lord."[51] Some manuscripts, however, seem to me to have a better reading—"I will rejoice in God my Jesus"—than those whose translators, wanting to put it into Latin, did not give the name itself, which for us is dearer and sweeter to speak.[52]

WHAT JEREMIAH AND ZEPHANIAH FORETOLD BY THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CALLING OF THE NATIONS

Jeremiah and Zephaniah foretell Christ, the new covenant and the calling of the nations.

18.33 The prophet Jeremiah is one of the major prophets, like Isaiah, not one of the minor ones, like the others from whose writings I have already set down several passages. He prophesied while Josiah reigned in Jerusalem and Ancus Marcius among the Romans, when the captivity of the Jews was already drawing near. And he continued his prophecy up to the fifth month of the captivity, as we find in his writings. Zephaniah, one of the minor prophets, is paired with him. For he too says that he prophesied in the days of Josiah, but he does not say until when. So Jeremiah prophesied not only in the time of Ancus Marcius but also in that of Tarquinius Priscus, whom the

51 Psalm 39:3–4 (40:2–3 in most English Bibles); the last words are 1 Corinthians 1:31.

52 The name Jesus means "savior" or "salvation" in Hebrew, so most Latin versions rendered it as "my Savior."

Romans had as their fifth king; for he had already begun to reign when that captivity took place. Prophesying of Christ, then, Jeremiah says: "The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord, was taken in our sins," thus briefly showing both that Christ is our Lord and that he suffered for us.[53] Again, in another place: "This is my God," he says, "and no other will be reckoned beside him. He found every way of understanding and gave it to Jacob his servant and to Israel his beloved. Afterward he was seen on earth and lived among human beings." Some attribute this testimony not to Jeremiah but to his scribe, who was called Baruch; but it is more widely held to be Jeremiah's. Again the same prophet says of him: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and a king will reign and will be wise and will execute judgment and justice on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell in confidence; and this is the name by which they will call him: the Lord our Righteous One."[54] Of the calling of the nations, too, which was to come and which we now see fulfilled, he spoke thus: "O Lord my God, my refuge in the day of evils, to you the nations will come from the end of the earth and say, 'Truly our fathers worshiped lying images, and there is no profit in them.'" And because the Jews, by whom he also had to be killed, were not going to recognize him, the same prophet indicates it thus: "The heart is heavy in all things, and he is a man, and who recognizes him?" His too is the passage I set down in the seventeenth book about the new covenant, whose mediator is Christ. For Jeremiah himself says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will accomplish a new covenant for the house of Jacob," and the rest that is read there.[55]

From the prophet Zephaniah, who prophesied alongside Jeremiah, I will for the present set down these predictions about Christ: "Wait for me, says the Lord, on the day of my resurrec-

53 Lamentations 4:20, traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah. Ancus Marcius and Tarquinius Priscus were the legendary fourth and fifth kings of Rome.
54 Baruch 3:35–37 and Jeremiah 23:5–6; Baruch was Jeremiah's secretary, to whom the Book of Baruch is attributed.
55 Jeremiah 16:19, 17:9 and 31:31.

tion in the future; for my judgment is to gather the nations and assemble the kingdoms." And again: "The Lord will be terrible against them," he says, "and he will destroy all the gods of the earth, and each man will worship him from his own place, all the islands of the nations." And a little later: "Then," he says, "I will turn a tongue toward the peoples and their offspring, so that all may call on the name of the Lord and serve him under one yoke; from the ends of the rivers of Ethiopia they will bring me sacrifices.[56] On that day you will be put to shame for all your devices, which you wickedly carried out against me; for then I will take away from you the perversities of your wrongdoing, and you will no longer go on exalting yourself upon my holy mountain. And I will leave in you a meek and humble people; and those who are left of Israel will stand in awe of the name of the Lord." These are the remnant of which it is prophesied elsewhere, as the apostle also recalls: "Though the number of the children of Israel be like the sand of the sea, a remnant will be saved." For these are the remnant of that nation who believed in Christ.[57]

THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL AND EZEKIEL, WHICH AGREES IN POINTING TO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Daniel foresees the Son of Man's eternal kingdom; Ezekiel foresees one shepherd, David.

18.34 Earlier, during the Babylonian captivity itself, Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied—two more, that is, of the major prophets. Of these, Daniel even fixed by a number of years the time when Christ was to come and to suffer; it would take long to show this by calculation, and it has often been done by others before us. Of his power and of the Church he spoke thus: "I was watching," he says, "in a vision of the night, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming; and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him were

56 Zephaniah 3:8, 2:11 and 3:9–12.
57 Isaiah 10:22, quoted by Paul in Romans 9:27.

given dominion and honor and the kingdom, and all peoples, tribes and tongues will serve him. His power is an everlasting power, which will not pass away, and his kingdom will not be destroyed."[58]

Ezekiel too, signifying Christ by David in the prophetic manner, because he took flesh from the seed of David (and because of this form of a servant, in which he became man, the same Son of God is also called the servant of God), foretells him thus in prophecy, speaking in the person of God the Father: "And I will raise up over my flocks one shepherd to feed them, my servant David; he will feed them and he will be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken." And in another place: "And one king," he says, "will rule over all; and there will no longer be two nations, nor will they be divided any more into two kingdoms; nor will they defile themselves any more with their idols and abominations and all their iniquities.[59] "And I will save them from all their dwelling places in which they sinned, and I will cleanse them; and they will be my people, and I will be their God; and my servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for them all."

THE PROPHECY OF THREE PROPHETS, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi foretell Christ's coming, the new sacrifice and the judgment.

18.35 There remain three minor prophets who prophesied at the end of the captivity: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Of these, Haggai prophesies Christ and the Church quite plainly in this brief passage: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet one little while, and I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, and I will move all nations, and the one desired by all nations will

58 Daniel 7:13–14. The reckoning of years refers to the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24–27.
59 Ezekiel 34:23–24 and 37:22–24.

come." This prophecy we see already partly fulfilled; in part it is hoped to be fulfilled at the end. For he moved heaven by the testimony of angels and stars when Christ became incarnate; he moved the earth by the immense miracle of the virgin birth itself; he moved the sea and the dry land when Christ is proclaimed both in the islands and in the whole world. So we see all nations moved to faith. But what follows, "and the one desired by all nations will come," is awaited at his last coming. For in order to be desired by those who wait for him, he first had to be loved by those who believe.[60]

Zechariah, of Christ and the Church: "Rejoice greatly," he says, "daughter of Zion; shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king comes to you, just and a savior; he is poor and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey; and his power is from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth." When this was done—when the Lord Christ on a journey made use of an animal of this kind—is read in the gospel, where this prophecy too is recalled in part, as much as seemed sufficient for that passage. In another place, speaking in the spirit of prophecy to Christ himself about the forgiveness of sins through his blood, he says: "You also, by the blood of your covenant, have sent your prisoners out of the pit in which there is no water." What he wants to be understood by this pit may be interpreted in different ways, even in keeping with right faith.[61] To me, however, it seems that nothing is better signified by it than the depth of human misery, dry, as it were, and barren, where there are no streams of righteousness but only the mire of iniquity. For of this it is also said in the psalm: "And he brought me up out of the pit of misery and out of the miry clay."[62]

Malachi, prophesying the Church that we see spread abroad through Christ, says most plainly to the Jews, speaking in the person of God: "I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its

60 Haggai 2:6–7.
61 Zechariah 9:9–11; the gospel passage is Matthew 21:1–11.
62 Psalm 39:3 (40:2 in most English Bibles).

setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place sacrifice will be made and a pure offering will be offered to my name; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord." We now see this sacrifice being offered to God in every place, from the rising of the sun to its setting, through the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. And they cannot deny that the sacrifice of the Jews, to whom it was said, "I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept an offering from your hands," has ceased. Why then do they still await another Christ, when what they read as prophesied and see fulfilled could not have been fulfilled except through him?[63] For a little later he says of him, in the person of God: "My covenant of life and peace was with him, and I granted him to fear me with fear and to stand in awe before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth; guiding in peace, he walked with me and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of the priest will guard knowledge, and they will seek the law from his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord Almighty." Nor should it surprise us that Christ Jesus is called the angel of the Lord Almighty. For just as he is called a servant because of the form of a servant in which he came to human beings, so he is called an angel because of the gospel he announced to human beings. For if we translate these Greek words, "gospel" means "good news" and "angel" means "messenger."[64] For again he says of him: "Behold, I will send my angel, and he will survey the way before my face; and suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his temple, and the angel of the covenant whom you desire. Behold, he comes, says the Lord Almighty; and who will endure the day of his entrance? Or who will stand against his gaze?" In this passage he foretold both the first and the second coming of Christ. The first, of course, where he says, "And suddenly he will come to his temple," that is, into his flesh, of which he said in the gospel, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The second, where he says, "Behold, he comes, says the Lord Almighty; and who

63 Malachi 1:10–11.

64 Malachi 2:5–7. Greek *euangelion* means "good news" and *angelos* "messenger."

will endure the day of his entrance? Or who will stand against his gaze?"[65] And when he said, "the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the covenant whom you desire," he certainly indicated that the Jews too, according to the Scriptures they read, seek and desire Christ. But many of them did not recognize that the one they sought and desired had come, for they were blinded in their hearts by their own previous deserts. As for what he here calls the covenant—whether above, where he says, "My covenant was with him," or here, where he called him the angel of the covenant—we must without doubt understand the new covenant, in which eternal things are promised, not the old, in which temporal things are promised. Very many weak people regard these temporal things as something great and serve the true God for the reward of such things; and so, when they see the wicked abounding in them, they are disturbed. That is why the same prophet, in order to distinguish the eternal happiness of the new covenant, which will be given only to the good, from the earthly happiness of the old, which is often given to the wicked as well, says: "You have made your words heavy against me, says the Lord, and you said, 'In what have we spoken against you?' You said, 'Everyone who serves God is a fool; and what more have we gained because we kept his observances, and because we walked as suppliants before the face of the Lord Almighty? And now we call strangers happy, and all who do wicked things are built up again; they opposed God and were saved.' These were the complaints of those who feared the Lord, each to his neighbor; and the Lord took notice and heard, and he wrote a book of remembrance in his presence for those who fear the Lord and revere his name." By this book the new covenant is signified.[66] Finally, let us hear what follows: "And they will be mine, says the Lord Almighty, as a possession on the day that I am making; and I will choose them as a man chooses his son who serves him. And you will turn and see the difference between the just and the unjust, between the one who serves

65 Malachi 3:1–2; John 2:19.
66 Malachi 3:13–16.

God and the one who does not serve him. For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, and it will consume them; and all the foreigners and all who do wickedness will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty, and neither root nor branch of them will be left. And for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness will rise, with healing in its wings; and you will go out and leap for joy like calves let loose from their bonds. And you will trample the wicked, and they will be ashes under your feet on the day that I am making, says the Lord Almighty."[67] This is what is called the day of judgment, of which, God willing, we shall speak more fully in its proper place.[68]

ESDRAS AND THE BOOKS OF THE MACCABEES

Ezra's story of truth's victory points to Christ; the Maccabees are accepted by the Church.

18.36 After these three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Ezra also wrote during the same period of the people's release from bondage in Babylon. He has been regarded more as a writer of history than as a prophet. The same is true of the book called Esther, whose story, told to the praise of God, is found to belong not far from these times. Unless, perhaps, Ezra is to be understood as having prophesied Christ in the following passage. A question arose among certain young men as to what had the greatest power in the world. One said kings, another wine, and a third women, who often command kings. Yet this same third man then showed that truth is victorious over all. And when we consult the Gospel, we learn that Christ is the truth.[69] From this time, after the temple had been restored, the Jews had not kings but rulers, down to Aristobulus. The reckoning of their dates is found not in the holy scriptures called canonical but in

67 Malachi 3:17–4:3.
68 Augustine treats the Last Judgment in Book 20.
69 The contest of the three young men is told in the apocryphal book 1 Esdras (3 Esdras in the Latin Bible), chapters 3–4; compare John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

other writings. Among these are the books of the Maccabees, which the Church, though not the Jews, holds as canonical. It does so because of the intense and wonderful sufferings of certain martyrs who, before Christ had come in the flesh, fought to the death for the law of God and endured the most grievous and horrible evils.[70]

THAT THE AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHETS IS FOUND TO BE OLDER THAN ANY ORIGIN OF PAGAN PHILOSOPHY

The Hebrew prophets, and Moses above all, are older than the Greek philosophers.

18.37 So it was in the time of our prophets, whose writings have now come to the knowledge of nearly all nations, and much more after them, that there were philosophers among the nations who were actually called by that name. The name began with Pythagoras of Samos, who began to be prominent and well known at the time when the captivity of the Jews came to an end. All the more, then, are the other philosophers found to have lived after the prophets. For Socrates of Athens himself, the teacher of all who were most famous at that time, who holds first place in the branch of philosophy called moral or practical, is placed after Ezra in the chronicles. Not long after him Plato too was born, who far surpassed the other disciples of Socrates. To these we may also add the earlier thinkers, who were not yet called philosophers: the Seven Sages, and then the natural philosophers who succeeded Thales and imitated his zeal in investigating the nature of things, such as Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras and several others, before Pythagoras first professed himself a philosopher. Even so, not even they precede all our prophets in antiquity. For Thales, after whom the others came, is said to have flourished in the reign of Romulus, when the river of prophecy burst forth from the springs of Israel in those writings that were to flow over the whole world. Only the

70 Aristobulus I, of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty, was the first of these rulers to take the title of king, in 104 BC.

theological poets, then—Orpheus, Linus, Musaeus and any others there were among the Greeks—are found to be earlier in years than those Hebrew prophets whose writings we hold as authoritative. But not even they came before our true theologian Moses, who truthfully proclaimed the one true God and whose writings now stand first in the canon of authority. And so, as far as the Greeks are concerned—in whose language the literature of this world flourished most—they have nothing on which to pride themselves for their wisdom, as if it might seem, if not superior to our religion, where true wisdom is, at least older. It must be admitted, however, that among foreign peoples, though not in Greece—in Egypt, for example—there had already been before Moses some learning which could be called their wisdom. Otherwise it would not have been written in the holy books that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. That was, of course, when he was born there and, adopted and raised by Pharaoh's daughter, was also given a liberal education.[71] But not even the wisdom of the Egyptians could precede the wisdom of our prophets in time, since Abraham too was a prophet. And what wisdom could there have been in Egypt before Isis gave them letters—Isis, whom they thought, after her death, should be worshiped as a great goddess? Isis, moreover, is reported to have been the daughter of Inachus, who was the first to reign over the Argives, at a time when Abraham's grandsons are found to have already been born.

THAT THE CHURCH'S CANON DID NOT ACCEPT CERTAIN WRITINGS OF HOLY MEN BECAUSE OF THEIR EXCESSIVE ANTIQUITY, SO THAT FALSE THINGS MIGHT NOT BE SLIPPED IN AMONG THE TRUE UNDER COVER OF THEM

Writings ascribed to Noah and Enoch are excluded from the canon as doubtful.

18.38 Now if I go back to far more ancient times, even before that great flood there was, of course, our patriarch Noah, whom I

71 Acts 7:22.

might with good reason also call a prophet, since the very ark he built, in which he escaped with his family, was a prophecy of our times. What of Enoch, the seventh from Adam? Is he not also said, in the canonical letter of the apostle Jude, to have prophesied? Their writings have no authority among the Jews or among us because of their excessive antiquity, which made it seem that they should be held suspect, for fear that false things might be put forward as true. For certain writings are indeed put forward, said to be theirs, by people who indiscriminately believe whatever they like according to their own taste. But the purity of the canon did not admit them—not because the authority of those men who pleased God is rejected, but because these writings are not believed to be theirs.[72] Nor should it seem surprising that writings put forward under the name of such great antiquity are held suspect. For in the very history of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel, which contains the events we believe on the authority of that same canonical scripture, a great many things are mentioned which are not explained there and are said to be found in other books written by prophets; and in some places the names of those prophets are given too. Yet these books are not found in the canon that the people of God received. The reason for this, I confess, escapes me. I can only suppose that even those to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the things that ought to carry religious authority could write some things as men, with a historian's diligence, and others as prophets, by divine inspiration. These two kinds were kept so distinct that the former were judged to be attributed to the writers themselves, the latter to God speaking through them. Thus the former served the abundance of knowledge, the latter the authority of religion; and it is by that authority that the canon is safeguarded. Outside the canon, if any writings are now put forward even under the name of true prophets, they are of no value even for the store of knowledge, since it is uncertain whether they belong to those to whom they are ascribed. For this reason they are not trusted—especially those in which we read things that

72 Jude 14–15, which quotes the apocryphal Book of Enoch.

even go against the trustworthiness of the canonical books, which makes it plain that they are not theirs at all.

THE HEBREW LETTERS, WHICH ALWAYS EXISTED WITH THE PROPER CHARACTER OF THEIR LANGUAGE

Hebrew writing is ancient; Egyptian learning came after the patriarchs.

18.39 We should not believe, then, as some suppose, that only the Hebrew language was preserved through the man called Eber, from whom the name "Hebrews" comes, and passed from him to Abraham, while Hebrew letters began only with the law given through Moses. Rather, that language was kept, along with its letters, through that succession of fathers. In fact, Moses appointed men among the people to be in charge of teaching letters before they knew any letters of the divine law. Scripture calls these men γραμματοεισαγωγούς [introducers of letters], which in Latin can be rendered *litterarum inductores* or *introductores*—those who lead letters in, or introduce them—because in a way they lead letters into the hearts of learners, that is, introduce them, or rather lead those they teach into the letters.[73] Let no nation, then, vainly boast that the antiquity of its wisdom surpasses our patriarchs and prophets, in whom there was divine wisdom. For not even Egypt, which is accustomed to glory falsely and idly in the antiquity of its learning, is found to have preceded the wisdom of our patriarchs in time with any wisdom of its own. No one will dare to say that the Egyptians were highly skilled in wonderful sciences before they knew letters, that is, before Isis came there and taught them. And that celebrated learning of theirs, which was called wisdom—what was it but chiefly astronomy and any other such disciplines, which usually serve more to exercise the intellect than to illuminate minds with true wisdom? As for philosophy, which professes to teach something by which people may become happy, studies of that kind became famous in those lands around the

73 The Greek term occurs in the Septuagint, e.g., Deuteronomy 1:15.

time of Mercury, whom they called Trismegistus. That was long before the sages or philosophers of Greece, indeed, but still after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—and evidently even after Moses himself. For at the time Moses was born, there is found to have lived Atlas, that great astronomer, brother of Prometheus and maternal grandfather of the elder Mercury, whose grandson was this Mercury Trismegistus.[74]

THE UTTERLY LYING VANITY OF THE EGYPTIANS, WHO ASCRIBE A HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS TO THE ANTIQUITY OF THEIR LEARNING

Egypt's claim to a hundred thousand years of learning is a laughable falsehood.

18.40 So some people chatter in vain, with the emptiest presumption, when they say that more than a hundred thousand years have passed since Egypt grasped the reckoning of the stars. From what books did they gather this number, when they learned letters, with Isis as their teacher, not much more than two thousand years ago? For Varro, who reported this, is no small authority in history, and what he says does not conflict with the truth of the divine writings either. Since not yet six thousand years have been completed from the first man, who was called Adam, how should those people not be laughed at rather than refuted who try to convince us of something so different about the span of time and so contrary to this established truth? For whom do we better believe when he tells of the past than one who also foretold the future, which we now see present? Indeed, the very disagreement of historians among themselves gives us good reason to believe instead the one who does not contradict the divine history we hold. But the citizens of the ungodly city, scattered everywhere over the earth, read the most learned men, none of whose authority seems negligible, disagreeing among themselves about events very remote

74 Hermes (Mercury) Trismegistus, "thrice-greatest," was a legendary Egyptian sage to whom a body of philosophical and religious writings was ascribed.

from the memory of our age, and they cannot find whom they ought rather to believe. We, on the other hand, supported by divine authority in the history of our religion, do not doubt that whatever opposes it is utterly false, however the rest may stand in secular literature. Whether that is true or false, it contributes nothing of importance to our living rightly and happily.

THE DISAGREEMENTS OF PHILOSOPHICAL OPINIONS AND THE HARMONY OF THE CANONICAL SCRIPTURES IN THE CHURCH

Philosophers contradict one another freely, while the canonical authors agree.

18.41 But to leave historical knowledge aside now: the philosophers themselves, from whom we moved on to these matters, seem to have labored in their studies for no other purpose than to find out how one should live so as to attain happiness. Why, then, did they disagree—disciples with their masters, and fellow disciples among themselves—if not because, as men, they sought these things with human senses and human reasoning? There may also have been a desire for glory in this, by which each wishes to seem wiser and sharper than another, not bound, so to speak, to someone else's view, but the inventor of his own doctrine and opinion. Still, let me grant that some, or even most of them, were torn away from their teachers or fellow students by the love of truth, so as to fight for what they thought was the truth, whether it was or not. What does human unhappiness accomplish, where does it reach out to, or by what way, in order to attain happiness, if divine authority does not lead it? Our authors, by contrast—in whom the canon of sacred scripture is, not without reason, fixed and closed—far be it from them to disagree among themselves in any respect. Hence it is not without reason that people have believed that, when they wrote those things, God spoke to them or through them. And those who believed were not a few chatterers in schools and gymnasia engaged in contentious debates, but so many great peoples, learned and unlearned alike, in the countryside and in cities.

These authors, of course, had to be few, so that what ought to be precious in religion should not become cheap through numbers; yet not so few that their agreement is not cause for wonder. For among the multitude of philosophers who have left records of their doctrines through literary labor as well, one would not easily find any who agree in everything they thought—but to show this would take too long in this work.

And what founder of any school has been approved in this demon-worshiping city in such a way that the others, who held different and opposing views, were disapproved? Did not the Epicureans flourish at Athens, asserting that human affairs are no concern of the gods, and the Stoics too, who held the contrary and argued that human affairs are governed and protected by the gods as helpers and guardians? So I wonder why Anaxagoras was put on trial for saying that the sun is a burning stone—thereby, of course, denying that it is a god—when in the same city Epicurus flourished in glory and lived in safety. Yet he not only did not believe that the sun or any star was a god, but maintained that neither Jupiter nor any of the gods at all dwells in the world, for human prayers and supplications to reach.[75] Was it not there that Aristippus, who placed the supreme good in bodily pleasure, and Antisthenes, who asserted instead that a person becomes happy through the virtue of the mind—two famous philosophers, both followers of Socrates—set the sum of life in ends so different and so contrary to each other? The former said that the wise man should shun public life, the latter that he should take part in governing the commonwealth. And did not each of them gather disciples to follow his own school?[76] Indeed, openly, in the conspicuous and very famous Porch, in gymnasia, in gardens, in public and private places, they fought in crowds, each for his own opinion. Some asserted that there is one world, others that there are countless worlds. Of this one

75 Anaxagoras (5th century BC) was prosecuted for impiety at Athens; Epicurus (341–270 BC) taught that the gods live apart from the world and take no part in it.
76 Aristippus of Cyrene founded the hedonist Cyrenaic school; Antisthenes was regarded as the forerunner of the Cynics.

world, some said that it had come into being, others that it had no beginning; some that it would perish, others that it would last forever; some that it was governed by a divine mind, others by chance and accident. Some said that souls are immortal, others that they are mortal. Of those who held them immortal, some said that they pass back into animals, others that they by no means do; of those who held them mortal, some said that they perish soon after the body, others that they live on afterward for a little while or a longer time, yet not forever. Some set the end of good in the body, others in the mind, others in both, others added external goods as well to mind and body. Some thought that the bodily senses should always be trusted, others not always, others never.[77] What people, what senate, what public authority or office of the ungodly city ever took care to judge these and almost countless other disagreements of philosophers, approving and accepting some, disapproving and rejecting others? Did it not rather hold in its bosom, indiscriminately, without any judgment and in confusion, all these controversies of men at odds with one another—not over fields and houses or any matter of money, but over the things that make one's life either miserable or happy? There, even if some true things were said, false things were said with the same license, so that it is not without reason that such a city received the mystical name of Babylon. For Babylon means "confusion," as I recall we have already said. Nor does it matter to the devil, its king, how much they quarrel among themselves with contrary errors, since he possesses them all alike, as they deserve for their many and varied impieties.

But that nation, that people, that city, that commonwealth, those Israelites to whom the words of God were entrusted, in no way confused false prophets with true prophets by granting them equal license. Rather, they recognized and held as the truthful authors of the sacred writings those who were in harmony among themselves and disagreed on no point. These were

77 The Porch is the Painted Stoa at Athens, from which the Stoics took their name; the gardens recall the Garden where Epicurus taught.

their philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom; these were their sages, their theologians, their prophets, their teachers of uprightness and piety. Whoever was wise and lived according to them was wise and lived not according to men but according to God, who spoke through them. If sacrilege was forbidden there, God forbade it. If it was said, "Honor your father and your mother," God commanded it. If it was said, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal," and other things of this kind, it was not human mouths but divine oracles that poured these forth.[78] Certain philosophers, amid the false things they believed, were able to see some truths and labored to persuade others of them through painstaking arguments: that God made this world and himself governs it with the utmost providence; and truths about the honor of the virtues, love of country, loyalty in friendship, good works and everything that pertains to upright conduct—though they did not know to what end and in what way all these things should be referred. All of this was commended to the people in that city by prophetic, that is, divine, voices, though through human beings. It was not drilled in through contentious argument, so that whoever came to know these things should fear to despise not a human intellect but the word of God.

BY WHAT ARRANGEMENT OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE THE SACRED SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW INTO GREEK, SO THAT THEY MIGHT BECOME KNOWN TO THE NATIONS

Ptolemy Philadelphus has the Scriptures translated into Greek by seventy-two scholars.

18.42 One of the Ptolemies, the kings of Egypt, was also eager to know and to have these sacred writings. Alexander of Macedon, who was also surnamed the Great, had wielded a most marvelous but short-lived power, by which he had subdued all Asia

78 The phrase about the words of God echoes Romans 3:2; the commandments are from Exodus 20:12–15.

—indeed nearly the whole world—partly by force of arms, partly by terror, and among other regions of the East he also entered and took Judea. After his death his companions did not divide that vast kingdom among themselves to possess it in peace, but rather tore it apart, set on laying everything waste by wars. Egypt then began to have the Ptolemies as kings. The first of them, the son of Lagus, carried many captives from Judea into Egypt. His successor, another Ptolemy, called Philadelphus, allowed all those whom the former had brought there in subjection to return as free men. In addition, he sent royal gifts to the temple of God and asked Eleazar, then high priest, to give him the scriptures. He had heard them proclaimed by report as divine, and so he had longed to have them in the library he had made most renowned. When the high priest sent them to him in Hebrew, he then asked for translators too; and seventy-two were provided, six men from each of the twelve tribes, highly learned in both languages, Hebrew and Greek. Custom has by now established that their translation is called the Septuagint.[79] It is reported, indeed, that there was so marvelous, astounding and plainly divine an agreement in their words that, although each sat at this work separately (for this was how Ptolemy chose to test their trustworthiness), they did not differ from one another in a single word—not even by using a different word of the same meaning and force—or in the order of the words. Instead, as if there were one translator, what all of them had translated was one and the same, because in truth there was one Spirit in them all. And they had received so marvelous a gift of God so that the authority of those scriptures might be commended in this way as well—not as human writings but, as they truly were, as divine—to benefit the nations that would one day believe. This we now see accomplished.

79 Ptolemy II Philadelphus reigned 283–246 BC; the story of the translation is told in the Letter of Aristeas.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SEVENTY TRANSLATORS, WHICH, WITH DUE RESPECT TO THE HEBREW TEXT, IS TO BE PREFERRED TO ALL OTHER TRANSLATORS

The Septuagint and the Hebrew are both authoritative; the same Spirit spoke through both.

18.43 Other translators have also rendered those sacred words from Hebrew into Greek, such as Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. There is also a translation whose author is unknown, and which is therefore called the Fifth Edition, without a translator's name. Yet the Church has received this one, the Septuagint, as though it were the only one. The Greek Christian peoples use it, and most of them do not know whether any other exists. The Latin translation that the Latin churches hold was also made from this Septuagint translation. In our own time, it is true, there has been the presbyter Jerome, a most learned man and expert in all three languages, who translated these same Scriptures into Latin not from the Greek but from the Hebrew.[80] The Jews admit that his learned labor is accurate, and they contend that the seventy translators went wrong in many places. Even so, the churches of Christ judge that no one should be preferred to the authority of so many men, chosen by Eleazar, then high priest, for so great a task. Suppose a single spirit, undoubtedly divine, had not appeared in them. Suppose instead that the seventy scholars had compared the wording of their translation with one another in the ordinary human way, so that whatever all of them agreed on would stand. Even then, no single translator ought to be placed above them. But since so great a sign of divinity did appear in them, any other accurate translator of those Scriptures from Hebrew into any other language either agrees with those seventy translators or, where he seems not to agree, we must believe that a prophetic depth lies

80 Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion made Greek versions of the Hebrew Scriptures in the 2nd century AD. Jerome's translation from the Hebrew became the core of the later Latin Vulgate.

in that passage. For the Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke those words was the very same Spirit who was in the seventy men when they translated them. By divine authority he could certainly say something different, as though the prophet had said both, since the same Spirit would be saying both. He could also say the same thing differently, so that, even if the words were not the same, the same meaning would still shine through to those who understand rightly. And he could leave something out and add something, so that this too might show that in that work there was not the human servitude that a translator owes to words. Rather, there was a divine power that filled and governed the translator's mind. Some people, however, thought that the Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint translation ought to be corrected from the Hebrew manuscripts. Yet they did not dare to remove what the Septuagint included and the Hebrew lacked. They only added what was found in the Hebrew but was not in the Septuagint. They marked these additions at the beginning of the relevant lines with certain signs shaped like stars, which they call asterisks. What the Hebrew lacks but the Septuagint has, they likewise marked at the beginning of the lines with short horizontal strokes, like those used in writing ounces. Many manuscripts bearing these marks have spread everywhere, Latin ones too. But some passages have not been omitted or added but expressed differently. They may yield a different meaning that is itself not incompatible, or they may be shown to express the same meaning in another way. These cannot be found except by examining both sets of manuscripts.[81] So we should look for nothing in those Scriptures except what the Spirit of God has said through human beings. If we do that, then whatever is in the Hebrew manuscripts and not in the seventy translators, the Spirit of God chose to say not through these men but through those prophets. And whatever is in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew manuscripts, the same

81 This system of critical signs goes back to Origen's edition of the Old Testament in parallel columns, the Hexapla (3rd century AD). The horizontal stroke was called an obelus.

Spirit preferred to say through these men rather than through those, thus showing that both were prophets. In just this way he said some things through Isaiah, others through Jeremiah, and others through one prophet or another. Or he said the same things differently through this one and that one, as he willed. Further, whatever is found in both, the one and the same Spirit willed to say through both. But he did so in such a way that the prophets went first by prophesying, and the translators followed by translating them prophetically. For there was one Spirit of peace in the prophets when they spoke truly and in harmony. In the same way, the same one Spirit appeared in the translators, who did not consult one another and yet translated everything as if with one mouth.

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE DESTRUCTION OF NINEVEH, WHOSE ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE HEBREW EXTENDS OVER FORTY DAYS, BUT IN THE SEPTUAGINT IS CONFINED TO THREE

Jonah's forty days and the Septuagint's three both signify Christ.

18.44 But someone says: "How am I to know what the prophet Jonah said to the Ninevites? Was it 'Three days, and Nineveh will be overthrown,' or 'Forty days'?" For who does not see that the prophet could not have said both at that time? He had been sent to terrify the city with the threat of imminent destruction. If its ruin was to come on the third day, then certainly not on the fortieth, and if on the fortieth, then certainly not on the third. So if I am asked which of these Jonah said, I think it was rather what is read in the Hebrew: "Forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." The seventy, translating much later, could say something different. Yet it still bore on the matter and converged on one and the same meaning, though under a different sign. It would also prompt the reader, while despising neither authority, to rise above the history and seek out the things the history itself was written to signify.[82] Those events really did take place

82 Jonah 3:4. The Hebrew reads "forty days"; the Septuagint reads "three days."

in the city of Nineveh, but they also signified something beyond the scope of that city. In the same way, it really happened that the prophet himself was in the belly of the sea monster for three days. Yet this signified another, the Lord of all the prophets, who would be in the depths of the underworld for three days. So that city may rightly be taken as a prophetic figure of the Church of the nations, overthrown through repentance, so that it was no longer what it had been. This was done through Christ in the Church of the nations, of which that Nineveh was a figure. Therefore it is the very same Christ who is signified, whether by forty days or by three. He is signified by forty because he spent that many days with his disciples after his resurrection and then ascended into heaven. He is signified by three because he rose on the third day. Some readers want to cling to nothing but the history of events. It is as if the seventy translators, who were also prophets, roused such a reader from sleep to search out the depth of the prophecy, and in a way said: "Seek in the forty days the one in whom you may also find the three days. You will find the former in his ascension, the latter in his resurrection." That is why it could be signified most fittingly by either number. One was spoken through the prophet Jonah and the other through the prophecy of the seventy translators, yet both by one and the same Spirit. I avoid going on at length, and so I will not demonstrate this through the many passages in which the seventy translators are thought to differ from the Hebrew truth but, rightly understood, are found to agree. I too, in my small measure, follow in the footsteps of the apostles, who themselves cited prophetic testimonies from both, that is, from the Hebrew and from the Septuagint. So I have thought it right to use both authorities, since both are one and divine. But now let us pursue, as best we can, what remains.

THAT AFTER THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE THE JEWS CEASED TO HAVE PROPHETS AND FROM THEN UNTIL THE BIRTH OF CHRIST WERE AFFLICTED WITH CONTINUAL ADVERSITY, WHICH PROVES THAT THE PROPHETS' WORDS PROMISED THE BUILDING OF ANOTHER TEMPLE

After the return the Jews lose their prophets and suffer one disaster after another until Herod.

18.45 After the Jewish nation ceased to have prophets, it undoubtedly grew worse. This happened at the very time when it hoped to become better, once the temple had been restored after the captivity in Babylon. For that was how that carnal people understood what was foretold through the prophet Haggai, when he said: "The glory of this latter house will be great, greater than that of the first." A little earlier he showed that this was said of the New Testament, where he plainly promises Christ: "And I will move all nations, and the one desired by all nations will come." In this passage the seventy translators, with prophetic authority, gave another sense, one more fitting to the body than to the head, that is, to the Church rather than to Christ: "What is chosen of the Lord will come from all nations." They mean human beings, of whom Jesus himself says in the gospel: "Many are called, but few are chosen."[83] For with such chosen ones from the nations, the house of God is being built out of living stones through the New Testament. It is far more glorious than that temple which was built by King Solomon and restored after the captivity. This is why that nation had no prophets from that time on, and was afflicted with many disasters by foreign kings and by the Romans themselves. It was so that the nation would not suppose that this prophecy of Haggai had been fulfilled in that restoration of the temple.

For not long afterward, when Alexander came, the nation was subjugated. No devastation took place, since they did not dare resist him, and so they submitted and received him, and he was

83 Haggai 2:9 and 2:7; Matthew 22:14.

very easily appeased. Still, the glory of that house was not as great as it had been under the free rule of their own kings. Alexander did indeed offer sacrifices in the temple of God. Yet this was not because he had turned to God's worship in true piety. In his impious vanity he thought God should be worshiped along with false gods. Then, after Alexander's death, Ptolemy son of Lagus carried captives from there to Egypt, as I mentioned above. His successor Ptolemy Philadelphus released them with the greatest kindness. It was through him, as I recounted a little earlier, that we came to have the Scriptures of the seventy translators. After that they were crushed by the wars described in the books of the Maccabees. After this they were captured by Ptolemy, king of Alexandria, who was called Epiphanes. Then Antiochus, king of Syria, forced them by many grievous sufferings to worship idols, and the temple itself was filled with the sacrilegious superstitions of the nations. Yet their most vigorous leader Judas, also called Maccabeus, drove out Antiochus's generals and cleansed the temple of all that defilement of idolatry.[84]

Not long afterward a certain Alcimus became high priest through ambition, though he was not of priestly lineage, which was unlawful. After this came about fifty years in which they had no peace, though they did have some successes. Then Aristobulus became the first among them to assume the diadem and become both king and high priest. Before that, from the time they returned from captivity in Babylon and the temple was restored, they had not kings but leaders or princes. Of course, a king can also be called a prince, from the princely power of commanding, and a leader, because he leads an army. But it does not follow that all princes or leaders can also be called kings, as this Aristobulus was. He was succeeded by Alexander, who was also both king and high priest and is said to have reigned cruelly over his own people.[85] After him his wife Alexandra was queen of the Jews, and from her time on, worse evils

84 Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the temple in 167 BC, and Judas Maccabeus rededicated it in 164 BC.

85 Aristobulus I reigned 104–103 BC; Alexander Jannaeus, 103–76 BC.

followed them. This Alexandra's sons, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, fought each other for power and so provoked Roman forces against the nation of Israel, for Hyrcanus asked the Romans for help against his brother. By then Rome had subjugated Africa and had subjugated Greece. It ruled far and wide over other parts of the world too, and, as if unable to bear its own weight, it had in a sense broken itself by its own greatness. For it had come to serious uprisings at home, then to the wars with its allies, and soon to the civil wars. It had so weakened and worn itself down that a change in the constitution of the commonwealth was imminent, by which it would be ruled by kings.[86] So Pompey, a most illustrious leader of the Roman people, entered Judea with an army and captured the city. He opened up the temple, not with the devotion of a suppliant but by a conqueror's right. He approached the Holy of Holies, which no one but the high priest was permitted to enter, not as a worshiper but as a profaner. He confirmed Hyrcanus in the high priesthood and set Antipater over the subjugated nation as guardian, an office then called procurator. Then he led Aristobulus away with him in chains. From then on the Jews also became tributaries of the Romans. Later Cassius even plundered the temple. Then, after a few years, they deserved to have even a foreigner, Herod, as their king, and in his reign Christ was born. For the fullness of time had now come, as the prophetic Spirit had signified through the mouth of the patriarch Jacob, where he says: "A ruler shall not be lacking from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until he comes for whom it is stored up; and he is the expectation of the nations."[87] So the Jews did not lack a ruler from among the Jews until this Herod, the first foreign king they received. It was therefore now time for the coming of him for whom was stored up what the New Testament promises: that he himself would be the expectation of the nations. We see

86 The "wars with its allies" are the Social War (91–88 BC) between Rome and its Italian allies.

87 Pompey took Jerusalem in 63 BC; Cassius, one of Julius Caesar's assassins, governed Syria in the 50s and 40s BC. The quotation is Genesis 49:10.

the nations expecting him to come and execute judgment in the brightness of power. But they could not expect this unless they had first believed in him when he came to undergo judgment in the humility of patience.

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR, AS THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND THE SCATTERING OF THE JEWS AMONG ALL NATIONS, AS HAD BEEN PROPHESIED

Christ is born under Herod and Augustus; the scattered Jews bear witness to the prophecies.

18.46 So while Herod was reigning in Judea, the constitution of the Roman commonwealth had now changed, Caesar Augustus was emperor, and the world had been brought to peace through him. At that time, as earlier prophecy had foretold, Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judah: a man plainly seen, born of a human virgin; God hidden, born of God the Father. For thus the prophet had foretold: "See, a virgin will conceive in her womb and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel," which is interpreted, "God with us." To commend the God within him, he performed many miracles. The gospel Scripture contains some of them, as many as seemed sufficient for proclaiming him. The first of these is that he was born in so wonderful a way. The last is that he ascended into heaven with his own body, raised from the dead.[88] But the Jews killed him and refused to believe in him, because it was necessary for him to die and rise again. They were then laid waste more wretchedly by the Romans and uprooted completely from their kingdom, where foreigners were already ruling over them. They were scattered throughout the lands, since they are found everywhere. Through their own Scriptures they bear witness for us that we did not invent the prophecies about Christ. Very many of them reflected on these prophecies and believed in him, both before his passion and especially after his resurrection. Of them it was foretold: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of

88 Isaiah 7:14, as quoted in Matthew 1:23.

the sea, a remnant will be saved." The rest were blinded, and of them it was foretold: "Let their table become a snare, a retribution and a stumbling block. Let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see, and bend their backs always." So when they do not believe our Scriptures, their own Scriptures, which they read without seeing, are fulfilled in them.[89] Perhaps someone will say that the Christians invented those prophecies about Christ that are put forward under the name of the Sibyl, or of others, if there are any, who do not belong to the Jewish people. For us, certainly, the prophecies brought forward from the books of our enemies are enough. These enemies bear this testimony for us against their will by having and preserving those books. And we recognize that they themselves have been scattered among all nations for the sake of this testimony, wherever the Church of Christ spreads. For a prophecy about this was given in advance in the Psalms, which they also read, where it is written: "My God, his mercy will go before me. My God has shown me concerning my enemies: do not kill them, lest they ever forget your law; scatter them in your might."[90] So God has shown the Church the grace of his mercy in its enemies the Jews, since, as the apostle says, "their offense is salvation for the nations." And so he has not killed them. That is, he has not destroyed in them the fact that they are Jews, although they were conquered and oppressed by the Romans. Otherwise they might forget the law of God and be of no use for the testimony we are discussing. That is why it was not enough to say, "Do not kill them, lest they ever forget your law," without adding, "Scatter them." For suppose they possessed this testimony of the Scriptures only in their own land, and not everywhere. Then the Church, which is everywhere, certainly could not have them among all nations as witnesses to the prophecies given beforehand about Christ.[91]

89 Isaiah 10:22 (quoted in Romans 9:27) and Psalm 68:23–24 (69:22–23 in most English Bibles).
90 Psalm 58:11–12 (59:10–11 in most English Bibles).
91 Romans 11:11.

WHETHER BEFORE CHRISTIAN TIMES THERE WERE ANY OUTSIDE THE RACE OF ISRAEL WHO BELONGED TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HEAVENLY CITY

Some outside Israel, like Job, belonged to the heavenly city.

18.47 Therefore some foreigner may be read to have prophesied something about Christ: someone not descended from Israel and not received by that people into the canon of sacred writings. If such a person has come or comes to our knowledge, we can mention him as additional support. This is not because he is necessary, for we would lack nothing without him. It is because it is not unfitting to believe that among other nations too there were people to whom this mystery was revealed, and who were moved to foretell these things as well. They may have shared in the same grace. Or they may have lacked it and been taught by evil angels, who, as we know, confessed Christ when he was present, though the Jews did not recognize him. Nor do I think the Jews themselves dare to contend that no one belonged to God except the Israelites, from the time the line of Israel began and his elder brother was rejected.[92] For in truth there was no other people that could properly be called the people of God. But they cannot deny that among other nations too there were certain people who belonged to the true Israelites, citizens of the homeland above, not by an earthly fellowship but by a heavenly one. If they deny it, they are very easily refuted by the case of the holy and wonderful man Job. He was neither a native nor a proselyte, that is, a newcomer to the people of Israel. He traced his descent from the Idumaean nation, and he was born there and died there. The divine word praises him so highly that no one of his times equals him in righteousness and piety. We do not find his times in the Chronicles. Yet we gather from his book, which the Israelites received into canonical authority because of its merit, that he lived three generations after

92 Israel is Jacob; his elder brother was Esau (Genesis 25–27).

Israel.[93] I have no doubt that this was arranged by divine providence. From this one case we might know that there could also be people among other nations who lived according to God and pleased him, and who belonged to the spiritual Jerusalem. We must believe that this was granted to no one unless the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus, was divinely revealed to him. He was foretold to the saints of old as one who would come in the flesh, just as he has been announced to us as having come. So one and the same faith through him may lead to God all who are predestined for the city of God, the house of God, the temple of God. But whatever prophecies of others are brought forward concerning God's grace through Jesus Christ could be thought to have been fabricated by Christians.[94] Some outsiders may argue about this matter. Nothing is more effective for refuting them, and for making them ours if they are wise, than to bring forward the divine predictions about Christ that are written in the books of the Jews. The Jews have been torn from their own homes and scattered over the whole world for the sake of this testimony, and meanwhile the Church of Christ has grown everywhere.

THAT HAGGAI'S PROPHECY, IN WHICH HE SAID THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE WOULD BE GREATER THAN AT FIRST, WAS FULFILLED NOT IN THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE BUT IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Haggai's greater house is the Church built of living stones.

18.48 This house of God has greater glory than the first one had, which was built of wood and stone and other precious materials and metals. So Haggai's prophecy was not fulfilled in the restoration of that temple. For from the time it was restored, it is never shown to have had as much glory as it had in Solomon's time. On the contrary, the glory of that house is shown to have been

93 The "Chronicles" are probably Eusebius's Chronicle in Jerome's Latin version, which Augustine relies on throughout Book 18.

94 "One mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus" quotes 1 Timothy 2:5.

diminished, first by the cessation of prophecy, and then by the great disasters of the nation itself, down to the final destruction carried out by the Romans, as the events recorded above bear witness. But this house, which belongs to the new covenant, has a glory greater by as much as the living stones it is built of, believers who have been renewed, are better. Yet it was signified by the restoration of that temple, because in prophetic language the very renewal of that building signifies the other covenant, the one called new.[95] So when God said through that prophet, "And I will give peace in this place," we must understand by the place that signifies the place that is signified by it. Since the restored place signified the Church that was to be built by Christ, the words "I will give peace in this place" are to be taken to mean nothing other than "I will give peace in the place which this place signifies." For all things that signify seem in some way to take on the role of the things they signify. Thus the apostle said, "The rock was Christ," because the rock of which this was said certainly signified Christ. So the glory of this house of the new covenant is greater than that of the earlier house of the old covenant, and it will appear greater when it is dedicated. For then "the one desired by all nations will come," as we read in the Hebrew. For his first coming was not yet desired by all nations.[96] For they did not know whom they ought to desire, since they had not believed in him. Then too, according to the Septuagint translators (for theirs is also a prophetic sense), "there will come the chosen of the Lord from all nations." For then truly none will come but the chosen, of whom the apostle says, "Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world." For the architect himself, who said, "Many are called, but few are chosen," will reveal the house built not of those who were called and came in such a way that they were thrown out of the banquet, but of the chosen—a house that will fear no collapse ever after. Now, however, when the churches are filled also with those whom the

95 Augustine is interpreting Haggai 2:9: "The glory of this latter house will be greater than that of the former."
96 Haggai 2:9 and 2:7; 1 Corinthians 10:4.

winnowing will separate out, as on a threshing floor, the glory of this house does not appear as great as it will appear then, when whoever is there will be there forever.[97]

THE INDISCRIMINATE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, IN WHICH MANY REPROBATES ARE MIXED WITH THE ELECT IN THIS WORLD

Good and bad are mixed in the Church until the end, like fish in a net.

18.49 In this evil world, then, in these evil days, the Church gains its future exaltation through its present humility. It is trained by the goads of fear, the torments of pain, the hardships of toil, the dangers of temptation, rejoicing in hope alone, when its joy is sound. Here many reprobates are mixed with the good, and both are gathered, as it were, into the net of the gospel. In this world, as in a sea, both swim without distinction, enclosed in the nets, until the shore is reached. There the bad will be separated from the good, and in the good, as in his temple, God will be all in all. So we now recognize the fulfillment of the voice of him who spoke in the psalm and said, "I proclaimed and I spoke; they were multiplied beyond number." This has been happening ever since he proclaimed and spoke, first through the mouth of his forerunner John, then through his own mouth, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."[98] He chose disciples, whom he also named apostles—men of lowly birth, without honor, without learning—so that whatever greatness they had and whatever great things they did, it would be he himself who was and acted in them. He had among them one whose evil he used well, both to fulfill the plan of his passion and to give his Church an example of bearing with the wicked. When the holy gospel had been sown as far as his bodily presence required, he suffered, died, and rose again. By his passion he showed what we ought to endure for the truth, and by his resurrection what we ought to hope for in eternity—to say nothing of the depth of

97 Ephesians 1:4; Matthew 22:14.
98 Psalm 39:6 (40:5 in most English Bibles); Matthew 3:2 and 4:17.

the mystery by which his blood was shed for the remission of sins. He spent forty days on earth with his disciples, ascended into heaven as they watched, and after ten days sent the promised Holy Spirit. When the Spirit came upon those who had believed, the greatest and most necessary sign was that each of them spoke in the languages of all nations. This signified that the unity of the catholic Church would extend through all nations and so would speak in all languages.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, MADE MORE GLORIOUS AND MORE POWERFUL BY THE SUFFERINGS OF ITS PREACHERS

The gospel spreads from Jerusalem through the sufferings of the martyrs.

18.50 Then the Church spread out, first from Jerusalem. This was in accordance with the prophecy, "Out of Zion the law will go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," and with the predictions of Christ the Lord himself. After the resurrection, when his disciples were astonished at him, he opened their minds so that they understood the Scriptures, and told them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and for repentance and the remission of sins to be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." And again, when they asked about his final coming, he answered and said, "It is not for you to know the times which the Father has set in his own power; but you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." And when very many in Judea and Samaria had believed, the Church went on to other nations as well. The gospel was proclaimed by those whom he himself had prepared like lamps by his word and kindled by the Holy Spirit.[99] For he had told them, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." So that they

99 Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:45–47; Acts 1:7–8.

would not be chilled by fear, they burned with the fire of love. In short, the gospel was preached throughout the world not only by those who had seen and heard him both before his passion and after his resurrection, but also, after their death, by their successors, amid horrifying persecutions, all kinds of tortures, and the deaths of martyrs. God bore witness with signs and wonders, with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. As a result the peoples of the nations, believing in him who was crucified for their redemption, came to venerate with Christian love the blood of the martyrs that they themselves had shed in diabolical fury. The very kings by whose laws the Church was being ravaged submitted, to their own salvation, to the name they had cruelly tried to remove from the earth, and began to persecute the false gods for whose sake they had earlier persecuted the worshipers of the true God.[100]

THAT THE CATHOLIC FAITH IS STRENGTHENED EVEN BY THE DISSENSIONS OF HERETICS

Heretics and persecutors only exercise the Church's patience, wisdom and love.

18.51 But the devil, seeing the temples of demons deserted and the human race running to the name of the Mediator who sets free, stirred up heretics to resist Christian teaching under the Christian name. It was as if they could be kept in the city of God without distinction and without any correction, just as the city of confusion kept, without distinction, philosophers who held views different from and opposed to one another. So those in the Church of Christ who hold some unhealthy and perverse opinion, if, when corrected so that they may think what is sound and right, they stubbornly resist, refuse to amend their pestilent and deadly doctrines, and persist in defending them—these become heretics. Going outside, they are counted among the enemies who serve to exercise the Church. For even in this way they benefit, by their own evil, the true catholic members of Christ,

100 Matthew 10:28.

since God makes good use even of the wicked, and all things work together for good for those who love him.[101] For all the enemies of the Church, whatever error blinds them or malice corrupts them, exercise its patience if they receive the power to inflict bodily harm; if they oppose it only by thinking wrongly, they exercise its wisdom; and since even enemies are to be loved, they exercise its benevolence, or even its beneficence, whether it deals with them by persuasive teaching or by fearsome discipline. And so the devil, the prince of the ungodly city, though he stirs up his own vessels against the city of God on pilgrimage in this world, is permitted to do it no harm. For without doubt divine providence provides it with consolation in prosperity, so that it is not broken by adversity, and with exercise in adversity, so that it is not corrupted by prosperity. Each is so tempered by the other that we recognize this voice in the psalm as springing from nothing else: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, your consolations have gladdened my soul."[102] Hence also the apostle's words: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation."[103]

For when the same teacher says, "All who want to live a godly life in Christ suffer persecution," we must not suppose there can be any time when this does not hold. Even when there seems to be tranquillity, because those outside are not raging—and there really is, and it brings much consolation, especially to the weak—still there is no lack of people within, indeed there are many, who torment the hearts of those living godly lives by their depraved conduct, since through them the Christian and catholic name is blasphemed. The dearer that name is to those who want to live a godly life in Christ, the more they grieve that, because of the wicked within, it is loved less than the minds of the godly desire.[104] The heretics too, when one considers that they have the Christian name and sacraments, the Scriptures

101 The closing words echo Romans 8:28.
102 Psalm 93:19 (94:19 in most English Bibles).
103 Romans 12:12.
104 2 Timothy 3:12.

and the profession of faith, cause great grief in the hearts of the godly. For many who want to become Christians are driven to hesitate by their dissensions, and many slanderers find in them, too, material for blaspheming the Christian name, since they also are called Christians after a fashion. Through these and similar depraved ways and errors of men, those who want to live a godly life in Christ suffer persecution, even when no one attacks or harasses their bodies. For they suffer this persecution not in their bodies but in their hearts. Hence that voice: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart." It does not say, "in my body." But again, since one considers the unchangeable promises of God, and the apostle's words, "The Lord knows those who are his" (for of those whom he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, none can perish), the psalm goes on: "Your consolations have gladdened my soul." Moreover, the very grief that arises in the hearts of the godly, who are persecuted by the conduct of bad or false Christians, benefits those who grieve, since it comes from love, the love by which they do not want those others to perish or to hinder the salvation of others. Finally, great consolations come also from their correction, flooding the souls of the godly with as much joy as the sorrows with which their perdition had tormented them.[105] Thus in this world, in these evil days, not only from the time of the bodily presence of Christ and his apostles, but from Abel himself, the first righteous man, whom his ungodly brother killed, and from then on until the end of this world, the Church presses forward on its pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.

105 2 Timothy 2:19; Romans 8:29.

WHETHER WE SHOULD BELIEVE, AS SOME THINK, THAT AFTER THE TEN PERSECUTIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE, NONE REMAINS EXCEPT AN ELEVENTH, WHICH WILL COME IN THE TIME OF ANTICHRIST HIMSELF

Augustine refuses to fix the number of persecutions at ten before Antichrist.

18.52 Accordingly, I do not think we should rashly assert or believe even what some have thought, or still think: that until the time of Antichrist the Church will suffer no more persecutions than it has already suffered, that is, ten, so that the eleventh and last will come from Antichrist. They count the first as the one carried out by Nero, the second by Domitian, the third by Trajan, the fourth by Antoninus, the fifth by Severus, the sixth by Maximinus, the seventh by Decius, the eighth by Valerian, the ninth by Aurelian, the tenth by Diocletian and Maximian. For since there were ten plagues of the Egyptians before the people of God began to leave, they think the plagues should be referred to this meaning, so that the last persecution, by Antichrist, appears like an eleventh plague, the one in which the Egyptians, pursuing the Hebrews as enemies, perished in the Red Sea while the people of God crossed over on dry ground.[106] But I do not think that those events in Egypt were a prophetic sign of these persecutions—even though those who hold this view seem to have matched each of those events to each of these with care and ingenuity. They have done so not by a prophetic spirit but by the conjecture of the human mind, which sometimes arrives at the truth and sometimes is deceived.

For what will those who hold this view say about the persecution in which the Lord himself was crucified? Where will they place it in their count? But if they think the count should be made leaving this one aside—as though we should count the per-

106 These emperors range from Nero (AD 54–68) to Diocletian (284–305); the scheme of ten persecutions also appears in Augustine's contemporary Orosius.

secutions that concern the body, not the one in which the head itself was attacked and killed—what will they do about the one that took place in Jerusalem after Christ ascended into heaven? That was the persecution in which blessed Stephen was stoned; in which James, the brother of John, was put to the sword; in which the apostle Peter was imprisoned to be killed and was set free by an angel; in which the brothers were driven out of Jerusalem and scattered; in which Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, was ravaging the Church; and in which he too, now preaching the faith he used to persecute, suffered the kind of things he used to inflict, whether in Judea or among other nations, wherever he preached Christ with the greatest fervor.[107] Why, then, do they think the count should begin with Nero, when the Church had grown its way to Nero's time through the most atrocious persecutions, which would take far too long to recount in full? But if they think that only persecutions carried out by kings should be counted, Herod was a king, and he carried out a most severe one even after the Lord's ascension. Then what do they say about Julian, whom they do not count among the ten? Did he not persecute the Church, he who forbade Christians to teach or to study the liberal arts?[108] Under him Valentinian the elder, who was the third emperor counting from him, stood out as a confessor of the Christian faith and was stripped of his military rank. And I say nothing of what Julian had begun to do at Antioch. He would have gone further had he not been struck with awe by one young man of the greatest faith and steadfastness. Of the many who had been seized for torture, this young man was the first to be tortured, all day long. Julian marveled at the freedom and cheerfulness with which he sang psalms amid the hooks and torments, shrank back, and feared that he would disgrace himself even more shamefully with the rest. Lastly, within our own memory, did not Valens, the brother

107 See Acts 7–8 (Stephen and the scattering of the believers) and Acts 12:1–11 (James and Peter).

108 Herod is Herod Agrippa I, who executed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). Julian "the Apostate," emperor AD 361–363, barred Christians from teaching classical literature in 362.

of this Valentinian, an Arian, ravage the Catholic Church throughout the East with a great persecution? And what kind of reasoning is it not to consider that the Church, bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world, can suffer persecution from kings in some nations even when it is not suffering it in others?[109] Or perhaps we should not count it as a persecution when the king of the Goths, in Gothia itself, persecuted the Christians with astonishing cruelty, at a time when there were none but Catholics there, very many of whom were crowned with martyrdom—as we have heard from certain brothers who had been boys there at the time and remembered without hesitation that they had seen these things? And what of Persia at present? Has not the persecution against Christians raged there so fiercely (if indeed it has now died down) that some fleeing from it have made their way as far as Roman towns? When I consider these and similar things, it seems to me that we should not fix the number of persecutions by which the Church must be tested. On the other hand, it is no less rash to assert that there will be further persecutions by kings besides that last one, about which no Christian has any doubt. So we leave this question open, neither building up nor tearing down either side of it, but only calling people back from the bold presumption of asserting either.[110]

THE TIME OF THE LAST PERSECUTION, REVEALED TO NO HUMAN BEING

No one can know when the last persecution and the end will come.

18.53 That last persecution, the one to come from Antichrist, Jesus himself will extinguish by his presence. For so it is written: "he will kill him with the breath of his mouth and bring him to noth-

109 Valentinian I was emperor AD 364–375; his brother Valens, emperor in the East 364–378, favored the Arians, who denied that the Son is equal to the Father. The young man at Antioch is named by Rufinus as Theodore.

110 The Gothic king is Athanaric, who persecuted Christians among his people in the AD 370s. The Persian persecution under Yazdegerd I and Bahram V began around 420.

ing by the brightness of his presence." Here people commonly ask, "When will this be?" A wholly untimely question. For if it were good for us to know this, who would have told it better than God himself, our teacher, when his disciples asked him? For they did not keep silent about it with him, but asked him face to face, saying, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" And he said, "It is not for you to know the times which the Father has placed in his own power." They had certainly not asked about the hour or the day or the year, but about the time, when they received that answer.[111] It is useless, then, for us to try to count and fix the years that remain for this world, since we hear from the mouth of Truth that it is not for us to know this. Yet some have said that four hundred years, others five hundred, others even a thousand, could be completed from the Lord's ascension to his final coming. How each of them builds up his opinion would take long to show, and is unnecessary. For they rely on human conjectures; nothing certain is brought forward by them from the authority of canonical Scripture. But the fingers of all who calculate about this matter are unclenched and bidden to rest by the one who says, "It is not for you to know the times which the Father has placed in his own power."

But since this is a saying of the Gospel, it is no wonder that it did not restrain the worshipers of many false gods from pretending that the responses of the demons, whom they worship as gods, had fixed how long the Christian religion would last. For when they saw that it could not be destroyed even by so many great persecutions, but had rather grown wonderfully through them, they invented some Greek verses or other, supposedly poured out by a divine oracle to someone who consulted it. In these verses they make Christ innocent of the charge of this supposed sacrilege, but they go on to say that Peter worked sorcery so that the name of Christ would be worshiped for three hundred and sixty-five years, and then, once that number of years was completed, would come to an end without delay. O

111 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Acts 1:6–7.

hearts of learned men! O literary minds, so well suited to believing such things about Christ, you who refuse to believe in Christ! You believe that his disciple Peter did not learn the magic arts from him, but that, though Christ himself was innocent, Peter was nevertheless a sorcerer on his behalf, and preferred that Christ's name rather than his own be worshiped—through his magic arts, through his great labors and dangers, and finally even through the shedding of his own blood! If Peter the sorcerer made the world love Christ so, what did the innocent Christ do to make Peter love him so? Let them answer themselves, then, and, if they can, understand that it was by grace from above that the world came to love Christ for the sake of eternal life—the same grace by which Peter came to love Christ, both for the sake of the eternal life he was to receive from him and to the point of suffering temporal death for him. Next, who are these gods, who can predict such things but cannot avert them? They yield so completely to one sorcerer and one magical crime—in which, as they say, a year-old boy was killed, torn apart and buried with an abominable rite—that they allowed a sect hostile to them to grow strong for so long a time, to overcome the horrifying cruelties of so many great persecutions not by resisting but by enduring, and to bring about the overthrow of their images, temples, rites and oracles. And finally, what god is this—certainly not ours, but theirs—who was either enticed or driven by so great a crime to grant these things? For the verses say that Peter, by his magic art, laid down these terms not for some demon but for a god. That is the kind of god they have who do not have Christ.

THE UTTERLY FOOLISH LIE OF THE PAGANS, WHO PRETENDED THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION WOULD LAST NO MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE YEARS

The pagan oracle that Christianity would last 365 years has already proved false.

18.54 I would gather many arguments of this kind, if that very year had not already passed which the fabricated divination prom-

ised and deluded folly believed. But since the three hundred and sixty-five years—counting from the time when the worship of Christ's name was established through his presence in the flesh and through the apostles—were completed some years ago, what else do we need to refute this falsehood? For even if we do not place the beginning of this at Christ's birth, since as an infant and a boy he had no disciples, still, when he began to have them, the Christian teaching and religion undoubtedly became known through his bodily presence—that is, after he was baptized in the river Jordan through the ministry of John. It was for this reason that the prophecy had gone before concerning him: "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."[112] But before he had suffered and risen from the dead, faith had not yet been defined for all. (It was defined in Christ's resurrection, for so the apostle Paul speaks to the Athenians: "Now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day to judge the world in equity by the man in whom he has defined faith for all, by raising him from the dead.") So in solving this question we do better to take our starting point from there—especially because that was also when the Holy Spirit was given, as he was to be given after Christ's resurrection in that city from which the second law, that is, the New Testament, was to begin. For the first law came from Mount Sinai through Moses, and it is called the Old Testament. But of the law that was to be given through Christ it was foretold: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[113] This is why he himself said that repentance must be preached in his name among all nations, but beginning from Jerusalem. There, then, the worship of this name began: belief in Jesus Christ, who had been crucified and had risen again. There this faith blazed up with such remarkable beginnings that several thousand people, turned to Christ's name with wonderful eagerness, sold their possessions to be distributed to the needy, and by holy resolve and most ardent love

112 Psalm 71:8 (72:8 in most English Bibles).
113 Acts 17:30–31; Isaiah 2:3.

embraced voluntary poverty. Among Jews who raged and thirsted for blood, they prepared themselves to contend for the truth even to death—not with armed might, but with a mightier patience. If this was done without any magic arts, why do they hesitate to believe that the same divine power by which this was done could have done it throughout the whole world?[114] But if Peter had already performed that sorcery so that so great a multitude at Jerusalem—a multitude that had either seized Christ and nailed him to the cross or mocked him once he was nailed there—should be fired with zeal for the worship of Christ's name, then we must count from that very year to find when the three hundred and sixty-five years were completed. Christ died, then, in the consulship of the two Gemini, on March 25. He rose on the third day, as the apostles verified even with their own senses. Then, forty days later, he ascended into heaven; ten days after that, that is, on the fiftieth day after his resurrection, he sent the Holy Spirit. Then three thousand people believed as the apostles preached him. So it was then that the worship of his name began—as we believe and as the truth is, through the power of the Holy Spirit; but as impious folly has invented or supposed, through the magic arts of Peter.[115] A little later a wonderful sign was also performed: at the word of Peter himself, a beggar who had been lame from his mother's womb—so lame that he was carried by others and set down at the gate of the temple to ask for alms—leapt up healed in the name of Jesus Christ, and five thousand people believed. After that the Church grew as more and more believers joined it. From this we can also work out the day on which that year began: namely, when the Holy Spirit was sent, that is, around May 15. Counting the consuls, then, we find that the three hundred and sixty-five years were completed around that same date in the consulship of Honorius and Eutychianus.[116] Then in the following year, in

114 Luke 24:47.

115 The consuls Gaius Fufius Geminus and Lucius Rubellius Geminus held office in AD 29.

116 Honorius and Eutychianus were consuls in AD 398.

the consulship of Mallius Theodorus, when, according to that oracle of demons or fabrication of men, there should no longer have been any Christian religion, there was no need to inquire what may have happened in other parts of the world. Meanwhile, what we do know is this: in the most famous and eminent city of Carthage in Africa, Gaudentius and Jovius, counts of the emperor Honorius, overthrew the temples of the false gods and smashed their images on March 19. From then until now, for almost thirty years, who does not see how much the worship of Christ's name has grown—especially since many have become Christians who had been held back from the faith by that supposedly true divination, and who saw, when that number of years was completed, that it was empty and laughable?[117] We, then, who are Christians and are called Christians, do not believe in Peter but in the one in whom Peter believed. We have been built up by Peter's preaching about Christ, not poisoned by his spells; we have not been deceived by his sorceries, but helped by his kindnesses. Christ, Peter's teacher in the doctrine that leads to eternal life, is our teacher too.

But let us at last bring this book to a close. Up to this point we have discussed and shown, as far as seemed sufficient, what the mortal course is of the two cities, the heavenly and the earthly, which are mingled together from beginning to end. Of these, the earthly city has made for itself false gods as it wished, from any source whatever, even from human beings, in order to serve them with sacrifices. But the heavenly city, which is on pilgrimage on earth, does not make false gods; rather, it is itself made by the true God, and is itself to be his true sacrifice. Yet both alike make use of temporal goods, or are alike afflicted by temporal evils, with different faith, different hope, different love, until they are separated at the last judgment and each receives its own end—an end that has no end. It is these ends of both cities that we must discuss next.

117 Mallius Theodorus was consul in AD 399; Gaudentius and Jovius were imperial officials sent to close pagan temples in Africa.

Book XIX

The supreme good and peace
Philosophy's search for happiness; the miseries of life; peace in the two cities; what a commonwealth is.

THAT VARRO FOUND THAT TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT SECTS ARE POSSIBLE ON THE QUESTION, DEBATED BY PHILOSOPHERS, OF THE ENDS OF GOOD AND EVIL

Varro counts 288 possible philosophical schools on the question of the supreme good.

19.1 I see that I must next discuss the proper ends of both cities, the earthly and the heavenly. So I must first set out, as far as the plan for bringing this work to a close allows, the arguments by which mortals have tried to make happiness for themselves in the unhappiness of this life. In this way it may become clear how our hope, which God has given us, differs from their empty concerns, and how the reality itself, that is, the true happiness he will give, differs from them too. And this should become clear not only by divine authority but also by bringing in reason, of the kind we can use for the sake of unbelievers. For philosophers have argued among themselves at great length and in many different ways about the ends of good and evil. Turning this question over with the greatest concentration, they have tried to discover what makes a human being happy. For the end of our good is that for the sake of which everything else is to be sought, while it is itself sought for its own sake. The end of evil is that on account of which everything else is to be avoided, while it is itself avoided for its own sake. By "the end of good," then, we do not now mean that by which it is used up so that it

ceases to be, but that by which it is brought to completion so that it is full. By "the end of evil" we do not mean that by which it ceases to be, but the point to which its harm finally carries us. These ends, therefore, are the supreme good and the supreme evil. As I said, those who professed the pursuit of wisdom amid the vanity of this world have labored hard to find these ends, and to attain the supreme good and avoid the supreme evil in this life. Yet although they went astray in different ways, the boundary set by nature did not let them stray so far from the path of truth that they failed to place the ends of good and evil in the mind, in the body, or in both. Starting from this threefold division into general schools, as it were, Marcus Varro, in his book *On Philosophy*, examined the doctrines with care and subtlety and observed so great a variety among them that, by introducing certain distinctions, he very easily arrived at two hundred and eighty-eight schools. These were not schools that actually existed, but schools that could exist.[1]

To show this briefly, I must begin from what he himself observed and set down in the book I have mentioned. There are four things, he says, that people seek as if by nature: without a teacher, without any help from instruction, and without effort or the art of living that is called virtue and is undoubtedly learned. The first is pleasure, by which the bodily sense is agreeably stirred. The second is rest, which keeps a person from suffering any bodily discomfort. The third is both together, which Epicurus nevertheless calls by the single name of pleasure. The fourth, more generally, is the primary things of nature, which include these and others as well. Some are in the body, such as the soundness of its limbs, its health and its safety. Others are in the mind, such as the abilities, small or great, that are found in human talents.[2] These four, then (pleasure, rest, both together, and the primary things of nature), are in us in such a way that

1 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) was the most learned Roman scholar of his age. His *On Philosophy* is lost and known chiefly from this passage.

2 Epicurus (341–270 BC) was the Greek philosopher who made pleasure, understood chiefly as freedom from pain, the goal of life.

one of three things holds. Either virtue, which instruction later implants, is to be sought for their sake, or they are to be sought for the sake of virtue, or both are to be sought for their own sake. From this come twelve schools, since by this reasoning each of the four is tripled. Once I have shown this in one case, it will not be hard to find it in the others. When bodily pleasure, then, is subordinated to the virtue of the mind, or preferred to it, or joined with it, it gives rise to a threefold variety of schools. It is subordinated to virtue when it is taken up for virtue's use. For it belongs to the duty of virtue both to live for one's country and to beget children for one's country, and neither can be done without bodily pleasure. Without it we would neither take food and drink in order to live, nor lie together in order to propagate the race. But when pleasure is preferred to virtue, pleasure is sought for its own sake, and virtue is thought worth adopting for pleasure's sake. In other words, virtue does nothing except to obtain or preserve bodily pleasure. This is indeed a shameful life, since in it virtue is the slave of pleasure as its mistress, though such a thing should in no way be called virtue. Yet even this horrible depravity has had certain philosophers as its patrons and defenders. Pleasure, again, is joined with virtue when neither is sought for the sake of the other, but both for their own sake. So just as pleasure, whether subordinated to virtue, preferred to it or joined with it, makes three schools, rest, both together and the primary things of nature are each found to produce three more. For according to the variety of human opinions they are sometimes subordinated to virtue, sometimes preferred to it, and sometimes joined with it. In this way we arrive at the number of twelve schools. But this number too is doubled when one further distinction is introduced, namely that of social life. For whoever follows any one of these twelve schools surely does so either for his own sake alone or also for the sake of a companion, for whom he ought to want what he wants for himself. So there are twelve schools of those who think each position should be held for their own sake alone. There are another twelve of those who decide that one should philosoph-

ize in this way or that not only for one's own sake but also for the sake of others, whose good they seek as their own. These twenty-four schools are doubled again by adding a distinction drawn from the New Academics, and they become forty-eight. For anyone can hold and defend each of those twenty-four schools as certain, in the way the Stoics defended the view that the human good, which makes a person happy, consists solely in the virtue of the mind. Someone else can hold the same school as uncertain, as the New Academics defended what seemed to them, if not certain, at least likely to be true. So there are twenty-four schools of those who think these views should be followed as certain because they are true. There are another twenty-four of those who think the same views should be followed, though uncertain, because they resemble the truth. Again, anyone can follow each of these forty-eight schools in the garb of the other philosophers, and someone else can follow it in the garb of the Cynics. This distinction too doubles them, and they become ninety-six.[3] Next, people can defend and follow each of these schools while preferring one of three kinds of life. Some prefer a life of leisure, like those who wished, and were able, to devote themselves solely to the pursuits of learning. Some prefer a life of business, like those who, though they philosophized, were fully occupied in administering the commonwealth and governing human affairs. Others prefer a life balanced between the two, like those who divided their time into alternating periods, given partly to learned leisure and partly to necessary business. Because of these distinctions this number of schools can also be tripled, bringing it to two hundred and eighty-eight.

This is what I have taken from Varro's book, set out as briefly and clearly as I could, explaining his views in my own words. After refuting the others, he chooses one school, which he holds to be that of the Old Academics. (He wants it to be thought that

3 The Cynics, followers of Diogenes of Sinope (4th century BC), rejected social convention and were known for their coarse cloak, beggar's life and shameless public behavior.

these, founded by Plato and continuing down to Polemon, the fourth after Plato to head his school, which was called the Academy, held definite doctrines. On this ground he distinguishes them from the New Academics, for whom everything is uncertain, a kind of philosophy that began with Arcesilaus, Polemon's successor.) He also judges that this school, that of the Old Academics, is free from all error, just as it is free from doubt. To show in every detail how he does all this would take a long time; yet the matter should not be passed over entirely. First, then, he sets aside all the distinctions that multiplied the number of schools. He thinks they should be set aside because the end of good does not lie in them.[4] For he does not think that any philosophical school deserves the name unless it differs from the others by having different ends of good and evil. There is no reason for a human being to philosophize except to be happy, and what makes one happy is the end of good itself. It follows that there is no reason to philosophize except the end of good. Hence a school that pursues no end of good should not be called a philosophical school at all. So take the question about social life. Should the wise man embrace it, wanting and caring for the supreme good, which makes a human being happy, for his friend just as for himself? Or does he do whatever he does solely for the sake of his own happiness? Here the question is not about the supreme good itself. It is about whether or not to take a companion into a share in this good, not for one's own sake but for the companion's, so as to rejoice in his good just as one rejoices in one's own. Likewise, take the question raised by the New Academics, for whom everything is uncertain. Should the matters we philosophize about be regarded in that way? Or, as other philosophers have held, ought we to regard them as certain? Here the question is not what should be pursued as the end of good. It is about the truth of the good itself that seems worth pursuing: should it be doubted or not? To put it more plainly,

4 Polemon headed Plato's Academy at Athens from about 314 to 270 BC. His successor Arcesilaus (c. 316–241 BC) turned it toward skepticism, giving rise to the "New Academy."

should one pursue it in such a way that the pursuer says it is true? Or in such a way that the pursuer says it seems true to him, even if it is perhaps false? Either way, both pursue one and the same good. The distinction drawn from the garb and habits of the Cynics works the same way. The question there is not what the end of good is. It is whether one who pursues the true good, whatever good seems to him true and worth pursuing, should live in that garb and with those habits. In fact, there were some who pursued different final goods, some virtue and others pleasure, and yet kept the same garb and habits, which earned them the name of Cynics. So whatever it is that distinguishes Cynic philosophers from the rest, it certainly counted for nothing in choosing and holding the good that would make them happy. For if it made any difference to this, the same garb would surely compel people to pursue the same end, and different garb would not allow them to pursue the same end.

HOW VARRO, SETTING ASIDE ALL DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE NOT SECTS BUT QUESTIONS, ARRIVES AT A THREEFOLD DEFINITION OF THE SUPREME GOOD, OF WHICH ONE MUST BE CHOSEN

Varro discards the distinctions that do not concern the supreme good and keeps three schools.

19.2 The same is true of those three kinds of life. The first is leisured, not in sloth but in contemplating or investigating the truth. The second is busy with the conduct of human affairs. The third is balanced between the two. When the question is which of these is preferable, the dispute is not about the end of good. What the question deals with is which of the three makes it harder or easier to attain or keep the end of good. For the end of good, once a person reaches it, makes him happy at once. But a person is not immediately happy in literary leisure, or in public business, or when he engages in both by turns. Indeed, many people can live in any one of these three and still go astray in seeking the end of good that makes a human being happy. So the question about the ends of good and evil, which is what consti-

tutes each philosophical school, is one thing. The questions about social life, about the Academics' suspension of judgment, about the clothing and diet of the Cynics, and about the three kinds of life (leisured, active, and a blend of both) are another. In none of these is the debate about the ends of good and evil. Marcus Varro, then, applied these four distinctions, drawn from social life, from the New Academics, from the Cynics, and from the threefold kind of life, and arrived at two hundred and eighty-eight schools, along with any others that might be added in the same way. But he sets all these aside, since they raise no question about pursuing the supreme good, and therefore neither are schools nor should be called schools. He returns to the twelve in which the question is what the good of a human being is, the good whose attainment makes him happy. His aim is to show that one of them is true and the rest false. For when the threefold kind of life is removed, two-thirds of the number are taken away and ninety-six schools remain. When the distinction added from the Cynics is removed, they are reduced by half and become forty-eight. Let us also take away what was introduced from the New Academics: again half remains, that is, twenty-four. Likewise let what had been added from social life be taken away. Twelve are left, which that distinction had doubled to make twenty-four. About these twelve, then, there is nothing to be said for not counting them as schools. For nothing else is sought in them but the ends of good and evil, and once the ends of good are found, the ends of evil are surely their opposites. To make these twelve schools, the four things are tripled: pleasure, rest, both together, and the primary things of nature, which Varro calls *primigenia* [the primal things]. These four, taken one at a time, are sometimes subordinated to virtue, so that they seem worth seeking not for their own sake but for the sake of virtue's duty. Sometimes they are preferred to it, so that virtue is thought necessary not for its own sake but in order to obtain or preserve them. Sometimes they are joined with it, so that both virtue and they are believed worth seeking for their own sake. In this way they triple the number four and arrive at

twelve schools. Of those four things, however, Varro removes three, namely pleasure, rest and both together. He does not disapprove of them, but those primal things of nature already include both pleasure and rest. What need is there, then, to make three things out of these two? There would be two when pleasure or rest is sought singly, and a third when both are sought together. Yet the primary things of nature contain both of them and many other things besides. So he thinks the three schools must be carefully examined, to decide which one should be chosen. For true reason does not allow more than one to be true, whether it is among these three or somewhere else, as we shall see later. Meanwhile, let us discuss, as briefly and clearly as we can, how Varro chooses one of these three. These three schools arise, of course, in this way: either the primary things of nature are to be sought for the sake of virtue, or virtue for the sake of the primary things of nature, or both, that is, virtue and the primary things of nature, for their own sake.

WHICH OF THE THREE SECTS SEEKING THE SUPREME HUMAN GOOD VARRO SAYS SHOULD BE CHOSEN, FOLLOWING THE VIEW OF THE OLD ACADEMY ON THE AUTHORITY OF ANTIOCHUS

Varro, following Antiochus and the Old Academy, holds that the supreme good combines goods of soul and body.

19.3 Which of these three, then, is true and should be followed? He tries to persuade us of the answer in this way. First, he notes that in philosophy the supreme good sought is not that of a tree, or of a beast, or of God, but of a human being. So he thinks we must first ask what a human being is. He perceives that there are two things in human nature, body and soul, and he has no doubt at all that of these two the soul is better and far superior. But is the soul alone the human being, so that the body is to it as a horse is to a rider? (For a rider is not a man plus a horse, but the man alone; yet he is called a rider because he stands in a certain relation to the horse.) Or is the body alone the human being, standing in a certain relation to the soul as a drinking cup

does to its drink? (For it is not the vessel together with the drink it holds that is called a drinking cup, but the vessel alone; yet it is so called because it is suited to holding drink.) Or, finally, is the human being neither the soul alone nor the body alone, but both together? In that case soul and body are each one part of him, while the whole consists of both so as to be a human being. (Similarly, we call two horses yoked together a pair. The right horse and the left horse are each part of the pair, but we do not call either of them a pair, however it is related to the other; we use the word only of both together.) Of these three he chose the third. He holds that a human being is neither the soul alone nor the body alone, but soul and body together. Accordingly, he says that the supreme good of a human being, which makes him happy, consists of the goods of both, that is, of soul and of body. For this reason he thinks that the primary things of nature are to be sought for their own sake. The same goes for virtue itself, which instruction implants as the art of living, and which is the most excellent of the goods of the soul. This virtue, then, is the art of conducting life. It receives the primary things of nature, which existed without it, and existed even while instruction was still lacking to them. It then seeks all of them for their own sake, and itself as well. It uses all of them and itself together, with this end in view: to delight in them all and enjoy them all. It enjoys each more or less according as each is greater or less than the others, yet it rejoices in all of them. If necessity demands, it disregards some lesser goods in order to obtain or keep greater ones. But of all goods, whether of mind or of body, virtue ranks nothing at all above itself. For it makes good use both of itself and of the other goods that make a human being happy. But where virtue is absent, however many goods there may be, they do not serve the good of the one who has them. So they should not even be called his goods, since they cannot be of use to someone who uses them badly. This human life, then, is called happy when it enjoys virtue and the other goods of mind and body without which virtue cannot exist. It is happier if it also enjoys some or many of the other goods, those without which

virtue can exist. It is happiest if it enjoys absolutely all of them, so that no good whatever of mind or body is lacking. For life is not the same thing as virtue, since virtue is not every life, but only a wise life. A life of some kind can exist without any virtue; but virtue cannot exist without any life. I would say the same of memory and reason, and of anything else of that kind in a human being. These exist even before instruction, and without them there can be no instruction, and therefore no virtue either, since virtue is certainly learned. But running well, having a beautiful body, excelling in great strength and other things of this sort are different. Virtue can exist without them, and they without virtue. Yet they are goods, and according to these philosophers virtue loves even them for their own sake, and uses and enjoys them as befits virtue.

They maintain that this happy life is also social. It loves the goods of friends for their own sake, as its own, and wants for them, for their sake, what it wants for itself. These friends may be in the household, such as a spouse, children and any other members of the household. They may be in the place where one has one's home, such as a city, like those called fellow citizens. They may be in the whole earth, like the nations to which human fellowship joins us. Or they may be in the world itself, which goes by the name of heaven and earth. Such, they say, are the gods, whom they hold to be friends of the wise man, and whom we more familiarly call angels. As for the ends of good and, conversely, of evil, they deny that there should be any doubt at all about them, and they declare that this is the difference between themselves and the New Academics. Nor does it matter to them whether a person philosophizes within these ends, which they think true, in the garb and diet of the Cynics or in any other. Of the three kinds of life, moreover (the leisured, the active and the one compounded of both), they assert that they favor the third. Varro states that the Old Academics held and taught these views, on the authority of Antiochus, who was Cicero's teacher and his own. Cicero, to be sure, would have it thought that Antiochus was in more respects a Stoic than an Old

Academic. But what is that to us? We ought rather to judge the matters themselves than to set great store by knowing what each person thought about them.[5]

WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE SUPREME GOOD AND THE SUPREME EVIL, AGAINST THE PHILOSOPHERS WHO SAID THE SUPREME GOOD IS WITHIN THEMSELVES

The city of God answers: eternal life is the supreme good, and happiness here exists only in hope.

19.4 If, then, we are asked what the city of God answers when questioned on each of these points, and first what it thinks about the ends of good and evil, it will answer that eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil, and that we must live rightly in order to obtain the one and avoid the other. That is why it is written: "The righteous lives by faith." For we do not yet see our good, and so we must seek it by believing. Nor does our very living rightly come from ourselves, unless he helps us as we believe and pray. He also gave us that very faith by which we believe that we need his help.[6] Others have thought that the ends of good and evil lie in this life. They placed the supreme good in the body, or in the mind, or in both. Or, to spell it out more fully, they placed it in pleasure, or in virtue, or in both; in rest, or in virtue, or in both; in pleasure and rest together, or in virtue, or in both; in the primary things of nature, or in virtue, or in both. With astonishing vanity, these people wanted to be happy here and to be made happy by their own efforts. The Truth mocked them through the prophet who says: "The Lord knows the thoughts of human beings." Or, as the apostle Paul set down this testimony: "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."[7]

For who, however great the flood of his eloquence, is equal to setting out the miseries of this life? Cicero lamented them as

5 Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 130–68 BC) was a philosopher who claimed to restore the doctrines of the Old Academy. Cicero heard his lectures in Athens in 79 BC.
6 Habakkuk 2:4, quoted by Paul in Romans 1:17.
7 Psalm 93:11 (94:11 in most English Bibles), quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:20.

best he could in his *Consolation* on the death of his daughter. But how much was his best? As for what are called the primary things of nature: when, where, and how can they be so secure in this life that they are not tossed about at the mercy of uncertain chance? For what pain, the opposite of pleasure, and what disturbance, the opposite of rest, cannot befall the body of the wise man? Certainly the amputation or crippling of limbs destroys a person's soundness. Disfigurement destroys his beauty, weakness his health, fatigue his strength, numbness or sluggishness his agility. Which of these cannot assail the flesh of the wise man? The posture and movement of the body, too, when they are seemly and fitting, are counted among the primary things of nature. But what if some illness shakes the limbs with trembling?[8] What if the spine is so bent that the hands reach the ground, turning the man into a sort of four-footed creature? Will this not ruin all beauty and grace in the way the body stands and moves? What of the so-called primal goods of the mind itself? Here they put two first, sense and intellect, because they grasp and perceive truth. But what kind of sense remains, and how much of it, if—to say nothing of other things—a man becomes deaf and blind? And where will reason and intelligence withdraw to, where will they fall asleep, if some disease drives him insane? The frenzied say or do many absurd things, mostly foreign to their good purposes and character, indeed contrary to their good purposes and character. When we think of these things or see them, and consider them as they deserve, we can scarcely hold back our tears, or perhaps cannot hold them back at all. What shall I say of those who suffer the assaults of demons? Where do they keep their intelligence, hidden or buried, when an evil spirit uses both their soul and their body as it pleases? And who is confident that this evil cannot happen to a wise man in this life? Then again, what sort of perception of truth do we have in this flesh, and how much, when, as we read in the truthful book of Wisdom, "the corruptible body weighs

8 Cicero wrote a *Consolation*, now lost, after the death of his daughter Tullia in 45 BC.

down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the mind that thinks of many things"? Further, there is impulse, or appetite for action, if that is the right Latin name for what the Greeks call ὁρμήν [*hormē*, impulse]. They count this too among the primary things of nature. Yet is it not this very impulse that drives those pitiable movements and deeds of the insane that horrify us, when sense is perverted and reason is asleep?[9]

Then there is virtue itself. It is not among the primary things of nature, since it comes upon them later, brought in by teaching. It claims for itself the summit of human goods. Yet what does it do here but wage perpetual war with vices? These are not external vices but internal ones, not other people's but plainly our very own. This is above all the task of the virtue called in Greek σωφροσύνη [*sōphrosynē*, self-control] and in Latin temperance, which reins in the lusts of the flesh so that they do not drag the mind into consenting to every kind of depravity. For it is not as though there were no vice in us, since, as the apostle says, "the flesh desires against the spirit." The virtue opposed to this vice is present when, as he also says, "the spirit desires against the flesh." "For these," he says, "are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want." But what do we want to do, when we want to be made perfect in the end of the supreme good? Only this: that the flesh should not desire against the spirit, and that there should be in us no such vice for the spirit to desire against.[10] In this life we cannot accomplish that, however much we want to. So with God's help we at least do this: we do not let the spirit succumb and give way to the flesh that desires against it, and we are not dragged by our own consent into committing sin. Far be it from us, then, as long as we are in this civil war within, to believe that we have already attained the happiness we wish to reach by conquering. And who is so wise that he has no conflict at all against his lusts?

What of the virtue called prudence? Does it not use all its vigilance to distinguish good from evil, so that no error creeps

9 Wisdom 9:15, from the Wisdom of Solomon.
10 Galatians 5:17.

in as we seek the one and avoid the other? And by that very fact, does it not testify that we are among evils, or that evils are within us? For it teaches that consenting to lust so as to sin is evil, and that refusing that consent is good. Yet prudence teaches us not to consent to that evil, and temperance makes us not consent to it, but neither prudence nor temperance removes it from this life. What of justice, whose task is to give each his own? From it there arises in man himself a certain just order of nature: the soul is subject to God and the flesh to the soul, and thus both soul and flesh are subject to God. Does justice not show that it is still laboring at this work, rather than already resting at its completion?

COURAGE AND THE STOICS

Courage witnesses to life's evils; the Stoics who call suicide a remedy cannot call such a life happy.

For the less the soul conceives of God in its very thoughts, the less it is subject to God. And the more the flesh desires against the spirit, the less it is subject to the soul. So long, then, as this weakness, this plague, this sickness is in us, how shall we dare to call ourselves already saved? And if we are not yet saved, how shall we dare to call ourselves already happy with that final happiness? Then there is the virtue whose name is courage. However great the wisdom in which it is found, it is the clearest witness to human evils, which it is compelled to bear with patience. I wonder how the Stoic philosophers have the face to maintain that these evils are not evils. They themselves admit that if the evils become so great that the wise man cannot or should not bear them, he is compelled to inflict death on himself and depart from this life. These men think that they have the end of good here and are made happy by themselves. Yet so great is the stupor of their pride that their wise man—such as they describe him, with astonishing vanity—is not ashamed to call this life happy, though it is set amid all these evils. He may go blind, deaf, and mute. He may be crippled in his limbs and tortured

with pains. Any other such evil that can be named or imagined may befall him, until he is compelled to inflict death on himself. O happy life, which seeks the help of death to end it! If it is happy, let him remain in it. How can these things not be evils? They overcome the good of courage. They compel that same courage not only to yield to them but to rave, so that it both calls that same life happy and urges that it must be fled. Who is so blind as not to see that if it were happy, it would not have to be fled? But they confess, in the plain voice of weakness, that it must be fled. What reason is there, then, why they should not break the neck of their pride and confess that it is also miserable? Was it by patience, I ask you, or rather by impatience that the famous Cato killed himself? For he would not have done it had he not borne Caesar's victory impatiently. Where is his courage? Surely it yielded, surely it succumbed, surely it was so thoroughly defeated that it abandoned, deserted, and fled the happy life. Or was that life no longer happy? Then it was miserable. How, then, were they not evils, when they made life miserable and something to be fled?[11]

Others have admitted that these things are evils, such as the Peripatetics and the Old Academics, whose school Varro defends. These do speak more tolerably, it is true. But their error too is astonishing. They maintain that life is still happy amid these evils, even if the evils are so severe that the one who suffers them must flee them by a death he inflicts on himself. "Tortures and torments of the body are evils," Varro says, "and the greater they can become, the worse they are. To be rid of them, one must flee from this life." From what life, I ask? "From this one," he says, "which is weighed down by such great evils." So then it is certainly happy amid those very evils because of which you say it must be fled? Or do you call it happy because you are free to depart from these evils by death? What, then, if some divine judgment held you in them, and you were not permitted to die, and never allowed to be without them? Then

11 Cato the Younger, the Stoic statesman, killed himself at Utica in 46 BC rather than live under Julius Caesar's victory.

surely you would at least call such a life miserable. So it is not free of misery just because it is quickly left behind. Indeed, if it were everlasting, even you yourself would judge it miserable. Therefore it ought not to seem no misery at all because it is short. Still less should it be called happiness because the misery is short, which is even more absurd. Great is the power of those evils which, by their own account, compel a man, even a wise man, to deprive himself of his very being as a man. They say, and say truly, that the first and in a sense the greatest voice of nature is this: a human being should be drawn into friendship with himself, and therefore naturally flee death. He is so much his own friend that he vehemently wills and seeks to be a living being and to live in this union of body and soul. Great is the power of those evils which overcome this sense of nature. By this sense death is avoided in every way, with all one's strength and effort. And it is so overcome that what was avoided is wished for and sought. If death cannot come from elsewhere, the man inflicts it upon himself. Great is the power of those evils which turn courage into a killer—if indeed it should still be called courage. It is so overcome by these evils that it cannot keep safe through patience the person it undertook, as a virtue, to govern and protect. Worse, it is itself compelled to kill him. The wise man ought indeed to bear even death patiently, but a death that comes from elsewhere. If, however, on their view he is compelled to inflict it on himself, they must surely admit that the things which compel him to do this are not only evils, but unbearable evils. A life, then, that is either weighed down by the burdens of such great and grievous evils or exposed to their chances would in no way be called happy, if only the men who say this would yield to truth. When they inflict death on themselves, overcome by worsening evils, they yield to misfortune. Let them likewise, when they seek the happy life, be overcome by sound reasons and deign to yield to truth. Then they would not think that they are to rejoice in the end of the supreme good in this mortal condition. Here the virtues themselves are certainly the best and most useful things to be found in man. Yet

the greater the help they give against the force of dangers, toils, and pains, the more faithful their witness to our miseries. For true virtues can exist only in those in whom there is true godliness. If these virtues are true, they do not claim the power to keep the people in whom they exist from suffering any miseries. True virtues are not liars, to make such a claim. What they claim is this: human life is compelled to be miserable by the many great evils of this age, but in the hope of the age to come it is happy, just as it is saved in that hope. For how can a life be happy that is not yet saved? The apostle Paul was not speaking of people who were imprudent, impatient, intemperate, and unjust. He was speaking of those who lived according to true godliness, and whose virtues, therefore, were true ones. That is why he says: "For in hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."[12] Just as we have been saved in hope, then, so we have been made happy in hope. Like salvation, happiness is something we do not yet hold as present but await as future, and await "with patience." For we are among evils that we must patiently endure until we come to those goods where there will be everything to delight us beyond words, and nothing that we must still endure. Such salvation, which will be in the age to come, will itself also be final happiness. These philosophers do not see this happiness, and so they refuse to believe in it. Instead they try to manufacture for themselves here a happiness that is utterly false, by means of a virtue that is all the more deceitful for being all the more proud.

SOCIAL LIFE, WHICH, THOUGH MOST DESIRABLE, IS OFTEN OVERTURNED BY MANY TROUBLES

Household and city, the first two circles of social life, are full of treachery and strife.

19.5 They hold that the life of the wise man is social, and we approve this much more fully than they do. For how could this

12 Romans 8:24–25.

city of God have had its beginning, or advanced on its course, or reached its due end, if the life of the saints were not social? And we are now handling the nineteenth book of this work about that city. But in the hardship of this mortal condition, who could count how many and how great are the evils with which human society abounds? Who could reckon them? Let them listen to a character in their own comic playwrights, who speaks with the sense and consent of all mankind: "I took a wife—what misery I found there! Children were born—another worry." And what of those failings of love that the same Terence lists: "wrongs, suspicions, enmities, war, then peace again"? Have they not filled human affairs everywhere? Do they not often occur even in the honorable loves of friends?[13] Are not human affairs full of them everywhere? We experience wrongs, suspicions, enmities, and war as certain evils, but peace as an uncertain good. We do not know the hearts of those with whom we want to keep it. Even if we could know them today, we certainly would not know what they would be like tomorrow. And who are, or ought to be, more friendly to one another than those who live in the same household? Yet who is secure even there? Great evils have often arisen from the hidden treachery of such people. These evils were the more bitter, the sweeter the peace had been. That peace was thought genuine while it was being most cunningly feigned. That is why the words of Cicero touch every heart so deeply as to force a groan: "No treachery is more hidden than that which lurks under the pretense of duty or under some name of close relationship."[14] For an open adversary you can easily avoid by being on your guard. But this hidden evil, inside the household and the family, not only arises but overwhelms you before you have been able to foresee and detect it. That is why that divine saying, "And a man's enemies will be those of his own household," is heard with great sorrow of heart. A person may be strong enough to bear calmly what a pretended friendship plots

13 Terence, the Roman comic playwright of the 2nd century BC: *The Brothers* 867–868; the second quotation is from his *Eunuch* 59–61.
14 Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.1.39.

against him, or vigilant enough to guard against it with foresight. Still, if he himself is good, he cannot help being grievously tormented by the wickedness of those faithless people, once experience shows him how utterly bad they are. Perhaps they were always bad and pretended to be good. Perhaps they turned from goodness to this malice.[15] If, then, the home, the common refuge of the human race from these evils, is not safe, what of the city? The larger it is, the fuller its forum is of lawsuits, both civil and criminal. And that is so even when there is a lull in riots and civil wars, which are not only turbulent but more often bloody. Cities are sometimes free from their outbreak, but never from their danger.

THE ERROR OF HUMAN JUDGMENTS WHEN THE TRUTH IS HIDDEN

A judge who cannot see consciences tortures and condemns the innocent, and still must judge.

19.6 And what of the judgments that human beings pass on one another? Cities cannot do without them, however deep the peace they enjoy. What are we to think they are like—how wretched, how lamentable? For those who judge cannot see the consciences of those they judge. So they are often forced to seek the truth by torturing innocent witnesses in a case that is not their own. And what of the case in which a man is tortured in his own cause? When the question is whether he is guilty, he is tormented; and though innocent, he pays the most certain penalties for an uncertain crime—not because it is discovered that he committed it, but because it is not known that he did not. And so the judge's ignorance is very often the innocent man's calamity. And there is something still more intolerable, more to be lamented and, if it were possible, washed with fountains of tears. The judge tortures the accused precisely so as not to kill an innocent man unknowingly; yet through the misery of ignorance it comes about that he kills a man both tortured and inno-

15 Matthew 10:36, echoing Micah 7:6.

cent—the very man he had tortured so as not to kill an innocent man. For if, following the wisdom of these philosophers, the accused has chosen to escape from this life rather than endure those tortures any longer, he confesses to what he did not commit. Once he is condemned and executed, the judge still does not know whether he has killed a guilty man or an innocent one—the man he tortured so as not to kill an innocent man unknowingly. And so he tortured an innocent man in order to know, and killed him while still not knowing. In this darkness of social life, will that wise judge take his seat on the bench, or will he not dare? He will certainly take it. For human society, which he thinks it wicked to desert, constrains him and drags him to this duty. For he does not think it wicked that innocent witnesses are tortured in other people's cases; that the accused, often overcome by the force of pain and confessing falsely against themselves, are punished though innocent, after already having been tortured though innocent; that even if they are not punished with death, they very often die under the tortures or as a result of them. Nor does he think it wicked that sometimes the accusers themselves—who perhaps desire to benefit human society by seeing that crimes do not go unpunished—are condemned by a judge who does not know the truth, because the witnesses lie and the defendant holds out savagely against the tortures and will not confess, so that the accusers cannot prove what they charge, even though their charges were true. All these evils, so many and so great, he does not reckon to be sins. For the wise judge does not do these things from a will to harm, but from the necessity of not knowing—and yet, because human society compels him, also from the necessity of judging. This, then, is what we call the misery of man—certainly that, even if not the wickedness of the wise man. Or does he, through the necessity of not knowing and of judging, torture the guiltless and punish the guiltless, and yet is it too little for him to be free of guilt, unless he is happy as well? How much more thoughtful and worthy of a human being it is for him to recognize the

misery in this necessity, to hate it in himself, and, if his wisdom is godly, to cry out to God: "Deliver me from my necessities!"[16]

THE DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES, WHICH DIVIDES HUMAN SOCIETY, AND THE MISERY OF WARS, EVEN THOSE CALLED JUST

Different languages divide humanity; empire brings wars, and even just wars are cause for grief.

19.7 After the civic community or city comes the world, which they set as the third level of human society. They begin from the household, proceed from there to the city, and then come to the world. And the world, like a mass of waters, is the fuller of dangers the larger it is. Here, first of all, the diversity of languages estranges one human being from another. For if two people meet, neither of whom knows the other's language, and they are forced by some necessity not to pass each other by but to stay together, then mute animals, even of different species, associate with each other more easily than these two do, though both are human. For when they cannot communicate what they feel to each other, simply because of the difference of language, so great a likeness of nature is of no help in bringing people together—so much so that a man would rather be with his own dog than with a human stranger. But, it will be said, the imperial city has taken pains to impose on the conquered nations not only its yoke but also its language, through the peace of a shared society, so that there should be no lack of interpreters—indeed, an abundance of them. True. But at the cost of how many and how great wars, how much slaughter of men, how much shedding of human blood was this achieved? And when these were over, the misery of those same evils still did not come to an end. For although there have been, and still are, enemies—foreign nations against which wars have always been waged and are still being waged—yet the very breadth of the empire has given birth to wars of a worse kind, namely social and civil wars. By these

16 Psalm 24:17 (25:17 in most English Bibles).

the human race is shaken more wretchedly, whether while war is waged so that they may at last subside, or while it is feared that they will rise up again.[17] If I wanted to describe, as they deserve, the many and manifold disasters of these evils, their harsh and dreadful necessities—though I could by no means do it as the matter requires—what limit would there be to this lengthy discussion? But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. As if, remembering that he is human, he will not grieve far more that the necessity of just wars has fallen to him! For if they were not just, he would not have to wage them, and so the wise man would have no wars at all. It is the wickedness of the opposing side that forces just wars on the wise man; and that wickedness is certainly something for a human being to grieve over, because it belongs to human beings, even if no necessity of waging war arose from it. So let everyone who reflects with grief on these evils, so great, so horrifying, so cruel, admit that this is misery. But whoever endures them, or thinks about them, without grief of mind certainly thinks himself happy in a far more wretched way, because he has lost even human feeling.

THAT THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOOD PEOPLE CANNOT BE FREE OF CARE, SINCE WE MUST FEAR THE DANGERS OF THIS LIFE

The more good friends we have, the more we fear for them, and their deaths grieve us.

19.8 Suppose we are spared a certain ignorance resembling madness—which nonetheless often befalls us in the wretched condition of this life—by which someone who is an enemy is believed to be a friend, or someone who is a friend is believed to be an enemy. Even so, what consoles us in this human society, so full of errors and hardships, except the unfeigned faith and mutual love of true and good friends? Yet the more of them we have, and in the more places, the farther and wider we fear that

17 "Social" wars are wars against allies (*socii*), like Rome's war with its Italian allies in 91–88 BC.

some evil may befall them out of the huge heaps of evils in this world. For we are anxious not only that they may be afflicted by famine, war, disease or captivity, and that in that slavery they may suffer things we cannot even imagine; but also—and here the fear is far more bitter—that they may be changed into treachery, malice and wickedness. And when these things happen—more often, of course, the more friends we have—and are brought to our knowledge, who can grasp, except one who feels such things, the lashes with which they burn our heart? We would indeed rather hear that they were dead, although we cannot hear even this without grief. For how can it be that the death of those whose life delighted us with the comforts of friendship should bring us no sorrow? Whoever forbids that sorrow, let him forbid, if he can, friendly conversation; let him prohibit or cut off friendly affection; let him, with a harsh numbness of mind, burst the bonds of all human relationships, or decree that they be used in such a way that no sweetness from them floods the soul. But if that can in no way be done, how is it to come about that the death of one whose life is sweet to us should not be bitter? Hence comes grief, a kind of wound or sore of a heart that is not inhuman, and dutiful consolations are applied to heal it. For it does not follow that there is nothing to be healed simply because the better the mind is, the more quickly and easily the healing takes place in it. Mortal life, then, is afflicted, now more gently, now more harshly, even by the deaths of those dearest to us, especially those whose services are necessary to human society. Yet we would rather hear or see that those we love were dead than that they had fallen away from faith or from good morals—that is, had died in the soul itself. The earth is full of this vast supply of evils. That is why it is written: "Is not human life on earth a trial?" and why the Lord himself says: "Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks!" and again: "Because wickedness has abounded," he says, "the love of many will grow cold."[18] So it is that we rejoice for our good friends when they die; and though their death saddens us, it also con-

18 Job 7:1; Matthew 18:7; Matthew 24:12.

soles us more surely, since they have escaped the evils by which, in this life, even good people are crushed or corrupted, or are in danger of both.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE HOLY ANGELS, WHICH CANNOT BE CLEAR TO HUMAN BEINGS IN THIS WORLD BECAUSE OF THE DECEIT OF THE DEMONS, INTO WHOSE POWER FELL THOSE WHO THOUGHT MANY GODS SHOULD BE WORSHIPED

The angels cannot be friends to us as humans are, and demons can pose as angels.

19.9 Then there is the society of the holy angels. Those philosophers who held that the gods are our friends placed it fourth, as if passing from the earth to the universe, so as somehow to take in heaven as well. Here, indeed, we have no fear at all that such friends will sadden us by their death or by their corruption. But they do not mingle with us on the same familiar terms as human beings do—and this too belongs to the hardships of this life. Moreover, as we read, Satan sometimes transforms himself as if into an angel of light, to tempt those who need to be taught in this way or who deserve to be deceived. So God's great mercy is necessary, lest anyone, thinking he has good angels for friends, should have evil demons as false friends, and suffer them as enemies—all the more harmful the more cunning and deceitful they are.[19] And who needs this great mercy of God but human beings in their great misery, weighed down by so much ignorance that they are easily deceived by these demons' pretense? As for those philosophers in the ungodly city who said the gods were their friends, it is quite certain that they fell among evil demons, to whom that whole city is subject and with whom it will suffer eternal punishment. Their rites—or rather their sacrileges—by which they thought those gods should be worshiped, and the filthiest shows, in which the gods' crimes are celebrated and by which they thought the gods should be appeased, make it

19 2 Corinthians 11:14.

clear enough what kind of beings they worship; for these same gods were the authors and exactors of such great disgraces.

WHAT REWARD THE SAINTS GAIN FROM OVERCOMING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THIS LIFE

The saints' temptations make them long for the secure peace where virtue no longer has to fight.

19.10 But not even the saints and the faithful, worshipers of the one true and supreme God, are safe from the demons' deceptions and many-sided temptations. Yet in this place of weakness and in these evil days even this anxiety is not useless, for it makes us seek with more fervent desire that security where peace is most complete and most certain. For there the gifts of nature—that is, the gifts bestowed on our nature by the creator of all natures—will be not only good but everlasting, not only in the soul, which is healed by wisdom, but also in the body, which will be renewed by resurrection. There the virtues will not be struggling against any vices or evils whatever, but will have as the prize of victory eternal peace, which no adversary will disturb. That is the final happiness; that is the end of perfection, an end that has no ending to consume it. Here, indeed, we are called happy when we have peace, however little of it can be had here in a good life; but compared with the happiness we call final, this happiness turns out to be utter misery. So when we mortals, amid mortal things, have such peace as there can be here, then, if we live rightly, virtue makes right use of its goods; and when we do not have it, virtue makes good use even of the evils that a human being suffers. But virtue is true virtue only when it refers to that end all the goods it uses well, whatever it does in its good use of goods and evils, and itself as well—that end where we shall have a peace of such a kind and so great that there could be none better or greater.

THE HAPPINESS OF ETERNAL PEACE, WHICH IS THE SAINTS' END, THAT IS, THEIR TRUE FULFILLMENT

The end of the city of God may be called peace in eternal life or eternal life in peace.

19.11 We could therefore say that the end of our goods is peace, just as we said it is eternal life. This is especially so because a holy psalm says to the very city of God, the subject of this most laborious discussion: "Praise the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion. For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; he has blessed your children within you—he who has made peace your borders." For when the bars of its gates have been strengthened, no one will any longer enter it, and no one will leave it. And so by its "borders"—its ends—we must understand here the peace that we wish to show is final. For the mystical name of that city, Jerusalem, as we have said before, means "vision of peace."[20] But since the word "peace" is often used also of these mortal things, where there is certainly no eternal life, we have preferred to speak of the end of this city, where its supreme good will be, as eternal life rather than as peace. Of this end the apostle says: "But now, set free from sin and made slaves to God, you have your fruit in sanctification, and as your end, eternal life."[21] But again, those who are not familiar with the holy Scriptures could take "eternal life" to mean the life of the wicked as well—either, as some philosophers hold, because of the immortality of the soul, or, as our own faith also holds, because of the endless punishments of the ungodly, who certainly cannot be tormented forever unless they also live forever. So the end of this city, in which it will have its supreme good, should surely be called either peace in eternal life or eternal life in peace, so that everyone can understand it more easily. For the good of peace is so great that even in earthly and mortal affairs

20 NOTE:Psalm 147:1–3 (147:12–14 in most English Bibles). Latin *fines* means both "borders" and "ends," and Augustine plays on both.

21 Romans 6:22; "the apostle" is Paul.

nothing is usually heard with more pleasure, nothing is longed for with more desire, nothing, in short, can be found that is better. If we wish to speak about it at somewhat greater length, we shall not, I think, be burdensome to our readers, both because of the end of this city which is our subject, and because of the very sweetness of peace, which is dear to all.

THAT EVEN THE SAVAGERY OF THOSE AT WAR, AND ALL HUMAN UNREST, DESIRE TO REACH THE GOAL OF PEACE, WITHOUT THE LONGING FOR WHICH NO NATURE EXISTS

Everyone wants peace, even those who make war, robbers, and the monster Cacus.

19.12 For anyone who looks in any way at human affairs and at our common nature will recognize with me that, just as there is no one who does not wish to be joyful, so there is no one who does not wish to have peace. Indeed, even those who want war want nothing but to win; so by waging war they desire to arrive at a glorious peace. For what is victory but the subjugation of those who resist? And when this has been done, there will be peace. So even wars are waged with peace as their aim, even by those who are eager to exercise military courage in command and combat. Hence it is clear that peace is the desired end of war. For every man seeks peace even by waging war, but no one seeks war by making peace. Even those who want the peace they live in to be disturbed do not hate peace; they want it changed to suit their own will. So it is not that they do not want peace to exist; they want it to be the peace they want. In short, even if they have separated themselves from others by sedition, they do not achieve what they intend unless they maintain some semblance of peace with their own fellow conspirators or sworn confederates. So too robbers themselves, in order to assault the peace of others more violently and more safely, want to have peace with their comrades. But suppose there is one robber so overwhelming in strength and so wary of accomplices that he trusts himself to no partner, and, lying in wait alone and prevailing alone, takes his plunder after overpowering and killing whomever he can. Even

he certainly keeps some shadow of peace with those whom he cannot kill and from whom he wishes to hide what he does. And in his own home, with his wife and children and any others he has there, he surely strives to be at peace; he is undoubtedly delighted when they obey him at a nod. For if they do not, he is indignant, he rebukes, he punishes, and, if need be, he sets the peace of his house in order even by savagery. He feels that this peace cannot exist unless all the other members of that domestic society are subject to a certain head, which in his own house he himself is. So if he were offered the service of many—of a city or a nation—so that they served him as he wanted to be served in his own home, he would no longer hide himself as a robber in his lairs but would raise himself up as a king for all to see, while the same craving and malice remained in him. Thus all desire to have peace with their own people, whom they want to live according to their will. For even those against whom they wage war they want, if they can, to make their own, and, once these are subjected, to impose on them the laws of their own peace.

EVEN A MONSTER WANTS PEACE

Even the solitary monster Cacus wanted peace in his cave and in his own body.

But let us imagine someone such as poetic and mythical narrative sings of—someone whom, perhaps because of his very unsociable ferocity, they preferred to call a half-man rather than a man. His kingdom was the solitude of a dreadful cave, and his malice was so singular that his name was derived from it (for in Greek a bad man is called κακός [*kakos*, bad], and that was his name). No wife exchanged tender words with him; he had no children to play with when they were small or to command when they were somewhat older; he enjoyed no conversation with a friend, not even with his father Vulcan—than whom he was happier, and not a little, on this count at least, that he himself fathered no such monster. He gave nothing to anyone, but

took from whomever he could whatever he wanted, whenever he could and whenever he wished. Yet in that solitary cave of his, whose floor, as it is described, "was always warm with fresh slaughter," he wanted nothing else but peace—a peace in which no one would trouble him, and no one's violence or terror would disturb his quiet.[22] Lastly, he desired to have peace with his own body, and the more of it he had, the better off he was. For he gave commands to limbs that obeyed him. And his mortal nature rebelled against him out of need and stirred up the sedition of hunger to sever the soul from the body and drive it out; so, to pacify it with all possible haste, he seized, killed and devoured. Though monstrous and savage, he still provided, monstrously and savagely, for the peace of his own life and safety. And so, if he had been willing to have with others too the peace he was so busy maintaining in his cave and within himself, he would not be called bad, or a monster, or a half-man. Or if the shape of his body and his vomiting of black fires frightened human company away from him, perhaps he was savage not from a craving to harm but from the necessity of staying alive. But perhaps he never existed, or—what is more to be believed—was not such as poetic fancy describes him; for unless Cacus were excessively blamed, Hercules would be too little praised. So such a man, or half-man, is better believed, as I said, never to have existed, like many of the poets' fictions. For even the most savage beasts, from which he had a share of his ferocity (he was also called half-beast), preserve their own kind by a sort of peace—by mating, begetting, giving birth, warming and nourishing their young—though most of them are unsociable and solitary wanderers: not, that is, like deer, doves, starlings and bees, but like lions, foxes, eagles and owls. For what tigress does not purr gently over her cubs and caress them, her ferocity calmed? What kite, however solitary as it circles in search of prey, does not mate, build a nest, warm its eggs, feed its chicks, and preserve with its mate, the mother of its house-

22 Cacus, a fire-breathing monster, son of Vulcan, killed by Hercules on the site of Rome; Augustine draws on Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.190–267.

hold as it were, a domestic society with as much peace as it can? How much more is a human being carried, in a sense, by the laws of his nature to enter into society and to maintain peace with all human beings, as far as lies in him! For even the wicked wage war for the peace of their own people, and would, if they could, make everyone their own, so that all people and all things would serve one man. And how could that happen, unless they consented to his peace, through either love or fear? For thus pride perversely imitates God. It hates equality with its fellows under him, but wants to impose its own domination on its fellows in his place. So it hates the just peace of God and loves its own unjust peace. Yet it cannot help loving peace of some kind. For no one's vice is so contrary to nature as to destroy even the last traces of nature.

So the one who knows how to prefer right to wrong, and the ordered to the perverse, sees that the peace of the unjust, compared with the peace of the just, should not even be called peace. But even what is perverse must be at peace in some part, and from some part, and with some part of the things in which it exists or of which it is composed; otherwise it would be nothing at all. Suppose, for example, that someone hangs head downward. The position of the body and the order of the limbs are certainly perverse, because what nature requires to be above is below, and what nature wants below has been put above. This perversity has disturbed the peace of the flesh and is therefore painful. Yet the soul is at peace with its body and strives for its well-being, and that is why there is someone to feel the pain. And if the soul departs, driven out by these pains, then as long as the framework of the limbs holds together, what remains is not without a certain peace among its parts, and that is why there is still something hanging there. And when the earthly body tends toward the earth and strains against the bond by which it is hung, it is moving toward the order of its own peace and, by the voice of its weight, as it were, demands a place in which to rest. Even when it is lifeless and without any sensation, it does not depart from the natural peace of its order,

whether it holds that peace or is being borne toward it. For if embalming and treatment are applied that do not let the form of the corpse dissolve and decay, a certain peace still joins part to part and attaches the whole mass to an earthly place, one suited to it and therefore peaceful. If, however, no care is taken to preserve it, and it is left to its natural course, it is in a kind of tumult, with exhalations at odds with one another and offensive to our senses (that is what we perceive in the stench), until it accords with the elements of the world and passes away, little by little and particle by particle, into their peace. Yet in no way is anything thereby withdrawn from the laws of that supreme creator and orderer by whom the peace of the universe is governed. For even if tiny animals are born from the corpse of a larger animal, by the same law of the creator each of those little bodies serves its own little soul in the peace of its well-being. And even if the flesh of the dead is devoured by other animals, then wherever it is carried, whatever it is joined to, whatever it is converted and changed into, it finds those same laws, diffused through all things for the preservation of every mortal kind, bringing what is fitting into peace with what is fitting.

THE UNIVERSAL PEACE THAT THE LAW OF NATURE DOES NOT ALLOW TO BE LOST AMID ANY DISTURBANCES, SINCE UNDER A JUST JUDGE EACH COMES BY ORDINANCE TO WHAT HE HAS DESERVED BY HIS WILL

Augustine defines peace at every level, ending with peace as "the tranquillity of order."

19.13 The peace of the body, then, is the ordered proportion of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the ordered repose of its appetites. The peace of the rational soul is the ordered agreement of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the ordered life and health of the living creature. The peace between mortal man and God is ordered obedience in faith under the eternal law. The peace of human beings is ordered concord. The peace of a household is the ordered concord in commanding and obeying among those who live together. The

peace of a city is the ordered concord in commanding and obeying among its citizens. The peace of the heavenly city is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order. Order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal that assigns to each its own place. The wretched, accordingly, insofar as they are wretched, are certainly not at peace, and so they lack the tranquillity of order, in which there is no disturbance. Yet because they are wretched deservedly and justly, they cannot be outside order even in their very wretchedness. They are not joined to the blessed, but it is by the law of order that they are separated from them. And when they are free from disturbance, they are fitted to the conditions in which they find themselves with some degree of harmony, however small. So there is in them some tranquillity of order, and therefore some peace. But they are wretched precisely because, even if they feel no pain in some freedom from care, they are still not where they ought to be free from care and ought not to suffer. They are more wretched still if they are not at peace with the very law by which the natural order is governed. When they do suffer, a disturbance of peace has arisen in the part where they suffer; but there is still peace in the part where pain does not burn and the very frame of the body is not dissolved. Just as there is a kind of life without pain, then, while pain cannot exist without some life, so there is a kind of peace without any war, while war cannot exist without some peace. This is not because of what war is in itself, but because it is waged by or within beings that are natures of some kind—and they would not exist at all unless they subsisted in some sort of peace.

There can, therefore, be a nature in which there is no evil, or even in which no evil can exist; but there cannot be a nature in which there is no good. Accordingly, not even the nature of the devil himself, insofar as it is a nature, is evil; it is perversity that makes it evil. So he did not stand in the truth, but he did not escape the judgment of the truth. He did not remain in the tran-

quillity of order, yet he did not on that account escape the power of the one who orders all things. The good of God that is in his nature does not withdraw him from God's justice, by which he is set in his place in punishment; nor does God there pursue the good that he created, but the evil that the devil committed. For God does not take away all that he gave to the nature: he takes away something and leaves something, so that there may be someone to feel pain at what he has taken away. And the pain itself is evidence both of the good taken away and of the good that is left.[23] For unless some good had been left, he could not grieve for the good that was lost. One who sins is worse if he rejoices in the loss of uprightness; but one who is tormented, if he gains no good from it, grieves at the loss of his well-being. Uprightness and well-being are both goods, and the loss of a good is cause for grief rather than for joy—unless there is compensation by something better, and uprightness of mind is better than health of body. So it is surely more fitting for the unjust man to grieve in his punishment than it was for him to rejoice in his offense. Just as joy at a good forsaken in sin testifies to a bad will, therefore, so grief at a good lost in punishment testifies to a good nature. For whoever grieves at the lost peace of his nature grieves from some remnants of peace, and by these it comes about that his nature is still a friend to itself. In the final punishment, then, it is right that the wicked and ungodly should weep in their torments over the loss of their natural goods, feeling that the one who takes them away is the supremely just God, whom they despised as the supremely generous giver. God, then, the wisest creator and most just orderer of all natures, who established the mortal human race as the greatest ornament of earthly things, gave human beings certain goods suited to this life. These are temporal peace, in the measure that mortal life allows, consisting in health, safety and fellowship with their own kind, together with whatever is necessary either to protect or to recover this peace—such as the things fitly and suitably available to the senses, light and sound, breathable air and

23 "He did not stand in the truth" echoes John 8:44.

drinkable water, and whatever is suitable for feeding, clothing, caring for and adorning the body. He gave them on a most equitable condition: that any mortal who rightly uses such goods, adapted to the peace of mortals, should receive greater and better ones, namely the very peace of immortality and the glory and honor that befit it in eternal life, for the enjoyment of God and of one's neighbor in God; but that whoever uses them wrongly should not receive those and should lose these as well.

THE ORDER AND LAW, EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY, BY WHICH EVEN THOSE WHO RULE SERVE HUMAN SOCIETY, AND THOSE WHO SERVE IT ARE CARED FOR

Humans subordinate bodily peace to the peace of reason, and both to obedience to God.

19.14 All use of temporal things, then, is directed in the earthly city toward the enjoyment of earthly peace, but in the heavenly city toward the enjoyment of eternal peace. So if we were irrational animals, we would seek nothing beyond the ordered proportion of the body's parts and the repose of the appetites—nothing, then, beyond bodily rest and an abundance of pleasures—so that the peace of the body might benefit the peace of the soul. For if the peace of the body is lacking, the peace of the irrational soul is also hindered, since it cannot attain the repose of its appetites. Both together, moreover, benefit the peace that soul and body have with each other, that is, the peace of ordered life and health. For just as animals show that they love the peace of the body when they flee pain, and the peace of the soul when they pursue pleasure to satisfy the needs of their appetites, so by fleeing death they show clearly enough how much they love the peace by which soul and body are bound together. But because man has a rational soul, he subordinates all that he has in common with the beasts to the peace of the rational soul, so that he may contemplate something with his mind and act in accordance with it, and so may have that ordered agreement of knowledge and action which we called the peace of the rational soul. It is for this purpose that he ought to wish not to be

troubled by pain, not to be disturbed by desire, and not to be dissolved by death: so that he may come to know something useful and order his life and conduct according to that knowledge. But lest the weakness of the human mind should lead him, through the very pursuit of knowledge, into the plague of some error, he needs divine teaching, which he may obey with certainty, and divine help, so that he may obey it freely. And since, as long as he is in this mortal body, he is a pilgrim away from the Lord, he "walks by faith, not by sight." Therefore he refers all peace, whether of body or of soul or of body and soul together, to that peace which mortal man has with the immortal God, so that he may have ordered obedience in faith under the eternal law.[24] Now God, our teacher, teaches two chief commandments, love of God and love of neighbor, and in them a man finds three things to love: God, himself and his neighbor. And the man who loves God does not go wrong in loving himself. It follows, then, that he should also help his neighbor to love God, since he is commanded to love his neighbor as himself —and so with his wife, his children, his household, and all the other people he can reach—and that he should wish his neighbor to do the same for him, if he happens to need it. In this way he will be at peace, as far as lies in him, with every human being, in the peace of human beings, that is, in ordered concord. The order of this concord is, first, that he harm no one, and second, that he also help anyone he can. His first concern, then, is for his own people, since he has more ready and easier opportunity to provide for them, whether by the order of nature or by the order of human society itself. Hence the apostle says: "Anyone who does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." From this, then, domestic peace also arises, that is, the ordered concord in commanding and obeying among those who live together. For those who care for others give the commands: the husband to his wife, parents to their children, masters to their slaves. And those who are cared for obey: wives

24 2 Corinthians 5:6–7.

their husbands, children their parents, slaves their masters. But in the household of the just man who lives by faith and is still a pilgrim far from that heavenly city, even those who command serve those whom they appear to command. For they command not from a craving to dominate but from a duty to care for others, not from pride in ruling but from compassion in providing.[25]

NATURAL FREEDOM AND SLAVERY, WHOSE FIRST CAUSE IS SIN, SINCE A PERSON OF EVIL WILL, EVEN IF NOT ANOTHER PERSON'S SLAVE, IS A SLAVE OF HIS OWN LUST

God made humans to rule beasts, not one another; slavery is the result of sin.

19.15 This is what the natural order prescribes; this is how God created man.

For he says: "Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and all creeping things that creep upon the earth." He did not will that the rational being, made in his own image, should have dominion over any but irrational creatures—not man over man, but man over beast. That is why the first just men were set up as shepherds of flocks rather than as kings of men, so that in this way too God might indicate what the order of creation requires and what the deserts of sin demand. For the condition of slavery is rightly understood to have been imposed on the sinner. Accordingly, we nowhere read the word "slave" in the Scriptures until the just man Noah punished his son's sin with this name. So it was guilt that earned this name, not nature. The Latin word for slaves, *servi*, is believed to come from the fact that those who could have been killed by right of war became slaves when the victors spared them: they were called *servi* from *servare*, "to preserve." And even this does not happen apart from what sin deserves.[26] For even when a just

25 1 Timothy 5:8.

26 Genesis 1:26. Noah cursed Canaan, son of Ham, to be a slave after Ham's offense (Genesis 9:25).

war is waged, it is in defense of sin that the opposing side fights; and every victory, even when it falls to the wicked, humbles the vanquished by divine judgment, either correcting their sins or punishing them. The man of God Daniel bears witness to this: in captivity he confesses to God his own sins and the sins of his people, and with devout grief testifies that this was the cause of that captivity. The first cause of slavery, then, is sin, so that man was subjected to man by the bond of his condition. This happens only by the judgment of God, in whom there is no injustice and who knows how to assign different penalties according to the deserts of the offenders. But, as the Lord on high says, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin"; and so many devout people are indeed slaves of wicked masters, who are themselves not free. "For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is also bound as a slave."[27] And it is certainly a happier lot to be the slave of a human being than of a lust, since—to say nothing of others—the very lust for domination ravages the hearts of mortals with the most savage tyranny. Among human beings, in that order of peace by which some are subject to others, humility benefits those who serve just as pride harms those who dominate. But by nature, in which God first created man, no one is the slave either of a human being or of sin. Yet penal slavery too is ordered by that law which commands that the natural order be preserved and forbids it to be disturbed; for if nothing had been done against that law, there would be nothing to restrain by penal slavery. That is why the apostle also admonishes slaves to be subject to their masters and to serve them from the heart with good will. His point is that, if they cannot be set free by their masters, they may themselves make their slavery in a sense free, by serving not with deceitful fear but with faithful love, until injustice passes away and all rule and human authority are abolished, and God is all in all.[28]

27 Daniel's confession is in Daniel 9. The quotations are John 8:34 and 2 Peter 2:19.
28 Ephesians 6:5–7; the closing words echo 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28.

JUST RULE OVER OTHERS

Godly heads of households care for all members alike and correct them for their own good.

19.16 Therefore, although our righteous forefathers had slaves, they managed the peace of their households in such a way that, as regards these temporal goods, they distinguished the lot of their children from the condition of their slaves; but in the worship of God, in whom eternal goods are to be hoped for, they took thought for all the members of their household with equal love. The natural order prescribes this so clearly that the name *paterfamilias* [father of the household] arose from it, and it has spread so widely that even those who rule unjustly are glad to be called by it. But those who are true fathers of their households care for everyone in their household as if they were their children, so that they may worship God and win his favor. They desire and long to reach the heavenly home, where the duty of commanding mortals will not be necessary, because the duty of caring for those who are already happy in that immortality will not be necessary. Until that home is reached, fathers ought to bear the burden of being masters more than slaves bear the burden of being slaves.[29] If anyone in the household opposes domestic peace by disobedience, he is corrected by word or by blow or by any other kind of punishment that is just and lawful, as far as human society permits, for the benefit of the one corrected, so that he may be fitted back into the peace from which he had broken away. For just as it is not kindness to help someone in a way that makes him lose a greater good, so it is not innocence to spare someone in a way that lets him fall into a graver evil. It belongs to the duty of the innocent man, therefore, not only to do harm to no one but also to restrain others from sin or to punish sin, so that either the one punished may be corrected by the experience or others may be deterred by the

29 The Roman *familia* included the slaves of the household, all under the authority of the *paterfamilias*.

example. Since, then, a man's household ought to be the beginning, or a small part, of the city, and every beginning is directed to some end of its own kind, and every part to the completeness of the whole of which it is a part, it is quite clear that domestic peace is directed to civic peace—that is, that the ordered concord in commanding and obeying among those who live together is directed to the ordered concord in commanding and obeying among citizens. So it is that the father of a household ought to take from the law of the city the precepts by which he governs his household, so that it may be in harmony with the peace of the city.

WHAT MAKES FOR PEACE AND WHAT FOR DISCORD BETWEEN THE HEAVENLY SOCIETY AND THE EARTHLY CITY

The heavenly city uses earthly peace and obeys earthly laws, but not in matters of religion.

19.17 But the household of people who do not live by faith pursues earthly peace from the things and advantages of this temporal life, whereas the household of people who live by faith looks for the eternal things promised for the future, and uses earthly and temporal things like a pilgrim. It does not use them so as to be captured by them and turned aside from its course toward God, but so as to be sustained by them, bearing more easily, and not increasing in the least, the burdens of the corruptible body that weighs down the soul. Hence the use of the things necessary for this mortal life is common to both kinds of people and to both kinds of household; but each has its own end in using them, and the ends are very different. So too the earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks earthly peace, and it fixes the concord of its citizens in commanding and obeying on this: that there should be a certain agreement of human wills about the things that pertain to mortal life.[30] But the heavenly city—or rather the part of it that is on pilgrimage in this mortal condition and lives by faith—must also make use of this peace, until this mortal con-

30 "The corruptible body that weighs down the soul" is from Wisdom 9:15.

dition itself, for which such peace is necessary, passes away. Therefore, while it leads the life of its pilgrimage within the earthly city as if in captivity, having already received the promise of redemption and the spiritual gift as a pledge, it does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city by which the things suited to sustaining mortal life are administered. Since this mortal condition is common to both, it does this so that concord may be maintained between the two cities in the things that pertain to it. Now the earthly city has had certain wise men of its own whom divine teaching rejects. Either from their own conjecture or deceived by demons, they believed that many gods had to be won over to human affairs, and that different things were in a sense subject to their different offices: the body to one, the mind to another; and within the body itself, the head to one, the neck to another, and each of the remaining parts to a separate god; likewise within the mind, natural talent to one, learning to another, anger to one, desire to another; and among the things connected with life itself, livestock to one, wheat to another, wine to one, oil to another, forests to one, money to another, navigation to one, wars and victories to another, marriages to one, childbirth and fertility to another, and all the rest to others. The heavenly city, by contrast, knew that the one God alone was to be worshiped, and with faithful devotion held that to him alone was owed that service which in Greek is called λατρεία [*latreia*, worship] and is due to none but God. As a result, it could not share laws of religion with the earthly city; for their sake it had to dissent from it and to be a burden to those who thought otherwise, and to endure their anger and hatred and the assaults of persecution—except when it repelled the hostility of its opponents, sometimes by the fear its numbers inspired, and always by divine help. This heavenly city, then, while it is on pilgrimage on earth, calls out citizens from all nations and gathers a pilgrim society of every language. It does not care about any differences in customs, laws and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained. It annuls or destroys none of them; rather, it even preserves and follows whatever, though

different among different nations, is directed to one and the same end of earthly peace—provided it does not hinder the religion which teaches that the one supreme and true God is to be worshiped. So the heavenly city too, in this pilgrimage of its own, makes use of earthly peace. It protects and seeks the agreement of human wills about the things that pertain to mortal human nature, as far as is permitted without harm to piety and religion, and it refers that earthly peace to heavenly peace. This is so truly peace that it alone should be regarded and called peace for the rational creature: namely, a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God and of one another in God. When we arrive there, life will not be a dying life but one fully and surely living; and the body will not be an animal body, which weighs down the soul as it decays, but a spiritual body, lacking nothing and in every part subject to the will. This peace it possesses while on pilgrimage in faith, and by this faith it lives justly, when it refers to the attainment of that peace every good action it performs toward God and neighbor; for the life of a city is certainly a social life.

HOW DIFFERENT THE DOUBTING OF THE NEW ACADEMY IS FROM THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Against the New Academy, the city of God trusts reason, the senses and Scripture.

19.18 As for the distinction Varro brought in from the New Academics, for whom everything is uncertain, the city of God utterly detests such doubt as madness. About the things it grasps by mind and reason, its knowledge is small, because of the corruptible body that weighs down the soul (for, as the apostle says, "we know in part"), but that knowledge is still most certain. It also trusts the senses, which the mind uses through the body, in what each thing plainly shows, for anyone who thinks the senses should never be trusted is deceived more wretchedly still. It believes, too, the holy Scriptures, both old and new, which we call canonical. From them comes the very faith by which the just person lives, and through which we walk

without doubting as long as we are on pilgrimage away from the Lord. While this faith stays safe and certain, we may, without deserving reproach, doubt about some things: things we have not perceived by sense or by reason, that canonical Scripture has not made clear to us, and that have not come to our knowledge through witnesses whom it would be absurd not to believe.[31]

THE DRESS AND CUSTOMS OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE

Christians may keep any dress or way of life; leisure and action are balanced by love.

19.19 It makes no difference at all to this city in what dress or manner of life anyone follows the faith by which we come to God, provided it is not contrary to God's commandments. So when philosophers too become Christians, it compels them to change not their dress or their customary way of living, which is no hindrance to religion, but their false doctrines. It therefore cares nothing at all for the distinction Varro brought in from the Cynics, as long as a person does nothing shameful or intemperate. As for those three kinds of life—the leisured, the active, and the one compounded of both—anyone can, with faith kept safe, lead his life in any of them and reach the eternal rewards. Still, it matters what a person holds to out of love of truth, and what he spends in the duty of love. No one ought to be so leisured that in his leisure he gives no thought to his neighbor's good, nor so active that he does not seek the contemplation of God. In leisure, what should delight us is not idle inactivity but the search for truth or its discovery, so that each person may make progress in it and not begrudge another what he has found. In action, on the other hand, what we should love is not honor or power in this life, since "all is vanity under the sun." We should love the work itself that is done through that honor or power, if it is done rightly and usefully—that is, if it serves the salvation of those under us, the salvation that is according to God. We have

31 1 Corinthians 13:9.

already discussed this above. That is why the apostle says, "Whoever desires the office of bishop desires a good work." He wanted to explain what the episcopate is: it is the name of a work, not of an honor.[32] The word is Greek, and it comes from the fact that the one placed over others oversees those he is placed over—that is, he takes care of them. For σκοπός [*skopos*] means "attention," so ἐπισκοπεῖν [*episkopein*] we could, if we wished, render in Latin as *superintendere*, "to oversee." The point is that whoever loves to preside over others, and not to be of service to them, should understand that he is no bishop. So no one is barred from the pursuit of knowing the truth, which belongs to praiseworthy leisure. But a high position, without which a people cannot be governed, is unfittingly sought, even if it is held and administered as is fitting. Therefore the love of truth seeks holy leisure; the necessity of love takes up righteous business. If no one lays this burden on us, we should give our time to perceiving and contemplating truth. But if it is laid on us, it must be taken up because of the necessity of love. Yet even then the delight of truth must not be wholly abandoned, lest that sweetness be taken away and this necessity crush us.

THAT THE CITIZENS OF THE SAINTS ARE HAPPY IN HOPE DURING THE TIME OF THIS LIFE

Life here is happy only in hope of eternal peace; without that hope it is misery.

19.20 Since, then, the supreme good of the city of God is eternal and perfect peace—not a peace through which mortals pass as they are born and die, but one in which they remain immortal, suffering nothing adverse at all—who would deny that that life is supremely happy? Or who would not judge this life lived here, however full it may be of goods of soul and body and of external things, utterly miserable by comparison? Yet whoever holds this life in such a way that he directs its use toward the end of that other life, which he loves most ardently and hopes for most

32 Ecclesiastes 1:2–3; 1 Timothy 3:1.

faithfully, may without absurdity be called happy even now—by that hope rather than by this reality. But this reality without that hope is a false happiness and a great misery. For it does not make use of the true goods of the soul. That is no true wisdom which, in the things it discerns with prudence, carries out with courage, restrains with temperance and distributes with justice, does not direct its aim toward that end where God will be all in all, in secure eternity and perfect peace.[33]

WHETHER, BY THE DEFINITIONS OF SCIPIO IN CICERO'S DIALOGUE, THERE EVER WAS A ROMAN COMMONWEALTH

By Scipio's definition of a people as bound by justice, Rome was never a true commonwealth.

19.21 This, then, is the place to set out, as briefly and clearly as I can, what I promised in the second book of this work to demonstrate: that, according to the definitions Scipio uses in Cicero's books *On the Republic*, there never was a Roman commonwealth. For he briefly defines the commonwealth as "the affair of the people." If this definition is true, there never was a Roman commonwealth, because it never was the people's affair, and that is how he wanted the commonwealth to be defined. For he defined a people as "a gathering of a multitude united by agreement on what is right and by a sharing of interests." What he means by agreement on what is right, he explains in the course of the discussion, showing that a commonwealth cannot be carried on without justice. So where there is no true justice, there can be no right either.[34] For what is done by right is surely done justly, and what is done unjustly cannot be done by right. Unjust human enactments are not to be called or thought rights, since even they themselves say that right is what has flowed from the fountain of justice. They also say it is false—though some who think

33 1 Corinthians 15:28.

34 Scipio Aemilianus (185–129 BC) is the main speaker in Cicero's dialogue *On the Republic* (written 54–51 BC); the promise was made in 2.21. The Latin plays on *res publica* (commonwealth, literally "public affair") and *res populi* ("the people's affair").

wrongly commonly claim it—that right is whatever is advantageous to the stronger. Therefore, where there is no true justice, there can be no gathering of human beings united by agreement on what is right, and so no people according to that definition of Scipio, or Cicero. And if there is no people, there is no affair of the people either, but only the affair of some sort of multitude not worthy of the name of a people.[35] Consequently, if a commonwealth is the affair of the people, and there is no people that is not united by agreement on what is right, and there is no right where there is no justice, it undoubtedly follows that where there is no justice there is no commonwealth. Now justice is the virtue that gives to each his own. What kind of justice in a human being is it, then, that takes that very human being away from the true God and subjects him to unclean demons? Is this giving to each his own? Is someone who takes a farm away from the one who bought it and hands it over to someone with no right to it unjust, while someone who takes himself away from the God who rules him and made him, and serves evil spirits, is just?

Certainly, in those same books *On the Republic*, the case for justice against injustice is argued most keenly and powerfully. Earlier, the side of injustice had been pleaded against justice, and it was said that a commonwealth could not stand or grow except through injustice. The strongest point put forward was this: it is unjust for human beings to be slaves to other human beings who are their masters, and yet unless an imperial city, whose commonwealth is great, follows this injustice, it cannot rule its provinces. To this the side of justice replied that it is just, because slavery is beneficial to such people, and is done for their benefit when it is done rightly—that is, when the wicked are deprived of license to do wrong. Once subdued, they will be better off, because unsubdued they were worse off. And to support this reasoning a noble example was added, as if drawn from nature, and it was said: "Why, then, does God command man,

35 The view that justice is the advantage of the stronger is put in the mouth of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*.

the mind the body, reason lust and the other vicious parts of the mind?"[36] This example plainly shows well enough that slavery is beneficial to some, and that to serve God is beneficial to all. The mind that serves God rightly commands the body, and within the mind itself reason, subject to the Lord God, rightly commands lust and the other vices. So where a human being does not serve God, what justice are we to suppose there is in him? For a mind that does not serve God can in no way justly command the body, nor human reason the vices. And if there is no justice in such a person, there is certainly none in a gathering of people made up of such persons. So here there is not that agreement on what is right which makes a multitude of human beings a people, whose affair is said to be the commonwealth. And what shall I say about interest, by the sharing of which, too, a gathering of human beings is called a people, as the definition has it? For if you consider carefully, there is no benefit at all for those who live impiously—as everyone lives who does not serve God but serves demons, demons who are the more impious the more they want sacrifices offered to themselves as if to gods, though they are the most unclean of spirits. Still, I think what we have said about agreement on what is right is enough to show that, by this definition, a people in which there is no justice is not a people whose affair could be called a commonwealth. If they say that the Romans in their commonwealth served not unclean spirits but good and holy gods, must we really repeat over and over the same things we have already said enough—indeed more than enough? Who that has reached this point through the earlier books of this work could still doubt that the Romans served evil and impure demons, unless he were either utterly dull-witted or shamelessly contentious? But to say nothing of what kind of beings they were whom they worshiped with sacrifices: in the law of the true God it is written, "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted, except to the Lord alone." So

36 In Book 3 of Cicero's *On the Republic*, Philus argues the case for injustice, following the skeptic Carneades, and Laelius the case for justice.

he who gave this command with so great a threat wished no sacrifice to be offered to gods, whether good or bad.[37]

WHETHER THE GOD WHOM CHRISTIANS SERVE IS THE TRUE GOD, TO WHOM ALONE SACRIFICE SHOULD BE OFFERED

The God Christians worship is the God of the prophets, whom even Varro and Porphyry acknowledged.

19.22 But someone may reply: "Who is this God, or how is he proved worthy, that the Romans should have obeyed him and worshiped none of the gods but him with sacrifices?" It shows great blindness to be still asking who this God is. He is the God whose prophets foretold the things we see. He is the God from whom Abraham received the answer, "In your seed all nations shall be blessed." That this is fulfilled in Christ, who according to the flesh sprang from that seed, is acknowledged, whether they like it or not, by the very people who have remained enemies of this name. He is the God whose divine Spirit spoke through those whose prophecies, fulfilled through the Church that we see spread throughout the whole world, I set out in the earlier books.[38] He is the God whom Varro, the most learned of the Romans, takes to be Jupiter, though he does not know what he is saying. I thought this worth mentioning because a man of such learning could not think this God either nonexistent or contemptible, since he believed him to be the one he thought the supreme god. Finally, he is the God whom Porphyry, the most learned of philosophers, though the bitterest enemy of the Christians, acknowledges as a great god, even through the oracles of those whom he takes to be gods.[39]

37 Exodus 22:20.
38 Genesis 22:18.
39 Porphyry (c. AD 234–305), pupil of Plotinus, was a Neoplatonist philosopher who wrote a work against the Christians.

WHAT PORPHYRY SAYS THE ORACLES OF THE GODS ANSWERED ABOUT CHRIST

Porphyry quotes oracles that condemn Christians yet praise Christ as a pious man.

19.23 In the books he calls ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας [Philosophy from Oracles], he collects and writes down what are supposedly divine responses on matters belonging to philosophy. To give his very words, as they have been translated from Greek into Latin: "To someone who asked," he says, "what god he could appease so as to call his wife back from Christianity, Apollo said this in verse." Then come these words, supposedly Apollo's: "You might perhaps more easily write in letters pressed into water, or spread light wings and fly through the air like a bird, than call back the mind of your impious wife once she is polluted. Let her go on as she likes, singing in empty delusions to a dead god—a ruined man condemned by judges who judged rightly, and killed in full view by the worst of deaths, bound with iron." Then, after these verses of Apollo, which have been translated into Latin without keeping the meter, he added: "In these words he revealed the incurable nature of their opinion, saying that the Jews accept God more than these people do." See how, in denigrating Christ, he has put the Jews above the Christians, admitting that the Jews accept God. For this is how he explained the verses of Apollo that say Christ was killed by judges who judged rightly—as if, since they judged justly, he was deservedly punished. I leave aside what Apollo's lying prophet said about Christ and what Porphyry believed, or whether perhaps he himself invented the claim that the prophet said what he did not say. How consistent he is with himself, or how he makes the oracles agree with one another, we shall see later. Here, at any rate, he says that the Jews, as those who accept God, judged rightly about Christ when they decided he should be tortured to death by the worst of deaths. So the God of the Jews, to whom he bears witness, ought to have been heeded when he says, "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted, except to the Lord alone."

But let us come to plainer statements and hear how great he says the God of the Jews is. Again, in reply to what he asked Apollo—which is better, the word (that is, reason) or the law—"He answered," he says, "speaking these verses." Then he adds Apollo's verses, among which are these—I take from them only as much as is enough: "But in God," he says, "the begetter, and king before all things, before whom heaven and earth and sea and the hidden places of the underworld tremble, and the very divinities shudder; their law is the Father, whom the holy Hebrews greatly honor." By such an oracle of his god Apollo, Porphyry has called the God of the Hebrews so great that even the divinities themselves shudder before him. Since, then, this God has said, "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted," I am amazed that Porphyry himself did not shudder, and was not afraid of being uprooted for sacrificing to gods.

This philosopher also says good things about Christ, as if he had forgotten the insult of his that we spoke of a little earlier—or as if his gods had cursed Christ in their sleep and, on waking, recognized that he was good and praised him as he deserved. Indeed, as if about to bring out something marvelous and incredible, he says: "What we are about to say may well seem to some contrary to expectation. For the gods have declared Christ most pious, and say he has become immortal, and they remember him with high praise. But the Christians," he says, "they call polluted and defiled and entangled in error, and they use many such blasphemies against them." Then he adds supposed oracles of the gods blaspheming the Christians, and after these he says: "To those who asked whether Christ is God, Hecate said: 'You know how the immortal soul goes on after the body; but when it is cut off from wisdom, it wanders forever.[40] That soul belongs to a man most outstanding in piety; they worship it, though the truth is foreign to them.'"

Then, weaving his own words onto those of this so-called oracle, he says: "So she said he was a most pious man, and that

40 Hecate was a Greek goddess associated with magic, crossroads and the underworld.

his soul, like the souls of other pious men, was granted immortality after death, and that the Christians worship it in ignorance. And to those who asked," he says, "'Why, then, was he condemned?' the goddess replied in an oracle: 'The body is always exposed to torments that weaken it, but the soul of the pious dwells in a heavenly seat. That soul, however, by fate gave to other souls—those to whom the fates did not grant to obtain the gifts of the gods or to have knowledge of immortal Jupiter—to be entangled in error. They are therefore hated by the gods, because those for whom it was not fated to know God or to receive gifts from the gods were given by fate, through him, to be entangled in error. But he himself was pious, and like the pious he went to heaven. So you shall not blaspheme him, but you shall pity the madness of men; from him comes their easy and headlong danger.'"

Who is so foolish as not to understand that these oracles were either invented by a cunning man, and one most hostile to the Christians, or given as responses by impure demons with a similar purpose? The aim, of course, is that because they praise Christ, they may be believed to be telling the truth when they disparage Christians, and so, if they can, block the way of eternal salvation, the way in which each person becomes a Christian. For they see that it does not run counter to their thousand-shaped cunning in doing harm if they are believed when they praise Christ, so long as they are also believed when they disparage Christians. In this way they make anyone who believes both into the kind of praiser of Christ who does not want to be a Christian; and so, although Christ is praised by him, Christ does not set him free from the domination of these demons. All the more so because they praise Christ in such a way that whoever believes in him as they portray him is not a true Christian but a Photinian heretic, one who knows Christ only as a man and not also as God. So he cannot be saved through him, nor avoid or loosen the snares of these lying demons. We, however, can approve neither Apollo when he disparages Christ nor Hecate when she praises him. He wants

Christ to be believed wicked, since he says he was killed by judges who judged rightly; she wants him believed a most pious man, but only a man.[41] Yet the aim of both is one and the same: they do not want people to be Christians, because unless they are Christians they cannot be rescued from their power. But let this philosopher—or rather those who believe such so-called oracles against the Christians—first, if they can, make Hecate and Apollo agree with each other about Christ, so that they either both condemn him or both praise him. Even if they could do that, we would nonetheless shun the deceitful demons, whether they disparaged Christ or praised him. But since their god and goddess disagree with each other about Christ, he disparaging and she praising, people surely do not believe them when they blaspheme Christians—if they themselves think rightly.

Now Porphyry—or Hecate—in praising Christ, while saying that he himself by fate gave Christians to be entangled in error, nonetheless lays out what he thinks are the causes of that error. Before I set them out from his own words, I first ask: if Christ by fate gave Christians entanglement in error, did he do so willingly or unwillingly? If willingly, how is he just? If unwillingly, how is he happy? But now let us hear the causes of that error. "There are," he says, "earthly spirits, very small, subject in a certain place to the power of evil demons. From these the wise men of the Hebrews—one of whom was this Jesus too, as you heard from the divine sayings of Apollo quoted above—from these worst of demons and lesser spirits, then, the Hebrews kept religious people away and forbade them to give their attention to them. Rather, they told them to venerate the heavenly gods, and still more to venerate God the Father." "This," he says, "the gods also command, and we showed above how they urge us to turn the mind toward God, and order us to worship him everywhere. But the uneducated and those of impious nature, to whom fate truly did not grant to obtain gifts from the gods or to have a

41 Photinus, a fourth-century bishop of Sirmium, was condemned for teaching that Christ was only a man.

notion of immortal Jupiter, would not listen to the gods and to divine men. They have rejected all the gods, while the forbidden demons they not only do not hate but revere. And though they pretend to worship God, they do not do the only things by which God is adored. For God, as the Father of all, needs nothing; but it goes well with us when we adore him through justice and chastity and the other virtues, making our very life a prayer to him through imitation of him and inquiry into him. For inquiry purifies," he says, "and imitation deifies, by working our disposition toward him." He has indeed spoken well of God the Father, and has said by what way of life he is to be worshiped. The prophetic books of the Hebrews are full of such precepts, where the life of the saints is either commanded or praised. But about the Christians he errs, or slanders, exactly as much as the demons he takes for gods wish him to. As if it were hard for anyone to recall the shameful and disgraceful things done in theaters and temples in the service of the gods, and to consider what is read, said and heard in the churches, or what is offered to the true God, and from this to understand where morals are built up and where they are torn down! And who but a diabolical spirit told or inspired in him so empty and obvious a lie as that Christians revere, rather than hate, the demons whose worship the Hebrews forbade? But that God whom the wise men of the Hebrews worshiped forbids sacrifice to be offered even to the holy angels of heaven and the powers of God, whom we venerate and love as most blessed fellow citizens during this mortal pilgrimage of ours. He thunders this in his law, which he gave to his Hebrew people, saying with great menace: "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted." Someone might think the command was only that sacrifice not be offered to the worst demons and earthly spirits, whom this man calls very small or lesser. (These too are called gods in the holy Scriptures—gods not of the Hebrews but of the nations, as the Seventy translators plainly put it in the psalm, saying, "For the gods of the nations are demons.") So that no one, then, would think it was forbidden to sacrifice to these demons but permitted to sacrifice to the heav-

enly beings, whether all or some of them, he at once added, "except to the Lord alone," that is, "except to the Lord only." This was so that no one, from the words *Domino soli*, might perhaps believe the Lord to be the sun and think sacrifice should be offered to him; and that this is not the meaning is very easily found in the Greek Scriptures.[42]

So the God of the Hebrews, to whom even this great philosopher bears such great testimony, gave his Hebrew people a law written in the Hebrew language—not obscure and unknown, but now spread abroad among all nations—and in that law it is written: "Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted, except to the Lord alone." What need is there to search out many passages on this subject in his law and his prophets? Or rather, not to search them out, for they are not hidden or rare, but to gather up those that are plain and frequent and put them into this discussion of mine—passages that make it clearer than daylight that the true and supreme God wished sacrifice to be offered to no one at all except himself alone? Here is this one saying, spoken briefly—or rather grandly—menacingly but truthfully by that God whom their most learned men proclaim so excellently: let it be heard, feared and fulfilled, lest uprooting overtake the disobedient.

THE TRUE SACRIFICE AND THE TRUE PEOPLE

True sacrifice is God's city itself; without the justice of serving God there is no people.

"Whoever sacrifices to gods shall be uprooted," he says, "except to the Lord alone." This is not because he needs anything, but because it is to our benefit to be his. For to him it is sung in the sacred writings of the Hebrews: "I said to the Lord: You are my God, for you have no need of my goods." His most glorious and best sacrifice is we ourselves, that is, his city. We celebrate the

42 Psalm 95:5 (96:5 in most English Bibles), in the Septuagint, the Greek translation traditionally made by seventy translators. Latin *soli* can mean "alone" or "to the sun"; the Greek has no such ambiguity.

mystery of this in our offerings, which are known to the faithful, as we argued in the preceding books. For divine oracles rang out through the Hebrew prophets that the victims the Jews offered as a shadow of what was to come would cease, and that the nations, from the rising of the sun to its setting, would offer one sacrifice, as we now see happening. We have brought forward some of these oracles, as many as seemed sufficient, and have already scattered them through this work.[43] Consider, then, the justice by which the one supreme God rules a city that obeys him according to his grace, so that it sacrifices to no one but him alone. Through it, in all the people who belong to that city and obey God, the soul also faithfully rules the body, and reason rules the vices in lawful order. So, just as the individual righteous person does, the community and people of the righteous live by faith, which works through love. This is the love by which a person loves God as God ought to be loved, and his neighbor as himself. Where, then, this justice is absent, there is certainly no gathering of human beings united by agreement on what is right and by a sharing of interests. And if there is no such gathering, there is certainly no people, if this definition of a people is true. Therefore there is no commonwealth either, for where there is no people, there is no "affair of the people."

BY WHAT DEFINITION NOT ONLY THE ROMANS BUT OTHER KINGDOMS TOO MAY RIGHTLY CLAIM THE NAMES OF A PEOPLE AND A COMMONWEALTH

Defined as a multitude united by what it loves, Rome was a people and a commonwealth.

19.24 But suppose a people is defined in some other way. One might say, for example: "A people is a gathering of a multitude of rational beings united by a harmonious sharing in the things it loves." Then, to see what kind of people each one is, we must certainly look at what it loves. Yet whatever it loves, it is not absurd to call it a people, provided it is a gathering of a multi-

43 Exodus 22:20; Psalm 15:2 (16:2 in most English Bibles).

tude, not of cattle but of rational creatures, united by a harmonious sharing in the things it loves. It is a better people the better the things on which it agrees, and a worse one the worse the things on which it agrees. By this definition of ours, the Roman people is a people, and its affair is without doubt a commonwealth. What that people loved in its earliest times and in the times that followed, history bears witness. History also shows what morals brought it to the bloodiest factional strife, and from there to the Social and Civil Wars, breaking and corrupting that very concord which is, in a sense, the health of a people. We have set out much of this in the earlier books. Yet I would not on that account say either that it is not a people or that its affair is not a commonwealth, so long as there remains some sort of gathering of a rational multitude, united by a harmonious sharing in the things it loves. And what I have said of this people and this commonwealth should be understood as said and meant of the commonwealth of the Athenians or of any of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, and of that earlier Babylon of the Assyrians, when in their commonwealths they held empires small or great. The same holds for any other commonwealth of any other nations.[44] For in general, the city of the ungodly lacks true justice. In it, God does not rule an obedient city so that it offers sacrifice to no one but him alone. As a result, the soul does not rightly and faithfully rule the body in it, nor does reason rule the vices.

THAT THERE CAN BE NO TRUE VIRTUES WHERE THERE IS NO TRUE RELIGION

Virtues not referred to God are vices rather than virtues.

19.25 However praiseworthy the soul's rule over the body and reason's rule over the vices may appear, if the soul and reason itself do not serve God as God himself has commanded that he be served, they do not rule the body and the vices rightly at all.

44 The Social War (91–88 BC) was fought between Rome and its Italian allies; the Civil Wars followed, from Marius and Sulla to Octavian.

For what kind of mistress of the body and the vices can a mind be if it does not know the true God and is not subject to his rule, but is prostituted to the most vicious demons, who corrupt it? Hence the virtues it seems to itself to possess, through which it rules the body and the vices, are themselves vices rather than virtues if it refers them to obtaining or keeping anything other than God. Some think that virtues are true and honorable when they are referred to themselves and sought for no other end. But even then they are puffed up and proud, and so they must be judged not virtues but vices. For what makes the flesh live does not come from the flesh but is above it. In the same way, what makes a human being live happily does not come from man but is above man. This is true not only of man, but of every heavenly power and virtue as well.

THE PEACE OF THE PEOPLE ESTRANGED FROM GOD, WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD USE FOR GODLINESS WHILE ON PILGRIMAGE IN THIS WORLD

The people of God make use of Babylon's earthly peace and pray for it.

19.26 Therefore, as the soul is the life of the flesh, so God is the happy life of a human being. Of him the sacred writings of the Hebrews say: "Happy the people whose God is the Lord." Wretched, then, is the people estranged from that God. Yet even such a people loves a peace of its own, which is not to be condemned. It will not have that peace at the end, however, because it does not use it well before the end. Still, it is in our interest too that it should have this peace in the meantime, in this life. For as long as the two cities are intermingled, we also make use of the peace of Babylon. The people of God is set free from Babylon by faith, but in such a way that for the present it lives as a pilgrim alongside it.[45] For this reason the apostle also admonished the Church to pray for its kings and those in high places, adding: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and love." The prophet Jeremiah foretold captivity to the ancient

45 Psalm 143:15 (144:15 in most English Bibles).

people of God. By divine command, he told them to go obediently into Babylon, serving their God even by this patience. He too urged that prayer be made for Babylon, saying: "For in its peace is your peace." This is, of course, a temporal peace for the time being, which is common to good and bad alike.[46]

THE PEACE OF THOSE WHO SERVE GOD, WHOSE PERFECT TRANQUILLITY CANNOT BE GRASPED IN THIS TEMPORAL LIFE

Our peace and justice here consist more in forgiveness of sins than in perfect virtue.

19.27 Our own peace, however, is with God both here, through faith, and in eternity, when it will be with him through sight. But here, whether it is the common peace or our own, peace is such that it is a solace for misery rather than the joy of happiness. Even our justice, though it is true because of the true end of good to which it is referred, is in this life such that it consists in the forgiveness of sins rather than in the perfection of virtues. The prayer of the whole city of God on pilgrimage on earth is witness to this. For through all its members it cries out to God: "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This prayer is not effective for those whose faith without works is dead. It is effective for those whose faith works through love.[47] For reason, though subject to God, does not perfectly rule the vices in this mortal condition and in the corruptible body, which weighs down the soul. That is why such a prayer is necessary for the righteous. Certainly, although the vices are ruled, they are by no means ruled without conflict. In this place of weakness, something creeps in even on one who fights well, or on one who has conquered and subdued such enemies and is master over them. So sin is committed, if not by an easy deed, then surely by a slip of the tongue or a fleeting thought. And therefore, as long as the vices are being ruled, there is no full

46 1 Timothy 2:2; Jeremiah 29:7.
47 Matthew 6:12; James 2:17.

peace. The vices that resist are subdued in perilous battle. The vices that have been conquered are not yet triumphed over in secure repose, but are still held down by an anxious rule. In these temptations, then—all of which are briefly summed up in the divine words, "Is not human life on earth a temptation?"—[48] who would presume to live in such a way that he has no need to say to God, "Forgive us our debts," except a man exalted in his own eyes? Such a man is not truly great, but puffed up and swollen. He who bestows grace on the humble justly resists him. That is why it is written: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Here, therefore, justice in each individual consists in this: God rules the obedient human being, the soul rules the body, and reason rules the vices, even when they rebel, either by subduing them or by resisting them. It also consists in seeking from God himself both grace for merits and pardon for sins, and in giving thanks for the good things received.[49] That final peace is the goal to which this justice must be referred, and it must be kept in order to attain it. In that peace our nature, healed by immortality and incorruption, will have no vices. Nothing will resist any of us, either from another or from ourselves. So there will be no need for reason to rule the vices, since there will be none. Instead, God will rule man, and the soul will rule the body, and the sweetness and ease of obeying there will be as great as the happiness of living and reigning. There this will be eternal in all and in each, and it will be certain that it is eternal. Therefore the peace of this happiness, or the happiness of this peace, will be the supreme good.

TO WHAT END THE WICKED WILL COME

The end of the wicked is the second death, a war without end within themselves.

19.28 But for those who do not belong to this city of God there will be, on the contrary, everlasting misery, which is also called the

48 Job 7:1.
49 James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.

second death. It is called death because neither the soul nor the body can be said to live there. The soul will be estranged from the life of God, and the body will be subject to eternal pains. For this reason that second death will be harsher, because it cannot be ended by death. Misery seems to be the opposite of happiness and death of life, and in the same way war seems to be the opposite of peace. Peace has been proclaimed and praised as the end of goods. So it is fair to ask what war, or what kind of war, can be understood by contrast as the end of evils. Whoever asks this, let him consider what is harmful and destructive in war. He will see that it is nothing other than the opposition and conflict of things with one another. What war, then, can be imagined more grievous and bitter than one in which the will is so opposed to passion, and passion to the will, that their hostility can be ended by the victory of neither? What could be worse than one in which the force of pain so wars with the very nature of the body that neither yields to the other?

For here, when this conflict occurs, either pain wins and death takes away sensation, or nature wins and health removes the pain. But there, pain remains to torment, and nature endures to feel it. Neither fails, so that the punishment may not fail. These are the ends of good and evil, the former to be sought, the latter to be avoided. It is through judgment that the good will pass to the former and the bad to the latter. So I will discuss this judgment, so far as God grants, in the following book.

Book XX

The Last Judgment
The two resurrections, the thousand years, Antichrist, and the judgment in Scripture.

THAT ALTHOUGH GOD JUDGES AT ALL TIMES, THIS BOOK IS PROPERLY ABOUT HIS LAST JUDGMENT

God judges always, but this book concerns the last judgment when Christ comes.

20.1 I am going to speak, so far as God himself grants, about the day of God's last judgment, and to defend it against the ungodly and the unbelieving. So I must first lay down the divine testimonies, like the foundation of a building. Those who refuse to believe them try to oppose them with petty human arguments that are false and deceptive. They either contend that a testimony brought from the sacred writings means something else, or deny altogether that it was spoken by God. For I do not think there is any mortal who, once he has understood those testimonies as they were spoken and has believed that they were spoken by the supreme and true God through holy souls, would not yield to them and agree. He may also confess this aloud. Or, because of some fault, he may be ashamed or afraid to confess it. Or he may even, with an obstinacy very like madness, strive with the utmost contentiousness to defend what he knows or believes to be false.

The whole Church of the true God holds, in its confession and profession of faith, that Christ will come from heaven to judge the living and the dead. This is what we call the last day of divine judgment, that is, the final time. For over how many days

this judgment will extend is uncertain. But no one who has read the holy Scriptures, however carelessly, is unaware that in their usage "day" is regularly put for "time." When we speak of the day of God's judgment, we add "last" or "final" because he judges even now, and has judged from the beginning of the human race. He judged when he expelled the first human beings from paradise and cut them off from the tree of life, as the perpetrators of a great sin. Indeed, when he did not spare the angels who sinned, whose prince, overthrown by himself, overthrew human beings out of envy, he undoubtedly judged. Nor is it without his deep and just judgment that the life of both demons and human beings, in this airy heaven and on earth, is utterly wretched and filled to the brim with errors and hardships. Yet even if no one had sinned, it would not have been without good and right judgment that he would keep the whole rational creation in eternal happiness, clinging with unwavering perseverance to him, its Lord. He judges, moreover, not only universally concerning the race of demons and of humans, that they should be wretched because of what the first sins deserved, but also concerning the individual works of each, which they do by the choice of their will. For the demons too pray not to be tormented, and it is certainly not unjust either that they are spared or that each of them is tormented for his own wickedness. Human beings, too, pay penalties imposed by God for their deeds, often openly and always secretly, whether in this life or after death. Yet no human being acts rightly unless helped by divine aid, and no demon or human acts wickedly unless permitted by divine judgment, a judgment that is also perfectly just. For, as the apostle says, "There is no injustice with God"; and, as he also says elsewhere, "His judgments are unsearchable and his ways inscrutable." In this book, then, I shall discuss, so far as he grants, neither those first judgments of God nor these intermediate ones, but the very last, when Christ is to come from heaven to judge the living and the dead.[1] This is the day that is now properly called the day of judgment, because there will be

1 Romans 9:14 and Romans 11:33.

no room then for the ignorant complaint asking why this unjust man is happy and that just man unhappy. For then the true and full happiness of all the good, and only the good, and the deserved and supreme unhappiness of all the wicked, and only the wicked, will be plain to see.

THE CHANGEABILITY OF HUMAN AFFAIRS, IN WHICH GOD'S JUDGMENT CANNOT BE SAID TO BE ABSENT, THOUGH IT CANNOT BE TRACED

God's judgments are hidden now, as good and bad fortune fall to good and wicked alike.

20.2 Now, however, we learn to bear with equanimity the evils that good people also suffer, and not to set great value on the goods that wicked people also obtain. And so, even in matters where divine justice is not evident, divine teaching brings salvation. For we do not know by what judgment of God this good man is poor while that wicked man is rich. We do not know why this man is joyful, though we think he ought to have been tormented with sorrows for his depraved conduct, while that man is sad, though his praiseworthy life convinces us he ought to have been joyful. We do not know why an innocent man leaves the court not only unavenged but even condemned, crushed by the injustice of the judge or overwhelmed by false testimony, while his criminal opponent exults not only unpunished but even vindicated. Nor do we know why the ungodly man enjoys excellent health while the godly man wastes away in sickness. The healthiest young men turn to robbery, while infants, who could not hurt anyone even with a word, are afflicted by all kinds of cruel diseases. A person useful to human affairs is snatched away by an untimely death, while one who seems never to have deserved to be born lives on, and for a very long time besides. A man steeped in crimes is raised high in honors, while the darkness of obscurity hides a blameless man. And so on. Who could collect all such things? Who could count them? Suppose these things were at least consistent in their very absurdity, so to speak. Suppose that in this life, in which, as the

sacred psalm declares, "man has become like vanity, and his days pass away like a shadow," only the wicked obtained these transitory and earthly goods, and only the good suffered such evils. Then this could be referred to God's just, or even kindly, judgment. Those who were not going to attain the eternal goods that make people happy would be either deceived by temporal goods because of their wickedness, or consoled by them because of God's mercy. And those who were not going to suffer eternal torments would be either afflicted by temporal evils for their sins, whatever they were and however small, or trained by those evils so that their virtues might be brought to perfection.[2] As it is, however, not only are the good in evil circumstances and the wicked in good ones, which seems unjust, but often evil things also befall the wicked and good things come to the good. So God's judgments become all the more unsearchable and his ways inscrutable. We do not know, then, by what judgment God does these things or allows them to be done—God, in whom there is supreme power, supreme wisdom and supreme justice, no weakness, no rashness and no injustice. Nevertheless, we learn to our salvation not to set great value on the goods or the evils that we see to be common to good and wicked alike. We learn to seek those goods that belong to the good, and above all to flee those evils that are proper to the wicked. But when we come to that judgment of God, whose time is now properly called the day of judgment, and sometimes the day of the Lord, all things will be seen to be perfectly just. This will hold not only for whatever will be judged then, but also for whatever has been judged from the beginning and whatever is still to be judged until that time. Then it will also become clear how just is the judgment of God by which so many—indeed almost all—of God's just judgments are now hidden from the senses and minds of mortals. Yet in this matter it is not hidden from the faith of the godly that what is hidden is just.

2 Psalm 143:4 (144:4 in most English Bibles).

WHAT SOLOMON ARGUED IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES ABOUT THE THINGS COMMON TO THE GOOD AND THE WICKED IN THIS LIFE

Ecclesiastes laments that the same things happen to the just and the unjust under the sun.

20.3 Indeed Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, who reigned in Jerusalem, began the book called Ecclesiastes, which the Jews too include in the canon of sacred writings, with these words: "Vanity of the vain, said the Preacher; vanity of the vain, all is vanity. What does a man gain from all the labor at which he labors under the sun?" Linking the rest to this statement, he recalls the hardships and errors of this life and the vanishing flow of time, in which nothing solid and nothing stable is retained. Amid this vanity of things under the sun he also laments, in a way, that although wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness, and the wise man's eyes are in his head while the fool walks in darkness, yet one and the same fate befalls all—in this life, that is, which is lived under the sun. He means, of course, those evils that we see to be common to good and wicked alike.[3] He also says that the good suffer evils as though they were wicked, and the wicked obtain goods as though they were good. These are his words: "There is a vanity that is done on the earth: there are righteous people to whom it happens as though they had done the deeds of the ungodly, and there are ungodly people to whom it happens as though they had done the deeds of the righteous. I said that this too is vanity." This wise man devoted his whole book to bringing home this vanity, as far as he thought sufficient. Surely he did so for no other reason than that we should long for that life which has no vanity under this sun, but has truth under him who made this sun. In this vanity, then, would man, made like that very vanity, vanish away except by God's just and right

3 Ecclesiastes 1:2–3 and 2:13–14. "Ecclesiastes" is Greek for "the Preacher," one who addresses an assembly.

judgment?[4] Yet in the days of his vanity it makes a very great difference whether he resists the truth or obeys it, and whether he lacks true godliness or shares in it. This matters not for the sake of acquiring the goods or avoiding the evils of this life, which pass away and vanish, but for the sake of the coming judgment. Through that judgment good things will remain for the good, and evil things for the wicked, without end. Finally, this wise man concluded his book by saying: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is every man; for God will bring every work into judgment, in every one who is despised, whether good or evil." What could be said more briefly, more truly or more wholesomely? "Fear God," he says, "and keep his commandments, for this is every man."[5] For whoever truly exists *is* this, namely a keeper of God's commandments; whoever is not this is nothing. Such a person is not re-formed in the image of truth, but remains in the likeness of vanity. "For God will bring every work"—that is, whatever a person does in this life—"whether good or evil, into judgment, in every one who is despised." That means even in every one who seems contemptible here and is therefore not even seen. For God sees him too. God does not despise him, and does not pass him over when he judges.

THAT IN DISCUSSING GOD'S LAST JUDGMENT HE WILL FIRST BRING FORWARD TESTIMONIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THEN FROM THE OLD

Augustine will cite the New Testament first, then the Old.

20.4 I have undertaken to set out testimonies from the holy Scriptures concerning this last judgment of God. They should be chosen first from the books of the New Testament, and afterward from the Old. For though the old books come first in time, the new are to be placed first in dignity, since the old are heralds of the new. So the new will be set out first, and the old will be brought in to prove them more firmly. In the old are the Law and

4 Ecclesiastes 8:14.

5 Ecclesiastes 12:13–14. Augustine's Latin Bible differs here from modern versions.

the Prophets; in the new, the Gospel and the apostolic letters. Now the apostle says: "For through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made manifest, attested by the law and the prophets—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe." This righteousness of God belongs to the New Testament and receives its testimony from the old books, that is, from the Law and the Prophets. So the case itself must be stated first, and the witnesses brought in afterward.[6] Christ Jesus himself shows that this order should be kept when he says: "A scribe instructed in the kingdom of God is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old." He did not say "old and new," as he certainly would have done had he not preferred to keep the order of merit rather than the order of time.[7]

THE SAYINGS BY WHICH THE LORD AND SAVIOR DECLARES THAT A DIVINE JUDGMENT WILL COME AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Gospel sayings of Jesus foretell a judgment that will come with the resurrection of the dead.

20.5 So the Savior himself rebuked the cities in which he had done great miracles and which had not believed, and he ranked foreigners above them. "But I tell you," he says, "it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you." A little later he says to another city: "Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." Here he proclaims most clearly that a day of judgment is to come. And in another place he says: "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and look, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to

6 Romans 3:20–22.
7 Matthew 13:52.

hear the wisdom of Solomon, and look, something greater than Solomon is here." In this passage we learn two things: that a judgment is coming, and that it will come together with the resurrection of the dead.[8] For when he said this about the Ninevites and the queen of the South, he was undoubtedly speaking of the dead. Yet he foretold that they would rise again on the day of judgment. He said "will condemn" not because they will themselves be judges, but because by comparison with them these people will rightly be condemned.

Again, in another place, he spoke of the present mingling of good and wicked people and of their later separation, which will certainly take place on the day of judgment. He used the comparison of the wheat that was sown and the weeds sown over it, and he explained it to his disciples: "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of stumbling and those who do iniquity, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."[9] "Whoever has ears, let him hear." Here he did not name the judgment or the day of judgment. Yet he expressed it much more clearly through the very events he described, and he foretold that it would come at the end of the world.

Again, he said to his disciples: "Truly I tell you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his majesty, you too will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here we learn that Jesus will judge together with his disciples. Hence he also said to the Jews elsewhere: "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your

8 Matthew 11:22, 24 and 12:41–42.
9 Matthew 13:37–43.

sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges." He says they will sit on twelve thrones, but that is no reason to think that only twelve men will judge with him.[10] For the number twelve signifies the entire multitude of those who will judge. This is because of the two parts of the number seven, which commonly signifies totality. Those two parts, three and four, multiplied by each other make twelve, for four times three and three times four are both twelve. There may also be some other explanation of this number twelve that serves the purpose. Otherwise, since we read that the apostle Matthias was ordained in place of Judas the traitor, the apostle Paul, who labored more than all of them, would have nowhere to sit in judgment. Yet he plainly shows that he belongs, with the other saints, to the number of the judges when he says: "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" The same reasoning applies to the number twelve as regards those who are to be judged.[11] For the words "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" do not mean that the tribe of Levi, which is the thirteenth, will not be judged by them. Nor do they mean that the disciples will judge only that people and not the other nations as well. And when he says "in the regeneration," he undoubtedly meant the resurrection of the dead to be understood by the word "regeneration." For our flesh will be regenerated through incorruption, just as our soul has been regenerated through faith.

I pass over many sayings that seem to speak of the last judgment but which, on careful examination, prove to be ambiguous or to refer rather to something else. Some refer to the coming of the Savior by which, throughout this whole time, he comes in his Church, that is, in his members, part by part and little by little, since the whole Church is his body. Others refer to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem. For when he speaks of that event too, he often speaks as though he were speaking of the end of the world and that last and great day of judgment. As a result, the two cannot be distinguished at all unless all the similar say-

10 Matthew 19:28 and 12:27.
11 1 Corinthians 6:3.

ings on this subject in the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are compared with one another. For one evangelist sets out certain things more obscurely and another more plainly, so that it becomes clear what the sayings about a single subject actually refer to.[12] I have tried to do this, after a fashion, in a letter I wrote in reply to Hesychius of blessed memory, bishop of the city of Salona. The title of that letter is *On the End of the World.*[13]

So here I shall cite only what we read in the Gospel according to Matthew about the separation of the good from the wicked through Christ's most manifest and final judgment. "When the Son of Man comes in his majesty," he says, "and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his majesty, and all the nations will be gathered before him. He will separate them from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand: 'Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was in prison, and you came to me.'"[14] "Then the righteous will answer him, saying: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?' And the king will answer them: 'Truly I tell you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" "Then," he says, "he will also say to those at his left: 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Then in the same way he lists for them too that they failed to do the very things he had said those on his right had

12 The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in AD 70.
13 Hesychius was bishop of Salona in Dalmatia, near modern Split in Croatia. Augustine's reply is his Letter 199.
14 Matthew 25:31–46.

done. Likewise, when they ask when they saw him in such need, he answers that what was not done to his least ones was not done to him. He concludes his discourse with the words: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." The evangelist John, for his part, relates most plainly that Jesus foretold the judgment would take place at the resurrection of the dead. For after saying: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father; whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him," he immediately added: "Truly, truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." Notice that here he said that his faithful do not come into judgment.[15] How, then, will they be separated from the wicked through the judgment and stand at his right hand, unless in this passage he used "judgment" to mean "condemnation"? Into that kind of judgment, certainly, those who hear his word and believe him who sent him will not come.

WHAT THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS, AND WHAT THE SECOND

The first resurrection is of souls, now; the second, of bodies, at the end.

20.6 Then he goes on to say: "Truly, truly, I tell you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has also granted the Son to have life in himself." He is not yet speaking of the second resurrection, the resurrection of bodies, which will take place at the end. He is speaking of the first, which is now. It was precisely to distinguish this one that he says: "The hour is coming, and now is." This resurrection is not of bodies but of souls. For souls too have their own death, in ungodliness and sins. It is by this death that those people are dead of whom the same Lord says: "Let the dead bury their own

15 John 5:22–24.

dead"—meaning, of course, that those dead in soul should bury those dead in body.[16] It is with reference to these, then, who are dead in soul through ungodliness and wickedness, that he says: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." By "those who hear" he meant those who obey, who believe, and who persevere to the end. Nor did he make any distinction here between good and bad. For it is good for everyone to hear his voice and to live, passing from the death of ungodliness to the life of godliness. Of this death the apostle Paul says: "Therefore all have died, and he died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again."[17] So all have died in sins, with absolutely no one excepted. These may be original sins or sins added by their own will, whether through ignorance or through knowing what is right and not doing it. And for all the dead one living man died, that is, one who had no sin whatever. He died so that those who live through the forgiveness of sins might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for all because of our sins and rose again for our justification. Then, believing in him who justifies the ungodly, and justified from ungodliness as though brought to life from death, we may belong to the first resurrection, which is now. For only those who will be happy forever belong to this first resurrection. But he will teach that both the happy and the wretched belong to the second, of which he is about to speak. The one is the resurrection of mercy, the other of judgment.[18] That is why it is written in the psalm: "Of mercy and judgment I will sing to you, O Lord."[19]

Of this judgment he next added: "And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." Here he shows that he will come to judge in the same flesh in which he had come to be judged. That is why he says: "because

16 John 5:25–26; Matthew 8:22.
17 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.
18 Romans 4:25 and 4:5.
19 Psalm 100:1 (101:1 in most English Bibles).

he is the Son of Man." Then he adds the point we are dealing with: "Do not marvel at this, for the hour will come in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment."[20] This is the judgment that he had used a little earlier, as he does now, in the sense of condemnation. He said then: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." That is, by belonging to the first resurrection, by which one now passes from death to life, he will not come into condemnation. Condemnation is what he signified by the word "judgment," just as he does in this passage too, where he says: "those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment"—that is, of condemnation. Whoever does not wish to be condemned in the second resurrection, then, should rise in the first.[21] For "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." That is, they will not come into condemnation, which is called the second death. Those who do not rise in the first resurrection, the resurrection of souls, will be hurled into that death after the second resurrection, the resurrection of bodies, which is still to come. For "the hour will come" (here he does not say "and now is," because it will be at the end of the world, that is, at God's last and greatest judgment) "when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth." He did not say, as he did of the first, "and those who hear will live." For not all will live—not, that is, with the life which alone deserves to be called life, because it is happy. Certainly they could not hear and come forth from the tombs, as their flesh rises, without some sort of life. He teaches in what follows why not all will live. "Those who have done good," he says, "to the resurrection of life"—these are the ones who will live. "But those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment"—these are the ones who will not live, because they will

20 John 5:27–29.
21 John 5:24.

die the second death. They have done evil because they lived evil lives. And they lived evil lives because they did not come back to life in the first resurrection, the resurrection of souls, which is now, or else they did not remain to the end in the life to which they had come back. There are two regenerations, then, of which I have already spoken above. One is according to faith, and takes place now through baptism. The other is according to the flesh, and will take place in the flesh's incorruption and immortality through the great and final judgment. In the same way there are also two resurrections. The first is both now and of souls, and it does not allow us to come into the second death. The second is not now but will come at the end of the world. It is not of souls but of bodies, and through the last judgment it will send some into the second death and others into that life which has no death.

WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE REVELATION OF JOHN ABOUT THE TWO RESURRECTIONS AND THE THOUSAND YEARS, AND WHAT MAY REASONABLY BE THOUGHT ABOUT THEM

Revelation's thousand years are not a future earthly reign; the devil is bound now.

20.7 The same John the Evangelist spoke of these two resurrections in the book called the Apocalypse. But he spoke in such a way that some of our own people did not understand the first of them, and even turned it into certain ridiculous fables. For in the book mentioned the apostle John says: "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would no longer lead the nations astray until the thousand years are ended; after this he must be released for a short time. And I saw thrones and those seated on them, and judgment was given."[22] "And the souls of those who

22 The Apocalypse is the Book of Revelation; this is Revelation 20:1–4.

were slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and any who had not worshiped the beast or its image, nor received its mark on their foreheads or on their hands; and they reigned with Jesus for a thousand years. The rest of them did not live until the thousand years are ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has a share in this first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power; but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him for a thousand years."[23] Some have supposed, on account of these words of this book, that the first resurrection will be bodily. Among other things, they have been moved chiefly by the number of a thousand years. They think that the saints ought to have a kind of Sabbath rest lasting that long—a holy leisure, that is, after the labors of the six thousand years since man was created and was sent out from the happiness of paradise into the hardships of this mortal life, in punishment for that great sin. For it is written: "One day with the Lord is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." So, they argue, when six thousand years have been completed, like six days, a kind of seventh day of Sabbath will follow in the final thousand years, and the saints will rise to celebrate this Sabbath. This opinion would be tolerable to some degree if it were believed that the saints would enjoy some spiritual delights in that Sabbath through the presence of the Lord. Indeed, we ourselves once held this opinion too.[24] But they say that those who rise then will spend their leisure in the most immoderate fleshly banquets, with so much food and drink that it not only keeps to no moderation but oversteps the measure even of the incredible. Such things can in no way be believed except by the carnal. Those who are spiritual call the people who believe these things by the Greek name χιλιαστὰς [chiliasts]; translating it word for word, we could call them "millenarians." It would take a long time to refute them point by point. Rather, we ought now to show how this passage of Scripture is to be understood.

23 Revelation 20:4–6.
24 2 Peter 3:8.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself says: "No one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his goods unless he first binds the strong man." By the strong man he wants the devil to be understood, because the devil was able to hold the human race captive. By his goods, which the Lord was going to carry off, he means his own future faithful, whom the devil held in his possession through various sins and acts of ungodliness. It was so that this strong man might be bound, then, that this apostle saw in the Apocalypse "an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a chain in his hand. And he seized," he says, "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." That is, he checked and curbed the devil's power to lead astray and to possess those who were to be set free.[25] As far as I can see, the thousand years can be understood in two ways. The first is that this takes place in the last thousand years, that is, in the sixth millennium, as if in the sixth day, whose later stretches are now rolling by. This is to be followed by a Sabbath that has no evening, namely the rest of the saints, which has no end. On this view he called the last part of this millennium—the last part of the day, as it were, which remained until the end of the world—a thousand years, by the figure of speech in which a part is signified by the whole. The second is that he has put a thousand years for all the years of this world, so that the very fullness of time is marked by a perfect number. For the number one thousand gives the solid square of the number ten. Ten multiplied by ten makes a hundred, which is already a square figure, but a plane one. To rise into height and become solid, a hundred is multiplied again by ten, and that makes a thousand. Sometimes, moreover, a hundred itself is used for the whole. An example is what the Lord promised to the one who leaves all he has and follows him: "He will receive a hundredfold in this world." The apostle explains this, in a way, when he says: "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things," since it had also been said before: "The whole world of riches belongs to the faithful man."

25 Matthew 12:29.

If a hundred is used this way, how much more is a thousand used for the whole, since it is the solid form of the square of ten! Hence there is no better way to understand what we read in the psalm: "He has remembered his covenant forever, the word that he commanded for a thousand generations"—that is, for all generations.[26]

"And he threw him," he says, "into the abyss." That is, he threw the devil into the abyss. By this name is meant the countless multitude of the ungodly, whose hearts are very deep in malice against the Church of God. It is not that the devil was not there before. He is said to have been thrown there because, shut out from believers, he began to possess the ungodly more fully. For a person is more fully possessed by the devil who is not only estranged from God but also hates without cause those who serve God. "And he shut it," he says, "and sealed it over him, so that he would no longer lead the nations astray until the thousand years are ended." "He shut it over him" means that he laid a prohibition on him, so that he could not go out, that is, could not cross the forbidden line. As for "sealed," which he added, it seems to me to signify that he willed it to remain hidden who belong to the devil's side and who do not. For this is entirely hidden in this world, since it is uncertain whether the one who seems to stand will fall, and whether the one who seems to lie fallen will rise. By the bond and enclosure of this prohibition, however, the devil is prevented and restrained from leading astray those nations which belong to Christ, but which he formerly led astray or held. For God chose these nations before the foundation of the world, to rescue them from the power of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of the Son of his love, as the apostle says. What believer does not know that even now the devil leads nations astray and drags them with him into eternal punishment—but not those predestined to eternal life? Nor should it trouble anyone that the devil often leads astray even those who have already been reborn in Christ and are

26 Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:30; 2 Corinthians 6:10; Proverbs 17:6 (found only in the Greek version); Psalm 104:8 (105:8 in most English Bibles).

walking in the ways of God. For "the Lord knows those who are his"; of these the devil leads no one astray into eternal damnation.[27] For the Lord knows them as God knows, from whom nothing is hidden, not even the future. He does not know them as a man does, who sees another man only in the present (if indeed he sees one whose heart he does not see), and does not even see what kind of person he himself will be later. This, then, is why the devil was bound and shut up in the abyss: so that he might no longer lead astray the nations of which the Church consists, which he had led astray and held captive before they were the Church. For it was not said, "so that he would not lead anyone astray," but "so that he would no longer lead," he says, "the nations astray." By the nations he undoubtedly wanted the Church to be understood. "Until the thousand years are ended," he says—that is, either what remains of the sixth day, which consists of a thousand years, or all the years over which this world is still to run its course.

Nor should the words "so that he would not lead the nations astray until the thousand years are ended" be taken to mean that afterward he will lead astray precisely those nations of which the predestined Church consists, from leading which astray he was prevented by that bond and enclosure. Rather, there are two possibilities. The first is that it is said by a figure of speech found several times in the Scriptures, as in the psalm: "So our eyes are on the Lord our God, until he has mercy on us." When he has had mercy, the eyes of his servants will not therefore cease to be on the Lord their God. The second is that the order of the words is this: "And he shut it and sealed it over him until the thousand years are ended." The clause he inserted, "so that he would no longer lead the nations astray," stands free of this connection and is to be understood separately, as if it were added afterward. The whole sentence would then read: "And he shut it and sealed it over him until the thousand years are ended, so that he would no longer lead the nations astray." That is, he shut it until the

27 Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:19.

thousand years are ended for this purpose: so that he would no longer lead the nations astray.[28]

THE BINDING AND LOOSING OF THE DEVIL

The devil's binding restrains his power to seduce the Church until his brief final release.

20.8 "After this," he says, "he must be released for a short time." If the devil's being bound and shut up means that he cannot lead the Church astray, will his release mean, then, that he can? Far from it! The Church predestined and chosen before the foundation of the world, of which it was said, "The Lord knows those who are his," will never be led astray by him. And yet the Church will be here even at the time when the devil is to be released. It has been here ever since it was founded, and it will be here at all times—in its own members, of course, who by being born take the place of those who die. For a little later he says that the devil, once released, will draw the nations he has led astray throughout the whole world into war against the Church, and that the number of these enemies will be like the sand of the sea.[29] "And they went up," he says, "over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down from heaven from God and devoured them. And the devil who had led them astray was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." But this already belongs to the last judgment. I thought it should be mentioned now so that no one may think that the Church will not exist on this earth during that short time when the devil is released—either because he does not find it here when he is released, or because he destroys it after persecuting it in every way.[30] So it is not the case that throughout this whole time which the book covers—from Christ's first coming,

28 Psalm 122:2 (123:2 in most English Bibles).
29 Revelation 20:3; the war is described in Revelation 20:7–8.
30 Revelation 20:9–10.

that is, to the end of the world, which will be his second coming—the devil is bound in such a way that his binding consists in precisely this: that during this interval, which the book calls by the number of a thousand years, he does not lead the Church astray. For he will certainly not lead it astray even when he is released. Surely, if being bound means for him being unable, or not permitted, to lead astray, what will being released mean but being able, or permitted, to lead astray? God forbid that this should happen! Rather, the binding of the devil consists in his not being permitted to exert the whole force of temptation that he can, whether by force or by guile, to lead people astray to his side—compelling them by violence or deceiving them by fraud. If he were permitted to do this over so long a time and amid such weakness in so many, he would bring down a great many people of a kind whom God does not will to undergo this: he would both throw down believers and prevent others from believing. It is to keep him from doing this that he has been bound.

But he will be released when the time will also be short. (For we read that he will rage with all his own forces and those of his followers for three years and six months.) And those against whom he must wage war will be such that they cannot be conquered by all his onslaught and all his snares.[31]

If, however, he were never released, his malicious power would be less apparent, the most faithful patience of the holy city would be less tested, and, finally, it would be less clearly seen how well the Almighty has used so great an evil as his. For God has not removed him altogether from tempting the saints, though he has cast him out of their inner selves, where faith in God resides, so that they might profit from his attacks from outside. And he has bound him in those who belong to his side, so that he might not pour out and exercise all the malice he could. Otherwise he would turn away from the faith of godliness the countless weak, from whom the Church had to grow and be

31 Augustine has in mind the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14.

filled—some who were going to believe and some who already believed—frightening off the first and breaking the second. And he will release him at the end, so that the city of God may behold what a strong adversary it has overcome, to the immense glory of its Redeemer, Helper and Deliverer. Indeed, what are we in comparison with the saints and believers who will be living then? For so great an enemy will be released to test them—the very one against whom we fight at such great peril even while he is bound. Yet there is no doubt that even in this interval of time there have been, and are, some soldiers of Christ so wise and so brave that, if they were living in this mortal state at the time when he is released, they would guard most wisely against all his snares and endure all his assaults most patiently.

Moreover, this binding of the devil did not take place only from the time when the Church began to spread beyond the land of Judea into one nation after another. It is happening now as well, and will go on happening until the end of the world, when he is to be released. For even now people are being converted to faith from the unbelief in which he held them, and without doubt they will go on being converted until that end. And this strong man is bound in each person at the very moment when that person is carried off from him as one of his goods. Nor was the abyss in which he was shut up used up with the death of those who were alive when he began to be shut up. Others have taken their place by being born, and still are taking it, and will until this world comes to an end—people who hate Christians. In their blind and deep hearts he is shut up daily, as in an abyss. There is a considerable question, however, whether even in those last three years and six months, when he is released and will rage with all his strength, anyone will come to the faith who was not in it before. For how will the saying stand, "Who enters a strong man's house to carry off his goods unless he first binds the strong man?" if his goods are carried off even when he is released? This text, therefore, seems to compel us to believe that during that time, short as it is, no one will join the Christian people. Instead, the devil will fight with those who are found to

be Christians already; and if some of them are conquered and follow him, they do not belong to the predestined number of the children of God. For it is not for nothing that the same apostle John, who also wrote this Apocalypse, says of certain people in his letter: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would surely have remained with us." But what happens to little children? It is quite beyond belief that no children of Christians will be overtaken by that time as infants, already born but not yet baptized, and that none will be born during those very days. It is equally beyond belief that, if there are such children, their parents will not bring them in some way or other to the washing of rebirth. And if this happens, how will these goods be carried off when the devil is already released, since no one enters his house to carry off his goods unless he first binds him?[32] No—we should rather believe that at that time there will be no lack either of those who fall away from the Church or of those who join it. But surely both the parents seeking baptism for their little ones and those who will then believe for the first time will be so strong that they will overcome that strong man even when he is not bound. That is, though he lies in wait with every kind of art, or presses with all his forces, as never before, they will both recognize him with vigilance and bear him with patience. And so they will be snatched from him even though he is not bound. Nor will that saying of the Gospel be false on that account: "Who enters a strong man's house to carry off his goods unless he first binds the strong man?" For in accordance with the truth of that saying this order has been kept. First the strong man was bound. Then, as his goods were carried off, the Church was multiplied far and wide among all the nations, out of the strong and the weak alike. It grew so much that, through a faith made most robust by the very events that God foretold and fulfilled, it could carry off his goods even when he is released. For we must admit that the love of many grows cold when wickedness abounds, and that many who are not written in the book of life will give way under the

32 1 John 2:19.

unprecedented and very great persecutions and deceptions of the devil, who will then be released. Just so, we must also consider that some will become firmer in believing what they did not believe, and stronger to conquer the devil even when he is released. These will include not only the good and faithful whom that time will find, but also some who will still be outside. God's grace will help them through their study of the Scriptures, in which, among other things, the very end that they now feel to be coming has been foretold. If this is so, then his binding must be said to have come first precisely so that he might be plundered, both bound and released. For it is about this that it was said: "Who will enter the house of a strong man to snatch away his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?"[33]

WHAT THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS WITH CHRIST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS IS, AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

The saints reign with Christ now, in the Church, during the thousand years.

20.9 Meanwhile, while the devil is bound for a thousand years, the saints reign with Christ, also for a thousand years. These are without doubt the same years and are to be understood in the same way, that is, as this present time of his first coming. At the end he will speak of a kingdom: "Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you." But apart from that kingdom, his saints, to whom he says, "See, I am with you until the end of the world," must already be reigning with him now in some other way, though a far unequal one. Otherwise the Church would certainly not be called his kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven, even now.[34] For it is surely in this present time that the scribe we spoke of above, who brings out of his treasure things new and old, is trained in the kingdom of God. And it is from the Church that those reapers will gather the

33 Matthew 24:12; Revelation 13:8; Matthew 12:29.
34 Matthew 25:34; Matthew 28:20.

weeds that he allowed to grow together with the wheat until the harvest. Explaining this, he says: "The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age: the Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all stumbling blocks." Surely not out of that kingdom in which there are no stumbling blocks? It is out of this kingdom of his, then, which here is the Church, that they will be gathered. Again he says: "Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches people to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."[35] He says that both are in the kingdom of heaven. One is the man who does not do the commandments he teaches (for that is what "breaking" means: not keeping them, not doing them). The other is the man who does them and teaches them. But the first is least, the second great. And he immediately goes on to add: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees"—that is, exceeds those who break what they teach (for of the scribes and Pharisees he says elsewhere, "For they say, and do not do")—so unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, that is, unless you do not break but rather do what you teach, "you will not enter," he says, "the kingdom of heaven."[36] So the kingdom of heaven must be understood in one sense where both are found, namely the one who breaks what he teaches and the one who does it, the former least, the latter great. In another sense, the kingdom of heaven is the one into which only the one who does it enters. Hence where both kinds are found, that is the Church as it now is. But where only the latter kind will be found, that is the Church as it will be then, when no evil person will be in it. Therefore the Church, even now, is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. So his saints reign with him even now, though otherwise than they will reign then. And yet the weeds do not reign with him, though they

35 Matthew 13:52; 13:24–30, 39–41; 5:19.
36 Matthew 5:20; Matthew 23:3.

grow in the Church together with the wheat. For those reign with him who do what the apostle says: "If you have risen with Christ, set your minds on the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; seek the things that are above, not those on earth." Of such people he also says that their way of life is in heaven. In short, those reign with him who are in his kingdom in such a way that they themselves are also his kingdom. But others, to say nothing of their other faults, seek there their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ, although they are in the kingdom until all stumbling blocks are gathered out of it at the end of the age. How are they the kingdom of Christ?[37]

This book, then, speaks of this kingdom at war, and of this first resurrection, which is happening now. In this kingdom there is still conflict with the enemy. Sometimes we resist vices that fight back, and sometimes we rule vices that yield, until we come to that most peaceful kingdom where we shall reign without an enemy. It has said that the devil is bound for a thousand years and afterward loosed for a short time. It then recapitulates what the Church does, or what is done in it, during those thousand years: "And I saw," it says, "thrones, and those seated on them, and judgment was given." This must not be thought to refer to the last judgment. Rather, we should understand the thrones of those in authority, and those in authority themselves, by whom the Church is now governed.[38] And the judgment given seems best taken as nothing other than what was said: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven too, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven too." Hence the apostle says: "For what business is it of mine to judge those outside? Is it not those inside whom you judge?" "And the souls," it says, "of those slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God"—here we must supply what it will say later: "reigned with Jesus for a thousand years." It means the souls of the martyrs, whose bodies have not yet been restored to them.

37 Colossians 3:1–2; Philippians 3:20; Philippians 2:21.
38 Revelation 20:4.

For the souls of the godly dead are not separated from the Church, which even now is the kingdom of Christ.[39] Otherwise they would not be remembered at the altar of God in the communion of the body of Christ. Nor would it do any good, in times of danger, to hurry to his baptism so that this life should not end without it. Nor would it help to hurry to reconciliation, if someone has perhaps been separated from that same body through penance or a bad conscience. Why are these things done, unless it is because the faithful, even when dead, are his members? So although they do not yet reign with their bodies, their souls already reign with him while these thousand years run their course. Hence we read in this same book, as elsewhere too: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Yes, says the Spirit, from now on, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them." So the Church reigns with Christ now, at this first stage, in the living and the dead. For, as the apostle says, Christ died for this reason: that he might be Lord of both the living and the dead.[40] But it mentions only the souls of the martyrs because those who fought for the truth even to death are the ones who above all reign after they die. But taking the part for the whole, we understand it to include the rest of the dead who belong to the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ.

As for what follows, "And any who had not worshiped the beast or its image, nor received its mark on their forehead or on their hand," we should take it of the living and the dead together. Now, the question of what this beast is calls for more careful inquiry. Still, it is not at odds with the true faith to understand it as the ungodly city itself, the people of unbelievers opposed to the faithful people and to the city of God. Its image, however, seems to me to be its pretense, found in those people who profess the faith, as it were, and live faithlessly. For they pretend to be what they are not, and are called Christians not by a true likeness but by a deceptive image. For to this same beast belong not only the open enemies of the name of Christ

39 Matthew 18:18; 1 Corinthians 5:12; Revelation 20:4.
40 Revelation 14:13; Romans 14:9.

and of his most glorious city, but also the weeds that are to be gathered out of his kingdom, which is the Church, at the end of the age. And who are those who do not worship the beast or its image, if not those who do what the apostle says: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers"? For "they do not worship" means they do not consent, do not submit. Nor do they receive the mark, that is, the brand of guilt, on the forehead, which signifies what they profess, or on the hand, which signifies what they do. Those, then, who are strangers to these evils, whether still living in this mortal flesh or dead, reign with Christ even now, in a way suited to this time, through this whole interval which is signified by the number of a thousand years. "The rest of them," it says, "did not live." For "the hour is now when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live"; so the rest of them will not live. As for what it adds, "until the thousand years are ended," it must be understood that they did not live at the time when they should have lived, that is, by passing from death to life.[41] And so, when the day comes on which the resurrection of bodies also takes place, they will come forth from the tombs not to life but to judgment, that is, to condemnation, which is called the second death. For consider whoever has not lived until the thousand years are ended, that is, whoever has not heard the voice of the Son of God and passed from death to life during this whole time in which the first resurrection is taking place. He will certainly, at the second resurrection, which is that of the flesh, pass into the second death together with that very flesh. For it goes on to say: "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a share in this first resurrection," that is, who partakes in it. And the one who partakes in it is he who not only comes back to life from the death that consists in sins, but also remains in the life to which he has come back. "Over these," it says, "the second death has no power."[42] So it does have power over the rest, of whom it said above, "The rest of them did not live until the thou-

41 2 Corinthians 6:14; Revelation 20:5; John 5:25.
42 Revelation 20:6.

sand years were ended." For during that whole interval of time which it calls a thousand years, however long each of them lived in the body, he did not come back to life from the death in which ungodliness held him. Had he done so, he would have become a partaker in the first resurrection, and the second death would have had no power over him.

WHAT TO ANSWER THOSE WHO THINK THE RESURRECTION CONCERNS ONLY BODIES AND NOT ALSO SOULS

Against those who say only bodies can rise, Scripture speaks of souls rising too.

20.10 There are some who think that resurrection can be spoken of only in relation to bodies, and so they contend that this first resurrection too will be in bodies. "For to rise again," they say, "belongs to what falls. And bodies fall in dying; indeed, corpses (*cadauera*) get their name from falling (*cadere*). So there cannot be a resurrection of souls," they say, "but only of bodies." But what do they say against the apostle, who calls it a resurrection? For those to whom he says, "If you have risen with Christ, set your minds on the things that are above," had certainly risen in the inner self, not the outer. He expressed the same meaning elsewhere in other words, saying: "so that, just as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life." Hence also this: "Rise, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."[43] They say that only those who fall can rise again, and so they think that resurrection pertains to bodies, not souls, because it is bodies that fall. Why, then, do they not listen to these words: "Do not withdraw from him, lest you fall," and "It is before his own Lord that he stands or falls," and "Let anyone who thinks he stands take care that he does not fall"? For I suppose this is a fall to be guarded against in the soul, not in the body. If, then, resurrection belongs to those who fall, and souls also fall, we must

43 Colossians 3:1; Romans 6:4; Ephesians 5:14.

certainly acknowledge that souls also rise again.[44] After saying, "Over these the second death has no power," it went on to add: "But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him for a thousand years." This is certainly not said only of the bishops and presbyters, who are now properly called priests in the Church. Rather, just as we call all believers "christs" because of the mystical anointing, so we call them all priests, because they are members of the one Priest. Of them the apostle Peter says: "a holy people, a royal priesthood." Indeed, briefly and in passing, the book has intimated that Christ is God by saying "priests of God and of Christ," that is, of the Father and of the Son. Yet it was on account of the form of a servant that Christ became Son of Man, and on the same account he became a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. I have spoken of this more than once in this work.[45]

GOG AND MAGOG, WHOM THE DEVIL, WHEN LOOSED NEAR THE END OF THE WORLD, WILL STIR UP TO PERSECUTE THE CHURCH OF GOD

Gog and Magog are not a particular people but the devil's followers throughout the world.

20.11 "And when the thousand years are ended," it says, "Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, and will draw them into war; their number is like the sand of the sea." So he will deceive them then for this purpose: to draw them into this war. For before this, too, he used to deceive by whatever means he could, through many and various evils. And "will come out" means that he will burst forth from hidden hatreds into open persecution. For this will be the last persecution, with the last judgment at hand. The holy Church will suffer it throughout the whole world. The whole city of Christ will suf-

44 Sirach 2:7; Romans 14:4; 1 Corinthians 10:12.
45 Revelation 20:6; 1 Peter 2:9. Melchizedek is the priest-king of Genesis 14, after whose order the Messiah is called a priest in Psalm 109:4 (110:4 in most English Bibles).

fer it at the hands of the whole city of the devil, however great each of them will be on earth.[46] For these nations which it calls Gog and Magog are not to be taken as though they were some foreign peoples settled in some part of the world. Some suspect that they are the Getae and Massagetae, because of the initial letters of these names. Others might take them for some other peoples of foreign stock outside Roman jurisdiction. But they are signified as being throughout the whole world, when it is said, "the nations that are at the four corners of the earth," and it added that these are Gog and Magog. We find that the meaning of these names is: Gog, "roof"; Magog, "from the roof"—as if to say the house and the one who comes out of the house. They are therefore the nations in which, as we understood above, the devil is shut up as if in the abyss. And he himself, in a sense, rises up and comes out from them, so that they are the roof, and he is "from the roof."[47] But we might refer both names to the nations, rather than one to them and the other to the devil. Then they themselves are the roof, because in them the ancient enemy is now shut in and in a sense covered. And they themselves will be "from the roof" when they are about to burst out of hiding into open hatred. Then it says: "And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city." They are certainly not signified as having come, or being about to come, to a single place, as if the camp of the saints and the beloved city were to be in some one place. For this city is nothing but the Church of Christ spread throughout the whole world. And therefore, wherever it will be then—and it will be among all nations, which is what is signified by the term "the breadth of the earth"—there will be the camp of the saints, and there will be his city beloved by God. There all its enemies will surround it with the savagery of that persecution, for they too will be among all nations along with it. That is, it will be

46 Revelation 20:7–8. Gog and Magog are drawn from the prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39.

47 The Getae and Massagetae were peoples living beyond the Danube and the Caspian Sea, respectively.

hemmed in, pressed hard, and shut in by the straits of tribulation. Yet it will not desert its military service, which is why it is called by the name of a camp.[48]

WHETHER THE FIRE THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DEVOURED THEM BELONGS TO THE FINAL PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

The fire from heaven is the saints' steadfastness, or Christ's blow at his coming, not final punishment.

20.12 Next it says: "And fire came down from heaven and devoured them." This is not to be thought the final punishment, which will come when it is said, "Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire." For then they will be cast into the fire; fire will not come from heaven upon them. Here, however, the fire from heaven is well understood as the very steadfastness of the saints, which will keep them from yielding to those who rage against them and doing their will. For heaven is the firmament, and by its firmness those enemies will be tormented with burning zeal, because they will not be able to draw the saints of Christ over to the side of Antichrist. And this will be the fire that devours them. It comes from God, since it is by God's gift that the saints become unconquerable, and this is what torments their enemies. For just as it is said in a good sense, "Zeal for your house has devoured me," so it is said in the opposite sense: "Zeal has seized an untaught people, and now fire will devour the adversaries."[49] "And now"—that is, apart, of course, from the fire of that last judgment. When Christ comes, he will slay Antichrist with the breath of his mouth, and he will strike the persecutors of the Church whom he finds alive on earth. Or perhaps it is this blow that the book has called fire coming down from heaven and devouring them. Even so, this will not be the final punish-

48 Revelation 20:9.

49 Revelation 20:9; Matthew 25:41; Psalm 68:10 (69:9 in most English Bibles); Isaiah 26:11.

ment of the ungodly. That will be the punishment they are to suffer once the resurrection of bodies has taken place.[50]

WHETHER THE TIME OF ANTICHRIST'S PERSECUTION SHOULD BE COUNTED IN THE THOUSAND YEARS

The saints reign with Christ even during the three and a half years of Antichrist.

20.13 This last persecution, which the Antichrist will bring, will last three years and six months, as we have already said, since this is stated both earlier in this book and in the prophet Daniel. This period is short. But does it belong to the thousand years in which, he says, the devil is bound and the saints reign with Christ, or is this short span added to those years and outside them? The question is a fair one. If we say that it belongs to the same years, the reign of the saints with Christ will turn out to last longer than the binding of the devil, not the same length of time. For surely the saints will reign with their King even in that persecution, and especially in it, overcoming such great evils, at a time when the devil will no longer be bound and can persecute them with all his strength.[51] How, then, does this scripture assign both things, the binding of the devil and the reign of the saints, to the same thousand years, when the devil's binding ends three years and six months before the saints' reign with Christ in these thousand years? Suppose instead we say that this short span of persecution is not to be counted within the thousand years but added after they are completed. Then we could take in its proper sense the fact that, after saying, "The priests of God and of Christ will reign with him a thousand years," he added, "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison";[52] for in this way he indicates that the reign of the saints and the bondage of the devil will end at the same time. The time of that persecution would then be thought

50 2 Thessalonians 2:8.
51 Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 speak of "a time, times, and half a time," understood as three and a half years.
52 Revelation 20:6–7.

to belong neither to the reign of the saints nor to the imprisonment of Satan, both of which fall within the thousand years, but to be added on and counted outside them. But then we shall be forced to admit that the saints will not reign with Christ during that persecution. And who would dare to say that his members will not reign with him then? At that time they will cling to him most closely and most firmly. At that time, the fiercer the onslaught of war, the greater will be the glory of not yielding, and the richer the crown of martyrdom. Or perhaps they are not to be said to reign because of the tribulations they will suffer. In that case it will follow that in the earlier days within these same thousand years, any of the saints who suffered tribulation must also be said not to have reigned with Christ during the time of their tribulation. And so even those whose souls the author of this book writes that he saw, the souls of those slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, were not reigning with Christ when they suffered persecution. They themselves would not have been Christ's kingdom, even though Christ possessed them in a more excellent way. That is utterly absurd and must be rejected entirely. Surely the victorious souls of the most glorious martyrs overcame all their pains and toils and came to the end of them. After they laid aside their mortal members, they reigned with Christ and still reign, until the thousand years are ended. Afterward they will reign with their bodies restored as well, and those bodies will then be immortal. Accordingly, during those three and a half years the souls of those slain for their witness to him will reign with him. This includes both those that left their bodies earlier and those that will leave them in that last persecution. They will reign until this mortal age comes to an end and we pass into that kingdom where there will be no death. Therefore the years of the saints reigning with Christ will be more than the years of the devil's chain and prison. For they will reign with their King, the Son of God, during those three and a half years as well, when the devil is no longer bound. It remains, then, that when we hear, "The priests of God and of Christ will reign with him a thousand years, and when the thou-

sand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison," we must understand one of two things. The first possibility is that it is not the thousand years of this reign of the saints that end, but those of the devil's bondage and prison. Each would then have its thousand years, that is, all its years, ending after different spans of its own: the saints' reign longer, the devil's bondage shorter. The other possibility is that, since three years and six months is a very short span, Scripture chose not to count it, either because Satan's bondage seems to fall short of it or because the saints' reign seems to exceed it. I argued in the same way about the four hundred years in the sixteenth book of this work: they were somewhat more, and yet they were called four hundred. Such things are often found in the sacred writings, if one pays attention.[53]

THE CONDEMNATION OF THE DEVIL WITH HIS FOLLOWERS, AND, BY WAY OF RECAPITULATION, THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF ALL THE DEAD AND THE JUDGMENT OF FINAL REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Revelation's great white throne, the books, and the judgment of all the dead.

20.14 After this mention of the last persecution, he briefly sums up everything that the devil, and the hostile city together with its prince, will suffer at the last judgment. For he says: "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet also are; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." We said above that the beast is rightly understood as the ungodly city itself. Its false prophet is either the Antichrist or that image, that is, the counterfeit, which we discussed there. After this he goes back over the ground and tells how the last judgment itself was revealed to him. That judgment will take place at the second resurrection of the dead, which is the resurrection of the body. "And I saw," he says, "a great white throne and one seated on it,

53 See *City of God* 16.24, on the four hundred years of Genesis 15:13.

from whose face heaven and earth fled, and no place was found for them."[54] He does not say, "I saw a great white throne and one seated on it, and heaven and earth fled from his face." That did not happen then, that is, before judgment had been passed on the living and the dead. What he said is that he saw seated on the throne one from whose face heaven and earth fled, but this fleeing came later. For once the judgment is complete, this heaven and this earth will cease to be, when a new heaven and a new earth begin to be. This world will pass away through a change in things, not through total destruction. That is why the apostle also says: "For the form of this world is passing away; I want you to be free from anxiety." So it is the form that passes away, not the nature.[55] John had said that he saw one seated on the throne from whose face heaven and earth fled, which is something that will happen later. He then says: "And I saw the dead, great and small, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of each person's life; and the dead were judged by what was written in those books, according to their deeds." He said that books were opened, and also a book. And he did not leave unsaid what kind of book this was: "which is," he says, "the book of each person's life." So the books he mentioned first are to be understood as the holy books, both Old and New, which show the commandments God ordered to be carried out. The other book, the book of each person's life, shows which of these commandments each person failed to do or did. If this book is pictured in bodily terms, who could estimate its size or length?[56] And how long would it take to read a book in which all the lives of all people are written? Will there be as many angels present as there will be human beings, and will each person hear his life read aloud by an angel assigned to him? Then there would not be one book for all, but a separate book for each. But this scripture wants us to understand one book: "And another book," it says, "was opened." We must there-

54 Revelation 20:10–11.
55 1 Corinthians 7:31–32.
56 Revelation 20:12.

fore understand a kind of divine power that will bring all of each person's works, good or bad, back to memory, so that the mind sees them all with marvelous speed. In this way knowledge will accuse or excuse conscience, and all will be judged at once, and each one individually. This divine power, no doubt, is what received the name of a book. For in it, in a certain sense, is read whatever its action brings back to mind. Next he wants to show which dead are to be judged, small and great. So he goes back over the ground, as if returning to something he had passed over, or rather put off: "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and the underworld gave back the dead that they held." This undoubtedly happened before the dead were judged, and yet the judgment was mentioned first. This is what I meant when I said that, in going back over the ground, he returned to what he had left out. Here, though, he kept to the order. And to set that order out, he also, more fittingly, repeated in its proper place what he had already said about the judging of the dead. For when he had said, "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and the underworld gave back the dead that they held," he immediately added what he had stated a little earlier: "And they were judged, each according to their deeds."[57] For this is what he had said above: "And the dead were judged according to their deeds."

WHO THE DEAD ARE WHOM THE SEA GAVE UP FOR JUDGMENT, AND WHOM DEATH AND THE UNDERWORLD GAVE BACK

The sea that gives up its dead stands for this world; death and the underworld for the rest.

20.15 But who are the dead whom the sea gave up, the ones who were in it? It cannot mean that those who die at sea are not in the underworld, or that their bodies are kept in the sea. Still more absurd would be the idea that the sea held the good dead and the underworld the wicked. Who would think that? Some,

57 Revelation 20:13.

quite fittingly, take "the sea" in this passage to stand for this world. Christ will find some people here still living in the body. The writer wanted to show that they will be judged together with those who are to rise again, and so he called them "dead" too. This covers both the good, to whom it is said, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God," and the wicked, of whom it is said, "Let the dead bury their own dead."[58] They can also be called dead because they bear mortal bodies. Hence the apostle says: "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." He shows that both are present in a person who is alive and still in this body: a dead body and a spirit that is life. Yet he did not say a "mortal" body but a "dead" one, although a little later he calls the same bodies "mortal," as they are more usually called. These, then, are the dead whom the sea gave up, the ones who were in it. That is, this world gave up all the people who were in it, because they had not yet died. "And death and the underworld," he says, "gave back the dead that they held." The sea *gave up* its dead, because they came forward just as they were found. Death and the underworld *gave back* theirs, because they called them back to the life they had already left.[59] And perhaps there is a reason why it was not enough to say "death" or "the underworld," and both were said. Death is mentioned for the sake of the good, who could undergo only death and not the underworld as well. The underworld is mentioned for the sake of the wicked, who also pay penalties in the underworld. It does not seem absurd to believe that even the holy people of old, who held faith in the Christ who was to come, were in the underworld until Christ's blood and his descent into those places rescued them. They were in places far removed from the torments of the ungodly, but still in the underworld. If so, then surely from that time on good believers, redeemed by the price that was poured out, know nothing of the underworld at all. They remain so until they receive their bodies back as well, together with the good

58 Colossians 3:3; Matthew 8:22.
59 Romans 8:10–11.

things they deserve. When he had said, "And they were judged, each according to their deeds," he briefly added how they were judged: "And death and the underworld," he says, "were thrown into the lake of fire." By these names he means the devil, since the devil is the author of death and of the penalties of the underworld, and with him the whole fellowship of demons. This is what he had already said above, more clearly and in anticipation: "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur." What he had added there more obscurely, "where the beast and the false prophet also are," he states here more openly: "And those who were not found written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire." This book is not a reminder for God, as though forgetfulness might lead him astray. Rather, it signifies the predestination of those to whom eternal life will be given.[60] For it is not that God does not know them and reads this book in order to know them. Rather, his foreknowledge of them, which cannot be mistaken, is itself the book of life. They are written in it, that is, known in advance.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

After the judgment this world will pass away by fire and be renewed.

20.16 Now that he has finished with the judgment in which, as he foretold, the wicked are to be judged, it remains for him to speak of the good as well. He has already explained what the Lord said briefly: "So these will go away into eternal punishment." Next he must explain what is joined to it there: "but the righteous into eternal life." "And I saw," he says, "a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea is no more." This will happen in the order he already indicated earlier, in anticipation, when he said he saw one seated on the throne, from whose face heaven and earth fled.[61] Those who are not written in the book of life will be judged and sent into the eternal fire. What kind of fire that is, and in what part of the

60 Revelation 20:14–15.
61 Matthew 25:46; Revelation 21:1.

world or of the universe it will be, I think no human being knows, unless perhaps someone to whom the divine Spirit has revealed it. Then the form of this world will pass away in a burning of the world's fires, just as the flood came about through an inundation of the world's waters. In that burning of the world, as I said, the qualities of the corruptible elements, which suited our corruptible bodies, will perish utterly in the fire. The substance itself will then have those qualities which, by a marvelous change, befit immortal bodies. In this way the world, renewed for the better, will be fittingly adapted to human beings who have also been renewed for the better in their flesh. As for his saying, "and the sea is no more," I could not easily say whether the sea will be dried up by that intense heat or whether it too will be changed for the better. For we read that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, but I do not recall having read anything anywhere about a new sea. The only exception is what is found in this same book: "something like a sea of glass, like crystal."[62]

But there he was not speaking of this end of the world. Nor does he seem to have said "sea" in the literal sense, but "something like a sea." Prophetic language loves to mix figurative words with literal ones and so, in a way, to veil what is said. So even here he could have meant, by "and the sea is no more," the same sea of which he had said above: "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it." For then this world, turbulent and stormy with the life of mortals, will no longer exist, and it was this world that he represented by the name "sea."

THE GLORIFICATION OF THE CHURCH WITHOUT END AFTER THE END

The new Jerusalem's glory, with no tears or death, belongs to the world to come.

20.17 "And I saw," he says, "the great city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a new bride

62 Revelation 4:6.

adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'See, the dwelling of God is with human beings, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor any pain, for the former things have passed away.' And the one seated on the throne said: 'See, I am making all things new.'" This city is said to come down from heaven because the grace by which God made it is heavenly. That is why he also says to it through Isaiah: "I am the Lord who made you."[63] Indeed, it has been coming down from heaven since its beginning. Throughout the time of this age, the grace of God comes from above through the washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, and so its citizens keep increasing. But through God's judgment, the last judgment, which will be carried out through his Son Jesus Christ, God's gift will reveal a splendor in it so great and so new that no trace of the old will remain. For even bodies will pass from their old corruption and mortality into a new incorruption and immortality. Some take this to refer to the present time, in which the city reigns with its King for a thousand years. That seems to me far too shameless, since he says most plainly: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor any pain." Who could be so absurd, so out of his mind with stubborn contentiousness, as to dare to claim that someone amid the hardships of this mortal life has no tears and no pains? I do not mean the holy people as a whole, but any single one of the saints who is living this life, will live it, or has lived it. On the contrary, the holier a person is and the fuller of holy longing, the more abundant are his tears in prayer. Is it not the voice of the city on high, Jerusalem, that says: "My tears have been my bread day and night"? And: "Every night I will wash my bed; I will drench my couch with my tears"? And: "My groaning is not hidden from you"? And: "My sorrow has been renewed"?[64]

63 Revelation 21:2–5; Isaiah 45:8 (in the Greek version).
64 Psalms 41:4, 6:7, 37:10, 38:3 (42:3, 6:6, 38:9, 39:2 in most English Bibles).

Or are they not her children who groan under their burden, because they do not want to be stripped but to be clothed over, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life? Are they not the very ones who have the firstfruits of the Spirit and groan within themselves, awaiting adoption, the redemption of their body? Was the apostle Paul himself not a citizen of the Jerusalem on high? Was he not all the more so when he had great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart for the Israelites, his brothers according to the flesh? And when will there be no death in that city, except when it is said: "Where, O death, is your struggle? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin"? Sin will certainly not exist then, when it is said: "Where is it?"[65] But now it is not some lowly citizen of that city who cries out. It is this same John, who says in his letter: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." In this book, called the Apocalypse, many things are indeed said obscurely, in order to exercise the reader's mind. Only a few things in it are clear enough to let us track down the rest, and even then only with effort. This is above all because it repeats the same things in so many ways that it seems to be saying one thing and then another. Yet on investigation it turns out to be saying the very same things, now one way and now another.[66] But consider these words, where he says: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor any pain." These things are said with such clarity about the world to come and about the immortality and eternity of the saints that, if we think them obscure, we should not look for or read anything plain in the sacred writings at all. For only then, and only there, will these things cease to exist.

65 2 Corinthians 5:4; Romans 8:23; Romans 9:2–3; 1 Corinthians 15:55–56.
66 1 John 1:8.

WHAT THE APOSTLE PETER PREACHED ABOUT GOD'S LAST JUDGMENT

Peter foretells that the present heavens and earth are kept for fire on the day of judgment.

20.18 Now let us see what the apostle Peter also wrote about this judgment. "In the last of the days," he says, "scoffers will come with their scoffing, following their own desires and saying: 'Where is the promise of his presence? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.' For they willingly overlook this: that there were heavens long ago, and an earth formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and through these the world that then existed was flooded with water and perished. But the heavens and the earth that exist now have been set in place again by the same word, reserved for fire on the day of judgment and of the destruction of ungodly people. But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved: that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.[67] The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some reckon slowness; rather, he is patient for your sake, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to turn to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a great rush, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Since all these things are perishing, then, what sort of people ought you to be in holy ways of life, as you wait for and hasten toward the presence of the day of the Lord, through which the heavens will burn and be dissolved, and the elements will melt in the heat of the fire?

But according to his promises we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Here he has said nothing about the resurrection of the dead, but certainly enough about the destruction of this world. And by recalling

67 2 Peter 3:3–13, quoted through the next two chunks.

what happened before the flood, he seems in a way to have given us a hint as to how far we should believe that this world will perish at the end of this age. For he said that at that time too the world that then existed perished—and not only the globe of the earth but also the heavens. By these we certainly understand the heavens of the air, whose place and space the water had then overtopped as it rose. So all or nearly all of this windy air (which he calls heaven, or rather heavens—but surely these lowest ones, not those highest ones where the sun, the moon and the stars are set) had been turned into a moist quality, and in this way had perished together with the earth, whose former face had of course been wiped out by the flood. "But the heavens and the earth that exist now," he says, "have been set in place again by the same word, reserved for fire on the day of judgment and of the destruction of ungodly people." Accordingly, the heavens and the earth—that is, the world—that were set in place out of the same water, in place of the world that perished in the flood, are themselves reserved for the final fire on the day of judgment and of the destruction of ungodly people. For he does not hesitate to speak of a future destruction of human beings too, because of a great change, even though their nature will continue to exist, albeit in eternal punishment. Someone may perhaps ask: if this world is going to burn after the judgment has taken place, before a new heaven and a new earth are put in its place, where will the saints be at the very time of its conflagration, since, having bodies, they must be in some bodily place? We can answer that they will be in the upper regions, to which the flame of that fire will not rise, just as the waves of the flood did not. For they will have bodies of such a kind that they will be wherever they wish to be. Nor, once they have been made immortal and incorruptible, will they dread the fire of that conflagration, if the corruptible and mortal bodies of the three men were able to live unharmed in the burning furnace.[68]

68 The three young men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—thrown into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3).

WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE TO THE THESSALONIANS ABOUT THE APPEARING OF ANTICHRIST, WHOSE TIME THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL FOLLOW

Paul says Antichrist must come first; Augustine admits he cannot explain what "holds him back."

20.19 I see that I must pass over many sayings of the Gospels and the apostles about this last judgment of God, so that this volume may not roll on to excessive length. But I must on no account pass over the apostle Paul, who, writing to the Thessalonians, says: "We ask you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, whether by a spirit or by a word or by a letter as if from us, as though the day of the Lord were at hand. Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the deserter comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above everything that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God, displaying himself as if he were God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you these things were being told to you?[69] And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work. Only let him who now holds hold on until he comes out of the midst; and then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the brightness of his presence—the one whose presence is according to the working of Satan, with all power and lying signs and wonders, and with every deception of iniquity for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved. And therefore God will send them a working of error, so that they believe a lie, and so that all may be judged who did not believe the truth but consented to iniquity."

No one doubts that he said these things about the Antichrist, and that the day of judgment (for this is what he calls the day of

the Lord) will not come unless that one comes first whom he calls the deserter—a deserter, of course, from the Lord God. And if this can rightly be said of all the ungodly, how much more of him! But in which temple of God he will sit is uncertain: whether in the ruins of the temple that was built by King Solomon, or rather in the Church. For the apostle would not call the temple of some idol or demon the temple of God. That is why some want the Antichrist in this passage to be understood not as the ruler himself but, in a way, as his whole body—that is, the multitude of people who belong to him—together with their ruler himself. And they think it would be more correct to say in Latin too, as it is in the Greek, not *in templo Dei* ("in the temple of God") but *in templum Dei* ("as the temple of God"), as though he himself were the temple of God, which is the Church—just as we say *sedet in amicum*, meaning "he sits as a friend," or anything else that is usually said with this kind of idiom. As for his saying, "And now you know what is holding him back"—that is, you know what is causing the delay, what the reason for his postponement is, so that he may be revealed in his own time—since he said that they knew, he did not want to say it openly.[70] And so we, who do not know what they knew, long to arrive with effort at what the apostle meant, and we cannot—especially since the words he added make this meaning even more obscure. For what does this mean: "For the mystery of iniquity is already at work. Only let him who now holds hold on until he comes out of the midst; and then the wicked one will be revealed"? I confess that I simply do not know what he meant. Still, I will not keep silent about the conjectures of others that I have been able to hear or read.

Some think this was said of the Roman Empire, and that the apostle Paul did not want to write it openly for this reason—namely, so as not to incur the false charge of wishing ill on the Roman Empire, when people hoped it would be eternal. On this

69 2 Thessalonians 2:1–11, quoted through the next chunk.
70 Latin *in* with the accusative can mean "as" or "by way of"; the Greek of 2 Thessalonians 2:4 has *eis* ("into").

view, by saying, "For the mystery of iniquity is already at work," he meant Nero to be understood, whose deeds already looked like the Antichrist's. Hence some suspect that Nero himself will rise again and be the Antichrist. Others think that he was not even killed but rather withdrawn, so that he would be thought dead, and that he is being kept hidden alive, in the vigor of the very age he had reached when he was believed to have perished, until he is revealed in his own time and restored to his kingdom. But the great presumption of those who hold this opinion astonishes me greatly.[71] Still, the apostle's words, "Only let him who now holds hold on until he comes out of the midst," are not absurdly believed to have been said of the Roman Empire itself, as if it were said: "Only let him who now rules rule until he comes out of the midst"—that is, until he is taken out of the midst. "And then the wicked one will be revealed": no one doubts that this signifies the Antichrist. Others, however, think that both "You know what is holding him back" and "the mystery of iniquity is at work" were said only of the wicked and the pretenders who are in the Church, until they reach so great a number as to make up a great people for the Antichrist. This, they say, is the mystery of iniquity, because it seems hidden. And the apostle, they say, is urging the faithful to persevere tenaciously in the faith they hold when he says, "Only let him who now holds hold on until he comes out of the midst"—that is, until the mystery of iniquity, which is now hidden, goes out from the midst of the Church. For they consider that what John the evangelist says in his letter belongs to this same mystery: "Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have arisen; by this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would surely have remained with us." "So," they say, "just as before the end, in this hour which John calls the last, many heretics went out from the midst of the Church, whom he calls many antichrists, so at

71 Nero, Roman emperor AD 54–68, the first to persecute Christians; legends circulated that he had not died or would return.

that time all who belong not to Christ but to that last Antichrist will go out from there, and then he will be revealed."[72]

So one person conjectures one thing about the apostle's obscure words, another another. But what he undoubtedly did say is this: Christ will not come to judge the living and the dead unless his adversary, the Antichrist, comes first to deceive those who are dead in soul—although the fact that they will be deceived by him already belongs to God's hidden judgment. For his presence, as was said, will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power and lying signs and wonders, and with every deception of iniquity for those who are perishing." For then Satan will be let loose, and through that Antichrist he will work with all his power—wondrously indeed, but deceitfully. It is commonly debated whether they are called lying signs and wonders because he will deceive mortal senses with phantoms, so that he seems to do what he does not do, or because these very things, even if they are real wonders, will draw into a lie those who will believe that they could only have been done by divine power, since they do not know the power of the devil—especially when he has received such power as he never had before. For when fire fell from heaven and in a single onslaught consumed holy Job's large household along with his great flocks and herds, and a whirlwind rushed in, threw down the house and killed his children, these were not phantoms; and yet they were works of Satan, to whom God had given this power. So on which of these accounts they are called lying wonders and signs will become clearer at that time.[73] But whichever of these is the reason they are so called, those who deserve to be deceived will be deceived by these signs and wonders, "because," he says, "they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved." Nor did the apostle hesitate to go on and say: "Therefore God will send them a working of error, so that they believe a lie." For God will send it, because God will permit the devil to do these things—by a just judgment of his own, even though the

72 1 John 2:18–19.
73 Job 1:13–19.

devil does them with an unjust and malicious purpose. "So that," he says, "all may be judged who did not believe the truth but consented to iniquity." Accordingly, having been judged, they will be deceived; and having been deceived, they will be judged. But having been judged, they will be deceived by those judgments of God that are hiddenly just and justly hidden, by which he has never ceased to judge since rational creatures first sinned; and having been deceived, they will be judged in the last and open judgment through Christ Jesus, who will judge most justly, having been judged most unjustly.

WHAT THE SAME APOSTLE TAUGHT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN HIS FIRST LETTER TO THE SAME PEOPLE

Paul describes the dead rising and the living caught up to meet Christ.

20.20 But here the apostle said nothing about the resurrection of the dead. Writing to the same people in his first letter, however, he says: "We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about those who are asleep, so that you may not grieve as the others do who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so too God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we tell you by the word of the Lord: that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep before us. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."[74] These words of the apostle show most clearly that there will be a resurrection of the dead when Christ comes—to judge, of course, the living and the dead.

But it is commonly asked about those whom Christ will find alive here—a role the apostle was applying to himself and to

74 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17.

those who were living with him at the time—whether they are never to die at all, or whether, at the very moment when they are caught up with those who are rising in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, they will pass through death to immortality with wondrous speed. For we must not say that it is impossible for them both to die and to come back to life within that interval while they are being carried aloft through the air. For when he says, "And so we shall always be with the Lord," this must not be taken as if he meant that we shall remain always with the Lord in the air. Surely he himself will not remain there either, since he will pass through on his way; one goes out to meet someone who is coming, not someone who is staying put. Rather, "so we shall be with the Lord" means: we shall be in this state, having everlasting bodies, wherever we may be with him. Now the apostle himself seems to press us toward this interpretation—that we should think that even those whom the Lord will find alive here will, in that brief interval, both suffer death and receive immortality—when he says: "In Christ all will be made alive"; for in another place, speaking of the resurrection of bodies itself, he says: "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies." How, then, will those whom Christ finds alive here be made alive in him through immortality, if they do not die, when we see that this was said for this very reason: "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies"?[75] Or, if we cannot rightly speak of sowing except for those human bodies that in dying somehow return to the earth (as indeed the sentence divinely pronounced against the transgressing father of the human race has it: "You are earth, and to earth you shall go"), then we must admit that those whom Christ, when he comes, will find not yet departed from their bodies are bound neither by these words of the apostle nor by those from Genesis. For when they are caught up on high in the clouds, they are certainly not sown, since they neither go into the earth nor return to it—whether they experience no death at all or die for a little while in the air.[76]

75 1 Corinthians 15:22 and 15:36.
76 Genesis 3:19.

But again something else comes up, which the same apostle said when he was speaking to the Corinthians about the resurrection of bodies: "We shall all rise again," or, as other manuscripts have it, "We shall all sleep." Since, then, resurrection cannot take place unless death has gone before it, and since in that passage we can understand sleep only as death, how will all either sleep or rise again, if so many whom Christ will find in the body will neither sleep nor rise again?[77] If, then, we believe that the saints who are found alive at Christ's coming and are caught up to meet him will, in that same rapture, leave their mortal bodies and immediately return to those same bodies, now immortal, we shall face no difficulties in the apostle's words—either where he says, "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies," or where he says, "We shall all rise again" or "We shall all sleep." For those people will not be made alive through immortality unless they first die, however briefly; and for this reason they will not be strangers to the resurrection either, since they precede it with a sleep that is very brief, yet not nonexistent. And why should it seem incredible to us that that multitude of bodies should in a sense be sown in the air and there immediately come back to life, immortal and incorruptible, when we believe what the same apostle says most plainly—that the resurrection will take place in the twinkling of an eye, and that the dust of the most ancient corpses will return with such ease and such inconceivable speed into limbs that will live without end? Nor should we think that those saints will be exempt from the sentence by which it was said to man, "You are earth, and to earth you shall go," if their bodies, when they die, do not fall back to the earth, but, just as they will die in the very rapture, so too will rise again while they are being borne into the air. For "to earth you shall go" means: when you have lost life, you shall go into what you were before you received life. That is, once lifeless, you will be what you were before you were given life (for God breathed the breath of life into the face of

77 1 Corinthians 15:51; the Latin manuscripts Augustine knew differed at this verse.

earth when man was made a living soul). It is as if it were said: "You are living earth, which you were not; you will be lifeless earth, as you were." This is what all the bodies of the dead are even before they decay; and this is what those bodies too will be, if they die, wherever they die, when they are without life—a life they are to receive back immediately. So they will go to earth in this sense: from living human beings they will become earth—just as we say that what becomes ash "goes to ash," what grows old "goes to old age," what is made from clay into pottery "goes into pottery"; and we speak this way of countless other things.[78] But how this will come about—which we are now conjecturing as best we can with the strength of our poor little reason—will then rather be something we can know. For if we want to be Christians, we must believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and in the flesh, when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead. But our faith on this matter is not empty just because we cannot fully grasp how it will come about.

But now, as we promised above, we must show, so far as seems sufficient, what the ancient prophetic books too foretold about this last judgment of God. These will not, I think, need to be discussed and explained at such length, if the reader takes care to make use of the help of what we have set out beforehand.

WHAT THE PROPHET ISAIAH SAID ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND THE REWARD OF JUDGMENT

Isaiah prophesies the resurrection, the comfort of the good and the punishment of the wicked.

20.21 The prophet Isaiah says: "The dead will rise again, and those who were in the tombs will rise again, and all who are on the earth will rejoice; for the dew that comes from you is health to them; but the earth of the ungodly will fall." All of the first part refers to the resurrection of the blessed. But the words "But the earth of the ungodly will fall" are well understood as meaning:

78 Genesis 2:7.

"But the ruin of damnation will receive the bodies of the ungodly." Further, suppose we want to look more carefully and more precisely at what is said about the resurrection of the good. Then "The dead will rise again" should be referred to the first resurrection, and what follows, "and those who were in the tombs will rise again," to the second. And if we also ask about those saints whom the Lord will find still alive here, what he added will fittingly be assigned to them: "And all who are on the earth will rejoice; for the dew that comes from you is health to them."[79] In this passage we are entirely right to take "health" to mean immortality. For that is the fullest health, which is not restored by food as if by daily medicines. Likewise, speaking of the day of judgment, the same prophet first gives hope to the good and then terrifies the wicked: "This is what the Lord says: See, I bend down toward them like a river of peace and like a flooding torrent of the glory of the nations. Their children will be carried on shoulders and comforted on knees. As a mother comforts someone, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem, and you will see, and your heart will rejoice, and your bones will spring up like grass. And the hand of the Lord will be known to those who worship him, and he will threaten the defiant. For see, the Lord will come like fire, and his chariots like a storm, to repay vengeance in indignation and devastation in a flame of fire."[80] "For by the fire of the Lord all the earth will be judged, and all flesh by his sword; many will be wounded by the Lord." In the promise to the good, by the "river of peace" we must surely understand the abundance of that peace than which there can be none greater. With this peace, certainly, we shall be watered at the end, and we spoke of it abundantly in the previous book. He says that this river bends down toward those to whom he promises such great happiness. We are to understand that in the region of that happiness which is in heaven all things are satisfied by this river. But because the peace of incorruption and immortality will flow from there into

79 Isaiah 26:19.
80 Isaiah 66:12–16.

earthly bodies as well, he said that this river bends down, so that from on high it may in some way pour over even the lower things and make human beings equal to the angels. By Jerusalem, too, let us understand not the one that is in slavery with her children, but, as the apostle says, our free mother, eternal in heaven.[81] There, after the toils of mortal hardships and cares, we shall be comforted like her little ones carried on her shoulders and knees. For that happiness, so unfamiliar to us, will take us up, raw and new as we are, with the tenderest help. There we shall see, and our heart will rejoice. He did not specify what we shall see—but what else than God? So the promise of the gospel will be fulfilled in us: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." We shall also see all those things that we do not see now, but that we, believing, think of according to the small measure of human capacity—far less than they are, and incomparably less. "And you will see," he says, "and your heart will rejoice." Here you believe; there you will see.[82]

But since he had said, "And your heart will rejoice," he added, so that we would not think those good things of Jerusalem belong only to our spirit: "And your bones will spring up like grass." Here he touched briefly on the resurrection of bodies, as though supplying what he had not yet said. For it will not happen once we have seen; rather, we shall see once it has happened. He had already spoken earlier of the new heaven and the new earth, while describing often and in many forms the things promised to the saints at the end: "There will be," he says, "a new heaven and a new earth, and they will not remember the former things, nor will these come up into their heart; but they will find gladness and exultation in it."[83] "See, I will make Jerusalem an exultation and my people a gladness; and I will exult in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; and the sound of weeping will no longer be heard in her," and the rest, which some try to refer to those carnal thousand years. For, as is the prophetic cus-

81 The previous book is Book 19, on peace. The apostle: Galatians 4:25–26.
82 Matthew 5:8.
83 Isaiah 65:17–18.

tom, figurative expressions are mixed with literal ones, so that a sober attention may reach the spiritual meaning through a certain useful and wholesome labor. But carnal laziness, or the sluggishness of an untaught and untrained mind, is content with the surface of the letter and thinks that nothing deeper need be sought. Let what I have said about the prophetic words written before this passage be enough. But in the passage from which we digressed to those words, after saying, "And your bones will spring up like grass," he wanted to show that he was now speaking of the resurrection of the flesh—but of the good. So he added: "And the hand of the Lord will be known to those who worship him."[84] What is this but the hand of one who distinguishes his worshipers from those who despise him? Continuing about these, he says: "And he will threaten the defiant"—or, as another translator puts it, "the unbelieving." Nor will he threaten them then; rather, what is now spoken as a threat will then be fulfilled in fact. "For see," he says, "the Lord will come like fire, and his chariots like a storm, to repay vengeance in indignation and devastation in a flame of fire. For by the fire of the Lord all the earth will be judged, and all flesh by his sword; many will be wounded by the Lord." Whether by fire, or storm, or sword, he signifies the punishment of the judgment, since he says that the Lord himself will come like fire—to those, of course, for whom his coming will be punishment. As for his chariots (for they are spoken of in the plural), we may quite fittingly take them as the ministries of angels. When he says that all the earth and all flesh will be judged by his fire and his sword, let us not understand here the spiritual and the saints as well, but the earthly and carnal. Of such people it is said, "who set their minds on earthly things," and, "To set the mind on the flesh is death"; and it is such people whom the Lord calls simply flesh when he says: "My spirit will not remain in these people, because they are flesh." And as for what is put here, "Many will be wounded by the Lord," it is by this wound that the second

84 Isaiah 65:18–19. The "carnal thousand years" are the millenarian reading of Revelation 20, which Augustine rejected earlier in this book.

death will come about. Fire and sword and wound can, it is true, also be taken in a good sense.[85] For the Lord said that he wished to cast fire on the world; and when the Holy Spirit came, divided tongues as of fire appeared to them; and the same Lord said, "I have not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword." Scripture calls the word of God a two-edged sword because of the double edge of the two testaments; and in the Song of Songs the holy Church says she has been wounded with love, as though shot through by the onset of love. But here, when we read or hear that the Lord will come as an avenger, it is clear how these things are to be understood.[86]

ISAIAH'S FINAL CHAPTER

Isaiah's last chapter runs from the spread of the Church to the final separation of good and wicked.

Then he briefly mentions those who will be consumed by this judgment, signifying sinners and the ungodly under the figure of the foods forbidden in the old law, from which they did not abstain. After that he recapitulates from the beginning the grace of the new testament, from the first coming of the Savior down to the last judgment, which we are now discussing, carrying his discourse through to that point and ending it there. For he relates that the Lord says he is coming to gather all the nations, and that they will come and see his glory. For, as the apostle says, "all have sinned and are in need of the glory of God."[87] He says, too, that he will leave signs among them, so that, marveling at them, they may believe in him. He says that he will send some of them who have been saved to various nations and to distant islands that have not heard his name or seen his glory; that they will proclaim his glory among the nations and bring the brothers of those to whom he was speaking—that is, brothers in faith, under God the Father, of the chosen Israelites; and that

85 Philippians 3:19; Romans 8:6; Genesis 6:3.
86 Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3; Matthew 10:34; Hebrews 4:12; Song of Songs 2:5.
87 Isaiah 66:17–18; Romans 3:23.

they will bring them from all nations as an offering to the Lord on beasts of burden and in carriages to the holy city Jerusalem, which is now spread throughout the earth in the faithful saints. (These beasts and carriages are well understood as divine help given through God's ministers of every kind, whether angelic or human.) For where people are helped by God, there they believe; and where they believe, there they come.[88] The Lord compared them, by way of a likeness, to the children of Israel offering him their sacrificial victims with psalms in his house—something the Church now does everywhere. And he promised that he would take for himself from among them priests and Levites—which we see happening now no less. For we now see priests and Levites chosen not by descent of flesh and blood, as it was at first according to the order of Aaron, but, as was fitting in the new testament, where Christ is high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, according to the merit that divine grace has conferred on each. They are to be weighed not by that title, which the unworthy often obtain, but by the holiness that is not shared by good and bad alike.[89]

He had said these things about the mercy of God now imparted to the Church, a mercy plain and well known to us. Then he also promised the ends to which we shall come through the last judgment, once the good and the wicked have been separated—speaking through the prophet, or rather the prophet himself speaking about the Lord: "For just as the new heaven and the new earth will remain before me, says the Lord, so your seed and your name will stand; and there will be month after month and Sabbath after Sabbath. All flesh will come before me to worship in Jerusalem! said the Lord; and they will go out and see the limbs of the people who have transgressed against me. Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be a spectacle to all flesh." The prophet ended his book at the very point at which the world will end.[90] Some, it is true, did

88 Isaiah 66:19–20.
89 Isaiah 66:20–21.
90 Isaiah 66:22–24.

not translate "the limbs of the people" but "the corpses of men," signifying by "corpses" the manifest punishment of bodies. Yet "corpse" is not usually said except of lifeless flesh, whereas those bodies will be alive; otherwise they could feel no torments. Unless perhaps, since they will be the bodies of the dead —that is, of those who fall into the second death—they can for that reason quite reasonably be called corpses too. Hence also the saying of the same prophet that I quoted above: "But the earth of the ungodly will fall." And who does not see that *cadauera* [corpses] are named from *cadere* [to fall]? It is obvious, too, that those translators put "men" for what means "people." For no one is going to say that women who transgressed will not be in that punishment; rather, both sexes are understood under the name of the principal one, especially since it was from him that woman was made. But—and this is most to the point—it is said of the good, "All flesh will come," because that people will be made up of every kind of human being (for not all human beings will be there, since more will be in punishment). As I had begun to say, then: when the good are called "flesh" and the wicked "limbs" or "corpses," it is surely being declared that the judgment by which the good and the wicked will be separated into their own ends will take place after the resurrection of the flesh—and faith in that resurrection is fully confirmed by these terms.

WHAT THE GOING OUT OF THE SAINTS TO SEE THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE WICKED WILL BE LIKE

The saints will "go out" to see the punishment of the wicked by knowledge, not bodily movement.

20.22 But how will the good go out to see the punishments of the wicked? Will they, by bodily movement, leave those blessed abodes and make their way to the places of punishment, to look upon the torments of the wicked in bodily presence? Far from it. They will go out by knowledge. For this word signifies that those who are tormented will be outside. That is why the Lord, too, calls those places the outer darkness, which is the opposite of

the entering of which the good servant is told: "Enter into the joy of your Lord." So the wicked are not to be thought of as entering there in order to be known; rather, the good, as it were, go out to them by the knowledge by which they will know them, because what they will know is outside. For those who are in punishment will not know what is happening within, in the joy of the Lord; but those who are in that joy will know what is happening outside, in that outer darkness.[91] That is why it says, "They will go out": because even those who are outside, apart from them, will certainly not be hidden from them. For if the prophets could know these things before they had happened, because God was in their minds, mortal though they were, in however small a measure, how will the immortal saints not know them once they have happened, when God will be all in all? So in that happiness the seed and the name of the saints will stand—the seed, that is, of which John says, "And his seed remains in him," and the name of which it was said through this same Isaiah, "I will give them an everlasting name." They will have month after month and Sabbath after Sabbath—as it were, moon after moon and rest after rest. And they themselves will be both, when they pass from these old and temporal shadows into those new and everlasting lights.[92] As for the punishments of the wicked, the unquenchable fire and the ever-living worm have been explained in different ways by different people. Some have referred both to the body, others both to the soul; others have referred the fire literally to the body and the worm figuratively to the soul, which seems more credible. But this is not the time to debate this difference. For I undertook to fill this volume with the last judgment, by which the separation of the good and the wicked will be made; the rewards and punishments themselves must be discussed more carefully elsewhere.

91 Matthew 25:21; the "outer darkness" is from Matthew 8:12 and 25:30.
92 1 Corinthians 15:28; 1 John 3:9; Isaiah 56:5.

WHAT DANIEL PROPHESIED ABOUT THE PERSECUTION OF ANTICHRIST, THE JUDGMENT OF GOD, AND THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS

Daniel foresees four kingdoms, Antichrist's brief reign and the eternal kingdom of the saints.

20.23 Daniel prophesies about this last judgment in such a way that he also foretells that the Antichrist will come first, and he carries his narrative through to the eternal kingdom of the saints. In a prophetic vision he had seen four beasts signifying four kingdoms, and the fourth of them overcome by a certain king, who is recognized as the Antichrist, and after these things the eternal kingdom of the Son of Man, who is understood to be Christ. Then he says: "My spirit shuddered within my frame—I, Daniel—and the visions of my head troubled me. And I approached," he says, "one of those standing by, and I asked him the truth about all these things, and he told me the truth."[93] Then he tells what he heard from the one he had asked about all these things, as that one explained it to him: "These four great beasts are four kingdoms that will arise on the earth, which will be taken away; and the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever, and forever and ever. And I inquired carefully," he says, "about the fourth beast, which was different from every other beast, more terrible—its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, devouring and crushing and trampling the rest with its feet—and about its ten horns, which were on its head, and about the other one, which came up and struck out three of the earlier ones: that horn which had eyes and a mouth speaking great things, and whose appearance was greater than the others."[94] "I watched, and that horn was making war with the saints and prevailing over them, until the Ancient of Days came and gave the kingdom to the saints of the Most High; and the time came, and the saints possessed the kingdom." Daniel

93 Daniel 7:15–16.
94 Daniel 7:17–20.

said that he had asked about these things. Then, immediately adding what he heard, he says: "And he said"—that is, the one he had asked answered and said—"The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will prevail over all kingdoms; and it will devour the whole earth, and trample it and cut it down. And its ten horns are ten kings who will arise; and after them another will arise, who will surpass in evils all who were before him; and he will humble three kings, and speak words against the Most High, and wear down the saints of the Most High, and he will think to change times and the law; and it will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time."[95] "And the judgment will sit, and they will take away his dominion, to destroy and ruin it to the end; and the kingdom and the power and the greatness of the kings who are under the whole heaven was given to the saints of the Most High. And his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all dominions will serve and obey him. Here," he says, "is the end of the account. I, Daniel—my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my appearance was changed upon me, and I kept the word in my heart." Some have explained those four kingdoms as those of the Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians and the Romans. How fittingly they did so, those who wish to know may read the book on Daniel by the priest Jerome, written with considerable learning and care. But that the reign of the Antichrist against the Church will be most savage, though it is to be endured for only a short space of time, until by God's last judgment the saints receive the everlasting kingdom—this no one who reads these words, even half asleep, can be allowed to doubt.[96] For that "a time and times and half a time" means one year and two years and a half, and therefore three and a half years, becomes clear also from the number of days given later; and in the Scriptures it is sometimes stated by the number of months as well. In Latin, "times" seems here to be said indefinitely; but it is said in the dual number, which Latin speakers do

95 Daniel 7:21–25.

96 Daniel 7:26–28. Jerome (c. AD 347–420), the biblical scholar and translator, wrote his Commentary on Daniel around AD 407.

not have. The Hebrews, like the Greeks, are said to have it. So "times" is said as if "two times" were said. I confess, indeed, that I fear we may perhaps be mistaken about the ten kings whom the Antichrist seems likely to find as ten individual men, and that he may thus arrive unexpectedly, when there are not that many kings in the Roman world.[97] For what if this number ten signifies the totality of the kings after whom he is to come—just as totality is often signified by a thousand, a hundred, or seven, and by various other numbers that there is no need to mention now?

In another place the same Daniel says: "And there will be a time of tribulation such as has not been since a nation was born upon the earth until that time. And at that time your people will be saved, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the mound of the earth will rise, some to eternal life, and some to reproach and to eternal confusion. And those who understand will shine like the brightness of the firmament, and many of the righteous like the stars forever and beyond." This passage is very similar to that saying in the gospel, at least as regards the resurrection of the bodies of the dead.[98] For those who are said there to be in the tombs are the same as those who here sleep in the mound of the earth—or, as others have translated it, in the dust of the earth. Just as it is said there, "they will come forth," so here, "they will rise." Just as it is said there, "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment," so too in this passage, "some to eternal life, and some to reproach and to eternal confusion." Nor should it be thought a difference that, whereas it says there, "all who are in the tombs," here the prophet does not say "all," but "many of those who sleep in the mound of the earth." For Scripture sometimes puts "many" for "all." That is why it was said to Abraham, "I have made you the father of many nations," though in another place it says to him,

97 The days are given in Daniel 12:11–12; the months (forty-two) in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5.

98 Daniel 12:1–3. The gospel saying is John 5:28–29.

"In your seed all nations will be blessed."[99] And of such a resurrection it is said to this same prophet Daniel a little later: "And you, come and rest; for there are still days until the completion of the consummation; and you will rest and rise again in your lot at the end of the days."[100]

WHAT IS PROPHESIED IN THE PSALMS OF DAVID ABOUT THE END OF THIS WORLD AND GOD'S LAST JUDGMENT

The Psalms say the heavens will perish and that God will come openly to judge.

20.24 Many things are said about the last judgment in the Psalms, but most of them in passing and briefly. Yet what is said there most plainly about the end of this world I will by no means pass over in silence: "In the beginning you founded the earth, O Lord, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment, and like a covering you will change them, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail." How is it, then, that Porphyry praises the piety of the Hebrews, by which they worship the God who is great and true and dreaded even by the deities themselves, and yet accuses the Christians of the greatest folly, even citing the oracles of his gods, for saying that this world will perish? Look: in the writings of the Hebrews' piety it is said to God, whom even the deities themselves hold in dread, as so great a philosopher admits: "The heavens are the works of your hands; they will perish."[101]

When the heavens perish, will the world not perish, when those same heavens are its higher and safer part? If this view displeases Jupiter, whose oracle, so this philosopher writes, carries greater authority and condemns it as part of the Christians' credulity, why does he not likewise condemn the wisdom of the Hebrews as folly, since the view is found in their most pious

99 Genesis 17:5; Genesis 22:18.
100 Daniel 12:13.
101 Psalm 101:26–28 (102:25–27 in most English Bibles).

books? Further, we read in that wisdom that the heavens will perish. Porphyry likes that wisdom so much that he even proclaims it through the voices of his own gods. Why, then, is this deceit so empty that, among the other things in the Christian faith or above all the rest, they abhor this: that in it the world is believed destined to perish? Surely the heavens cannot perish unless the world perishes. And in the sacred writings that are properly ours and not shared by the Hebrews and us—that is, in the Gospels and the apostolic books—we do read: "The form of this world is passing away"; we read: "The world passes away"; we read: "Heaven and earth will pass away." But I suppose that "is passing away," "passes away" and "will pass away" are put somewhat more mildly than "will perish."[102] The epistle of the apostle Peter also says that the world that then existed perished when it was flooded with water. There it is clear enough what part of the world was signified by the whole, and in what sense it is said to have perished. It is equally clear which heavens are "stored up, kept for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." A little later he says: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief; on it the heavens will pass away with great violence, the elements will burn and melt, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Then he added: "Since all these things are perishing, what sort of people ought you to be?"[103] In these words the heavens that will perish can be understood as those he said were stored up and kept for fire. The elements that will burn can be taken as those that exist, stormy and turbulent, in this lowest part of the world, in which he said those same heavens were stored up. Meanwhile the higher heavens, in whose firmament the stars are set, remain safe and whole. For even the scripture that says the stars will fall from heaven rather shows that those heavens will remain, if indeed the stars are to fall from there. Besides, it can be understood otherwise, and much more plausibly. Either the expression is figurative, which is more credible, or it will happen in this low-

102 1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 John 2:17; Matthew 24:35.
103 2 Peter 3:6–7, 10–11.

est heaven, though certainly in a more wondrous way than happens now. So too that star in Virgil, "trailing a torch, ran with a great light" and "hid itself in the forest of Ida."[104] But the passage I cited from the psalm seems to leave none of the heavens that it does not say will perish. For where it says, "The heavens are the works of your hands; they will perish," none of them is excluded from destruction, just as none of them is excluded from being God's work. They will not deign to defend the piety of the Hebrews, approved by the oracles of their own gods, by appealing to the language of the apostle Peter, whom they fiercely hate. Such an appeal would at least spare them from believing that the whole world will perish. The part could then be taken for the whole in the words "they will perish," since only the lowest heavens are to perish. In just this way, in that apostolic epistle, the part is taken for the whole when the world is said to have perished in the flood, though only its lowest part perished, along with its heavens. But, as I said, they will not deign to do this. They do not want to endorse the meaning of the apostle Peter, or to grant the final conflagration as much power as we say the flood had, since they maintain that the whole human race cannot perish by any waters or any flames. So it remains for them to say that their gods praised the wisdom of the Hebrews because they had not read this psalm.

In the forty-ninth psalm, too, these words are understood to speak of God's last judgment: "God will come openly, our God, and he will not keep silent. Fire will blaze before him, and around him a mighty storm. He will summon heaven on high, and the earth, to separate his people. Gather to him his righteous ones, who establish his covenant upon sacrifices." We understand this of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we expect to come from heaven to judge the living and the dead. For he will come openly to judge justly between the just and the unjust, he who first came hidden to be judged unjustly by the unjust.[105] He,

104 Virgil, Aeneid 2.694–697, describing a shooting star seen as an omen at the fall of Troy, near which Mount Ida stands.
105 Psalm 49:3–5 (50:3–5 in most English Bibles).

I say, will come openly and will not keep silent. That is, he will appear plainly, with the voice of a judge. When he first came hidden, he kept silent before his judge, when he was led like a sheep to the slaughter and was voiceless like a lamb before its shearer. We read this prophesied of him through Isaiah and see it fulfilled in the Gospel. As for the fire and the storm, we have already said how these should be understood, when we were discussing something similar in the prophecy of Isaiah. Then come the words "He will summon heaven on high." The saints and the righteous are rightly called heaven, so this is no doubt what the apostle says: "Together with them we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air." For if we take the surface of the letter, how is heaven summoned on high, as if it could be anywhere but on high?[106] Then comes what is added: "and the earth, to separate his people." Suppose only "he will summon" is understood here, that is, "he will summon the earth too," and "on high" is not understood. Then, in keeping with right faith, it seems to mean this: heaven is understood in those who are to judge with him, and earth in those who are to be judged. In that case we should take "he will summon heaven on high" here to mean not "he will catch them up into the air" but "he will raise them to the seats of judgment." It can also be understood this way: "he will summon heaven on high" means "he will summon the angels in the high and lofty places, and with them he will descend to carry out the judgment"; "he will summon the earth too" means the human beings on earth, who are, of course, to be judged. But perhaps both are to be understood when it says "and the earth," that is, both "he will summon" and "on high." Then the sense would be: "He will summon heaven on high, and he will summon the earth on high." In that case I think nothing better can be understood than all those who will be caught up to meet Christ in the air. They are called "heaven" on account of their souls and "earth" on account of their bodies. Next, "to separate his people"—what is this but to divide the good from the bad through judgment, as sheep from

106 Isaiah 53:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

goats? Then the speech turns to the angels: "Gather to him his righteous ones." For surely so great a work is to be carried out through the ministry of angels. And if we ask which righteous ones the angels will gather to him, it says: "Those who establish his covenant upon sacrifices." This is the whole life of the righteous: to establish God's covenant upon sacrifices. There are two ways to take this. Either works of mercy are "upon sacrifices," that is, to be ranked above sacrifices, in keeping with the saying of God: "I desire mercy rather than sacrifice." Or "upon sacrifices" is understood to mean "in sacrifices," just as something done on the earth is said to be done "upon the earth." In that case works of mercy are themselves the sacrifices by which God is pleased, as I remember arguing in the tenth book of this work. In these works the righteous establish God's covenant, because they do them for the sake of the promises contained in his new covenant. Hence, when his righteous ones have been gathered to him and set at his right hand, Christ will say at the last judgment: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food to eat." The rest that is set out there tells of the good works of the good and of their everlasting rewards, given through the final sentence of the judge.[107]

THE PROPHECY OF MALACHI, IN WHICH GOD'S LAST JUDGMENT IS DECLARED AND A CLEANSING OF SOME THROUGH PURIFYING PUNISHMENTS IS SPOKEN OF

Malachi foretells a judgment that refines some through purifying punishment.

20.25 The prophet Malachiel, or Malachi, prophesies the last judgment. He is also called "the angel," and some believe he is also Ezra the priest, other writings of whom have been received into the canon, for Jerome says that this is the opinion of the Hebrews about him. Malachi says: "See, he comes," says the

107 Hosea 6:6; Matthew 25:34–35.

Lord Almighty, "and who will endure the day of his coming, or who will be able to bear to look on him? For he enters like a refiner's fire and like the washers' herb. He will sit refining and cleansing as silver and as gold. He will cleanse the sons of Levi and melt them like gold and silver, and they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. And the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.[108] And I will draw near to you in judgment, and I will be a swift witness against sorcerers and against adulterers and against those who swear falsely in my name. I will witness against those who cheat the hired worker of his wages, who oppress widows by their power, strike orphans and pervert justice for the stranger, and against those who do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty, "for I am the Lord your God, and I do not change." From what has been said, it seems to appear more clearly that in that judgment there will be certain purifying punishments for certain people. For consider the words: "Who will endure the day of his coming, or who will be able to bear to look on him? For he enters like a refiner's fire and like the washers' herb. He will sit refining and cleansing as silver and as gold. He will cleanse the sons of Levi and melt them like gold and silver." What else is to be understood by them? Isaiah too says something similar: "The Lord will wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion, and will cleanse the blood from their midst by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning." Unless perhaps we should say that they are cleansed of filth, and in a sense refined, when the wicked are separated from them through penal judgment. The separation and condemnation of the one group would then be the purification of the other, since from then on they will live without any mingling with such people. But he also says: "He will cleanse the sons of Levi and melt them like gold and silver, and they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness, and the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord." Here he surely shows that the very ones who

108 The name Malachi means "my messenger" (Latin *angelus*). The passage quoted is Malachi 3:1–6.

will be cleansed will afterward please the Lord with sacrifices of righteousness. Therefore they themselves will be cleansed of their own unrighteousness, in which they displeased the Lord. And once they have been cleansed, they themselves will be the offerings, in full and perfect righteousness.[109] For what more acceptable thing do such people offer to God than themselves? But this question of purifying punishments must be put off to another time, so that it may be treated more carefully. Now, by the sons of Levi and Judah and Jerusalem we ought to understand the Church of God itself, gathered not only from the Hebrews but from other nations too. This is not the Church as it is now, where "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is the Church as it will be then, purified by the last judgment as a threshing floor is purified by winnowing. Those who need such cleansing will also have been cleansed by fire, so that there will be no one at all who offers sacrifice for his sins. For all who offer in that way are surely in sins. They offer to have those sins forgiven, so that once they have offered and the offering has been accepted by God, their sins may then be forgiven.[110]

THE SACRIFICES THAT THE SAINTS WILL OFFER TO GOD, WHICH WILL PLEASE HIM AS THEY DID IN THE DAYS OF OLD AND IN FORMER YEARS

The sacrifices pleasing "as in former days" recall humanity's sinless state in paradise.

20.26 But God wished to show that his city will not then follow this practice, and so he said that the sons of Levi would present offerings in righteousness—not, therefore, in sin, and hence not for sin. He went on to add: "and the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years." From this it can be understood that the Jews promise themselves in vain a return to the past times of their sacrifices

109 Isaiah 4:4.
110 1 John 1:8.

under the law of the old covenant. For in those times they presented their offerings not in righteousness but in sins, since they offered chiefly and first of all for sins. So much was this the case that even the priest, who we must certainly believe was more righteous than the rest, regularly offered by God's command first for his own sins and then for those of the people. We must therefore explain how the words "as in the days of old and as in former years" are to be taken. Perhaps it recalls the time when the first human beings were in paradise. For then, pure and untouched by any filth or stain of sin, they offered themselves to God as the purest offerings. But ever since they were sent away from there because of the transgression they committed, and human nature was condemned in them, no one is "clean from filth," apart from the one Mediator and those who are still little children after the washing of rebirth. As it is written, "not even an infant whose life on earth is a single day."[111] Someone may reply that those who offer in faith can also rightly be said to present offerings in righteousness. For "the righteous lives by faith," although he deceives himself if he says he has no sin, and so he does not say it, because he lives by faith. But will anyone claim that this time of faith is to be equated with that end? At that end, those who are to present offerings in righteousness will be cleansed by the fire of the last judgment. And so, since we must believe that after such cleansing the righteous will have no sin, that time surely cannot be compared, as far as having no sin is concerned, with any other time. The only exception is the time when the first human beings lived in paradise before the transgression, in a happiness of perfect innocence. It is rightly understood, therefore, that this is what is meant when it is said:[112]

"As in the days of old and as in former years." For through Isaiah, too, a new heaven and a new earth are promised. After that promise he sets out other things about the happiness of the saints in allegories and riddles; concern to avoid length has kept

111 Job 14:4–5, in the Greek and Old Latin versions.
112 Habakkuk 2:4, quoted in Romans 1:17.

us from giving them a fitting explanation. Among these he says: "The days of my people will be like the days of the tree of life." And who that has so much as touched the sacred scriptures does not know where God planted the tree of life? Its food was withheld from those first human beings when their wickedness drove them out of paradise, and a fiery and terrible guard was set around that same tree.[113]

But suppose someone contends that those days of the tree of life mentioned by the prophet Isaiah are these present days of the Church of Christ. He might say that Christ himself is prophetically called the tree of life, because he is the wisdom of God, of which Solomon says, "She is a tree of life to all who embrace her." He might add that those first human beings did not spend any years in paradise, since they were thrown out so quickly that they had no child there. In that case that time cannot be understood in the words "as in the days of old and as in former years." I pass over this question. Otherwise I would be forced into the lengthy task of examining everything, so that the plain truth might confirm one of these views. For I see another meaning, which keeps us from believing that the prophet promised us, as a great gift, the days of old and the former years of carnal sacrifices.[114] For those offerings of the old law, whatever animals they came from, were commanded to be offered spotless and wholly without blemish. They signified holy human beings, such as Christ alone has been found to be—without any sin at all. Accordingly, after the judgment, those who deserve such cleansing will also have been cleansed by fire, and no sin at all will be found in any of the saints. They will offer themselves in righteousness, and these offerings will be spotless in every respect and without any blemish. Since this is so, things will surely be as in the days of old and as in former years. In those days the purest offerings were offered in the shadow of this thing to come. For then there will be in the immortal flesh and

113 Isaiah 65:22, in the Greek version.
114 Proverbs 3:18.

mind of the saints the purity that was prefigured in the bodies of those sacrificial animals.

Then he turns to those who deserve not cleansing but condemnation: "And I will draw near to you in judgment," he says, "and I will be a swift witness against sorcerers and against adulterers," and so on. After listing these damnable crimes he added: "For I am the Lord your God, and I do not change." It is as if he said: "Your guilt has changed you for the worse, and my grace has changed you for the better, but I do not change." He says he will be a witness because in his judgment he needs no witnesses. He calls himself swift for one of two reasons. Either he will come suddenly, and the judgment that seemed so very slow will be very swift because his coming is so unexpected. Or he will convict consciences themselves without any lengthy speech. For, as it is written, "In the thoughts of the ungodly there will be an inquiry." And the apostle says: "Their thoughts accuse or even excuse them, on the day when God will judge the secrets of human beings according to my gospel, through Jesus Christ." In this way too, then, the Lord is to be understood as a swift witness. Without delay he will call back to memory the things by which he will convict and punish the conscience.[115]

THE SEPARATION OF THE GOOD AND THE WICKED, BY WHICH THE DISTINCTION MADE AT THE LAST JUDGMENT IS DECLARED

Malachi foretells the day that will show the difference between the just and the wicked.

20.27 Another passage I quoted from this same prophet in Book 18, while dealing with a different subject, also concerns the last judgment. There he says: "They shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, on the day when I act to make them my own possession, and I will choose them as a man chooses his son who serves him. And I will turn, and you shall see what difference there is between the just and the unjust, between the one who

115 Wisdom 1:9; Romans 2:15–16.

serves God and the one who does not serve him. For see, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and it shall burn them up. All the foreigners and all who do wickedness shall be stubble, and the coming day shall set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty, and neither root nor branch shall be left of them.[116] And for you who fear my name the sun of justice shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out and leap like calves let loose from their tethers, and you shall trample the wicked, and they shall be ashes under your feet, says the Lord Almighty." This difference of rewards and punishments, which separates the just from the unjust, is not seen under this sun, in the vanity of this life. But it will shine out clearly under that sun of justice, when that other life is made manifest. Then, surely, there will be a judgment such as there has never been.

THAT THE LAW OF MOSES MUST BE UNDERSTOOD SPIRITUALLY, SO THAT A FLESHLY UNDERSTANDING MAY NOT FALL INTO DAMNABLE MURMURING

Malachi calls for remembering the law of Moses, to be read spiritually as pointing to Christ.

20.28 The same prophet then adds: "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, its precepts and its judgments." He fittingly recalls these after declaring that there will be so great a distinction between those who keep the law and those who despise it. At the same time, he does so that they may learn to understand the law spiritually and find Christ in it, through whom, as judge, that very separation between the good and the wicked is to be made. For it was not for nothing that the same Lord said to the Jews: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me too; for he wrote about me." By taking the law carnally, and not knowing that its earthly promises were figures of heavenly things, they fell into those murmurings, and even dared to say: "It is futile to serve God. What more have we gained because we kept his command-

116 Malachi 3:17–4:1. Augustine had quoted the passage earlier in Book 18.

ments, and because we walked as suppliants before the face of the Lord Almighty?[117] And now we call strangers happy, and all who do wickedness are built up." By these words of theirs the prophet was in a way compelled to foretell the last judgment. Then the wicked will not be happy even falsely but will plainly appear most wretched, and the good will not suffer even temporal misery but will enjoy a clear and everlasting happiness. Earlier, too, he had reported similar words from these same people: "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and such people please him." To these murmurings against God, I say, they came by taking the law of Moses carnally. That is why the psalmist, too, in Psalm 72, says that his feet had almost been shaken and his steps had almost slipped away—slipped, that is, into a fall—because he envied sinners when he saw the peace of sinners. He went so far as to say, among other things: "How does God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?"[118] and also: "Was it for nothing that I justified my heart and washed my hands among the innocent?" But to resolve this most difficult question, which arises when the good seem wretched and the wicked happy, he says: "This is a labor before me, until I enter the sanctuary of God and understand the last things." For at the last judgment it will not be so. In the open misery of the wicked and the open happiness of the just, things will appear far otherwise than they do now.[119]

THE COMING OF ELIJAH BEFORE THE JUDGMENT, WHEN THE JEWS, AS HIS PREACHING UNLOCKS THE SECRETS OF SCRIPTURE, WILL BE CONVERTED TO CHRIST

Elijah will return before the judgment and the Jews will come to believe in Christ.

20.29 He had urged them to remember the law of Moses, because he foresaw that for a long time yet they would not take it spiritu-

117 Malachi 4:4; John 5:46; Malachi 3:14–15.
118 Malachi 3:15 and 2:17; Psalm 72:2–3, 11 (73 in most English Bibles).
119 Psalm 72:13, 16–17 (73 in most English Bibles).

ally, as they ought. Then he immediately added: "And see, I will send you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. He will turn the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest when I come I strike the earth utterly." Through this Elijah, the great and wonderful prophet, the law will be expounded to the Jews in the last time before the judgment, and they will believe in the true Christ, that is, in our Christ. This is a familiar theme in the conversation and the hearts of the faithful. Not without reason is he expected to come before the coming of the Savior as judge, since not without reason is he believed to be alive even now. For he was carried away from human affairs in a chariot of fire, as holy Scripture most plainly testifies.[120] When he comes, then, he will expound spiritually the law that the Jews now understand carnally, and so he will turn the heart of the father to the son—that is, the heart of the fathers to the sons, for the Seventy translators put the singular for the plural. The sense is that the sons, that is, the Jews, will understand the law as the fathers understood it, that is, the prophets, among whom was Moses himself. For in this way the heart of the fathers will be turned to the sons, when the understanding of the fathers is carried through to the understanding of the sons. And the heart of the sons will be turned to their fathers, when the sons come to think as the fathers thought. At this point the Seventy said: "and the heart of a man to his neighbor." For fathers and sons are very near neighbors to one another.[121] Yet in the words of the Seventy, who translated prophetically, another sense can be found, and a better one. On this reading, Elijah is to turn the heart of God the Father to the Son—not, of course, by bringing it about that the Father loves the Son, but by teaching that the Father loves the Son. Then the Jews too will love the same Christ, our Christ, whom they previously hated. For in the Jews' view God now has his heart turned

120 Malachi 4:5–6. Elijah's being taken up in a chariot of fire is told in 2 Kings 2:11.
121 The Seventy are the translators of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, traditionally said to be the work of seventy (or seventy-two) scholars.

away from our Christ, because that is what they believe. For them, then, his heart will be turned to the Son when they, with their own hearts turned, have learned the Father's love for the Son. Then follows: "and the heart of a man to his neighbor"—that is, Elijah will also turn the heart of a man to his neighbor. What better meaning can be found than the heart of a man turned to the man Christ? For though in the form of God he is our God, in taking the form of a servant he deigned to become our neighbor as well. This, then, is what Elijah will do. "Lest perhaps," he says, "I come and strike the earth utterly." For those who set their minds on earthly things are earth, as the carnal Jews are to this day. From this fault came those murmurings against God: "The wicked please him," and, "It is futile to serve God."

THAT IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, WHEN GOD IS SAID TO BE ABOUT TO JUDGE, THE PERSON OF CHRIST IS NOT PLAINLY SHOWN, YET FROM CERTAIN TESTIMONIES IN WHICH THE LORD GOD SPEAKS IT APPEARS BEYOND DOUBT THAT HE IS CHRIST

Where the Old Testament says God will come to judge, the Lord God is Christ.

20.30 There are many other testimonies in the divine Scriptures about God's last judgment, but to collect them all would take far too long. Let it be enough, then, that we have shown it to have been foretold in both the New and the Old sacred writings. But that the judgment will take place through Christ—that is, that Christ will come from heaven as judge—is not stated as plainly in the Old as in the New. The reason is that when the Lord God says there that he will come, or the Lord God is said to be coming, it does not follow that Christ is meant. For the Lord God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Even so, we must not leave this point without evidence. First, then, we must show how Jesus Christ speaks in the prophetic books as the Lord God, and yet plainly appears as Jesus Christ. Then, even where he does not appear so plainly, and yet the Lord God is said to be

coming to that last judgment, Jesus Christ can be understood. There is a passage in the prophet Isaiah that plainly shows what I mean. God says through the prophet: "Hear me, Jacob, and Israel whom I call. I am the first, and I am forever. My hand founded the earth, and my right hand made the heavens firm. I will call them, and they will stand together, and they will all be gathered and will hear. Who told him these things? Because I love you, I did your will against Babylon, to take away the seed of the Chaldeans. I spoke, and I called; I brought him and made his way prosper.[122] Come near to me and hear this. From the beginning I have not spoken in secret; when these things were being done, I was there. And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit." Surely it is he who was speaking as the Lord God. Yet he would not be understood to be Jesus Christ had he not added: "And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit." For he said this according to the form of a servant, using a verb in the past tense about a future event. So too we read in the same prophet: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter." He did not say "will be led"; in place of what was still to come he put a past-tense verb. And prophecy constantly speaks in this way.[123]

There is another passage, in Zechariah, which plainly shows that the Almighty sent the Almighty. Who sent whom, if not God the Father God the Son? For it is written: "Thus says the Lord Almighty: After glory he has sent me upon the nations that plundered you; for whoever touches you is like one who touches the pupil of his eye. See, I will bring my hand upon them, and they will become plunder for those who had served them, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me." See, the Lord Almighty says that he was sent by the Lord Almighty. Who would dare to understand this as anyone but Christ speaking—speaking, that is, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? For he says in the Gospel: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These sheep he here compared to the pupil of God's eye, because of his surpassing tenderness of love. And the

122 Isaiah 48:12–16.
123 Isaiah 53:7.

apostles themselves were of this flock.[124] But "after glory"—after the glory of his resurrection, that is, before which the evangelist says, "Jesus was not yet glorified"—he was sent upon the nations as well, in his apostles. So was fulfilled what we read in the psalm: "You will rescue me from the contradictions of the people; you will make me head of the nations." Those who had plundered the Israelites, and whom the Israelites had served when they were subject to the nations, were not in their turn plundered in the same way. Instead they themselves became plunder for the Israelites. (This is what he had promised the apostles when he said, "I will make you fishers of men," and to one of them, "From now on you will be catching men.") They became plunder, then, but for their good, like goods snatched from that strong man—strong, but more strongly bound.[125]

Again, the Lord speaks through the same prophet: "And it shall be on that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and mercy. They will look on me because they have mocked, and they will mourn over him with mourning as for one most dear, and they will grieve with grief as for an only son." Whose work is it, if not God's, to destroy all the nations hostile to the holy city of Jerusalem, which "come against" it—that is, are opposed to it—or, as others have translated, "come upon" it, that is, to subject it to themselves? Whose work is it, if not God's, to pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of that city the spirit of grace and mercy?[126] This is certainly the work of God, and it is spoken by the prophet in the person of God. And yet Christ shows that he is this God who does such great and divine things, by going on to say: "They will look on me because they have mocked, and they will mourn over him with mourning as for one most dear (or beloved), and they will grieve with grief as

124 Zechariah 2:8–9; Matthew 15:24.
125 John 7:39; Psalm 17:44 (18:43 in most English Bibles); Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10. The bound "strong man" alludes to Matthew 12:29.
126 Zechariah 12:9–10.

for an only son." For on that day the Jews will repent—even those who are to receive the spirit of grace and mercy—that they mocked Christ in his passion. This will happen when they look on him coming in his majesty and recognize that he is the one whom they mocked, in the persons of their ancestors, when he was lowly. Their ancestors too, the authors of that great impiety, will rise again and see him—but now to be punished, no longer to be corrected. So in this passage it is not the ancestors who are meant, where it is said: "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and mercy; and they will look on me because they have mocked." It means those descended from their stock, who will believe through Elijah at that time. But just as we say to the Jews, "You killed Christ," although it was their ancestors who did it, so these too will grieve that in a sense they did what was done by those from whose stock they descend. They will have received the spirit of grace and mercy, and as believers they will not be condemned with their impious ancestors. Yet they will grieve as if they themselves had done what those others did. So they will grieve not from guilt for the crime but from the feeling of devotion. Where the Seventy translators said, "They will look on me because they have mocked," the translation from the Hebrew reads: "They will look on me, whom they pierced." This wording shows Christ crucified more plainly. But the mocking that the Seventy chose to put was not absent from any part of his passion. They mocked him when he was arrested, when he was bound, when he was condemned, when he was dressed in the insult of a shameful robe, when he was crowned with thorns, struck on the head with a reed, and worshiped in derision on bended knee, when he carried his cross, and when at last he hung on the tree. So if we follow not one translation but join both, reading both "they mocked" and "they pierced," we recognize the truth of the Lord's passion more fully.[127]

So when we read in the prophetic writings that God is coming to hold the last judgment, Christ should be understood simply

because of the judgment itself, even if nothing else marks the distinction. For although the Father will judge, he will judge through the coming of the Son of Man. He himself, by the manifestation of his own presence, judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son. The Son will be manifested as a man in order to judge, just as he was judged as a man. For who else is it of whom God likewise speaks through Isaiah under the name of Jacob and Israel, from whose seed he took a body? It is written: "Jacob my servant, I will uphold him; Israel my chosen, my soul has taken him to itself. I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth judgment to the nations. He will not cry out, nor will he cease, nor will his voice be heard outside. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench; but he will bring forth judgment in truth.[128] He will shine out and will not be broken, until he establishes judgment on the earth; and in his name the nations will hope." In the Hebrew we do not read "Jacob" and "Israel"; what we read there is "my servant." Evidently the Seventy translators wanted to show how this should be taken: that it was said with reference to the form of a servant, in which the Most High showed himself most lowly. So, to signify him, they put the name of the very man from whose line that form of a servant was taken. The Holy Spirit was given upon him, as was also shown in the form of a dove, according to the Gospel's testimony. He brought forth judgment to the nations, because he foretold what was to come, which was hidden from the nations. In his gentleness he did not cry out, and yet he did not cease preaching the truth. But his voice was not heard outside, nor is it heard now, since he is not obeyed by those who are outside, cut off from his body. As for the Jews themselves, his persecutors, they are compared to a bruised reed, having lost their wholeness, and to a smoldering wick, having lost their light. Yet he did not break them and did not quench them, because he spared them: he had not yet come to

127 The translation from the Hebrew is Jerome's; the reading "whom they pierced" is also quoted in John 19:37.
128 John 5:22; Isaiah 42:1–4.

judge them, but to be judged by them. He did indeed bring forth judgment in truth, foretelling to them when they would be punished if they persisted in their malice. His face shone on the mountain, his fame throughout the world. Nor was he broken or crushed, since neither in himself nor in his Church did he yield to his persecutors so as to cease to exist. And so what his enemies said, and still say, has not happened and will not happen: "When will he die, and his name perish?"—"until he establishes judgment on the earth." See, what we were looking for as hidden has been made plain. For this is the last judgment, which he will establish on the earth when he himself comes from heaven. We already see fulfilled what is placed last here: "And in his name the nations will hope." Through this, which cannot be denied, let that also be believed which is shamelessly denied. For who would have hoped for what even those who still refuse to believe in Christ now see along with us? Because they cannot deny it, they gnash their teeth and waste away.[129] Who, I say, would have hoped that the nations would hope in the name of Christ, when he was being seized and bound, scourged and mocked, and crucified—when even his own disciples had lost the hope they had begun to place in him? What scarcely one thief hoped for then, on the cross, the nations spread far and wide now hope for. And so as not to die forever, they are signed with the very cross on which he died.

THE ORDER OF THE LAST THINGS

Augustine lists the last events in order and announces the last two books.

No one, then, denies or doubts that a last judgment such as these sacred writings foretell will take place through Christ Jesus—no one except a person who, from some incredible animosity or blindness, does not believe these writings, which have already demonstrated their truth to the whole world. At that judgment, then, or around the time of it, we have learned that these things

129 Psalm 40:6 (41:5 in most English Bibles).

will come: Elijah the Tishbite, the faith of the Jews, Antichrist who will persecute, Christ who will judge, the resurrection of the dead, the separation of the good and the wicked, the burning of the world and its renewal. All these things must be believed to be coming. But in what ways and in what order they will come, experience of the events will teach better then than human understanding can fully grasp now. I think, however, that they will come in the order in which I have listed them.

Two books belonging to this work remain for us, so that with the Lord's help we may fulfill our promises. One will be on the punishment of the wicked, the other on the happiness of the just. In them above all, as God grants, we will refute the human arguments that wretched people think they are wisely gnawing on against what God has foretold and promised, while they despise the nourishment of saving faith as false and laughable. But those who are wise according to God hold one argument as the greatest for all the things that seem incredible to human beings and yet are contained in the holy Scriptures, whose truth has already been established in many ways: the truthful omnipotence of God. They are certain that he could in no way have lied in those Scriptures, and that he can do what is impossible to the unbeliever.

Book XXI

The punishment of the damned
Can bodies burn forever? Against those who deny or soften eternal punishment.

THE ORDER OF THE DISCUSSION: WHY THE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OF THE DAMNED WITH THE DEVIL MUST BE DISCUSSED BEFORE THE ETERNAL HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS

Augustine treats the punishment of the damned before the happiness of the saints, since bodily torment seems less credible.

21.1 When, through Christ our Lord, the judge of the living and the dead, the two cities have reached their due ends—the one the city of God, the other the city of the devil—what kind of punishment will the devil and all who belong to him suffer? That is what we must examine more carefully in this book, as far as divine help enables us. I have chosen to keep this order, and to discuss the happiness of the saints afterward, because both will involve bodies. It seems more incredible that bodies should endure in eternal torments than that they should continue without any pain in eternal happiness. So once I have shown that that punishment ought not to be incredible, it will help me greatly: it will be much easier to believe that the saints will have bodies that are immortal and free from all distress. Nor is this order at odds with the divine Scriptures. Sometimes they place the happiness of the good first, as in this passage: "Those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." But sometimes it comes later, as here: "The Son of Man will send his angels, and

they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of stumbling and throw them into the blazing furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And here: "So these will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." In the prophets too, anyone who looks will find now one order, now the other, though it would take too long to list them. But I have said why I chose this one.[1]

WHETHER BODIES CAN LAST FOREVER IN BURNING FIRE

Unbelievers want an example from nature, not an appeal to God's power, of bodies living in fire.

21.2 What, then, can I point to that will convince unbelievers that human bodies, animated and alive, can not only never be dissolved by death but also endure the torments of eternal fire? They do not want us to appeal to the power of the Almighty; they demand to be persuaded by some example. Suppose we answer them that there are animals, certainly corruptible because they are mortal, which nevertheless live in the midst of fire. Suppose we add that a certain kind of worm is found where hot springs gush out, springs whose heat no one can touch without harm, and that these worms not only live there without any injury to themselves but cannot live outside them. Then either they refuse to believe it, if we cannot show it to them; or, if we manage to show them the things themselves or to inform them through reliable witnesses, they will argue, with the same unbelief, that this is not an adequate example of the matter in question. These animals, they will say, do not live forever, and they live in that heat without pain: they thrive in those elements because the elements suit their nature, and are not tortured by them. As if it were not more incredible to thrive in such things than to be tortured by them! For it is wonderful to feel pain in fire and still live, but it is more wonderful to live in fire and feel no pain. But if the second is believed, why not the first as well?

1 John 5:29; Matthew 13:41–43; Matthew 25:46.

WHETHER BODILY PAIN MUST RESULT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH

Pain proves life, not death; the soul feels pain yet is immortal, and so the damned bodies may be.

21.3 "But there is no body," they say, "that can feel pain and yet cannot die." And how do we know this? Who is certain about the bodies of demons, whether they feel pain in them, when the demons confess that they are afflicted with great torments? Perhaps the answer is that there is no earthly body, solid and visible, or, to put it in a single word, no flesh that can feel pain and cannot die. But what is that, except what people have gathered from bodily sense and experience? They know no flesh except mortal flesh, and this is their whole argument: that what they have not experienced cannot possibly exist. And what kind of reasoning makes pain an argument for death, when it is rather an indication of life? Even if we ask whether a thing that feels pain can live forever, it is certain at any rate that everything that feels pain is alive, and that pain cannot exist except in a living thing. It is necessary, then, that whatever feels pain be alive; it is not necessary that pain kill. Not every pain kills even these mortal bodies of ours, which are certainly going to die. The reason some pain can kill is that the soul is so joined to this body that it yields to the greatest pains and departs. Another reason is that the very structure of our limbs and vital organs is so frail that it cannot withstand the force that produces great or extreme pain. But at that time the soul will be joined to such a body, and in such a way, that the bond will be broken by no pain, just as it will be dissolved by no length of time. So even if no flesh now exists that can suffer the sensation of pain but cannot suffer death, then there will be flesh of a kind that does not exist now, just as there will also be a death of a kind that does not exist now. For there will not be no death; there will be everlasting death, when the soul will be unable to live, because it does not have God, and unable to escape the pains of the body by dying. The first death drives the soul out of the body against its will;

the second death holds the soul in the body against its will. Both deaths have this in common: the soul suffers from its own body what it does not want.

These objectors notice that there is now no flesh that can suffer pain but cannot suffer death. Yet they do not notice that something of this kind does exist, something greater than the body. The soul itself, by whose presence the body lives and is governed, can suffer pain and cannot die. Here, then, we have found something that has the sensation of pain and is immortal. So what we now know to be true of everyone's soul will then be true also of the bodies of the damned. Indeed, if we consider more carefully, the pain that is called bodily belongs rather to the soul. It is the soul that feels pain, not the body, even when the cause of its pain comes from the body, as when it feels pain in the place where the body is injured. We speak of bodies that feel and bodies that live, although feeling and life come to the body from the soul. In the same way we speak of bodies that feel pain, although pain cannot come to the body except from the soul. So the soul feels pain together with the body in the part of it where something happens to cause pain. It also feels pain alone, though it is in the body, when it is sad from some cause, even an invisible one, while the body is unharmed. It feels pain even when it is not in a body: that rich man in the underworld was certainly in pain when he said, "I am tormented in this flame." The body, on the other hand, does not feel pain when it is lifeless, nor does it feel pain without the soul when it is alive. If, then, it were valid to argue from pain to death, so that death can occur because pain could occur, dying would belong more to the soul, since feeling pain also belongs more to the soul.[2] But since the soul, which is more capable of pain, cannot die, what grounds are there for believing that those bodies will die just because they will be in pain? The Platonists, it is true, said that the soul's fearing and desiring, feeling pain and rejoicing come from earthly bodies and dying limbs. So Virgil says: "From this," that is, from the dying limbs of the earthly body, "they fear and

2 Luke 16:24.

desire, feel pain and rejoice." But in the twelfth book of this work we proved against them that, on their own account, souls purged of every stain of the body still have a dreadful craving, which makes them begin once more to want to return into bodies. And where there can be craving, there can surely also be pain. For frustrated craving turns into pain, whether by failing to reach what it was aiming at or by losing what it had reached.[3] The soul, then, feels pain alone or chiefly, and yet it has a kind of immortality of its own, after its own manner. So those bodies will not be able to die just because they will feel pain. Finally, if bodies cause souls to feel pain, why can they inflict pain on them but not death? Surely because it does not follow that what causes pain causes death. Why, then, is it incredible that fire can inflict pain on those bodies but not death, just as bodies make souls feel pain without thereby forcing them to die? Pain, therefore, is not a necessary argument that death will follow.

EXAMPLES FROM NATURE SHOWING THAT LIVING BODIES CAN SURVIVE AMID TORMENTS

The salamander, Etna, undecaying peacock flesh, quicklime, diamond and magnet show how strange nature already is.

21.4 Those who have investigated the natures of animals with particular care have written that the salamander lives in fire. Certain very famous mountains of Sicily have been seething with flames for so many ages, down to the present and on into the future, and yet remain intact. These are quite adequate witnesses that not everything that burns is consumed, and the soul shows that not everything that can feel pain can also die. If so, why are we still asked for examples from the world of things to teach that it is not incredible that human bodies punished with everlasting punishment should keep their souls in the fire, burn without being consumed, and feel pain without perishing?[4]

For the substance of the flesh will then have this quality, given to it by the one who gave such wonderful and varied qual-

3 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.733.

ities to so many things we see that, because there are so many of them, we do not wonder at them. Who but God, the creator of all things, gave the flesh of a dead peacock the property of not decaying? When I heard of this it seemed incredible. Then it happened at Carthage that this bird was served to us cooked, and I had a portion of meat taken from its breast, as much as seemed right, and kept. It was brought out and set before us after as many days as it would take any other cooked meat to decay, and it did not offend our sense of smell at all. It was put away again, and after more than thirty days it was found just as it had been; and the same after a year, except that it was somewhat drier and more shrunken. Who gave straw a power so cold that it preserves snow packed in it, or so warm that it ripens unripe fruit?

Who can explain the marvels of fire itself? Everything it scorches turns black, though fire itself is bright. Its own color is most beautiful, yet it discolors almost everything it encircles and licks, and turns a glowing ember into an ugly black coal. Nor is this laid down as a fixed rule. On the contrary, stones baked in white-hot fire turn white themselves; and though fire is rather red and they are whitish, white is akin to light, as black is to darkness. So when fire burns in wood in order to bake stones, it has contrary effects on things that are not contrary. Stones and wood are different, but they are not contrary, as white and black are. Fire produces one of these in the stones and the other in the wood: bright itself, it brightens the stones and darkens the wood, though it would die out in the stones if it were not alive in the wood. And charcoal: is it not wonderful? It is so weak that it breaks at the lightest blow and crumbles under the slightest pressure, and yet so strong that no moisture corrupts it and no age overcomes it. So much so that those who set up boundary stones usually lay charcoal underneath them. That way they can refute any litigant who comes forward, after however long a time, and claims that the stone fixed there is not a boundary marker. Who made it possible for charcoal buried in damp

4 The mountains are chiefly Mount Etna, the volcano of eastern Sicily.

earth, where wood would rot, to last so long without corruption, if not fire, that great corrupter of things?

Let us also consider the marvel of lime. I have already said enough about one point: that it turns white in the fire that makes other things black. Besides this, it takes fire from fire in a most hidden way. Then, when it is already a lump cold to the touch, it keeps that fire so secretly that it is not apparent to any of our senses at all. Yet once the fire has been discovered by experiment, it is known to be present, asleep, even while it does not appear. That is why we call it quicklime, "living" lime, as if the hidden fire were the invisible soul of a visible body. And how marvelous it is that it is kindled at the very moment it is quenched! To rid it of its hidden fire, it is put into water or water is poured over it; and though it was cold before, it grows hot from the very thing that makes all hot things grow cold.

So the lump seems to breathe its last; the fire that lay hidden departs and appears; and then, as if in death, the lump is so cold that if water is added it will not burn, and the lime we used to call "living" we now call "extinguished." What could possibly be added to this marvel? And yet something is. If you apply not water but oil, which feeds fire even more, no amount of pouring it over or into the lime makes it grow hot. If we read or heard of this marvel concerning some stone from India, and it could not come within our own experience, we would surely think it a lie or at least be greatly amazed. But things whose proofs pass before our eyes every day become cheap through their very familiarity, though they are no less marvelous in kind. So much so that we have even stopped marveling at some things from India itself, a part of the world far from us, which could be brought to us to be marveled at.

Many people here have the diamond, especially goldsmiths and gem engravers. It is a stone which, they say, can be overcome neither by iron nor by fire nor by any other force except goat's blood. But do those who have it and know it marvel at it as much as those to whom its power is shown for the first time? Those to whom it is not shown perhaps do not even believe it; or

if they believe, they marvel at what they have not experienced. And if they happen to experience it, they still marvel at the unusual, but constant experience gradually removes the stimulus of wonder. We know that the magnet is a marvelous stone that snatches up iron. When I first saw this, I was struck with awe. I saw an iron ring snatched up by the stone and suspended from it. Then, as if the stone had given its own power to the iron it had snatched and shared it, that same ring was brought near another ring and lifted it up. Just as the first ring clung to the stone, so the second ring clung to the first. A third was added in the same way, and then a fourth. And now there hung a kind of chain of rings joined to one another, not linked through the middle but clinging on the outside. Who would not be astonished at this power of the stone, which was not only in the stone itself but also passed through so many suspended objects and bound them with invisible bonds? But much more marvelous is what I learned about this stone from my brother and fellow bishop Severus of Milevis.[5] He told me that he himself had seen Bathanarius, formerly count of Africa, do this when the bishop was dining with him. Bathanarius brought out this same stone, held it under a silver plate, and placed a piece of iron on top of the silver. Then, as he moved the hand holding the stone underneath, the iron on top moved too. The silver in between was not affected at all, while below the stone was moved by the man and above the iron was pulled along by the stone, darting back and forth at great speed. I have told what I saw myself, and I have told what I heard from Severus, whom I believed as if I had seen it myself. Let me also tell what I have read about this magnet. When a diamond is placed near it, it does not snatch up iron; and if it has already done so, it lets the iron go as soon as the diamond comes near.[6] India sends these stones. But if we, who already know them, have stopped marveling at them, how much more must the people they come from, if these stones are very easy for them to obtain, regard them perhaps as we regard lime.

5 Severus, bishop of Milevis in Numidia, was a close friend of Augustine.
6 Bathanarius, military count of Africa, was put to death in AD 408.

We do not marvel at lime, because it is readily at hand. Yet it marvelously grows hot with water, which usually puts fire out, and does not grow hot with oil, which usually kindles fire.

HOW MANY THINGS THERE ARE WHOSE EXPLANATION CANNOT BE KNOWN, YET WHOSE TRUTH IS NOT IN DOUBT

Unbelievers must explain the marvels of Agrigentine salt, strange springs and Sodom's fruit before demanding reasons from Christians.

21.5 When we proclaim divine miracles, past or future, which we cannot show unbelievers so that they may experience them, they demand that we give a reason for those things. Because we cannot give one, since such things exceed the powers of the human mind, they think that what we say is false. Very well: these same people ought to give a reason for all the marvels that we either can see or actually do see. If they perceive that no human being can do this, they must admit that a thing has not failed to happen, or will not fail to happen, simply because no reason can be given for it, since these things exist and no reason can be given for them either. So I will not go through the many things recorded in writing, things not done and past but remaining in particular places, where anyone who wishes and is able to go can find out whether they are true. I mention only a few. They say that the salt of Agrigentum in Sicily melts as if in water when brought near fire, but crackles as if in fire when put in water. Among the Garamantes, they say, there is a spring so cold by day that no one can drink from it, and so hot by night that no one can touch it. In Epirus there is another spring in which lighted torches are put out, as in other springs, but, unlike other springs, extinguished torches are lit. The stone of Arcadia called asbestos ["unquenchable"] is so named, they say, because once lit it can never be put out. The wood of a certain Egyptian fig tree does not float in water like other wood but sinks. More wonderful still, after it has stayed at the bottom for a while it rises again to the surface, when, soaked through, it ought to be weighed down by the weight of the water. In the land of Sodom fruit grows and takes on the look of ripeness; but when tested by

biting or squeezing, the skin bursts and the fruit vanishes into smoke and ash.[7] The Persian stone pyrites, they say, burns the hand of anyone who holds it if it is squeezed too hard, which is why it takes its name from fire. Also in Persia a stone called selenite ["moonstone"] is found, whose inner whiteness waxes and wanes with the moon. In Cappadocia, they say, mares conceive by the wind, and their foals live no longer than three years. Tylos, an island of India, is preferred to all other lands because no tree that grows there ever loses its covering of leaves.[8]

These and countless other marvels are recorded by history, a history not of events done and past but of places that still remain, though, since I am engaged on another task, it would take me too long to pursue them. Let those unbelievers who refuse to believe the divine Scriptures give a reason for them, if they can. And why do they refuse, except that they do not think the Scriptures are divine because they contain incredible things, like the matter we are now dealing with? "No reason," they say, "allows that flesh should burn and not be consumed, feel pain and not die." Great reasoners indeed, able to give a reason for all the things that are known to be marvels! Then let them give one for the few we have set out. If they did not know that these things existed, and we said they would exist in the future, they would doubtless believe them much less than they now believe what we say will come about one day, which they refuse to believe. For which of them would believe us if we said these things? We say that there will be living human bodies which will always burn and feel pain and yet never die. Suppose that in the same way we said that in the world to come there will be a salt which fire makes melt as if in water, and which water makes crackle as if in fire. Or a spring whose water will be so hot in the cool of the night that it cannot be touched, but so cold in the heat of the day that it cannot be drunk. Or a stone, either one that burns with its own heat the hand of whoever squeezes it, or one that, once lit from any source, can never be put out at all. Or

7 The Garamantes were a people of the Libyan Sahara.
8 Tylos is modern Bahrain, which ancient writers associated with India.

the other things which, leaving aside countless others, I have thought worth mentioning for now. Suppose, then, that we said these things would exist in the world to come, and unbelievers replied: "If you want us to believe them, give a reason for each one." We would confess that we could not, because the feeble reasoning of mortals is overcome by these and similar wonderful works of God. Yet we would say that we hold a fixed reason: that the Almighty does nothing without reason, even where the feeble human mind cannot give the reason. In many things, we would say, it is uncertain to us what he wills; but this is most certain, that nothing he wills is impossible for him. And we would say that we believe him when he foretells things, since we cannot believe him to be either powerless or a liar. Yet what do these critics of faith, these demanders of reasons, say in reply about these things? No human being can give a reason for them; and yet they exist, and seem contrary to the very reason of nature. If we said that these things would exist in the future, unbelievers would demand a reason from us for them, just as they do for the things we say will exist. And so, since in such works of God the reasoning of the human heart and of human speech fails, it does not follow that these things do not exist; and in the same way it does not follow that those other things will not exist, simply because no human being can give a reason for either.

THAT NOT ALL MARVELS ARE NATURAL, BUT MANY ARE CONTRIVED BY HUMAN SKILL AND MANY BY THE ART OF DEMONS

The unquenchable lamp of Venus may be human contrivance, magic or demons, which only proves God's greater power.

21.6 Here they may perhaps reply: "Those things simply do not exist, and we do not believe them. What has been said about them is false; what has been written about them is false." And they may add, by way of argument: "If such things are to be believed, then you too must believe what is reported in the same writings: that there was, or is, a certain shrine of Venus, and in it

a lampstand, and on the lampstand a lamp burning in the open air in such a way that no storm and no rain could put it out. Hence, like that stone, it too was named λύχνος ἄσβεστος, *lychnos asbestos*, that is, 'the unquenchable lamp.'" They will be able to say this in order to put us in a tight spot when we answer. For if we say it is not to be believed, we will weaken those written accounts of marvels; but if we grant that it is to be believed, we will strengthen the deities of the pagans.[9] But, as I already said in the eighteenth book of this work, we are under no obligation to believe everything that the history of the nations contains. For the historians themselves, as Varro says, disagree among themselves on many points, as if on purpose and deliberately. Rather, we believe, if we wish, those things that do not conflict with the books which we have no doubt we ought to believe. As for these marvels of particular places, for what we want to persuade unbelievers will happen in the future, those are quite sufficient which we too can test by experience, and for which it is not hard to find reliable witnesses. As for this shrine of Venus and its unquenchable lamp, far from being squeezed into any tight spot, we find a wide field opening before us.[10] For to that unquenchable lamp we add many marvels: marvels of human art, marvels of magic—that is, of demonic arts practiced through human beings—and marvels of demons acting by themselves. If we chose to deny these, we would be setting ourselves against the truth of the very sacred writings we believe. So either human skill contrived some mechanical device in that lamp out of asbestos stone; or it was done by magic art, so that people might marvel at it in that temple; or some demon, under the name of Venus, presented himself with such efficacy that this prodigy both appeared to people there and lasted for a long time. Demons are lured to take up residence by means of creatures, which not they but God created. They are lured by

9 The Greek *asbestos* means "unquenchable"; Augustine described the asbestos stone in the previous chapter.

10 Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), the most learned of Roman scholars, whose antiquarian works Augustine uses throughout.

delights as varied as they themselves are varied—not as animals are lured by food, but as spirits are lured by signs that suit each one's taste—through various kinds of stones and herbs, woods and animals, spells and rites. But in order to be lured by human beings, the demons first seduce them with the most cunning craft, either by breathing a hidden poison into their hearts or by appearing to them in deceitful friendships. They make a few of them their disciples, and these become the teachers of very many. For it could not have been learned, unless they themselves had first taught it, what each of them craves, what he abhors, by what name he is invited, by what name compelled. That is how the magic arts and their practitioners came into being. But above all they take possession of the hearts of mortals—the possession in which they glory most—when they transform themselves into angels of light. So there are very many deeds of theirs, and the more marvelous we admit them to be, the more carefully we must shun them. Yet for the matter we are now dealing with, even these are of use to us. For if unclean demons can do such things, how much more powerful are the holy angels! And how much more powerful than all of them is God, who made even those angels who bring about such great miracles![11]

Therefore, consider this. So many and such great wonders, which they call μηχανήματα [mechanical contrivances], are produced by human arts using God's creation that those who do not understand them suppose them to be divine. (This is how it happened that in a certain temple, with magnets set in the floor and in the ceiling in proportion to their size, an iron image hung in midair between the two stones, so that to those who did not know what was above and below it seemed to be suspended by the power of a deity. And we have already said that something of the sort could have been done by a craftsman in that lamp of Venus, using asbestos stone.) Again, the works of magicians, whom our Scripture calls sorcerers and enchanters, were able to exalt demons so highly that a famous poet felt he was in tune

11 An allusion to 2 Corinthians 11:14.

with common belief when he said of a certain woman who was powerful in that art: "She promises by her spells to set free the minds of whom she will, but to send harsh cares upon others; to halt the water in the rivers and turn the stars backward; she summons the ghosts of the night: you will see the earth groan beneath your feet and the ash trees come down from the mountains." If all this is so, how much more is God able to do what is incredible to unbelievers but easy for his power! For it was he who created the power of stones and other things, and the talents of the people who use them in wonderful ways, and the natures of angels, more powerful than all earthly living beings. His wonderful power surpasses all wonders, as does his wisdom in working, commanding and permitting; and he uses all things as wonderfully as he created them.

THAT IN MARVELOUS THINGS THE HIGHEST REASON FOR BELIEF IS THE ALMIGHTINESS OF THE CREATOR

To say 'it is their nature' is no better an explanation than 'it is God's will.'

21.7 Why, then, should God not be able to make the bodies of the dead rise again, and the bodies of the damned be tormented in eternal fire? He made a world full of countless marvels in the sky and on the earth, in the air and in the waters—and the world itself is without doubt a greater and more excellent marvel than all the things with which it is filled. But consider these people with whom, or rather against whom, we are arguing. They believe that there is a God by whom the world was made, and that there are gods made by him, through whom the world is governed by him. They do not deny—indeed they go further and proclaim—that there are cosmic powers that bring about marvels, whether spontaneous, or obtained through some form of worship and ritual, or even magical. Yet when we put before them the marvelous power of other things, which are neither rational animals nor spirits endowed with any reason—such as the few we have mentioned—they usually answer: "This is a power of nature; their nature is like that; these are the proper-

ties of their own natures." So the whole explanation of why Agrigentine salt is made to melt by flame and to crackle in water is that this is its nature.[12] Yet this seems rather to be contrary to nature, which gave the power of dissolving salt not to fire but to water, and the power of roasting it to fire, not to water. "But this," they say, "is the natural property of this salt: that it is affected in the opposite way." This, then, is the explanation given for that Garamantian spring as well, where a single stream is cold by day and boiling by night, and in either state painful to those who touch it. This is the explanation for that other spring which, though cold to the touch and though it puts out a lighted torch as other springs do, nevertheless—unlike them and marvelously—rekindles that same torch once it is extinguished. This is the explanation for the asbestos stone, which has no fire of its own, yet once it receives fire from elsewhere burns so that it cannot be put out. This is the explanation for the rest, which it would be tedious to go over again. Though an unusual power contrary to nature seems to be present in them, no other explanation is given for them except to say that this is their nature. This is certainly a brief explanation, I admit, and a sufficient answer. But since God is the author of all natures, why do they refuse to let us give a stronger explanation? When they refuse to believe something as if it were impossible, and demand an explanation, we answer that this is the will of almighty God. Surely he is called almighty for no other reason than that he can do whatever he wills. He was able to create so many things that, if they were not shown to us or reported even today by witnesses who deserve belief, would certainly be thought impossible—not only the things I have set down that are least known among us, but also those that are best known. As for those things which have no witness except the authors whose books on these matters we have read, and which were written by people who were not divinely taught and could perhaps have

12 Agrigentum (modern Agrigento) in Sicily; Augustine described its salt in the previous chapter.

been deceived, as humans may be, anyone is free to disbelieve them without just reproach.

For I do not wish everything I have set down to be believed rashly, since I myself do not believe it all in such a way that no doubt about it remains in my mind—except for those things which I have experienced myself and which anyone can easily experience. Such are quicklime, which boils in water and stays cold in oil; the magnet, which by some imperceptible suction does not move a straw but snatches up iron; the flesh of the peacock, which does not rot, though even Plato's has rotted; straw, so cold that it does not let snow melt, and so warm that it forces fruit to ripen; and bright fire, which in keeping with its brightness whitens stones by baking them, and contrary to that same brightness blackens most things by burning them. Similar is the fact that black stains spread from bright oil, and likewise black lines are traced by white silver; and also charcoal, which, when the fire kindles it, is turned into its opposite: from the most beautiful wood it becomes ugly, from hard it becomes brittle, from perishable imperishable. Some of these things I have known along with many people, some along with everyone, and many others too, which would have taken too long to include in this book. But of the things I have set down not from experience but from reading, apart from that spring where burning torches are put out and extinguished ones are lit, and the fruits of the land of Sodom, ripe-looking on the outside and smoke within, I have not been able to find any reliable witnesses from whom I could hear whether they were true. Indeed, I found no one who said he had seen that spring in Epirus; but I did find people who knew a similar one in Gaul, not far from the city of Grenoble. As for the fruits of the trees of Sodom, not only do trustworthy writings report them, but so many people say they have experienced them that I cannot doubt it. The rest I regard in such a way that I have decided neither to deny nor to affirm them. But I have included them too, because I read them in the historians of those against whom we are arguing. I wanted to show how many such things many of them believe, without any explanation

being given, in the writings of their own men of letters—these same people who do not deign to believe us even when an explanation is given, when we say that almighty God will do something that goes beyond their experience and perception. For what better and stronger explanation can be given for such things than to declare that the Almighty is able to do them, and to say that he will do what we read he foretold, in the very place where he foretold many other things that he is shown to have done? He himself will do the things thought impossible, because he foretold that he would do them—he who promised, and brought it about, that unbelievable things should be believed by unbelieving nations.

THAT IT IS NOT AGAINST NATURE WHEN SOMETHING WHOSE NATURE IS KNOWN BEGINS TO BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WAS KNOWN OF IT

Varro's account of Venus changing color and course shows that God can alter any known nature.

21.8 But suppose they answer that they do not believe what we say about human bodies that will burn forever and never die, because, they say, we know that the nature of human bodies was established quite differently. So, they argue, the explanation given for those marvelous natures cannot be given here—one cannot say, "This is a natural power; this is the nature of this thing"—since we know that this is not the nature of human flesh. To this we do indeed have an answer from the sacred writings: namely, that this very human flesh was constituted one way before sin, that is, so that it could never suffer death; and another way after sin, as it has become known to us in the hardship of this mortality, so that it cannot hold on to everlasting life. So too, then, in the resurrection of the dead it will be constituted otherwise than as we know it. But they do not believe those writings, in which we read what kind of life man lived in paradise and how far removed he was from the necessity of death. (If they did believe them, we would not have to argue with them so laboriously about the future punishment of the

damned.) So we must bring forward something from the writings of those who were most learned among them, which may show that it is possible for any thing to become otherwise than it had previously been known to be, by the defining limits of its own nature.

In the books of Marcus Varro entitled *On the Race of the Roman People* there is a passage which I will set down here in the very words in which it is read there. "In the sky," he says, "a marvelous portent appeared. For Castor writes that in the case of the most famous star of Venus, which Plautus calls Vesperugo and Homer calls Hesperos, saying it is the most beautiful, so great a portent occurred that it changed its color, size, shape and course —something that had never happened before and has not happened since. Adrastus of Cyzicus and Dion of Naples, famous astrologers, said that this happened in the reign of King Ogyges." Varro, so great an authority, would certainly not have called this a portent unless it seemed to be contrary to nature. For we say that all portents are contrary to nature; but they are not. How can something be contrary to nature that happens by the will of God, when the will of so great a Creator is surely the nature of each created thing? A portent, then, happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to nature as it is known.[13] But who can count the multitude of portents contained in the history of the nations? Let us now attend to this one alone, which bears on the matter we are dealing with. What has been so carefully arranged by the author of the nature of heaven and earth as the perfectly ordered course of the stars? What is so firmly established by settled and fixed laws? And yet, when he willed it—he who rules what he created with supreme authority and power—a star, the best known of all for its size and brilliance, changed its color, size, shape and (what is more wonderful still) the order and law of its course. Surely it threw into confusion at that time, if any yet existed, the tables of the astrologers, which they have written up as if by infallible calculation of the past and future

13 Castor of Rhodes (1st century BC) compiled a world chronology; Ogyges was a legendary primeval king in Greece.

motions of the stars. It was by following these tables that they dared to say that what happened to Lucifer had never happened before or since.[14] We, however, read in the divine books that the sun itself both stood still, when the holy man Joshua son of Nun had asked this of the Lord God until he could end in victory the battle he had begun, and went backward, so that the fifteen years added to King Hezekiah's life might be signified by this prodigy too, joined to God's promise. But even these miracles, granted to the merits of the saints, these people attribute to magic arts, when they believe they happened at all. Hence the line I mentioned above that Virgil wrote: "to halt the water in the rivers and turn the stars backward." For we read in the sacred writings that a river stood still upstream and flowed away downstream when the people of God were making their way under the leadership of Joshua son of Nun, mentioned above; and that this also happened when the prophet Elijah crossed, and afterward his disciple Elisha. And we have just mentioned that the greatest star was turned back in the reign of Hezekiah. But as for what Varro wrote about Lucifer, it is not said there that this was granted to any man who asked for it.

So let unbelievers not make a fog for themselves out of their knowledge of natures, as if God could not bring about something different in some thing simply because they have come to know its nature through their own human experience. And yet even the things in the natural world that are known to everyone are no less wonderful, and would astonish all who consider them, if people were in the habit of marveling at marvels other than rare ones. For who, if he reasons it out, does not see how very wonderful it is that among the countless multitude of human beings, with so great a likeness of nature, each individual has a face of his own? If they were not alike, their species would not be distinguished from the other animals; and again, if they were not unlike one another, individuals would not be distinguished from other human beings. So those whom we

14 Lucifer, "light-bringer," is the morning star—the planet Venus, which is also the evening star.

acknowledge to be alike, we find to be unlike. But their unlikeness is the more wonderful to consider, since a common nature seems more rightly to demand likeness. And yet, because it is the rare things that are wonderful, we marvel far more when we find two people so alike that we always, or often, make mistakes in telling them apart.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SODOM

Sodom, once fertile, was turned to soot and ash, proof that God changes the natures he made.

But as for the event I said Varro recorded, though he is their own historian and a most learned one, perhaps they do not believe it really happened; or, because that star's altered course did not last long but returned to its usual one, they are less moved by this example. So they have another, which can be shown even now and which I think ought to be enough for them. Let it remind them that when they have noticed something in some ordering of nature and made it very familiar to themselves, they should not on that basis lay down rules for God, as if he could not turn and change it into something far different from what they know. The land of Sodom was certainly not as it is now. It lay there with an appearance like other lands and enjoyed the same fertility, or even greater; for in the divine words it is compared to God's paradise. After it was struck from heaven, as even their own history attests and as is now seen by those who come to those places, it is a thing of horror with its uncanny soot, and its fruits enclose ashes within under a deceptive surface of ripeness. See: it was not like this, and like this it is. See: its nature was changed by the Creator of natures, through a wonderful transformation, into this most hideous difference; and what happened after so long a time has persisted for so long a time.

Just as it was not impossible for God to establish the natures he willed, so it is not impossible for him to change the natures he established into whatever he wills. Hence the multitude of those miracles too, which grows like a forest, the things called

monsters, signs, portents and prodigies. If I wished to recall and record them, what end would there be to this work? People say that *monstra* [monsters] are so called from *monstrare* [to show], because they demonstrate something by signifying it; *ostenta* [signs] from *ostendere* [to display]; *portenta* [portents] from *portendere* [to portend], that is, to display beforehand; and *prodigia* [prodigies] because they speak *porro* [ahead], that is, foretell future things. But let their interpreters see to it how, from these, they are either deceived; or, prompted by spirits whose concern is to entangle human minds that deserve such punishment in the nets of harmful curiosity, they even foretell true things; or, by saying many things, they now and then stumble on some truth. For us, however, these things that happen as if contrary to nature and are said to happen contrary to nature (the apostle too spoke in this human way, when he said that the wild olive, grafted contrary to nature into the olive, was made to share in the richness of the olive), and that are called monsters, signs, portents and prodigies, ought to show us this, display this or display it beforehand, foretell this: that God will do what he has foretold he will do concerning human bodies, with no difficulty hindering him and no law of nature setting limits for him. How he foretold it, I think I have shown sufficiently in the previous book, gathering from the holy Scriptures, both New and Old, not indeed everything bearing on this, but what I judged sufficient for this work.[15]

HELL AND THE NATURE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENTS

The undying worm and unquenchable fire may be taken literally of the body, or the worm of the mind.

21.9 What God said through his prophet about the everlasting punishment of the damned will happen. It will most certainly happen: "Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched." The Lord Jesus too wanted to impress this on us more forcefully. He used the members of the body that cause a

15 See Romans 11:17–24.

person to stumble to stand for those people whom one loves as dearly as one's own right limbs, and he commanded that they be cut off. "It is better for you," he said, "to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm will not die and the fire will not be quenched." He said the same about the foot: "It is better for you to enter eternal life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."[16] He speaks in just the same way about the eye: "It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the hell of fire, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." He did not hesitate to say the same words three times in one passage. Who would not be terrified by this repetition, and by so forceful a warning of that punishment from the mouth of God?[17]

Some people want both of these, the fire and the worm, to refer to punishments of the mind, not of the body. They say that those who have been separated from the kingdom of God also burn with anguish of mind, because they repent too late and to no purpose. So they contend that "fire" could quite fittingly be used for this burning anguish. Hence the apostle's words: "Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn?" They think the worm too should be understood in the same way. For it is written, they say: "As the moth eats the garment and the worm the wood, so grief tortures a man's heart." But those who have no doubt that in that punishment there will be pains of both mind and body maintain that the body is burned by fire, while the mind is gnawed, in a sense, by the worm of grief.[18] This view is indeed more credible, since it would certainly be absurd for pain of either body or mind to be absent there. Yet it is easier for me to say that both refer to the body than that neither does. On this

16 Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:43–46.
17 Mark 9:47–48.
18 2 Corinthians 11:29; Proverbs 25:20 in the Greek and Old Latin versions (absent from most English Bibles).

view the pain of the mind is left unspoken in those words of divine Scripture because it is understood to follow even if it is not stated: when the body is in such pain, the mind too is tormented by fruitless repentance. For we also read in the old Scriptures: "The punishment of the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worm." It could have been put more briefly: "The punishment of the ungodly." Why, then, does it say "of the flesh of the ungodly," unless both, that is, fire and worm, will be a punishment of the flesh?[19] Or perhaps the writer chose to say "the punishment of the flesh" because what will be punished in a person is that he lived according to the flesh. For that is why he will come to the second death, which the apostle indicated when he said, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die." If so, let each choose what he likes. He may assign the fire to the body and the worm to the mind, the one literally, the other figuratively. Or he may assign both literally to the body. For I have already argued sufficiently above that living creatures can live even in fire, burning without being consumed, in pain without dying, through a miracle of the all-powerful Creator. Whoever denies that this is possible for him does not know from whom comes whatever he marvels at in all of nature. For it is God himself who made all the miracles in this world, great and small, the ones we have mentioned and incomparably more that we have not. And he enclosed them in the world itself, the one miracle greatest of all.[20] So let each choose whichever of the two he likes. He may think that the worm too refers literally to the body. Or he may think it refers to the mind, with the word transferred from bodily things to incorporeal ones. Which of these is true, the reality itself will show more readily. The knowledge of the saints will then be so great that they will not need experience to know those punishments. The wisdom that will then be full and perfect will by itself be enough to know this too (for now we know in part, until what is perfect comes). Only, let us

19 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 7:17.
20 Romans 8:13.

in no way believe that those bodies will be such that the fire causes them no pain at all.[21]

WHETHER THE FIRE OF HELL, IF IT IS PHYSICAL, CAN BURN EVIL SPIRITS, THAT IS, BODILESS DEMONS, BY CONTACT

Demons, whether airy-bodied or bodiless, can still be tormented by the same corporeal fire as humans.

21.10 Here a question arises. Suppose the fire is not incorporeal, like the pain of the mind, but corporeal, harmful to the touch, so that bodies can be tormented by it. How then will evil spirits also be punished in it? For it will be the same fire, assigned to the punishment of both humans and demons, as Christ says: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." Perhaps demons too have bodies of their own, as learned men have held, made of this thick, moist air whose force we feel when the wind blows. If this kind of element could suffer nothing from fire, it would not scald when it is heated in the baths. For in order to burn, it is first burned itself, and it acts while it is being acted upon. But if anyone asserts that demons have no bodies at all, we need neither labor over the question with painstaking inquiry nor fight over it in contentious debate.[22] Why should we not say that even incorporeal spirits can be afflicted by the punishment of corporeal fire, in ways that are wondrous yet real? Human spirits are certainly incorporeal too, yet they could even now be enclosed in bodily members, and then they will be bound inseparably by the bonds of their bodies. So, if they have no bodies, the spirits of demons, or rather the demons who are spirits, will cling to corporeal fires to be tormented by them, even though they are incorporeal. This does not mean that the fires they cling to will be animated by being joined to them and become living creatures made of spirit and body. Rather, as I said, they

21 1 Corinthians 13:9–10.
22 Matthew 25:41.

will cling in wondrous and inexpressible ways, receiving punishment from the fires without giving life to the fires. For that other way too, by which spirits cling to bodies and become living creatures, is altogether wondrous and beyond human comprehension. And this is what a human being is.

I would indeed say that spirits will burn without any body of their own, just as that rich man was burning in the underworld when he said, "I am in torment in this flame." But I see that one could fittingly reply that the flame was of the same kind as the eyes he lifted up to see Lazarus. It was like the tongue on which he longed to have a little moisture poured, and like the finger of Lazarus by which he asked that this be done for him. And yet the souls there were without bodies. So the flame in which he burned and the little drop he begged for were likewise incorporeal. They were like the visions of people asleep, or of those in ecstasy who see incorporeal things that nonetheless have the likeness of bodies. For in such visions a person is present in spirit, not in body. Yet he then sees himself so like his own body that he cannot tell the difference at all.[23] But that hell, which is also called the lake of fire and sulfur, will be corporeal fire, and it will torment the bodies of the damned. Perhaps it will torment the bodies of both humans and demons, the solid bodies of humans and the airy bodies of demons. Or perhaps it will torment only the bodies of humans, along with their spirits, while the demons, spirits without bodies, cling to the corporeal fires, receiving punishment from them and not imparting life to them. For there will be one fire for both, as the Truth has said.[24]

WHETHER JUSTICE REQUIRES THAT THE TIME OF PUNISHMENT BE NO LONGER THAN THE TIME OF THE SINS

Human penalties too far outlast the crimes; punishment is measured by the gravity of the deed, not its duration.

21.11 Now some of those against whom we are defending the city of God think it unjust that anyone should be condemned to

23 Luke 16:19–31; the quotation is Luke 16:24.

eternal punishment for sins, however great, that were committed in a short time. As if the justice of any law ever required that a person be punished for as long as it took him to commit the deed for which he is punished! Cicero writes that the laws contain eight kinds of penalty: fines, imprisonment, flogging, retaliation in kind, disgrace, exile, death, and slavery. Which of these is compressed into a short time to match the speed of each offense, so that the punishment lasts only as briefly as the deed is found to have lasted? Retaliation, perhaps, but nothing else. Its aim is that each person should suffer what he did. Hence that saying of the law: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." For it can happen that a person loses an eye by the severity of punishment in as short a time as he took to deprive another of one by the wickedness of his offense.[25] Furthermore, suppose it is reasonable to punish a kiss planted on another man's wife with a flogging. The man did it in a moment, yet is he not flogged for an incomparably longer stretch of hours, so that the sweetness of a brief pleasure is punished with lasting pain? And what about imprisonment? Must a person be judged to deserve chains only for as long as it took him to do what earned him his bonds? Yet a slave quite justly pays a penalty of years in fetters for provoking or striking his master with a word or a blow that was over in an instant. And fines, disgrace, exile and slavery are often inflicted in such a way that no pardon relaxes them. Do they not then seem, on the scale of this life, like eternal punishments? The only reason they cannot be eternal is that the life they punish does not itself extend into eternity. And yet the sins that are avenged with very long punishments are committed in a very short time. No one has ever thought that the torments of the guilty should end as quickly as a murder, an adultery or a sacrilege was committed. The same holds for any other crime, which must be measured not by its length in time but by the magnitude of its wrongdoing and impiety. When someone is punished with death for some great crime, do the laws reckon his

24 Revelation 20:10. "The Truth" is Christ (John 14:6), referring to Matthew 25:41.
25 Cicero's list of penalties is known only from Augustine's citation; Exodus 21:24.

punishment by the time it takes to kill him, which is very brief? Or do they reckon it by the fact that they remove him forever from the fellowship of the living? Removing people from this mortal city by the punishment of the first death corresponds to removing people from that immortal city by the punishment of the second death. The laws of this city do not bring an executed man back into it. In the same way, the laws of that city do not bring someone condemned to the second death back to eternal life. "How, then," they say, "is it true, what your Christ said: 'With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you,' if a temporal sin is punished with eternal punishment?" They do not notice that the "same measure" refers not to an equal span of time but to the repayment of evil, that is, that one who has done evil should suffer evil. The saying can also be taken strictly, as referring to the matter the Lord was speaking about when he said it, namely judgments and condemnations. On that reading, one who judges and condemns unjustly receives back in the same measure if he is judged and condemned justly, even though he does not receive what he gave.[26] For he acted by judgment, and he suffers by judgment. By condemnation he did what is unjust, but by condemnation he suffers what is just.

THE GREATNESS OF THE FIRST TRANSGRESSION, FOR WHICH ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IS DUE TO ALL WHO ARE OUTSIDE THE SAVIOR'S GRACE

The first sin was so great that the whole human race became a condemned mass, saved only by grace.

21.12 Eternal punishment seems harsh and unjust to human senses because, in the weakness of our dying senses, we lack that sense of the highest and purest wisdom by which one could sense how great a wickedness was committed in that first transgression. For the more fully man enjoyed God, the greater the impiety with which he abandoned God. And he became deserving of eternal evil, since he destroyed in himself a good

26 Matthew 7:2.

that could have been eternal. Hence the whole mass of the human race is condemned. He who first committed this sin was punished together with his whole stock, which had been rooted in him. So no one is freed from this just and deserved punishment except by merciful and undeserved grace. And the human race is divided so that some may show what merciful grace can do, and the rest what just retribution can do. Both could not be shown in everyone. If all remained in the punishments of just condemnation, merciful grace would appear in no one. Again, if all were brought out of darkness into light, the truth of retribution would appear in no one. And there are far more under retribution than under grace, so that it may be shown what was owed to all. If it were paid to all, no one could justly find fault with the justice of the one who punishes. But because so many are freed from it, there is reason for the deepest gratitude for the gracious gift of the one who sets them free.

AGAINST THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO THINK THAT PUNISHMENTS ARE APPLIED TO SINNERS AFTER DEATH FOR THE SAKE OF PURIFICATION

Against the Platonists, not all punishment purifies; some temporary punishments come before the judgment, but eternal ones follow it.

21.13 The Platonists hold that no sins go unpunished. Yet they think that all punishments serve to correct, whether human laws or divine laws inflict them, and whether in this life or after death. The punishment after death applies if a person is spared here, or is punished here in a way that does not correct him. Hence that thought of Virgil. He speaks of earthly bodies and dying members, and says that because of them souls "fear and desire, feel pain and rejoice, and do not look up to the open sky, shut in darkness and a blind prison." Then he goes on to add: "Even when, with the last light, life has left them" (that is, when this life has left them on their last day), "yet not all evil," he says, "nor all the plagues of the body wholly leave the wretched. And many things long ingrained must take root deep within in won-

drous ways."[27] "So they are disciplined with punishments and pay the penalty for old evils. Some are hung outstretched, empty, to the winds. For others the stain of crime is washed out beneath a vast whirlpool, or burned away by fire." Those who hold this view want there to be no punishments after death except purifying ones. Water, air and fire are elements higher than earth, so whatever has been contracted from earthly contamination is cleansed by one of them through expiatory punishments. Air is meant where he says, "hung to the winds," and water where he says, "beneath a vast whirlpool." Fire is named outright when he says, "or burned away by fire." We, for our part, acknowledge that even in this mortal life there are indeed some purifying punishments. They do not purify people who are afflicted by them but whose lives do not become better as a result, or rather become worse. They purify those who are restrained by them and corrected. All other punishments, whether temporary or everlasting, are inflicted according to how each person is to be dealt with by divine providence. They may be for sins, whether past sins or sins in which the person punished is still living. Or they may serve to exercise and display virtues, and they come through human beings and angels, whether good or evil. Someone may suffer some evil through another's wickedness or error. In that case the human being who does evil to someone through ignorance or injustice does indeed sin. But God, who permits it by a just, though hidden, judgment, does not sin. As for temporary punishments, some suffer them in this life only, some after death, and some both now and then. All of these, however, come before that last and most severe judgment. But not all who undergo temporal punishments after death come into the everlasting punishments that will follow that judgment. For we have already said above that for some, what is not forgiven in this age is forgiven in the age to come, so that they are not punished with the eternal punishment of the age to come.[28]

27 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.733–742.
28 Echoing Matthew 12:32.

THE TEMPORAL PUNISHMENTS OF THIS LIFE, TO WHICH THE HUMAN CONDITION IS SUBJECT

Life itself is a punishment, from children's beatings at school to the assaults of evil spirits on infants.

21.14 Very rare are those who pay no penalties in this life but only after it. Still, there have been some who lived right up to decrepit old age without feeling even the slightest touch of fever, and who led a peaceful life. We ourselves both know of such people and have heard of them. And yet the whole life of mortals is itself a punishment, because it is all temptation, as the sacred writings proclaim: "Is not human life on earth a temptation?" For ignorance itself, or lack of skill, is no small punishment. It is rightly judged so much to be avoided that children are forced, through punishments full of pain, to learn various crafts or their letters. And the learning itself, to which punishments drive them, is so much a punishment to them that they sometimes prefer to endure the very punishments that compel them to learn rather than learn.[29] Who would not shudder and choose to die, if he were offered the choice between enduring death and becoming an infant again? Infancy begins this life not with laughter but with tears, and so in a way it prophesies, without knowing it, the evils it has entered. Zoroaster alone, they say, laughed when he was born, and that unnatural laugh portended nothing good for him. He is said to have invented the magic arts. Yet these could not help him against his enemies, even for the empty happiness of this present life. He was king of the Bactrians, and Ninus, king of the Assyrians, defeated him in war.[30] Scripture says: "A heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam from the day they come out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial in the mother of all." This must be fulfilled so completely that even little children suffer many evils, and some

29 Job 7:1; modern versions read "hard service" where Augustine's text has "temptation."

30 Zoroaster, the Persian prophet, was regarded in Greek and Roman legend as the founder of magic. Ninus was the legendary founder of the Assyrian empire.

at times even suffer the assaults of evil spirits. Yet they have already been freed through the washing of regeneration from the bond of original sin, by which alone they were held. Far be it, however, that this suffering should harm them, if they end this life at that age, even when the suffering grows worse and drives the soul from the body.[31]

THAT THE WHOLE WORK OF GOD'S GRACE, WHICH RESCUES US FROM THE DEPTH OF THE OLD EVIL, LOOKS TO THE NEWNESS OF THE WORLD TO COME

Life's miseries teach us that grace looks to the new age; meanwhile the flesh wars against the spirit.

21.15 Yet in the heavy yoke that is laid on the sons of Adam from the day they come out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial in the mother of all, even this evil turns out to be wonderful. It makes us sober and helps us understand that this life has become a punishment for us because of that utterly wicked sin committed in paradise. It also shows that everything done with us under the new covenant pertains only to the new inheritance of the new age: having received the pledge here, we are to obtain in due time that of which this is the pledge. Meanwhile we are to walk in hope and, making progress day by day, put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit. For "the Lord knows those who are his," and "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"—but by grace, not by nature.[32] For the only Son of God by nature became, out of mercy, the son of man for our sake, so that we, who are by nature sons of men, might become sons of God through him by grace. Remaining unchangeable himself, he took our nature from us, so that in it he might take us up. Holding fast to his own divinity, he became a sharer in our weakness. So we, changed for the better, are to lose what we are—sinners and mortals—by sharing in his

31 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 40:1. "The washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5) is baptism.
32 2 Timothy 2:19; Romans 8:14.

immortality and righteousness. And we are to keep whatever good he made in our nature, brought to fullness by the supreme good in the goodness of his nature. For just as through one man who sinned we fell into this grievous evil, so through one man who justifies, and who is also God, we shall come to that sublime good. Yet no one ought to feel sure that he has passed from the first man to the second until he is where there will be no temptation. He must first hold the peace that he seeks through the many and varied battles of this war, in which "the flesh desires against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." There would never have been any such war if human nature had persisted, by free will, in the uprightness in which it was made. As it is, the nature that in its happiness refused to have peace with God now fights with itself in its unhappiness. This is a pitiable evil, yet it is still better than the earlier stages of this life. For it is better to fight against vices than to let them rule without any fight. It is better, I say, to have war with the hope of eternal peace than captivity with no thought of release.[33] We long, indeed, to be free even of this war. We are set on fire by divine love to attain that perfectly ordered peace, in which the lower is subjected to the higher with unshakable stability. But even if (God forbid) there were no hope of so great a good, we ought to have preferred to remain in the trouble of this conflict rather than let the vices dominate us by failing to resist them.

THE LAWS OF GRACE UNDER WHICH ALL THE AGES OF THE REBORN ARE PLACED

Baptized infants are spared purgatorial pains; adults must fight their vices with the love of God that grace gives.

21.16 Yet so great is God's mercy toward the "vessels of mercy, which he has prepared for glory," that this holds true even of the first age of human life and of the second. The first is infancy, which submits to the flesh without any resistance. The second is called childhood, in which reason has not yet taken up this fight

33 Galatians 5:17.

and lies subject to almost every vicious pleasure. For although the child can now speak and so seems to have left infancy behind, the weakness of the mind at this stage is not yet capable of receiving a commandment. If someone at either age has received the sacraments of the Mediator, then even if he ends this life in those years, he is transferred, of course, from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. He is not only spared eternal punishment, but does not even suffer any purgatorial torments after death. For spiritual regeneration alone is enough to keep what carnal generation contracted along with death from doing harm after death.[34] But when one reaches the age that can now receive a commandment and be subjected to the authority of the law, war must be taken up against the vices and waged fiercely, so that they do not lead on to damnable sins. If the vices have not yet been strengthened by the habit of winning, they are more easily conquered and give way. But if they are used to conquering and ruling, they are overcome only with laborious difficulty. This does not happen truly and sincerely except through delight in true righteousness, and that is found in faith in Christ. For if the law is present to command and the Spirit is absent to help, the very prohibition makes the desire for sin grow and prevail, and the guilt of transgression is added as well. Sometimes, indeed, the most open vices are conquered by other, hidden vices that are thought to be virtues. In these pride reigns, and a kind of lofty self-satisfaction that ends in ruin. So vices are to be counted as conquered only when they are conquered by the love of God. That love no one gives but God himself, and he gives it only through the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," who became a sharer in our mortality to make us sharers in his divinity. Very few, however, have the great happiness of committing no damnable sins from the very beginning of adolescence—whether shameful acts, or crimes, or the error of some abominable impiety. Such people suppress, by a great generosity of the Spirit, whatever could dominate them through carnal pleasure. Most people, by con-

34 Romans 9:23; Colossians 1:13.

trast, receive the commandment of the law and are first conquered by the overpowering vices, becoming transgressors of the law. Then they take refuge in helping grace. Through it they become victors by repenting more bitterly and fighting more vigorously, their mind first subjected to God and so set over the flesh.[35] Whoever, then, wishes to escape eternal punishment, let him not only be baptized but also be justified in Christ, and so truly pass over from the devil to Christ. And let him not suppose that there will be any purgatorial punishments except before that last and dreadful judgment. Yet it is by no means to be denied that the eternal fire itself will be lighter for some and heavier for others, according to the differences in their deserts, evil though those deserts are. Either its force and heat will vary according to the punishment each one deserves, or it will burn equally but not be felt with equal pain.

THOSE WHO THINK THAT NO ONE'S PUNISHMENT WILL LAST FOREVER

Augustine turns to merciful Christians who deny eternal punishment, and recalls why the Church rejected Origen.

21.17 Now I see that I must deal with our merciful friends and argue with them peaceably. They refuse to believe that punishment will be eternal, either for all those whom the most just Judge will judge worthy of the punishment of hell, or at least for some of them. They think instead that after fixed limits of time, longer or shorter according to the magnitude of each one's sin, these people will be set free from it. On this point Origen was certainly more merciful still. He believed that even the devil himself and his angels, after more severe and longer-lasting punishments, as they deserved, would be rescued from those torments and joined to the holy angels.[36] But the Church has rightly rejected him, both for this and for several other things. It

35 1 Timothy 2:5.

36 Origen (c. AD 185–254) was a Greek Christian theologian and biblical scholar of Alexandria.

rejected him especially for his endless alternation of happiness and misery, with unending departures and returns from the one to the other and back again at fixed intervals of ages. For he lost even what seemed merciful in his view by giving the saints real miseries, in which to pay penalties, and a false happiness, in which they would not have true and secure joy in eternal good—that is, joy that is certain and free from fear. Quite differently, the mercy of these other people goes astray through human feeling. They suppose that the miseries of those condemned at that judgment are temporary, while the happiness of all, who are set free sooner or later, is eternal. Now if this opinion is good and true because it is merciful, then the more merciful it is, the better and truer it will be. Let the fountain of this mercy, then, be extended and deepened even to the damned angels, so that they too may be freed, at least after as many long ages as you like. Why does it flow as far as the whole of human nature, and then dry up the moment it reaches angelic nature? These people do not dare, however, to stretch their pity any further and reach the liberation of the devil himself. But if someone did dare, he would surely outdo them. And yet he would be found to err all the more grotesquely, and all the more perversely against the right words of God, the more lenient he thinks his view is.

THOSE WHO THINK THAT AT THE LAST JUDGMENT NO ONE WILL BE DAMNED, BECAUSE OF THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

Some argue the saints' prayers will win pardon for all, citing the psalm and Nineveh's reprieve.

21.18 There are also people—I have met them myself in conversation—who seem to revere the holy Scriptures but whose conduct deserves reproach. Pleading their own cause, they attribute to God a far greater mercy toward the human race than these others do. They say that what God foretold about wicked and unbelieving people is indeed true, since it is what they deserve; but that when it comes to the judgment, mercy will prevail. "For the merciful God," they say, "will pardon them at the prayers and

intercessions of his saints. If the saints prayed for them when they had to endure them as enemies, how much more will they pray when they see them lying prostrate, humble and suppliant! Nor are we to believe," they say, "that the saints will lose their heart of mercy at the very time when they are of the fullest and most perfect holiness. Would those who prayed for their enemies back when they themselves were not without sin fail to pray for their suppliants at a time when they no longer have any sin at all?" "Or will God not listen to so many children of his, and such children, at a time when he finds no obstacle to their prayer in their great holiness?" Then there is the testimony of the psalm. Both those who allow unbelieving and impious people to be tormented at least for a long time and then rescued from all evils, and still more these people, claim it supports them. It reads: "Will God forget to be merciful, or will he in his anger hold back his compassion?" "His anger," they say, "would consist in this: that all who are unworthy of eternal happiness should be punished, by his own judgment, with eternal punishment. But if he allows that punishment to last long, or to exist at all, then for this to happen he will be holding back his compassion in his anger—which the psalm says he will not do. For it does not say, 'Will he hold back his compassion in his anger for long?' but shows that he will not hold it back at all."[37]

So these people hold that the threat of God's judgment is not a lie, even though he is going to condemn no one. In the same way we cannot call his threat a lie when he said he would overthrow the city of Nineveh. "And yet," they say, "what he foretold without any condition did not happen. For he did not say, 'Nineveh will be overthrown unless they repent and mend their ways.' Without adding this, he foretold the coming overthrow of that city." They think this threat was truthful because God foretold what the people truly deserved to suffer, even though he himself was not going to do it. "For although he spared them when they repented," they say, "he certainly knew they would repent, and yet he foretold their overthrow absolutely and defin-

37 Psalm 76:10 (77:9 in most English Bibles).

itely."[38] "This, then," they say, "belonged to the truth of his severity, because that is what they deserved. But it did not belong to the reckoning of his compassion, which he did not hold back in his anger, so that he spared the suppliants the punishment with which he had threatened the defiant. If he spared them then," they say, "when by sparing them he was going to grieve his holy prophet, how much more will he spare those who beg still more pitifully at that time, when all his saints will pray that he spare them!" As for what they suspect in their own hearts, they think the divine Scriptures have kept silent about it for a reason. Many are to correct themselves out of fear of punishments either long or eternal, and there are to be people able to pray for those who have not corrected themselves. Still, they do not think the divine words have been entirely silent about it. "For what is the point," they say, "of the words 'How great is the abundance of your sweetness, O Lord, which you have hidden from those who fear you,' if not that we should understand that the great and secret sweetness of divine mercy was hidden for the sake of fear?" They add that the apostle said, "For God has shut up all in unbelief, that he may have mercy on all," in order to signify that no one will be condemned by him. Yet even those who hold this view do not extend their opinion to the liberation, or the noncondemnation, of the devil and his angels. They are moved by human mercy toward human beings alone, and they are chiefly pleading their own cause. Through a supposedly general compassion of God toward the human race, they promise a false impunity to their own depraved conduct. And so they will be outdone in proclaiming God's mercy by those who promise this impunity to the prince of demons and his henchmen as well.[39]

38 Jonah 3:4–10, where the prophet Jonah announces that Nineveh will be overthrown in forty days, and God spares the city when it repents.
39 Psalm 30:20 (31:19 in most English Bibles); Romans 11:32.

THOSE WHO PROMISE FREEDOM FROM PUNISHMENT FOR ALL SINS EVEN TO HERETICS, BECAUSE THEY SHARE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Some promise eventual release to everyone baptized who has received Christ's body, however they lived.

21.19 Again, there are others who promise liberation from eternal punishment not even to all human beings, but only to those washed in Christ's baptism who become partakers of his body. This holds, they say, however they may have lived and whatever heresy or impiety they may have fallen into. They base this on what Jesus said: "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone who eats of it may not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." "Therefore," they say, "these people must be rescued from eternal death and at some point brought to eternal life."[40]

THOSE WHO PROMISE PARDON NOT TO ALL, BUT ONLY TO THOSE REBORN AMONG CATHOLICS, EVEN IF THEY LATER FALL INTO MANY CRIMES AND ERRORS

Others restrict the promise to Catholics, even if they later fall into heresy or idolatry.

21.20 Again, there are those who promise this not to all who have the sacrament of Christ's baptism and of his body, but only to Catholics, even if they live badly. Their reason is that Catholics have eaten the body of Christ not merely in the sacrament but in reality, since they are placed within his very body, of which the apostle says, "We, though many, are one bread, one body." Consequently, even if such people later fall into some heresy or even into the idolatry of the pagans, simply because they received Christ's baptism and ate Christ's body within the body of Christ —that is, in the Catholic Church—they will not die forever, but

40 John 6:50–51.

will at some time attain eternal life. And all that impiety of theirs, however great it has been, will serve not to make their punishment eternal, but only to make it long and severe.[41]

THOSE WHO DECLARE THAT THOSE WHO REMAIN IN THE CATHOLIC FAITH WILL BE SAVED BECAUSE OF THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH, EVEN IF THEY HAVE LIVED VERY BADLY AND DESERVED TO BE BURNED FOR IT

Others say Catholics who persevere in the Church will be saved through fire on the foundation of Christ.

21.21 There are also those who, because of the text "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved," promise this only to those who persevere in the Catholic Church, even if they live badly in it. Such people, they hold, are to be saved through fire on the strength of the foundation of which the apostle says: "For no one can lay any other foundation than the one that has been laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If anyone's work that he has built on it survives, he will receive a reward. But if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."[42] They say, then, that a Catholic Christian, whatever his life, has Christ as his foundation, a foundation that no heresy possesses, since every heresy is cut off from the unity of his body. Therefore, because of this foundation, even if a Catholic Christian has lived a wicked life, like one who has built wood, hay, and straw upon it, they think he will be saved through fire. That is, he will be set free after the punishment of that fire with which the wicked will be punished at the last judgment.

41 1 Corinthians 10:17.
42 Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15.

THOSE WHO THINK THE CRIMES COMMITTED ALONG WITH WORKS OF ALMSGIVING WILL NOT BE CALLED TO THE JUDGMENT OF DAMNATION

Others say only those who neglect almsgiving will burn forever, citing James and the Lord's Prayer.

21.22 I have also found that some think the only people who will burn in that eternal punishment are those who neglect to give alms adequate to their sins. They cite the saying of the apostle James: "Judgment without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy." "So the one who has shown mercy," they say, "will have judgment with mercy, even if he has not changed his ways for the better but has lived wickedly and viciously in the midst of his almsgiving. Either he will suffer no condemnation at all, or he will be freed from that condemnation after some time, short or long." That is why they suppose that the very Judge of the living and the dead chose to mention nothing else that he would say to those on his right, to whom he will give eternal life, or to those on his left, whom he will condemn to eternal punishment, except the alms they had given or failed to give.[43] They say that the daily petition in the Lord's Prayer also bears on this: "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." For whoever pardons someone who has sinned against him, forgiving the sin, is undoubtedly giving alms. The Lord himself commended this so highly that he said: "For if you forgive people their sins, your Father will also forgive you your sins; but if you do not forgive people, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive you." So this kind of almsgiving too is covered by what the apostle James says, that there will be judgment without mercy for the one who has shown no mercy. "And the Lord did not say," they point out, "'great sins' or 'small ones,' but 'Your Father will forgive you your sins, if you also forgive people.'"[44] And so they

43 James 2:13. The Judge's words to those on his right and left are in the Last Judgment scene of Matthew 25:31–46.
44 Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14–15.

think that even for those who have lived depraved lives right up to the end of their last day in this life, all their sins, whatever their kind and however great, are forgiven daily through this prayer, just as the prayer itself is said daily. There is only one condition: they must remember to forgive from the heart when those who have wronged them by any sin ask their pardon. When, with God's help, I have replied to all these views, this book must be brought to a close.

AGAINST THE OPINION OF THOSE WHO SAY THAT NEITHER THE DEVIL'S PUNISHMENTS NOR THOSE OF WICKED HUMAN BEINGS WILL BE EVERLASTING

Scripture calls the devil's punishment eternal; the same word for humans means it too has no end.

21.23 First we must ask and understand why the Church has been unable to tolerate the argument of those who promise the devil purification or pardon, even after the greatest and longest punishments. It was not that so many saints, learned in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, begrudged angels of whatever kind and however many their cleansing and the happiness of the kingdom of heaven after punishments of whatever kind and however great. Rather, they saw that the divine sentence cannot be made void or weakened. This is the sentence that the Lord foretold he would pronounce at the judgment: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels." (In this way he showed that the devil and his angels will burn in eternal fire.) They also saw what is written in the Apocalypse: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet also are; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."[45] What is called "eternal" in the first passage is called "forever and ever" in the second, and by these words divine Scripture regularly means nothing other than what has no end in time. Therefore no other reason can be found, and

45 Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10.

certainly no juster or clearer one, why true piety holds it fixed and immovable that the devil and his angels will never return to the righteousness and life of the saints. The reason is simply that Scripture, which deceives no one, says that God did not spare them. Scripture also says that he has meanwhile condemned them in advance, so that they were thrust down into the prisons of the darkness of the underworld and handed over to be kept there and punished at the last judgment. Then the eternal fire will receive them, and there they will be tormented forever and ever.[46] If this is so, how can all human beings, or some of them, be withdrawn from the eternity of this punishment after however long a time, without at once weakening the faith by which we believe that the punishment of demons will be everlasting? For if all or some of those to whom it will be said, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels," will not be there forever, what reason is there to believe that the devil and his angels will be there forever? Or will God's sentence, pronounced against wicked angels and wicked human beings alike, perhaps be true for the angels and false for the humans? Plainly it will be so, if what humans suspect counts for more than what God has said. Since that cannot happen, those who want to escape everlasting punishment ought not to argue against God. They ought rather to obey the divine command while there is still time. Next, what sort of reasoning is it to take eternal punishment to mean fire lasting a long time, and yet to believe that eternal life is without end? For Christ, in the very same place and in one and the same sentence, included both when he said: "So these will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." If both are eternal, then surely both must be understood either as long-lasting but with an end, or as perpetual and without end. Like has been set beside like: on one side eternal punishment, on the other eternal life. But to say, in one and the same sense, "Eternal life will be without end, but eternal pun-

46 An allusion to 2 Peter 2:4.

ishment will have an end," is utterly absurd.[47] Therefore, since the eternal life of the saints will be without end, eternal punishment too will undoubtedly have no end for those who suffer it.

AGAINST THE VIEW OF THOSE WHO THINK THAT AT GOD'S JUDGMENT ALL THE GUILTY WILL BE SPARED BECAUSE OF THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

At the judgment the saints will not pray for the damned, as the Church never prays for the devil.

21.24 This argument also holds against those who plead their own cause and try to oppose God's words with what seems a greater mercy. Their view, of course, is that those words are true in the sense that people deserve to suffer what God said they would suffer, not in the sense that they will actually suffer it. "For he will pardon them," they say, "in answer to the prayers of his saints. The holier the saints are then, the more they will pray for their enemies, and their prayer will be all the more effective and worthy of God's hearing because they will no longer have any sin at all." Why, then, will the saints not pray also for the angels for whom eternal fire has been prepared? They will have that same most perfect holiness, and their most pure and most merciful prayers will be able to obtain everything. Why will they not pray that God may soften his sentence, bend it toward something better, and put those angels beyond the reach of that fire? Will there perhaps be someone who presumes that even this will happen? He would claim that the holy angels too, together with holy human beings, who will then be equal to the angels of God, will pray for the angels and humans who are to be damned, so that by mercy they may escape what by truth they deserve to suffer. No one of sound faith has ever said this, and no one ever will. Otherwise there would be no reason why the Church should not pray even now for the devil and his angels, since God her teacher has commanded her to pray for her enemies. So the reason why the Church does not now pray for the evil angels,

47 Matthew 25:46.

whom she knows to be her enemies, is the very same reason why at that judgment she will not pray even for the human beings who are to be tormented in eternal fire, though she will then be perfect in holiness. She prays now for those of the human race whom she has as enemies precisely because this is the time when repentance bears fruit. For what does she chiefly pray for on their behalf, if not that God may grant them repentance, as the apostle says, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snares of the devil, who holds them captive to his will? Indeed, suppose she were so certain about some people that she even knew who they were: people who are still in this life, yet are predestined to go into eternal fire with the devil. She would no more pray for them than for him. But because she is certain about no one, she prays for all her enemies, though only for human beings still living in this body. Yet she is not heard for all of them.[48] She is heard only for those who, though they oppose the Church, are nevertheless predestined in such a way that the Church is heard for them and they become children of the Church. But if some keep an unrepentant heart until death and are not converted from enemies into children, the Church does not still pray for them, does she—that is, for the spirits of such people after their death? And why is that, if not because anyone who was not brought over to Christ while he was in the body is now counted as belonging to the devil's side?

So the reason why no prayer will be offered then for the human beings who are to be punished in eternal fire is the same reason why no prayer is offered for the evil angels, either now or then. It is likewise the reason why, even now, no prayer is offered for unbelievers and the ungodly who have died, even though they are human beings. For the prayer of the Church itself, or of certain devout people, is indeed heard on behalf of some of the dead. But it is heard for those who have been reborn in Christ and whose life in the body was neither so bad that they are judged unworthy of such mercy, nor so good that they are found not to need it. In the same way, even after the resurrec-

48 2 Timothy 2:25–26.

tion of the dead has taken place, there will be some to whom mercy is granted after the punishments that the spirits of the dead suffer, so that they are not sent into eternal fire. It would not truly be said of some that they will be forgiven neither in this age nor in the age to come, unless there were others who, though not forgiven in this age, are forgiven in the age to come. But the judge of the living and the dead will say, "Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and to the others, by contrast, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels." And these will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. When all this has happened, it is excessive presumption to say that eternal punishment will not come to any of those of whom God has said that they will go into eternal punishment. It is excessive presumption, too, to persuade people of this, and so to make them either despair of eternal life itself or doubt it.[49]

So let no one take the psalm that sings, "Will God forget to be merciful, or will he hold back his compassion in his anger?" as if God's sentence were true of good people and false of bad ones, or true of good people and evil angels but false of evil people. What the psalm says concerns the vessels of mercy and the children of the promise, and the prophet himself was one of them. Having said, "Will God forget to be merciful, or will he hold back his compassion in his anger?" he went on at once: "And I said: Now I have begun; this is the change worked by the right hand of the Most High." He has surely explained what he meant by "Will he hold back his compassion in his anger?" For this mortal life too is God's anger, the life in which "man has become like emptiness; his days pass away like a shadow."[50] Yet in this anger God does not forget to be merciful. He makes his sun rise on the good and the bad and sends rain on the just and the unjust, and so he does not hold back his compassion in his

49 Matthew 12:32; Matthew 25:34.

50 Psalm 76:11 (77:10 in most English Bibles); Psalm 143:4 (144:4 in most English Bibles).

anger. He shows this most of all in what the psalm expressed by saying, "Now I have begun; this is the change worked by the right hand of the Most High." For in this very life, so full of hardship, which is God's anger, he changes the vessels of mercy for the better, even though his anger still remains in the misery of this corruption; for even in his anger he does not hold back his compassion. Since the truth of that divine song is fulfilled in this way, there is no need to understand it as applying also to the place where those who do not belong to the city of God will be punished with everlasting punishment.[51] But those who like to stretch this text to cover the torments of the ungodly should at least understand it this way. God's anger, which has been foretold as eternal punishment, remains upon them; yet in this anger of his God does not hold back his compassion, and he causes them to be tormented with a severity of punishment less than they deserve. This would not mean that they never undergo these punishments or that the punishments ever come to an end, but that they suffer them in a milder and lighter form than their deserts. In this way God's anger will remain, and yet in that very anger he will not hold back his compassion. I do not affirm this, however, merely because I do not oppose it.

THREATS THAT CAME TRUE

God's threats are true: Nineveh was overturned in its wickedness; the hidden sweetness belongs to those who hope.

Some think that these things were said as threats rather than as truth: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire," and "These will go into eternal punishment," and "They will be tormented forever and ever," and "Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched," and other sayings of this kind. It is not so much I as divine Scripture itself that refutes and disproves them, most plainly and most fully. The Ninevites repented in this life, and their repentance therefore bore fruit. They were sowing, as it were, in this field, where God willed that

51 Matthew 5:45.

there be sowing with tears, so that later there might be reaping with joy. And yet who will deny that what the Lord foretold was fulfilled in them? Only someone who pays too little attention to how God overturns sinners, not only in anger but also in mercy.[52] Sinners are overturned in two ways. Either they are overturned like the people of Sodom, so that the people themselves are punished for their sins, or like the Ninevites, so that the people's sins themselves are destroyed by repentance. So what God foretold did take place: the Nineveh that was evil was overturned, and a good Nineveh, which had not existed, was built. For while the walls and houses stood, the city was overturned in its depraved ways. And so, although the prophet was grieved because what those people had feared from his prophecy did not happen, what God in his foreknowledge had foretold did happen. For he who foretold it knew how it was to be fulfilled for the better.[53]

These people, merciful in a perverse way, should learn what is meant by the text, "How great is the abundance of your sweetness, Lord, which you have hidden from those who fear you!" Let them read what follows: "But you have brought it to perfection for those who hope in you." What does it mean—"you have hidden it from those who fear," "you have brought it to perfection for those who hope"—except this? To those who, out of fear of punishment, want to establish their own righteousness, the righteousness that is in the law, the righteousness of God is not sweet, because they do not know it. They have not tasted it. They hope in themselves, not in him, and so the abundance of God's sweetness is hidden from them. They do indeed fear God, but with that servile fear which has no place in love, since "perfect love casts out fear." Therefore he brings his sweetness to perfection for those who hope in him by breathing his love into them. So with a chaste fear—not the fear that love casts out, but

52 Isaiah 66:24 (quoted in Mark 9:48); the sowing image is from Psalm 125:5 (126:5 in most English Bibles).

53 Jonah had proclaimed, "Nineveh shall be overturned" (Jonah 3:4); Augustine plays on the word.

the fear that endures forever and ever—when they boast, they may boast in the Lord.[54] For the righteousness of God is Christ, who, as the apostle says, "has been made for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" This righteousness of God, which grace bestows without any merits, is unknown to those who want to establish their own righteousness, and so they have not submitted to the righteousness of God, which is Christ. In this righteousness lies the great abundance of God's sweetness, and on account of it the psalm says: "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is." In this pilgrimage we taste this sweetness without taking our fill of it, and so we hunger and thirst for it all the more, in order to be filled with it afterward. That will be when we see him as he is, and what is written will be fulfilled: "I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed." In this way Christ brings the great abundance of his sweetness to perfection for those who hope in him.[55] Moreover, these people imagine a sweetness of God by which he will not damn the ungodly, and they suppose that he hides it from those who fear him, so that, not knowing this and fearing damnation, they may live rightly and so there may be people to pray for those who do not live rightly. But if that is so, how does he bring this sweetness to perfection for those who hope in him, when, as they dream, by this sweetness he will not damn those who do not hope in him? Let us seek, then, that sweetness of his which he brings to perfection for those who hope in him, not the one he is supposed to bring to perfection for those who despise and blaspheme him. It is in vain, therefore, that anyone seeks after this body what he neglected to obtain for himself while in this body.

Again, the apostle's saying, "For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that he may have mercy on all," was not said to mean that he will damn no one. What precedes makes clear why it was

54 1 John 4:18.

55 1 Corinthians 1:30–31; Psalm 33:9 (34:8 in most English Bibles); Psalm 16:15 (17:15 in most English Bibles).

said. The apostle was speaking about the Jews who would later believe, and he was addressing the Gentiles, who were already believers and to whom, of course, he was writing his letter. He said: "For just as you once did not believe God, but now have obtained mercy through their unbelief, so they too have now not believed, for the sake of your mercy, so that they also may obtain mercy." Then he added the words with which these people, in their error, flatter themselves: "For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that he may have mercy on all." Who are these "all," if not the ones he was speaking of, as if he were saying, "both you and them"?[56] So God shut up all in unbelief—both Gentiles and Jews whom he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son—so that, put to shame by repenting of the bitterness of their unbelief and turned by faith to the sweetness of God's mercy, they might cry out the words of the psalm: "How great is the abundance of your sweetness, Lord, which you have hidden from those who fear you, but have brought to perfection for those who hope"—not in themselves, but "in you!" So he has mercy on all the vessels of mercy. What does "all" mean? Clearly, both those from the Gentiles and those from the Jews whom he predestined, called, justified and glorified. He will damn none of these—not none of all human beings, but none of all these.[57]

WHETHER THOSE BAPTIZED AMONG HERETICS WHO LATER BECAME WORSE BY LIVING BADLY, OR THOSE REBORN AMONG CATHOLICS WHO WENT OVER TO HERESIES OR SCHISMS, OR THOSE WHO, REBORN AMONG CATHOLICS AND NOT LEAVING THEM, PERSISTED IN LIVING CRIMINALLY, CAN HOPE BY THE PRIVILEGE OF THE SACRAMENTS TO BE SPARED ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

Paul's list of the works of the flesh refutes promises of the kingdom to the wicked baptized.

21.25 But now let us reply also to those who promise deliverance from eternal fire not to the devil and his angels (nor do those we

have just answered), and not even to all human beings, but only to those who have been washed in Christ's baptism and made partakers of his body and blood, however they may have lived and whatever heresy or ungodliness they may have fallen into. The apostle contradicts them, saying: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: they are fornication, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, quarrels, jealousies, fits of anger, dissensions, heresies, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not possess the kingdom of God." This sentence of the apostle is certainly false if such people, set free after however long a time, will possess the kingdom of God. But since it is not false, they certainly will not possess the kingdom of God.[58] And if they are never to possess the kingdom of God, they will be held in eternal punishment. For there is no middle place where anyone who has not been placed in that kingdom is not in punishment.

Therefore it is right to ask how we should take what the Lord Jesus says: "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that if anyone eats of it he will not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." This interpretation, indeed, is taken away from those we are now answering by those whom we must answer next. These are the people who promise this deliverance not to all who have the sacrament of baptism and of the body of Christ, but only to Catholics, even if they live badly. For these, they say, have eaten the body of Christ not only in the sacrament but in reality, since they are placed within his very body—the body of which the apostle says, "We, though many, are one bread, one body."[59] Whoever, then, is in the unity of his body—that is, in the fellowship of Christian members joined together, the body whose sacrament the faithful are accustomed to receive from

56 Romans 11:30–32.
57 Romans 8:29–30.
58 Galatians 5:19–21.
59 John 6:50–51; 1 Corinthians 10:17.

the altar when they take communion—is the one who should truly be said to eat the body of Christ and drink the blood of Christ. And so heretics and schismatics, cut off from the unity of this body, can receive the same sacrament, but it does them no good. On the contrary, it actually harms them, so that they are judged more severely rather than set free, however late. For they are not in that bond of peace which that sacrament expresses.

But then again, these people too, who rightly understand that one who is not in the body of Christ should not be said to eat the body of Christ, are wrong to promise eventual deliverance from the fire of eternal punishment to those who slip away from the unity of that body into heresy, or even into the superstition of the pagans. First, they ought to consider how intolerable it is, and how far it strays from sound doctrine, that many, indeed nearly all, of those who left the Catholic Church, founded ungodly heresies and became leaders of heresies, should have a better case than those who were never Catholics but fell into their snares. Yet this follows, if what delivers those leaders of heresies from everlasting punishment is that they were baptized in the Catholic Church and first received the sacrament of the body of Christ in the true body of Christ. Surely a deserter of the faith, who has gone from deserter to assailant, is worse than one who did not desert what he never held. Second, the apostle confronts these people too, using the same words; after listing those works of the flesh, he foretells with the same truth: "Those who do such things will not possess the kingdom of God."

Hence even those who, to all appearances, persevere to the end in the communion of the Catholic Church should not feel secure in depraved and damnable ways of life. They look to the saying, "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved," and yet through the wickedness of their lives they abandon the very righteousness of life, which Christ is for them. They do so by fornication, or by committing in their own body other impure vices which the apostle did not even want to name, or by dissolving in shameful debauchery, or by doing any other of those

things of which he says, "Those who do such things will not possess the kingdom of God." And therefore all who do such things will be nowhere but in everlasting punishment, since they cannot be in the kingdom of God.[60] For by persevering in these things until the end of this life, they certainly cannot be said to have persevered in Christ to the end. To persevere in Christ is to persevere in faith in him; and that faith, as the same apostle defines it, works through love; and love, as he says elsewhere, does no evil. So these people should not be said to eat the body of Christ either, since they are not even to be counted among the members of Christ. To say nothing of other things, they cannot be at once members of Christ and members of a prostitute. Finally, he himself says: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." He shows what it is to eat the body of Christ and drink his blood not merely as far as the sacrament goes, but in reality: it is to abide in Christ, in such a way that Christ also abides in him.[61] For he said this as if he were saying: "Whoever does not abide in me, and in whom I do not abide, should not say or think that he eats my body or drinks my blood." So those who are not his members do not abide in Christ. And those who make themselves members of a prostitute are not members of Christ, unless by repenting they cease to be that evil thing and return to this good through reconciliation.

WHAT IT IS TO HAVE CHRIST AS THE FOUNDATION, AND TO WHOM SALVATION IS PROMISED AS IF THROUGH THE BURNING OF FIRE

Having Christ as foundation means putting nothing before him; the fire tests and burns away earthly loves.

21.26 But, they say, Catholic Christians have Christ as their foundation, and they have not withdrawn from unity with him, even though on this foundation they have built a life as wicked as you like, like wood, hay, and straw. So right faith, through which

60 Matthew 10:22.
61 Galatians 5:6; Romans 13:10; 1 Corinthians 6:15; John 6:56.

Christ is the foundation, will be able at some point to save them from the endlessness of that fire, though with loss, since the things built on it will be burned up. Let the apostle James give them a brief answer: "If someone says he has faith but does not have works, can faith save him?" And who, then, they ask, is the one of whom the apostle Paul says: "He himself will be saved, yet only as through fire"?[62] Let us look into who this is together. But it is quite certain that it is not this man. Otherwise we would set the judgments of two apostles quarreling, if one says, "Even if someone has evil works, faith will save him through fire," and the other, "If he does not have works, can faith save him?"

We shall find, then, who can be saved through fire if we first find out what it is to have Christ as one's foundation. Let us grasp this as quickly as possible from the image itself. In a building nothing is placed before the foundation. So whoever holds Christ in his heart in such a way that he does not put earthly and temporal things before him—not even those that are lawful and permitted—has Christ as his foundation. But if he does put them before him, then even if he seems to have faith in Christ, Christ is not his foundation, since such things are put before him. How much more, if he scorns the saving commandments and commits unlawful acts, is he shown not to have put Christ before, but behind! He has held Christ cheap both when Christ commands and when he permits, choosing to satisfy his own lust through shameful acts against what Christ commands or permits. So if any Christian loves a prostitute and, clinging to her, becomes one body with her, he no longer has Christ as his foundation. But if someone loves his wife, and loves her as Christ would have him, who would doubt that Christ is his foundation? If, however, he loves her in the way of this world, carnally, in the sickness of desire, like the Gentiles who do not know God, even this the apostle permits by way of concession—or rather, Christ permits it through the apostle. So this man too can have Christ as his foundation. For if he puts nothing of such

62 James 2:14; 1 Corinthians 3:15. The image of building with wood, hay, and straw on the foundation of Christ comes from 1 Corinthians 3:11–15.

affection and pleasure before Christ, then even though he builds wood, hay, and straw on it, Christ is the foundation, and for this reason he will be saved through fire. For the fire of tribulation will burn up delights and earthly loves of this kind, which are not damnable because of the marriage bond. And to this fire belong bereavements and whatever calamities take these things away.[63] And so this building will bring loss to the one who built it, because he will not keep what he built on the foundation, and he will be tormented by the loss of the things he certainly delighted to enjoy. But he will be saved through this fire by the merit of the foundation. For if a persecutor put it to him whether he would rather have those things or Christ, he would not put them before Christ. See in the apostle's words a man building gold, silver, and precious stones on the foundation: "The unmarried man," he says, "thinks about the things of God, how to please God." See another building wood, hay, and straw: "But the man joined in marriage," he says, "thinks about the things of the world, how to please his wife." "Each one's work will become manifest; for the day will disclose it"—the day of tribulation, of course—"because," he says, "it will be revealed in fire." He calls that same tribulation fire, as we read elsewhere: "The furnace tests the potter's vessels, and the trial of tribulation tests righteous men."[64] "And the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If anyone's work survives"—and the work of thinking about the things of God, how to please God, does survive—"he will receive a reward for what he built on it"—that is, he will receive the very thing he thought about. "If anyone's work burns up, he will suffer loss"—since he will not have what he had loved—"but he himself will be saved"—because no tribulation moved him from the firmness of that foundation—"yet only as through fire"—for what he did not possess without an alluring love, he does not lose without a burning pain. There, as far as I can see, we have found the fire that condemns neither

63 Allusions to 1 Thessalonians 4:5 and 1 Corinthians 7:6.
64 1 Corinthians 7:32–33; 1 Corinthians 3:13; Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 27:5.

of them, but enriches the one, brings loss on the other, and tests both.

But suppose we chose to take the fire in this passage to be the one of which the Lord will say to those on his left: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire." Then those who build wood, hay, and straw on the foundation would be believed to be among them, and the good merit of the foundation would free them from that fire after a period imposed for their evil deserts. In that case, whom shall we take those on the right to be, to whom it will be said, "Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you," if not those who built gold, silver, and precious stones on the foundation? But if the fire is to be understood in this way, then both must be sent into that fire of which it was said, "yet only as through fire"—both those on the right, that is, and those on the left. For both are to be tested by that fire of which it was said: "For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed in fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done."[65] If, then, the fire will test both, so that if anyone's work survives—that is, is not consumed by the fire—he receives a reward for what he built on it, and if anyone's work burns up, he suffers loss, then surely this fire is not the eternal fire itself. For into that fire only those on the left will be sent, in the final and everlasting condemnation, whereas this fire tests those on the right. But it tests some of them in such a way that it does not burn up and consume the building it finds they have constructed on Christ the foundation; others it tests differently, that is, so that what they built on it burns and they suffer loss from it, yet they are saved, because they held fast to Christ, firmly laid as their foundation, with a love that set him above all else. But if they are to be saved, they will surely stand at the right hand and hear with the rest: "Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you." They will not stand at the left, where those will be who will not be saved and who will therefore hear: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire." For no one will be saved from that

65 Matthew 25:41; Matthew 25:34.

fire, since all of them will go into eternal punishment, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched, and where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.[66]

A FIRE OF TRIAL AFTER DEATH?

A fire of tribulation after death may test builders of wood and hay; it is not eternal fire.

Now consider the time after the death of this body, until we come to that day, after the resurrection of bodies, which will be the last day of condemnation and reward. Suppose it is said that during this interval the spirits of the dead suffer a fire of this kind. It would not be felt by those who, in the life of this body, did not have such habits and loves that their wood, hay, and straw had to be consumed. But it would be felt by others, who carried buildings of that sort with them—whether they meet this fire of passing tribulation, which burns up worldly things that are pardonable and do not bring damnation, only there, or both here and there, or here so that they do not meet it there. If this is said, I do not refute it, for perhaps it is true. Indeed, even the death of the flesh itself, which was conceived from the commission of the first sin, may belong to this tribulation, so that the time that follows death is experienced by each person according to what he has built. Persecutions too, by which martyrs have been crowned and which Christians of every kind suffer, test both kinds of building like fire. Some buildings they consume together with the builders themselves, if they do not find Christ as their foundation. Others they consume without the builders, if they do find him, because the builders themselves will be saved, though with loss. Still others they do not consume, because they find them to be such as will last forever. There will also be, at the end of the world, a tribulation in the time of the Antichrist such as there never was before. How many buildings will there be then, whether of gold or of hay, on the best foundation, which is Christ Jesus, for that fire to test both kinds—bring-

66 Echoes of Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:44 (Isaiah 66:24), and Revelation 20:10.

ing joy to some, loss to others, yet destroying neither those in whom it finds the one nor those in whom it finds the other, because of the firm foundation![67] But consider someone who puts before Christ—I do not say his wife, whose bodily union he uses for carnal pleasure, but even the very names of family affection, which are foreign to pleasures of that kind—loving them carnally, in a merely human way. He does not have Christ as his foundation. Therefore he will not be saved through fire; he will not be saved at all, because he will not be able to be with the Savior, who says most plainly on this matter: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me." But whoever loves these relatives carnally, yet in such a way that he does not put them before Christ the Lord, and would rather lose them than lose Christ if he were brought to that critical point of trial, will be saved through fire. For when he loses them, grief must burn him as much as love had clung to them.[68] On the other hand, someone may love father and mother, sons and daughters, as Christ would have him, so that he looks after their gaining Christ's kingdom and clinging to him; or he may love in them the fact that they are members of Christ. God forbid that such love should be found among the wood, hay, and straw that are to be consumed! It will certainly be counted as a building of gold, silver, and gems. And how can he love more than Christ those whom he loves precisely for Christ's sake?

AGAINST THE BELIEF OF THOSE WHO THINK THE SINS IN WHICH THEY PERSISTED WHILE GIVING ALMS WILL NOT HARM THEM

Alms cannot buy a license to keep sinning; worthy alms begin with amending one's own life.

21.27 It remains to answer those who say that the only people who will burn in eternal fire are those who neglect to give alms fit-

67 Allusion to Matthew 24:21. The Antichrist is the final adversary of Christ expected at the end of time (1 John 2:18).

ting for their sins. They rely on what the apostle James says: "But judgment without mercy for the one who has shown no mercy." So, they say, whoever has shown mercy, even if he has not corrected his depraved habits but has lived wickedly and viciously in the very midst of his almsgiving, will face a judgment with mercy. Either he will not be condemned at all, or after some time he will be freed from the final condemnation. And for no other reason, they think, will Christ make the separation between those on the right and those on the left, sending some into the kingdom and others into eternal punishment, solely on the basis of their love or neglect of almsgiving.[69] They want to persuade themselves that daily sins, which they never stop committing, can be forgiven through almsgiving, whatever their nature and however great. To this end they try to enlist the prayer the Lord himself taught as both their advocate and their witness. For just as there is no day, they say, on which this prayer is not said by Christians, so there is no daily sin of any kind that is not forgiven through it, when we say, "Forgive us our debts," provided we take care to do what follows: "as we also forgive our debtors." For the Lord did not say, they argue, "If you forgive people their sins, your Father will forgive you your small daily sins," but he said, "He will forgive you your sins." So, whatever their nature and however great, even if they are committed every day and one's life never leaves them behind and changes for the better, they presume that these sins can be remitted to them through the alms of not withholding pardon.[70]

Still, it is good that these people insist that the alms given for sins must be fitting ones. For suppose they said that any alms whatever, given for sins both daily and grave, and for any habit of crime however great, could obtain God's mercy, so that daily remission would follow. They would see that they were saying something absurd and ridiculous. For they would then be forced to admit that a very rich man, by spending ten small coins a day

68 Matthew 10:37.
69 James 2:13.
70 Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14.

on alms, could buy off murders and adulteries and every kind of wicked deed. But if that is utterly absurd and utterly insane to say, then surely, if we ask what alms are worthy of sins—the alms of which Christ's forerunner said, "Bear fruit, therefore, worthy of repentance"—we shall undoubtedly find that they are not given by people who stab their life through, right up to death, by committing crimes every day. First, because in taking what belongs to others they plunder far more than they give. They hand out a tiny portion of it to the poor and suppose that they are feeding Christ for a purpose: believing that they have bought from him a license for wrongdoing, or rather that they are buying it every day, they commit such damnable deeds without a care. Even if they distributed all they had to the needy members of Christ for a single crime, it could do them no good unless they gave up such deeds by having love, which "does not act wrongly." So whoever gives alms worthy of his sins begins by giving them first to himself.[71] For it is unfitting that someone who gives to his neighbor should not give to himself, since he hears God saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and hears also, "Have mercy on your own soul by pleasing God." If he does not give his own soul this alms—that is, pleasing God—how can he be said to give alms worthy of his sins? It was for this very reason that it is also written, "Whoever is evil to himself, to whom will he be good?" Alms, of course, help prayers; and we must certainly attend to what we read: "My son, you have sinned; do not do so again, and pray about your past sins, that they may be forgiven you." So alms are to be given for this purpose: that when we pray about our past sins, we may be heard—not that, while persisting in them, we should think we are purchasing with our alms a license to do wrong.[72]

The Lord foretold that he would reckon to those on his right the alms they had given, and to those on his left the alms they had not given, precisely in order to show how much alms avail

71 Matthew 3:8, spoken by John the Baptist; the description of love is from 1 Corinthians 13:4.

72 Matthew 22:39; then Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 30:24, 14:5 and 21:1.

for wiping out past sins—not for committing sins continually with impunity. Those who refuse to change their life for the better and abandon their habit of crime are not to be said to give such alms. For in saying, "When you did not do it for one of the least of mine, you did not do it for me," he also shows that they are not giving even when they think they are. If they gave bread to a hungry Christian as to a Christian, they would surely not deny themselves the bread of righteousness, which is Christ himself; for God looks not to whom something is given but in what spirit it is given. So whoever loves Christ in a Christian holds out alms to him in the spirit with which he draws near to Christ, not in the spirit with which he wants to withdraw from Christ unpunished.[73] For the more a person loves what Christ condemns, the more he deserts Christ. What good does it do anyone to be baptized if he is not justified? Did not he who said, "Unless someone is reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of God," also say, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"? Why do many run to be baptized because they fear the first saying, while not many take care to be justified, because they do not fear the second? So, just as a man who says "You fool" does not say it to his brother if, in saying it, he is hostile not to the brother but to his sin (otherwise he would be liable to the fire of hell), so, conversely, a man who holds out alms to a Christian does not hold them out to a Christian if he does not love Christ in him. And he does not love Christ who refuses to be justified in Christ.[74] Suppose someone has been caught in this fault of saying to his brother, "You fool"—that is, of insulting him unjustly, with no wish to remove his sin. It is not enough for him to give alms to redeem this unless he also adds the remedy of reconciliation that follows in that passage. For there it continues: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there at the altar, and go first and be

73 Matthew 25:45.
74 John 3:5; Matthew 5:20; Matthew 5:22.

reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." In the same way, it is not enough to give any amount of alms for any crime whatever while remaining in the habit of crime.[75]

WHAT THE LORD'S PRAYER FORGIVES

The Lord's Prayer forgives the daily sins of the righteous, not crimes persisted in.

As for the daily prayer that Jesus himself taught—which is why it is called the Lord's Prayer—it does indeed wipe out daily sins, when every day we say, "Forgive us our debts," and when what follows is not only said but also done: "as we also forgive our debtors." But it is said because sins are committed, not so that sins may be committed because it is said. For by this prayer the Savior wanted to show us that, however righteously we may live in the darkness and weakness of this life, we are not without sins, for whose forgiveness we must pray; and that we must forgive those who sin against us, so that we too may be forgiven.[76] Certainly the Lord did not say, "If you forgive people their sins, your Father will also forgive you your sins," so that, relying on this prayer, we might commit crimes every day without a care, whether through power that would free us from fear of human laws or through cunning by which we might deceive people themselves. He said it so that through this prayer we might learn not to think ourselves without sins, even if we were free from crimes. In just the same way God warned the priests of the old law about this very thing through the sacrifices, which he commanded them to offer first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. Indeed, the very words of our great Teacher and Lord must be carefully examined. He did not say, "If you forgive people their sins, your Father will also forgive you any sins whatever," but he said, "your sins." For he was teaching a daily prayer, and he was certainly speaking to disciples who had been

75 Matthew 5:23–24.
76 Matthew 6:12.

justified.[77] What, then, does "your sins" mean, if not the sins without which even you will not be, you who have been justified and sanctified? Those who look to this prayer for an opportunity to commit crimes every day claim that the Lord meant great sins too, since he did not say, "He will forgive you small sins," but "your sins." We, however, considering what sort of people he was speaking to, and hearing the words "your sins," ought to understand nothing but small sins, since such people no longer had great ones. Yet not even great sins—which must be abandoned altogether by a thorough change of life for the better—are forgiven to those who pray, unless what is said there is done: "as we also forgive our debtors." For if the smallest sins, without which not even the life of the righteous exists, are not forgiven in any other way, how much more will those entangled in many great crimes obtain no pardon—even if they now stop committing them—if they have been unrelenting in forgiving others whatever wrong anyone has done them! For the Lord says, "But if you do not forgive people, neither will your Father forgive you." That is the point of what the apostle James also says: that judgment will be without mercy for one who has shown no mercy. We should also call to mind that slave whose master canceled his debt of ten thousand talents, but afterward ordered him to repay it, because he himself had not taken pity on his fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii.[78]

FRIENDS WHO RECEIVE US INTO ETERNAL DWELLINGS

Friends made with the mammon of unrighteousness may help some, but no one knows which sins they cover.

In those, then, who are children of the promise and vessels of mercy, what the same apostle adds next holds good: "But mercy exults over judgment." For even those righteous people who have lived with such holiness that they also receive others into the eternal dwellings—others who made friends of them out of

77 Matthew 6:14; for the priests' sacrifices see Leviticus 16:6–15.
78 Matthew 6:15; James 2:13; the parable is in Matthew 18:23–35.

the mammon of unrighteousness—were set free by mercy, so that they might become such people. They were set free by him who justifies the ungodly, reckoning the reward according to grace, not according to debt. Among their number, indeed, is the apostle who says, "I have obtained mercy so that I might be faithful."[79]

As for those who are received by such people into the eternal dwellings, it must be admitted that their character is not such that their own life could suffice to set them free without the help of the saints; and for this reason mercy exults over judgment in them all the more.

Yet that is no reason to think that some utterly wicked man, whose life has in no way been changed into a good or even a more tolerable one, is received into the eternal dwellings because he has done favors for the saints with the mammon of unrighteousness. By that is meant money or riches that were wrongly acquired—or, even if rightly acquired, are not true riches, but only what unrighteousness takes for riches, since it does not know what true riches are: the riches in which those abound who also receive others into the eternal dwellings. There is, then, a certain way of life that is neither so bad that generous almsgiving does those who live it no good for gaining the kingdom of heaven—almsgiving by which even the poverty of the righteous is relieved, and friends are made who may receive them into the eternal dwellings—nor so good that it suffices by itself for them to attain such great happiness, unless they obtain mercy through the merits of those whom they have made their friends. I am often struck that this saying of the Lord is found even in Virgil—the saying "Make friends for yourselves out of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that they too may receive you into the eternal dwellings." Very similar to it is another: "Whoever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a right-

79 James 2:13; the phrases that follow echo Luke 16:9 and Romans 4:4–5, and the final quotation is 1 Corinthians 7:25.

eous man's reward." For when that poet was describing the Elysian Fields, where they suppose the souls of the blessed dwell, he did not place there only those who had been able to reach those abodes by their own merits, but added these words:[80]

"and those who by deserving well made others mindful of them"—that is, those who deserved well of others and, by deserving well of them, made them mindful of them. It is exactly as if those others said to them what is often on Christian lips, when some humble person commends himself to one of the saints and says, "Remember me," and by deserving well brings it about that this can be so. But what that way of life is, and what those sins are which so obstruct entry into the kingdom of God that they may nonetheless obtain pardon through the merits of saintly friends, is very hard to discover and very dangerous to define. Certainly I, for my part, up to this time, though I have taken great pains over it, have not managed to track them down. And perhaps they are hidden so that zeal for making progress in avoiding all sins may not grow sluggish.[81] For suppose it were known which faults, or what kind, are those for which the intercession of the righteous is to be sought and hoped for even while they persist and have not been done away with by progress toward a better life. Human sluggishness would wrap itself up in them without a care. It would not trouble to work itself free from such entanglements through the unencumbered effort of any virtue, but would seek only to be set free by the merits of others—those it had made its friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness by generous almsgiving. As it is, however, since the measure of pardonable wrongdoing, even when it persists, is unknown, zeal for advancing to better things is surely applied more watchfully through prayer and persistence, and care to make saintly friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness is not neglected.

80 Luke 16:9; Matthew 10:41. The Elysian Fields were the home of the blessed dead in the underworld, described in Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid*.
81 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.664.

But this deliverance, whether it comes about through each person's own prayers or through the intercession of the saints, has the effect that a person is not sent into the eternal fire—not that, once he has been sent there, he is rescued from it after some length of time. For even those who think that what is written—that the good soil yields an abundant crop, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold—is to be understood to mean that the saints, according to the differences in their merits, will set free some thirty people each, some sixty, some a hundred, usually suppose that this will happen on the day of judgment, not after the judgment.[82] When someone saw people promising themselves impunity in a most perverse way because of this opinion—since on this view everyone could seem to qualify for deliverance—he is said to have replied very elegantly that we ought rather to live good lives, so that each of us may be found among those who are to intercede for the deliverance of others. Otherwise the intercessors might be so few that each of them would quickly reach his quota of thirty or sixty or a hundred, and many would be left over who could no longer be rescued from punishment by their intercession; and among these would be found anyone who, with the emptiest rashness, promises himself hope from another's harvest. Let this suffice as my reply to those who do not reject the authority of the sacred writings that we hold in common, but who, by misunderstanding them, think that what will happen is not what those writings say but rather what they themselves want. With this reply given, then, we bring the book to a close, as we promised.

82 Matthew 13:8, 23.

Book XXII

The eternal happiness of the saints
Miracles, the resurrection of the body, and the vision of God in the everlasting Sabbath.

THE CREATION OF ANGELS AND HUMAN BEINGS

God made angels and humans with free will, foreseeing the fall, and will fill the heavenly city.

22.1 As I promised in the immediately preceding book, this one, the last of the whole work, will contain the discussion of the eternal happiness of the city of God. This happiness has received the name "eternal" not because it lasts through many ages and must still end at some point. It is eternal, as it is written in the Gospel, because "of his kingdom there will be no end." Nor is its eternity a mere appearance of permanence, produced while some depart by dying and others succeed them by being born. That is how an evergreen tree seems to keep the same greenness: as leaves wither and fall, others grow in their place and keep up its look of shade. Instead, all its citizens will be immortal, and human beings too will attain what the holy angels never lost. God, its all-powerful founder, will do this. For he has promised it, and he cannot lie. And to give us grounds for faith on this point too, he has already done many things, some he had promised and some he had not.[1]

For it is he who in the beginning created the world, full of all good things, both visible and intelligible. In it he made nothing better than spirits. He gave them intelligence, made them fit to

1 Luke 1:33.

contemplate him and able to receive him, and bound them together in one fellowship, which we call the holy and heavenly city. In that city what sustains them and makes them happy is God himself, as their common life and food. He gave this intellectual nature free will of such a kind that, if it chose to desert God, that is, its own happiness, misery would follow at once. He foreknew that certain angels would desert so great a good through the self-exaltation by which they wished to be sufficient to themselves for the happy life. Yet he did not take this power from them, judging it more powerful and better to bring good even out of evils than not to allow evils to exist. These evils would not exist at all had not a changeable nature made them for itself by sinning. That nature is good, and was created by the supreme God, the unchangeable good, who created all good things. By that very sin, as its own witness, it is proved to have been created a good nature. For unless it were itself a great good, though not equal to its Creator, deserting God, its light, certainly could not be an evil for it. Blindness is a defect of the eye, and this very defect shows that the eye was created to see light. So by its very defect the eye is shown to be more excellent than the other members, since it is the member capable of light. Otherwise lacking light would be no defect in it. In the same way, the nature that enjoyed God shows that it was created very good even by the defect that makes it miserable, for it is miserable precisely because it does not enjoy God. God bound the voluntary fall of the angels with the most just punishment of everlasting unhappiness. To the others, who remained in that supreme good, he granted certainty that they would remain in it without end, as the reward for their remaining. He also made man upright, with the same free will. Man was an earthly animal, but worthy of heaven if he clung to his maker. Likewise, misery would follow if he deserted him, a misery fitting for a nature of that kind. He likewise foreknew that man would sin by transgressing God's law and deserting God. Even so, he did not take the power of free will from him, foreseeing at the same time what good he himself would bring out of man's evil. From a

mortal race, deservedly and justly condemned, he gathers by his grace so great a people that from it he may fill up and restore the part of the angels that fell. Thus that beloved and heavenly city will not be cheated of the full number of its citizens. Indeed, it may even rejoice in a greater number.

THE ETERNAL AND UNCHANGEABLE WILL OF GOD

God's will never changes; when he seems to change or will, it is his people who do.

22.2 Many things, it is true, are done by the wicked against the will of God. But such is his wisdom and such his power that all things which seem contrary to his will tend toward outcomes or ends that he himself foreknew to be good and just. And so, when God is said to change his will, so that, for example, he becomes angry with those to whom he was gentle, it is they rather than he who change. In what they suffer they find him changed, in a sense. In the same way the sun "changes" for injured eyes: from gentle it becomes harsh, in a way, and from delightful it becomes painful, while in itself it remains just what it was. We also speak of the will of God when we mean the will he produces in the hearts of those who obey his commands. Of this the apostle says: "For it is God who works in you even to will."[2] "The righteousness of God" means not only the righteousness by which he himself is righteous, but also the righteousness he produces in the human being whom he justifies. In the same way, "his law" is the name for what is rather the law of human beings, though given by him. For they were certainly human beings to whom Jesus said, "It is written in your law," while in another passage we read: "The law of his God is in his heart." According to this will which God works in human beings, he is also said to will what he does not himself will, but makes his people will. Likewise, he is said to have known what he caused to be known by those who did not know it. For when the apostle says, "But now that you know God, or rather are known by God,"

2 Philippians 2:13.

we may not believe that God came to know them only then, when he foreknew them before the foundation of the world. Rather, he is said to have known them then because he then brought it about that he was known.[3] I remember that I have discussed these ways of speaking in earlier books as well. According to this will, then, God wills many things that he does not do. By this will we say that God wills what he makes others will, others to whom the future is unknown.

For his saints, inspired by him with a holy will, will many things to happen that do not happen. They pray devoutly and in holiness for certain people, for example, and he does not do what they pray for, although by his Holy Spirit he himself produced in them this will to pray. So when the saints will and pray, in accordance with God, that each person be saved, we can use that manner of speaking and say: "God wills and does not do." We mean that he wills because he makes them will. But according to that will of his which is eternal together with his foreknowledge, he has certainly already done all things whatsoever he willed in heaven and on earth. This includes not only things past or present, but also things to come. But before the time comes when he willed that what he foreknew and arranged before all ages should come to pass, we say: "It will happen when God wills." And if we know neither when it will happen nor even whether it will happen, we say: "It will happen if God wills." This is not because God will then have a new will that he did not have before. It is because what has been prepared from eternity in his unchangeable will shall then come to be.

THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL HAPPINESS FOR THE SAINTS AND EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

Prophecies already fulfilled guarantee that the promised resurrection and new heaven will also come.

22.3 Therefore, to pass over so many other things, we now see fulfilled in Christ what God promised to Abraham when he said,

3 John 8:17; Psalm 36:31 (37:31 in most English Bibles); Galatians 4:9.

"In your seed all nations shall be blessed." In the same way, what he promised to that same seed will be fulfilled. He says through the prophet: "Those who were in the tombs shall rise again." He also says: "There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and they shall not remember the former things, nor shall these come into their heart; but they shall find joy and exultation in it.[4] "Behold, I will make Jerusalem an exultation and my people a joy; and I will exult in Jerusalem and rejoice in my people, and the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her." Through another prophet he foretold the same, saying to that prophet: "At that time your people shall be saved, everyone who is found written in the book; and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth (or, as some have translated it, in the mound of earth) shall rise, some to eternal life and some to reproach and eternal confusion." In another place, through the same prophet, he says: "The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and shall possess it forever, even forever and ever." A little later he says: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." These passages will be fulfilled, together with the others on this subject that I set out in the twentieth book, and those I did not set out but which are still written in the same Scriptures. They will come, just as those things have come which unbelievers thought would never come.[5] For the same God promised both and foretold that both would come. He is the God before whom the deities of the pagans shudder, as even Porphyry, the most renowned philosopher of the pagans, testifies.[6]

4 Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 26:19; Isaiah 65:17–19.
5 Daniel 12:1–2; 7:18; 7:27.
6 Porphyry (c. AD 234–305), Neoplatonist philosopher, pupil of Plotinus, and author of a treatise against the Christians.

AGAINST THE WISE MEN OF THE WORLD WHO THINK EARTHLY HUMAN BODIES CANNOT BE CARRIED UP TO A HEAVENLY DWELLING

Cicero's claim that earthly bodies cannot rise to heaven ignores the greater wonder of soul joined to body.

22.4 But of course learned and wise men set themselves against the force of so great an authority, which, as it foretold so long before, has turned every kind of human being to believe and hope for this. They think they argue shrewdly against the resurrection of bodies, and they cite what Cicero records in the third book of his *Republic*. Asserting that Hercules and Romulus became gods after being men, he says: "Their bodies were not carried up into heaven; for nature would not allow what came from the earth to remain anywhere but on the earth." This is the great reasoning of the wise, whose "thoughts the Lord knows, that they are futile."[7] Suppose we were souls only, that is, spirits without any body, living in heaven and knowing nothing of earthly animals. Suppose we were told that in the future we would be joined by some wonderful bond to earthly bodies and give them life. Would we not argue far more forcefully that we refused to believe it, and say that nature does not allow an incorporeal thing to be bound by a bodily tie? And yet the earth is full of souls that give life to these earthly members, joined to them and intertwined with them in a marvelous way. A soul is more excellent than any body, and therefore than a heavenly body too, and yet it could be bound to an earthly body. Why then, if the same God who made this living creature wills it, will an earthly body not be able to be raised up into a heavenly body? So tiny a particle of earth could hold within itself something better than a heavenly body, so as to have sensation and life. Will heaven, then, disdain to receive it, sensing and living as it is? Or, once heaven has received it, will heaven be unable to hold it,

7 Cicero's dialogue *On the Republic* survives only in part. The closing words quote Psalm 93:11 (94:11 in most English Bibles), as cited in 1 Corinthians 3:20.

when it senses and lives by something better than any heavenly body? The only reason this does not happen now is that the time has not yet come when he willed it to happen. He has already made something far more wonderful than what these people refuse to believe, though it has grown cheap from being seen. For why are we not more powerfully amazed that incorporeal souls, superior to a heavenly body, are bound to earthly bodies? Why does that not amaze us more than that bodies, even earthly ones, are raised to dwellings that are heavenly but still bodily? Surely only because we are used to seeing the former, and are the former ourselves, while the latter we are not yet and have never yet seen. Certainly, if sober reason is consulted, it is a more wonderful divine work to weave bodily things, in a certain way, into incorporeal things than to join bodies to bodies. Those bodies may differ, the one heavenly and the other earthly, but they are bodies all the same.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH, WHICH SOME DO NOT BELIEVE THOUGH THE WORLD BELIEVES IT

Three incredible things: Christ's resurrection, the world's belief in it, and its spread by a few fishermen.

22.5 But suppose this was once incredible. Look: the world has now believed that the earthly body of Christ was taken up into heaven. The learned and the unlearned alike have now believed in the resurrection of the flesh and its ascension to the dwellings above, and only very few, whether learned or unlearned, remain astonished. If they believed something credible, let those who do not believe see how foolish they are. But if something incredible has been believed, this too is surely incredible: that something incredible has been believed in this way. Here, then, are two incredible things: the resurrection of our body to eternity, and the world's coming to believe so incredible a thing. Before either of them happened, the same God foretold that both would come to pass. One of the two incredible things we already see accomplished: the world believed what was incredible. Why, then, do people despair of the remaining one? The world has

believed, though it was incredible, that this too will come, just as the other, equally incredible, has already come: that the world would believe so incredible a thing. Both incredible things, the one we see and the one we believe, were foretold in the same Scriptures through which the world believed. And the very way in which the world believed proves, on consideration, even more incredible. Christ sent fishermen to the sea of this world with the nets of faith, very few of them. They had no training in the liberal arts and were wholly unpolished as far as these people's learning goes, not skilled in grammar, not armed with dialectic, not puffed up with rhetoric. And so he caught fish of every kind, and so many of them. The rarer they were, the more wonderful they were: he caught even the philosophers themselves. To those two incredible things let us add this third, if you please, or rather because it ought to please you. So there are now three incredible things, and yet they have happened. It is incredible that Christ rose in the flesh and ascended into heaven with the flesh. It is incredible that the world believed so incredible a thing. It is incredible that men of no standing, of the lowest rank, very few and unskilled, were able to persuade the world, and even its learned men, of so incredible a thing so effectively. The people we are arguing with refuse to believe the first of these three incredible things. The second they are even compelled to see, and they cannot explain how it came about unless they believe the third. Certainly the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven with the flesh in which he rose, is now proclaimed and believed throughout the whole world. If it is not credible, how has it come to be believed all over the earth? If many men of high birth, high rank and learning had said they saw it and had taken care to spread abroad what they saw, it would be no wonder that the world believed them, though it would be very stubborn of these people still to refuse belief. But the truth is that the world believed a few men, obscure, very humble and unlearned, who said and wrote that they had seen it. Why, then, do the few most obstinate people who remain still not believe the very world that now believes?

The world believed a small number of men of no standing, of the lowest rank and unskilled, precisely because in such contemptible witnesses the divine power did its own persuading far more wonderfully. For the eloquence of those who persuaded, the things they said, consisted of wonderful deeds, not words. Those who had not seen Christ risen in the flesh and ascending into heaven with it believed those who reported that they had seen it. These witnesses did not merely speak; they also performed marvelous signs. The people knew these men had one language, or at most two, and to their amazement they heard them suddenly speaking in the languages of all nations. At their word, in the name of Christ, they saw a man stand up sound after forty years, lame since he was at his mother's breast. Handkerchiefs taken from the apostles' bodies brought healing to the sick. Countless people suffering from various diseases were laid in rows along the road by which the apostles were to pass, so that their shadow might fall on them as they walked, and these regularly recovered their health at once. Many other astounding things were done through them in the name of Christ, and finally the people saw even the dead rise again. Suppose our opponents grant that these things happened as we read them. Then look: we are adding so many incredible things to those three. To get one incredible thing believed, namely the resurrection of the flesh and its ascension into heaven, we pile up such testimonies of many incredible things. And still we do not bend the unbelievers to belief, so dreadful is their hardness.[8] Perhaps they do not believe that Christ's apostles also performed these miracles in order to be believed when they preached Christ's resurrection and ascension. In that case, this one great miracle is enough for us: the whole earth believed it without any miracles.

8 See Acts 2:1–13; 3:1–10; 19:11–12; 5:15; 9:36–42.

THAT ROME MADE ITS FOUNDER ROMULUS A GOD BECAUSE IT LOVED HIM, WHEREAS THE CHURCH LOVED CHRIST BECAUSE IT BELIEVED HIM TO BE GOD

Rome loved Romulus and so believed him a god; the Church believed Christ God and so loved him.

22.6 Let us also recall here what Cicero finds remarkable about the belief in Romulus' divinity. I will quote his words as they are written. "What is more to be wondered at in Romulus," he says, "is this. The others who are said to have become gods after being men lived in less educated ages of humankind, when people readily invented stories, since the unlearned were easily moved to believe. But we see that Romulus lived less than six hundred years ago, when letters and learning were already long established, and all that ancient error arising from the uncultivated life of mankind had been removed." A little later he speaks of the same Romulus to this effect: "From this it can be understood," he says, "that Homer lived very many years before Romulus. So with men already learned and the times themselves educated, there was scarcely any room left for invention.[9] "For antiquity accepted fables, sometimes even crudely invented; but this age, now refined and quick above all to mock everything that cannot happen, rejects them." Marcus Tullius Cicero, one of the most learned of men and the most eloquent of all, says that the divinity of Romulus was believed in a remarkable way precisely because the times were already educated and would not accept the falsehood of fables. But who believed Romulus a god except Rome, and Rome when it was small and just beginning? After that, later generations had to preserve what they had received from their ancestors. So the city grew with this superstition drunk in, as it were, with its mother's milk, and came to so great an empire that from its height, as from some loftier place, it poured this belief of its own over the

9 Cicero, *On the Republic* 2.18–19. Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, was said to have been taken up to heaven and worshiped as the god Quirinus.

other nations it ruled. They did not, indeed, believe it, but they still called Romulus a god. They did not want to offend the city they served by naming its founder otherwise than Rome did. Rome had believed it, not indeed from love of the error, but from the error of love. Christ, on the other hand, is the founder of the heavenly and eternal city, yet that city did not believe him to be God because he founded it. Rather, it is to be founded precisely because it believed. Rome, once built and dedicated, worshiped its founder as a god in a temple. But this Jerusalem set its founder, Christ God, on the foundation of faith so that it could be built and dedicated. Rome believed him a god because it loved him; this city loved him because it believed him God. In Rome, a reason for loving came first, so that it gladly believed even a false good of the one it already loved. In this city, a reason for believing came first, so that by right faith it loved, not rashly what was false, but what was true. Apart from so many great miracles that convinced people Christ is God, there were also earlier divine prophecies, wholly worthy of belief. In his case these are not, as they were for the fathers, still believed to await fulfillment, but are now shown to have been fulfilled. About Romulus, on the other hand, we hear or read that he founded Rome and reigned in it. That is what happened, not what was prophesied before it happened. But as for his being received among the gods, the records hold this as a belief; they do not teach it as a fact. For no wonderful signs show that this truly befell him. Take the she-wolf that nursed him, which seems to have been a great portent. What sort of proof is that, or how strong a proof, that he was a god? Even if that *lupa* was not a prostitute but a beast, she was common to both of them, and yet his brother is not considered a god.[10] But who was ever forbidden to call Romulus or Hercules or other such men gods, and preferred to die rather than not say it? Or would any nation worship Romulus among its gods unless fear of the Roman name

10 Latin *lupa* means both "she-wolf" and "prostitute," and some ancient writers explained the legend of the twins' nurse this way. Romulus' twin brother was Remus.

compelled it? And who could count how many have chosen to be killed with whatever savage cruelty rather than deny that Christ is God? People thought that some slight indignation might arise in Roman minds if this were not done. Fear of that indignation, however slight, compelled certain cities under Roman rule to worship Romulus as a god. But fear could not turn so great a multitude of martyrs, among the peoples of the whole earth, away from worshiping Christ as God, and not only worshiping him but confessing him. That fear was not of some slight offense in people's minds. It was fear of immense and varied punishments, and of death itself, which is dreaded more than anything else. At that time the city of Christ was still a pilgrim on earth, though it already had hosts of great peoples. Even so, it did not fight against its impious persecutors for its temporal safety. Rather, in order to obtain eternal safety, it did not fight back. Its people were bound and imprisoned, beaten and tortured, burned and torn apart, slaughtered—and they multiplied. For them, the only way to fight for their safety was to scorn safety for the sake of the Savior.

I know that in the third book of Cicero's *Republic*, if I am not mistaken, it is argued that the best state undertakes no war except for faith or for safety. What he means by "for safety," or what safety he wants us to understand, he shows in another passage. "But these punishments," he says, "which even the dullest people feel, such as poverty, exile, chains and flogging, private individuals often escape when death comes swiftly. For states, however, death itself is a punishment, though for individuals it seems to be a release from punishment. For a state ought to be so constituted that it is eternal. So there is no natural death for a commonwealth, as there is for a human being, for whom death is not only necessary but very often even desirable. But when a state is removed, destroyed, extinguished, it is in some way as if, to compare small things with great, this whole world were to perish and collapse."[11] Cicero said this because he holds, with

11 Cicero, *On the Republic* 3.34–35; these fragments survive only because Augustine quotes them.

the Platonists, that the world will not perish. It is clear, then, what safety he meant a state to go to war for. It is the safety by which the state remains here, as he says, eternal, even while individuals die and are born. In the same way the shade of an olive or a laurel, or of other trees of this kind, is perennial, while individual leaves fall and grow. For death, as he says, is a punishment not for individual human beings but for the whole state, and it often releases individuals from punishment. Hence it is rightly asked whether the Saguntines did right. They chose to let their whole city perish rather than break the faith by which they were bound to the Roman commonwealth itself. For this deed of theirs they are praised by all the citizens of the earthly commonwealth.[12] But I do not see how they could have obeyed this argument. It says that no war should be undertaken except for faith or for safety. It does not say which of the two should be chosen if they meet in a single danger in such a way that one cannot be kept without losing the other. For certainly, if the Saguntines chose safety, they would have had to abandon faith. If they kept faith, they would have had to lose safety, and that is what happened. But the safety of the city of God is such that it can be kept, or rather acquired, with faith and through faith; once faith is lost, no one can reach it. This thought, the thought of a most steadfast and most patient heart, made so many great martyrs. Not a single martyr of that kind existed, or could have existed, when Romulus was believed to be a god.

THAT THE WORLD'S BELIEF IN CHRIST WAS THE WORK OF DIVINE POWER, NOT HUMAN PERSUASION

In educated times, only divine power and miracles could have made the world believe the resurrection.

22.7 But it is quite absurd to mention the false divinity of Romulus when we are speaking of Christ. Still, Romulus lived nearly six hundred years before Cicero, and that age is said to have been

12 Saguntum, a city in Spain allied to Rome, was besieged and destroyed by Hannibal in 219 BC, an event that led to the Second Punic War.

already so refined by learning that it rejected everything that could not happen. How much more, then, six hundred years later, in Cicero's own time, and above all afterward under Augustus and Tiberius, in times that were certainly more educated, would the human mind have been unable to bear the resurrection of Christ's flesh and his ascension into heaven as something that cannot happen. It would have mocked them and shut them out of its ears and hearts, had not the divinity of truth itself, or the truth of divinity, together with the corroborating signs of miracles, shown that this could happen and had happened. So, although so many great persecutions threatened and opposed it, the resurrection and immortality of the flesh, which came first in Christ and will follow in the rest at the coming of the new age, was believed most faithfully and proclaimed fearlessly. It was sown throughout the world with the blood of the martyrs, to spring up all the more fruitfully.[13] For the prophets' earlier proclamations were read, displays of mighty works came together with them, and the truth was made persuasive: new to custom, but not contrary to reason. In the end the world, which had once pursued it in fury, came to follow it in faith.

THE MIRACLES THAT WERE DONE SO THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BELIEVE IN CHRIST, AND THAT DO NOT CEASE NOW THAT THE WORLD BELIEVES

Miracles still happen through the sacraments and the martyrs' shrines, though they are little known.

22.8 "Why," they say, "do those miracles which you preach as having happened not happen now?" I could indeed say that they were necessary before the world believed, so that the world would believe. Whoever still demands prodigies in order to believe is himself a great prodigy, for he does not believe when the whole world believes. But they say this so that people will not believe that those miracles happened even then. Why, then,

13 Augustus and Tiberius: the Roman emperors under whom Christ was born and crucified.

is Christ everywhere celebrated with such faith as having been taken up into heaven with his flesh? How is it that, in learned times that rejected everything that could not happen, the world believed incredible things without any miracles, and believed them in a truly miraculous way? Or will they perhaps say that these things were credible and were therefore believed? Then why do they not believe them themselves? Our argument, then, is brief. Either other incredible things, which really happened and were seen, produced faith in an incredible thing that was not seen; or else the thing was so credible that it needed no miracles to persuade anyone, and then it convicts these people of excessive unbelief. I say this to refute the most frivolous of them. For we cannot deny that many miracles were done to bear witness to that one great and saving miracle by which Christ ascended into heaven with the flesh in which he rose. In those same most truthful books everything is written down: both the miracles that were done and the truth for whose belief they were done. These miracles became known in order to produce faith; through the faith they produced, they become known far more widely. For they are read among the peoples so that they may be believed; and yet they would not be read among the peoples unless they were believed. For even now miracles are done in his name, whether through his sacraments or through the prayers or the shrines of his saints. But they are not lit up with the same brilliance, so as to be spread abroad with a fame as great as those had. For the canon of the sacred Scriptures, which had to be fixed, causes those miracles to be read aloud everywhere and to cling to the memory of all peoples. But these present miracles, wherever they happen, are known there hardly even to the whole city itself, or to whatever place people live in together. Often, in fact, even there very few know of them while the rest are unaware, especially if it is a large city. And when they are told elsewhere and to others, no authority commends them strongly enough for them to be believed without

difficulty or doubt, even though they are reported by believing Christians to believing Christians.[14]

The miracle that took place at Milan while we were there, when a blind man received his sight, could come to the knowledge of many. For it is a large city, the emperor was there at the time, and the event took place with an immense crowd as witnesses, who had flocked to the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius. These bodies had lain hidden and were entirely unknown, but they were revealed to Bishop Ambrose in a dream and found. And there that blind man, his old darkness driven away, saw the light of day.[15]

THE HEALING OF INNOCENTIUS

At Carthage a hidden fistula that surgeons were about to cut is found healed after fervent prayer.

At Carthage, though, who besides a very few knows of the healing granted to Innocentius, formerly an advocate in the office of the deputy prefect? We were present at it and saw it with our own eyes. For when my brother Alypius and I came from overseas, not yet clergy but already serving God, he had taken us in, being, with his whole household, deeply religious; and we were living with him at the time. He was being treated by physicians for fistulas, many and complicated, which he had in the lower rear part of his body. They had already operated on him and were carrying out the rest of their art with medicines. In that operation he had suffered long and bitter pains. But one sinus among many had escaped the physicians and was so well hidden that they did not touch it, though they should have opened it with the knife. In the end, when all the others that they had opened and were treating had healed, this one alone remained,

14 Shrines (memoriae): small shrines or chapels holding relics of the saints, especially the martyrs.

15 This happened in AD 386, when Augustine was living in Milan; Ambrose, bishop of Milan, baptized him the following year.

and all their labor on it was spent in vain.[16] He regarded these delays with suspicion and was terribly afraid of being cut again. Another physician, a member of his household, had predicted this to him; when Innocentius was first operated on, the others had not let this man in even to watch how they did it, and Innocentius had angrily thrown him out of the house and had only reluctantly taken him back. So he burst out and said, "Are you going to cut me again? Am I going to end up just as that man said, the one you would not let be present?" They laughed at the unskilled physician and soothed the man's fear with kind words and promises. Many more days passed, and nothing that was done did any good. Yet the physicians persisted in their promise that they would close that sinus not with the knife but with medicines. They also called in another physician, Ammonius, already very old and highly esteemed in that art (he was still alive then), who examined the place and, trusting their care and skill, promised the same as they had. Made confident by his authority, Innocentius, as if already well, poked fun with witty good humor at his household physician, who had predicted another operation. What more need I say? So many days afterward passed, wasted to no purpose, that, worn out and embarrassed, they admitted that he could not possibly be healed except by the knife. He was terrified and turned pale, overwhelmed by fear; and when he had collected himself and could speak, he ordered them to leave and not to come near him again. Exhausted with weeping and now cornered by that necessity, he could think of nothing else but to call in a certain Alexandrian, who was then regarded as a marvelous surgeon, to do himself what Innocentius in his anger did not want the others to do. But after the Alexandrian came and, as a master of his craft, saw their work in the scars, he acted as a good man should. He persuaded Innocentius to let those who had labored on him so much—he marveled at it as he examined him—enjoy the completion of their treatment instead. He added that it was true that

16 Alypius: Augustine's closest friend, converted and baptized with him, later bishop of Thagaste.

Innocentius could not be made well unless he was cut; but that it was quite foreign to his own character, for the sake of the little that remained, to snatch the prize for so great a labor from men whose most skillful work, diligence and care he saw with admiration in his scars. They were restored to his good graces, and it was agreed that, with the same Alexandrian present, they themselves would open with the knife that sinus, which everyone now agreed could not be healed any other way. The matter was put off until the following day. But when they had gone, the master's overwhelming sorrow caused such grief in that house that we could hardly hold it back; it was like the wailing at a funeral. Holy men visited him every day: Saturninus of blessed memory, then bishop of Uzalis, the priest Gulosus, and the deacons of the church of Carthage. Among them was Aurelius, the only one of them still alive, now a bishop, whom I must name with the honor due to him. With him, as we recalled the marvelous works of God, I have often talked about this matter, and I found that he remembers well what I am relating. When they visited Innocentius in the evening, as they used to, he begged them with pitiable tears to be so kind as to attend his funeral in the morning, rather than his suffering. For such fear from his earlier pains had seized him that he had no doubt he would die in the physicians' hands. They comforted him and urged him to trust in God and to bear his will with courage.[17] Then we went in to pray. As we knelt in the usual way and bowed down to the ground, he threw himself down as if someone had violently pushed him over, and began to pray. In what manner, with what feeling, with what emotion of soul, with what flood of tears, with what groans and sobs that shook all his limbs and almost stopped his breath—who could explain it in any words? Whether the others were praying and their attention was not drawn away by all this, I did not know. I myself could not pray at all. I only said briefly in my heart: "Lord, what prayers of your people do you answer, if you do not answer these?" For it seemed to me

17 Aurelius: bishop of Carthage from c. AD 391 and primate of the African Church, Augustine's close ally.

that nothing more could be added, except that he should die praying. We rose and, after receiving the bishop's blessing, left; he begged them to be there in the morning, and they urged him to be calm. The dreaded day dawned. The servants of God were there, as they had promised to be; the physicians came in. Everything that hour required is made ready; the fearsome instruments are brought out, while everyone is stunned and in suspense. Those with greater authority lift up his failing spirit with words of comfort, and his limbs are arranged on the bed for the hands of the surgeon. The knots of the bandages are undone, the place is laid bare; the physician examines it and, knife in hand and intent, searches for the sinus to be cut. He scrutinizes with his eyes, he feels with his fingers, he tries every way he can: he finds a perfectly firm scar. The joy then, the praise and thanksgiving to the merciful and almighty God that poured from everyone's lips amid tears of gladness, I must not entrust to my words: let it be imagined rather than told.

HEALINGS AT CARTHAGE AND BEYOND

A woman's breast cancer is healed by the sign of the cross; other cures follow at baptism and shrines.

In the same city of Carthage, Innocentia, a very devout woman from one of the leading families of the city, had a cancer in her breast—a thing, as physicians say, that no medicines can cure. So either the part where it arises is usually cut off and removed from the body, or, so that the patient may live a little longer, though death will come from it eventually however slowly, all treatment should be abandoned, which is said to be the opinion of Hippocrates. She had learned this from a skilled physician who was very close to her household, and she had turned to God alone in prayer. As Easter drew near, she was told in a dream that, as she kept watch at the baptistery on the women's side, the first newly baptized woman who met her should mark the place with the sign of Christ. She did so, and health followed immedi-

ately.[18] Now the physician who had told her to apply no treatment if she wanted to live a little longer examined her afterward and found her perfectly healthy, though he had established by just such an examination that she had that disease before. He asked her urgently what she had used, wanting, as far as one can tell, to learn the remedy by which the verdict of Hippocrates could be overcome. When he heard from her what had happened, he is said to have answered, with a tone and a look as if of contempt, so that she feared he would utter some insulting word against Christ, but with devout wit: "I thought," he said, "you were going to tell me something great." And as she was already beginning to shudder, he quickly added: "What great thing has Christ done in healing a cancer, when he raised a man who had been dead four days?"[19] When I heard this, I was extremely indignant that so great a miracle, done in that city and to a person who was certainly not obscure, should remain so hidden, and I thought she ought to be admonished and almost scolded for it. When she replied that she had not kept silent about it, I asked the ladies who happened to be with her at the time, her closest friends, whether they had known of this before. They answered that they had not known it at all. "There you are," I said. "This is how you have not kept silent: even these women, who are joined to you by such close friendship, have not heard of it." And since I had questioned her only briefly, I had her tell the whole story in order, just as it happened, while they listened, greatly amazed, and glorified God.

We know that there was a physician in the same city who suffered from gout. He had given in his name for baptism. The day before he was to be baptized, he was forbidden in a dream to be baptized that year by black, curly-haired boys, whom he understood to be demons. He did not obey them, and when they even trampled on his feet, he burned with the sharpest pain, such as he had never experienced. But defeating them all the

18 Hippocrates: the famous Greek physician of the 5th century BC; his Aphorisms advise that hidden cancers are better left untreated.
19 An allusion to the raising of Lazarus (John 11).

more, he did not put off being washed in the bath of rebirth, as he had vowed. Yet who knows that in baptism itself he was rid not only of the pain that was tormenting him beyond the usual but of the gout as well, and that, though he lived long afterward, his feet never hurt again? We know it, though, and so do a very few brothers whom the news could reach.

A former mime actor from Curubis was made well when he was baptized, not only of paralysis but also of a grotesque swelling of his genitals. Freed from both afflictions, he came up from the font of rebirth as though there had been nothing wrong in his body. Who knows of this besides the people of Curubis and a very rare few who may have heard of it here and there? But when we learned of it, at the instruction of the holy bishop Aurelius, we had him come to Carthage as well, although we had first heard of it from people whose good faith we could not doubt.[20]

Hesperius, a man of tribunician rank, lives among us. He has an estate in the district of Fussala, called Zubedi. When he discovered that his household was suffering from the harmful power of evil spirits, which afflicted his animals and his slaves, he asked our priests, while I was away, that one of them go there, so that the spirits might yield to his prayers. One went, offered there the sacrifice of the body of Christ, and prayed as hard as he could that the harassment would stop; and by God's mercy it stopped at once. Now Hesperius had received from a friend some holy earth brought from Jerusalem, where Christ was buried and rose on the third day, and he had hung it up in his bedroom so that he himself would suffer no harm. But once his house had been cleansed of that infestation, he began to wonder what to do with that earth, since out of reverence he did not want to keep it in his bedroom any longer. It happened that my colleague at the time, Maximinus, bishop of the church of Sinitum, and I were nearby. He asked us to come, and we came. When he had told us everything, he also asked that the earth be

20 Curubis: a coastal town in Africa Proconsularis, on the Cape Bon peninsula in modern Tunisia.

buried somewhere and a place of prayer be made there, where Christians too could gather to celebrate the things of God. We did not object, and it was done. There was a young peasant there who was paralyzed. When he heard of this, he asked his parents to carry him to that holy place without delay. When he had been carried there, he prayed, and at once he walked away from there on his own feet, healed.

There is a country estate called Victoriana, less than thirty miles from Hippo Regius. It has a shrine of the Milanese martyrs Protasius and Gervasius. A young man was carried there who, while washing his horse in a deep pool of the river at midday in summer, had run into a demon. As he lay there, either close to death or very like a dead man, the lady of the estate came in, as was her custom, for evening hymns and prayers with her maid-servants and some nuns, and they began to sing hymns. At the sound he was shaken as if struck, and with a terrible roar he seized the altar and held on to it, not daring or not able to move it, as if he had been tied or fastened to it. Then, with loud howling, begging to be spared, the demon confessed where, when and how it had seized the young man.[21] Finally, announcing that it would leave, it named each of his limbs, threatening to cut them off as it went; and amid these words it departed from the man. But his eye had spilled down onto his cheek and was hanging by a thin little vein, as if from a root inside, and its whole center, which had been dark, had turned white. When those present saw this (others had also come running, summoned by his cries, and all had prostrated themselves in prayer for him), though they rejoiced to see him standing there in his right mind, they were saddened again because of his eye and said that a physician must be sent for. Then his sister's husband, who had brought him there, said: "God, who drove away the demon, is able to restore his sight at the prayers of the saints." Then, as best he could, he put the eye that had fallen out and was hanging back in its place, bound it with a cloth, and

21 Hippo Regius: Augustine's episcopal city on the coast of Numidia, modern Annaba in Algeria.

decided that it should not be untied until seven days had passed. When he did untie it, he found the eye perfectly sound. Others were healed there too, but it would take too long to tell of them.

I know of a young woman of Hippo who anointed herself with oil into which the priest praying for her had let his tears fall, and who was soon freed from a demon. I also know that a bishop once prayed for a young man he had not seen, and that the young man was immediately rid of the demon.

There was an old man of our Hippo named Florentius, a devout and poor man who earned his living as a tailor. He had lost his cloak and had nothing to buy another with. At the shrine of the Twenty Martyrs, which is very famous among us, he prayed aloud to be clothed. Some young men who happened to be there, scoffers, heard him, and as he left they followed him, taunting him as if he had asked the martyrs for fifty folles to buy a garment. But walking on in silence, he saw a large fish washed up on the shore, still flapping, and with their encouragement and help he caught it. He sold it for three hundred folles to a cook named Catosus, a good Christian, for his kitchen of preserved foods, telling him what had happened. He planned to buy wool with the money, so that his wife could make him something to wear as best she could.[22] But the cook, cutting up the fish, found a gold ring in its belly. At once, moved by compassion and struck with religious awe, he gave it back to the man, saying, "See how the Twenty Martyrs have clothed you."

THE RELICS OF SAINT STEPHEN

Relics of Saint Stephen bring sight, healing and even the raising of the dead in African towns.

When Bishop Praeiectus was bringing relics of the most glorious martyr Stephen to Aquae Tibilitanae, a great crowd came flocking to meet them. There a blind woman begged to be led to the bishop who was carrying them. She gave him the flowers she

22 The Twenty Martyrs: a group of martyrs venerated at Hippo. Folles: small bronze coins of very low value.

was carrying, received them back, put them to her eyes, and immediately she could see. While those present were astounded, she went on ahead, rejoicing, making her own way and no longer needing anyone to guide her.[23]

Lucilius, bishop of the town of Sinitum, which is near the colony of Hippo, was carrying the relic of that same martyr which is housed there, with the people going before and following after. He had long suffered from a troublesome fistula and was waiting for a physician, a close friend of his, to operate on it. Through carrying that holy burden it was suddenly healed; from then on he found no trace of it in his body.

Eucharius is a priest from Spain who lives at Calama. He suffered from a long-standing illness of the stone, and through the relic of the martyr mentioned above, which Bishop Possidius brought there, he was healed. Later this same man, when another illness got the better of him, lay dead, so that his thumbs were already being tied. Through the help of that martyr, when the priest's own tunic had been taken to the shrine and brought back and laid over his body as he lay there, he was raised to life.[24]

There was a man there named Martialis, a leading member of the town council, already advanced in years and strongly opposed to the Christian religion. He did, however, have a believing daughter, and a son-in-law who had been baptized that same year. When, during his illness, they begged him with many tears to become a Christian, he flatly refused and drove them away in angry indignation. His son-in-law decided to go to the shrine of Saint Stephen and pray for him there with all his might, that God would give him a good mind, so that he would not put off believing in Christ. He did this with great groaning and weeping and with a sincere and burning devotion. Then, as he left, he took some flowers from the altar, whatever came to

23 Stephen: the first Christian martyr (Acts 7), whose relics were discovered in AD 415 and soon reached Africa. Aquae Tibilitanae: a spa town in Numidia, modern Hammam Debagh in Algeria.

24 Calama: a town in Numidia, modern Guelma in Algeria. Possidius was its bishop, Augustine's friend and later his biographer.

hand, and since it was already night, he placed them by Martialis's head; then the household went to sleep. And look: before dawn Martialis cries out for someone to run to the bishop, who happened at that time to be with me at Hippo. So when he heard that the bishop was away, he asked for the priests to come. They came; he said he believed; and to everyone's wonder and joy he was baptized. As long as he lived, these words were on his lips: "Christ, receive my spirit." He did not know that these had been the last words of the most blessed Stephen when he was stoned by the Jews. They were his last words too, for not long afterward he also died.[25]

Through the same martyr two citizens suffering from gout were also healed there, and one visitor from elsewhere. The citizens were healed completely; but the visitor was told in a revelation what to apply whenever he felt pain, and when he does this, the pain at once subsides.

Audurus is the name of an estate where there is a church, and in it a shrine of the martyr Stephen. A little boy was playing on the threshing floor when the oxen pulling a wagon swerved off the track and crushed him under the wheel, and at once he lay convulsing as he breathed his last. His mother snatched him up and laid him at that same shrine; and not only did he come back to life, but he was also found to be unhurt.

A nun on a neighboring estate called Caspaliana was ill and her life despaired of, and her tunic was taken to the same shrine; but before it could be brought back, she died. Her parents nevertheless covered her corpse with the tunic, and her breath returned and she was made well. At Hippo a Syrian named Bassus was praying at the shrine of the same martyr for his daughter, who was sick and in danger, and he had brought her clothing there with him. And look: servants came running from the house to tell him she was dead. But while he was still praying, they were met by his friends, who forbade them to tell him, so that he would not mourn in public. When he came home to a house already ringing with the wailing of his family and

25 Acts 7:59.

threw his daughter's garment, which he was carrying, over her, she was restored to life.

Again, here among us at Hippo, the son of a certain Irenaeus, a tax collector, died of an illness. While the body lay lifeless and the mourners, weeping and lamenting, were preparing the funeral, one of the father's friends, among the words of the others who were consoling him, suggested that the body be anointed with oil of the same martyr. It was done, and the boy came back to life.

Likewise among us, Eleusinus, a man of tribunician rank, laid his infant son, who had died of an illness, on the shrine of the martyrs that stands on his estate outside the city. After the prayer he poured out there with many tears, he lifted the child up alive.

WRITTEN ACCOUNTS OF HEALINGS

Augustine has accounts of healings read in church; nearly seventy at Hippo in under two years.

What am I to do? The promise to complete this work presses on me, so I cannot record here everything I know. No doubt many of our people, when they read this, will be sorry that I have passed over so many things that they certainly know as well as I do. I ask them now to forgive me, and to consider how long a labor it would be to do what the demands of the work I have undertaken compel me not to do here. For suppose I wished to write, to say nothing of other things, only of the miracles of healing worked through this martyr, the most glorious Stephen, in the colony of Calama and in our own town. Many books would have to be produced, and even then they could not all be collected, but only those for which written accounts have been submitted to be read out to the congregations. We wanted this done because we saw that signs of divine power like those of old were occurring frequently in our own times too, and that they ought not to be lost from the knowledge of many. It is not yet two years since this shrine began to exist at Hippo Regius. Many

accounts of the wonderful things done there have not been submitted; this we know for certain. Yet those that have been submitted had reached almost seventy in number by the time I wrote this. At Calama, however, where the shrine was established earlier and accounts are submitted more often, they far outnumber ours.

At Uzalis too, a colony near Utica, we know of many remarkable things done through the same martyr. His shrine was established there by Bishop Evodius long before ours. But there the custom of submitting written accounts does not exist, or rather did not, for perhaps it has now begun. When we were there recently, we urged Petronia, a woman of senatorial rank, to submit an account to be read to the people, with the consent of the bishop of the place I have mentioned. She had been wonderfully cured there of a serious and long-lasting illness for which all the help of physicians had failed, and she complied most obediently. In her account she included something I cannot pass over in silence here, although I am pressed to hurry on to the matters this work demands.[26] She said that a Jew had persuaded her to thread a ring onto a cord made of hair and to wear it tied around her bare body under all her clothes. Under its gem the ring held a stone found in the kidneys of an ox. Bound with this as if with a remedy, she was making her way to the shrine of the holy martyr. She set out from Carthage and stopped at her own estate near the river Bagradas. When she got up to continue her journey, she saw the ring lying before her feet. Astonished, she felt the girdle of hair with which it had been tied on. She found it still fastened exactly as it had been, with all its very firm knots, and supposed that the ring had cracked and sprung off. But when the ring too was found completely intact, she took it that from so great a miracle she had received, as it were, a pledge of her coming cure. She untied the cord and threw it, together with

26 Evodius, bishop of Uzalis (near Utica, in modern Tunisia), was a lifelong friend of Augustine.

the ring, into the river.[27] Let those who do not believe that the Lord Jesus was born leaving his mother's virginity intact, and that he came in to his disciples when the doors were shut, refuse to believe this as well. But let them at least investigate it, and if they find it true, let them believe those other things too. She is a woman of senatorial rank, nobly born and nobly married, and she lives in Carthage. A great city and a great lady do not allow the matter to stay hidden from those who look into it. The martyr himself, at whose intercession she was healed, certainly believed in the Son of the ever-virgin mother. He believed in him who came in to his disciples when the doors were shut. And finally, and this is why we are saying all this, he believed in him who ascended into heaven in the flesh in which he had risen. That is why such great things are done through him: because he laid down his life for this faith. So even now many miracles are done. The same God who did those we read of works them through whom he wills and as he wills. But these do not become equally well known, nor are they pounded into the memory by frequent reading, like gravel into a road, so that they do not slip from the mind. Even where there is the care, now begun among us, to have the accounts of those who receive these benefits read out to the people, those present hear it only once, and more people are absent than present. So even those who were present do not retain what they heard for more than a few days, and scarcely anyone among them is found who will tell what he heard to someone he knows was not there.

THE TREMBLING BROTHER AND SISTER

A brother and sister from Cappadocia, cursed with trembling, are healed at Stephen's shrine on Easter.

One miracle happened among us that was no greater than those I have mentioned, but so clear and conspicuous that I think there is no one in Hippo who did not either see it or hear of it,

27 The Bagradas is the modern Medjerda, the chief river of Tunisia, flowing into the sea near Carthage and Utica.

and no one who could possibly have forgotten it. There were ten brothers and sisters, seven male and three female, from Caesarea in Cappadocia, people of some standing among their fellow citizens. Their mother had been left alone by their father's recent death, and she took very bitterly a wrong they had done her. Through her curse they were punished by God with such a penalty that all of them were horribly shaken by a trembling of the limbs. In this most unsightly condition they could not bear the eyes of their fellow citizens, and they wandered over almost the whole Roman world, each wherever he chose. Two of them came to us as well, a brother and a sister, Paul and Palladia. They were already known in many other places, since their misery had spread their story abroad.[28] They arrived about fifteen days before Easter. Every day they came to the church, and in it to the shrine of the most glorious Stephen, praying that God would at last be reconciled to them and restore their former health. There, and wherever they went, they drew the eyes of the city to themselves. Some who had seen them elsewhere and knew the cause of their trembling told others as best they could. Easter came. On the Lord's day itself, in the morning, a large crowd was already present, and the young man was praying and holding on to the railings of the holy place where the martyr's shrine was. Suddenly he fell down and lay there just like someone asleep, yet not trembling, though they used to tremble even in their sleep. Those present were amazed, some frightened, others distressed. Some wanted to lift him up, but others prevented them and said they should rather wait to see the outcome. And look: he got up, and he was not trembling, because he had been healed. He stood there sound and well, gazing at those who were gazing at him. Who then could hold back from praising God? The whole church was filled with the voices of people shouting and rejoicing. From there they came running to me where I was sitting, about to go out. They burst in one after another, each newcomer announcing as news what someone else had already told me. While I was rejoicing and

28 Caesarea in Cappadocia is modern Kayseri in central Turkey.

thanking God within myself, the young man himself came in too with several others. He knelt at my knees and was raised up for my kiss. We went out to the people. The church was full and ringing with cries of joy: "Thanks be to God! Praise be to God!" No one was silent; people were shouting on every side. I greeted the people, and they cried out the same words again with even more fervent voices. When at last there was silence, the appointed readings from the divine Scriptures were read. When we came to the place for my sermon, I said a few words suited to the occasion and to the delight of that joy. For I let them not so much hear as contemplate a kind of eloquence of God in his divine work. The man dined with us and told us carefully the whole story of his own misfortune and that of his brothers, his sisters, and his mother. So the following day, after delivering my sermon, I promised that a written account of his story would be read to the people the next day. This was done on the third day after Easter Sunday. While their account was being read, I had the brother and sister both stand on the steps of the apse, from whose raised platform I was speaking. The whole congregation, men and women alike, gazed at the one standing without any unsightly movement and at the other trembling in every limb. Those who had not seen him saw in his sister what divine mercy had done in him. For they saw what there was to rejoice over in him and what they had to pray for on her behalf. Meanwhile, when their account had been read, I told them to leave the people's sight, and I had begun to discuss the whole matter somewhat more thoroughly. Suddenly, while I was speaking, other voices were heard from the martyr's shrine, cries of fresh rejoicing. Those who were listening to me turned that way and began to run there together. When she came down from the steps on which she had stood, she had gone on to pray to the holy martyr. As soon as she touched the railings she collapsed in the same way, as if falling asleep, and got up healed. So while we were asking what had happened and where this joyful noise had come from, they came with her into the basilica where we were, bringing her healed from the martyr's place. Then such a cry of

wonder rose from men and women alike that the continuous shouting, mixed with tears, seemed as if it could never end. She was led to the place where a little earlier she had stood trembling. They had grieved that she remained unlike her brother, and now they exulted that she was like him. They saw that, though they had not yet poured out their prayers for her, the wish that went ahead of their prayers had already been heard, and so quickly. They exulted in God's praise with a voice without words, with such a noise that our ears could scarcely bear it. What was in the hearts of those who exulted but the faith of Christ, for which Stephen's blood was shed?

THAT ALL THE MIRACLES DONE THROUGH THE MARTYRS IN CHRIST'S NAME BEAR WITNESS TO THE FAITH BY WHICH THE MARTYRS BELIEVED IN CHRIST

The martyrs' miracles bear witness to the faith in Christ's bodily resurrection for which they died.

22.9 To what do these miracles bear witness, if not to this faith, which proclaims that Christ rose in the flesh and ascended into heaven with the flesh? For the martyrs themselves were martyrs of this faith, that is, witnesses of this faith. Bearing witness to this faith, they endured a world that was most hostile and most cruel, and they overcame it not by fighting back but by dying. For this faith they died, and so they can obtain such things from the Lord for whose name they were killed. For this faith their wonderful endurance came first, so that this great power might follow in these miracles. For suppose the resurrection of the flesh for eternity either did not first take place in Christ, or will not come as Christ foretold it, or as the prophets foretold it, the prophets by whom Christ himself was foretold. Then why do even the dead have such power, men who were killed for the faith in which this resurrection is proclaimed?[29] God may do these things himself, by himself, in that wonderful way in which, eternal as he is, he works things in time. Or he may do

29 *Martyr* is the Greek word for "witness."

them through his ministers. And of the things he does through ministers, he may do some even through the spirits of martyrs, as he does through human beings still living in the body. Or he may work all of them through angels, whom he commands invisibly, incorporeally, unchangeably, so that what is said to be done through the martyrs is done only by their praying and interceding, not also by their working. Or he may do some things in one way and some in another, in ways that mortals cannot comprehend at all. Whatever the case, these things bear witness to the faith that proclaims the resurrection of the flesh for eternity.

HOW MUCH MORE WORTHILY THE MARTYRS ARE HONORED, WHO OBTAIN MANY WONDERS SO THAT THE TRUE GOD MAY BE WORSHIPED, THAN THE DEMONS, WHO DO CERTAIN THINGS SO THAT THEY THEMSELVES MAY BE BELIEVED TO BE GODS

Pagan gods' wonders cannot compare with the martyrs', who are honored as men, not worshiped as gods.

22.10 Here perhaps they will say that their gods too have done some wonderful things. Good, if they are now beginning to compare their gods to our dead human beings! Or will they say that they too have gods who were once dead human beings, like Hercules, like Romulus, like many others whom they believe to have been received into the number of the gods? But for us the martyrs are not gods, because we know that one and the same God is both ours and the martyrs'. Nor are the miracles said to have been done through their temples in any way comparable to the miracles that happen through the shrines of our martyrs. If some do seem similar, their gods have been overcome by our martyrs, just as Pharaoh's magicians were overcome by Moses.[30] The demons performed those wonders with the haughtiness of the unclean pride by which they wanted to be gods to those people. But these wonders are performed by the martyrs, or

30 Exodus 7–8, where Moses' signs outdo those of Pharaoh's magicians.

rather by God, with the martyrs either cooperating or praying, so that the faith may advance by which we believe that they are not our gods, but have one God together with us. In short, those people built temples to such gods of theirs, set up altars, appointed priests, and offered sacrifices. But for our martyrs we build not temples, as for gods, but shrines, as for dead human beings whose spirits are alive with God. Nor do we set up altars there on which to sacrifice to the martyrs; we sacrifice to the one God, who is both the martyrs' God and ours. At this sacrifice they are named in their own place and order, as men of God who overcame the world by confessing him; but they are not invoked by the priest who offers the sacrifice. For he sacrifices to God, not to them, even though he sacrifices at their shrine, because he is God's priest, not theirs. And the sacrifice itself is the body of Christ, which is not offered to them, because they too are that body. Which miracle-workers, then, should we rather believe? Those who want to be regarded as gods by the people for whom they perform them, or those who do whatever wonders they do so that people may believe in God, which is what Christ also is? Those who wanted even their crimes to be their rites, or those who do not want even their praises to be their rites, but want all the praise they truly receive to serve the glory of him in whom they are praised? For "their souls are praised in the Lord." Let us therefore believe them, since they both speak the truth and do wonders. For they suffered for speaking the truth, so that they might be able to do wonders.[31] Among those truths, the chief is that Christ rose from the dead and was the first to show in his own flesh the immortality of the resurrection. He promised that it would come to us either at the beginning of the new age or at the end of this one.

31 An adaptation of Psalm 33:3 (34:2 in most English Bibles): "My soul shall be praised in the Lord."

AGAINST THE PLATONISTS, WHO ARGUE FROM THE NATURAL WEIGHTS OF THE ELEMENTS THAT AN EARTHLY BODY CANNOT BE IN HEAVEN

Against the Platonists' argument from the weights of the elements, earthly bodies can dwell in heaven.

22.11 Against this great gift of God these reasoners, "whose thoughts the Lord knows to be futile," argue from the weights of the elements. They have learned, you see, from their master Plato that the two greatest and outermost bodies of the world are linked and joined by two intermediate ones, namely air and water. "And therefore," they say, "since earth is first going upward from here, water second above the earth, air third above the water, and heaven fourth above the air, an earthly body cannot be in heaven. For each element is balanced by its own weight so as to keep its place in the order." See what kind of arguments human weakness, possessed by futility, uses to contradict the omnipotence of God! What, then, are so many earthly bodies doing in the air, when air is third from the earth?[32] Unless perhaps he who granted the earthly bodies of birds the ability to be carried in the air, through the lightness of their down and feathers, will be unable to give human bodies, once made immortal, the power to dwell even in the highest heaven! By their reasoning, the earthly animals that cannot fly, human beings among them, ought to have lived under the earth, just as fish, the creatures of the water, live under the water. Why then does an earthly animal draw its life not at least from the second element, the waters, but from the third? Though it belongs to the earth, why is it that if it is forced to live in the second element, which lies above the earth, it at once suffocates, and in order to live it lives in the third? Is this order of the elements mistaken, or rather does it fail not in the nature of things but in these people's arguments? I pass over what I already said in the thirteenth book: how many earthly bodies, like lead, are heavy, and

32 The scheme of the elements comes from Plato's *Timaeus*.

yet receive from a craftsman a shape that lets them float on water. And is the almighty Craftsman to be denied the power to give the human body a quality by which it can be carried into heaven and exist in heaven?

Now, even if they consider and examine this order of the elements in which they trust, they find nothing whatever to say against what I said above. For earth is first going upward from here, water second, air third, heaven fourth, in such a way that the nature of the soul is above them all. Aristotle said it was a fifth body, and Plato that it was no body at all.[33]

If it were a fifth body, it would certainly be higher than the rest; but since it is no body at all, it surpasses them all much more. What, then, is it doing in an earthly body? What is the subtlest of all things doing in this bulk? What is the lightest of all doing in this weight? What is the swiftest of all doing in this sluggishness? Will it really be impossible, by the merit of so excellent a nature, to bring it about that its body is lifted into heaven? The nature of earthly bodies can now press souls downward; will souls one day be unable to lift earthly bodies upward as well?

Now if we come to their miracles, which they set against our martyrs as works of their gods, will not even these be found to support us and to be entirely to our advantage? Surely one of the great miracles of their gods is the one Varro records. A Vestal virgin, in danger because of a false suspicion of unchastity, filled a sieve with water from the Tiber and carried it to her judges without a drop leaking from any part of it. Who held the weight of the water above the sieve? Who allowed nothing to fall from it to the ground through so many open holes? They will answer: "Some god, or some demon." If a god, is he greater than God, who made this world? If a demon, is he more powerful than an angel who serves God, by whom the world was made?[34]

33 Aristotle posited a fifth element (the aether, or "quintessence"), and ancient writers such as Cicero reported that he made it the substance of the mind.
34 The Vestal Virgins, priestesses of Vesta, were bound to chastity on pain of death; tradition names this one Tuccia.

If, then, a lesser god, or an angel, or a demon could so suspend the weight of a liquid element that the very nature of water seems to have been changed, will almighty God, who created all the elements themselves, really be unable to remove its heavy weight from an earthly body, so that the body, brought to life, may dwell in whatever element the life-giving spirit wishes?

Next, since they place air in the middle, between fire above and water below, how is it that we often find it between water and water, and between water and earth? What do they make of the watery clouds, with air found in the middle between them and the seas? By what weight and order of the elements, I ask you, does it come about that the most violent and surging torrents hang above the air in the clouds before they run over the earth beneath the air? Why, finally, is air in the middle between the heights of heaven and the bare surface of the lands, wherever the world extends, if its place has been fixed between heaven and the waters, just as that of the waters is between air and the earth? Lastly, suppose the order of the elements is arranged so that, according to Plato, the two extremes, fire and earth, are joined by two intermediates, air and water, and fire holds the place of the highest heaven, while earth holds the lowest, as the foundation, so to speak, of the world, and that therefore earth cannot be in heaven. Then why is fire itself on earth? By this reasoning these two elements, earth and fire, ought to have been in their proper places, lowest and highest, in such a way that, just as they will not allow what belongs to the lowest to be in the highest, so what belongs to the highest could not be in the lowest. So, just as they think that no particle of earth either is or will be in heaven, so we ought to see no particle of fire on earth. But in fact fire is not only on the earth but even beneath it, so much so that mountain peaks belch it forth. Besides, in human use we see both that fire is on earth and that it is born from earth, since it comes from wood and from stones, which are without doubt earthly bodies. “But that fire,” they say, “is tranquil, pure, harmless, everlasting; this one is turbulent, smoky, corruptible and corrupting.” Yet it does not corrupt the

mountains in which it rages continually, or the caverns of the earth. But granted: let this fire be unlike that one, so as to suit earthly dwellings. Why then do they refuse to let us believe that the nature of earthly bodies, made incorruptible at some future time, will be suited to heaven, just as corruptible fire is now suited to these lands? So they bring forward nothing from the weights and order of the elements on which to base an objection against almighty God, to stop him from making our bodies such that they can dwell even in heaven.

AGAINST THE SLANDERS OF UNBELIEVERS, WHO MOCK CHRISTIANS FOR BELIEVING IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

Unbelievers mock the resurrection with questions about fetuses, size, hair, nails and cannibalism.

22.12 But they are in the habit of asking questions with extreme scrupulousness, and by asking them to mock the faith by which we believe that the flesh will rise again. They ask whether aborted fetuses rise. And since the Lord says, "Truly I tell you, not a hair of your head will perish," they ask whether stature and strength will be equal for everyone, or whether bodies will differ in size. For if bodies are to be equal, where will those aborted fetuses get the bodily bulk they did not have here, if they too are to rise? Or if they will not rise, because they were not born but simply expelled, they turn the same question onto little children: where will they obtain the bodily size that we now see they lacked, when they die at that age? For we are certainly not going to say that those will not rise who are capable not only of being born but also of being reborn. Next they ask what standard this equality itself will follow.[35] For if everyone is to be as large and as tall as the very largest and tallest people here have been, they raise the question not only about little children but about most people: where will they get what they lacked here, if each person receives back what he had here? But suppose we

35 Luke 21:18.

take what the apostle says, that we shall all come "to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ," and that other text, "Those whom he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son," to mean that the stature and size of Christ's body will be the stature and size of all the human bodies that will be in his kingdom. Then, they say, a great deal will have to be taken away from the size and height of many bodies. And what then becomes of "not a hair of your head will perish," if so much of the very size of the body is going to perish? One might ask about the hair itself, too, whether everything that the barber has cut off comes back.[36] And if it is going to come back, who would not shudder at such ugliness? For the same thing seems necessarily to follow for the nails as well: that all the great quantity which care of the body has trimmed away will return. And where will be the beauty which, in that immortality, ought certainly to be greater than it could be in this state of corruption? If, on the other hand, it does not return, then it will perish. How then, they say, will no hair of the head perish? They argue in the same way about thinness and fatness. For if all are to be equal, surely some will not be thin and others fat. So something will be added to some and taken away from others. And so it will not be a matter of receiving back what was, but of adding in one place what was not, and losing in another what was.

They are also greatly troubled by the very decay and dissolution of dead bodies. One part turns to dust, another evaporates into the air; there are some whom beasts devour, some whom fire consumes; some perish by shipwreck or in waters of whatever kind in such a way that decay dissolves their flesh into liquid. And they do not believe that all of this can be gathered back into flesh and restored whole. They also pursue every disfigurement and defect, whether it comes by accident or from birth. Here they bring up monstrous births with horror and ridicule, and ask what sort of resurrection each deformity will have. For if we say that nothing of the kind will return in a human body, they presume they will refute our answer by

36 Ephesians 4:13; Romans 8:29.

pointing to the places of the wounds with which, as we proclaim, the Lord Christ rose. But among all these, the most difficult question put forward is this: into whose flesh will that flesh return which has gone to nourish the body of someone else, when hunger has driven him to eat human flesh? For it has been turned into the flesh of the man who lived on such food, and it made good the losses that his emaciation had displayed. So does it return to the man whose flesh it was first, or rather to the one whose flesh it later became? They ask this in order to mock the faith in the resurrection. In this way they either promise the human soul, as Plato does, true miseries and false happiness in alternation, or else admit, as Porphyry does, that after many cycles through different bodies the soul does at last end its miseries and never returns to them—yet not by having an immortal body, but by fleeing every body.[37]

WHETHER ABORTED FETUSES DO NOT BELONG TO THE RESURRECTION, IF THEY BELONG TO THE NUMBER OF THE DEAD

Augustine dares neither affirm nor deny that miscarried fetuses rise, but leans toward their resurrection.

22.13 To these objections, then, which as I have set them out seem to me to be raised by the opposing side, I shall now reply, with the mercy of God assisting my efforts. As for aborted fetuses, which had already lived in the womb and died there, I do not dare either to affirm or to deny that they will rise. Yet I do not see how the resurrection of the dead can fail to concern them, if they are not excluded from the number of the dead. For either not all the dead will rise, and there will be some human souls without bodies forever—souls that bore human bodies, even if only within their mothers' wombs. Or, if all human souls will receive back, as they rise, the bodies they had, wherever they left them, whether living or dying, then I cannot find any way to

37 Porphyry held that the purified soul escapes the cycle of rebirth for good, never again to be joined to a body.

say that the resurrection of the dead does not concern those who died, even in their mothers' wombs. But whichever view anyone holds about them, what we shall say about infants already born must be understood of them as well, if they rise.

WHETHER INFANTS WILL RISE WITH THE BODILY BUILD THEY WOULD HAVE HAD AS THEY GREW OLDER

Infants will rise with the full stature that time would have given them.

22.14 What, then, are we to say about infants, except that they will not rise in the smallness of body in which they died, but will receive, by that wonderful and most swift work of God, what time would have added to them more slowly? For in the Lord's saying, "Not a hair of your head will perish," it is stated that what was there will not be lacking; it is not denied that what was lacking will be there. Now the infant who died lacked the full size of its body. For even a perfectly formed infant certainly lacks the perfection of bodily size, the point at which, once reached, the stature can grow no taller. All have this measure of perfection in such a way that they are conceived and born with it; but they have it in their formative principle, not in bulk. In the same way all the limbs are already hidden in the seed, although some are still lacking even after birth, such as the teeth and anything else of that kind. In this principle, implanted in the bodily material of each individual, what does not yet exist —or rather, what lies hidden but will come to be, or better, will appear, as time goes on—seems already in a certain way to be, so to speak, threaded on the loom. In this principle, then, an infant who is going to be short or tall is already short or tall. In accordance with this principle we certainly need fear no bodily losses in the resurrection of the body. For suppose all were to be equal, so that everyone reached the size of giants, in order that those who were very large should not have less of their stature—which would then perish for them, contrary to the saying of Christ, who said that not even a hair of the head would perish. Even so, how could the Creator, who created all things out of nothing,

lack the material from which to add what he, the wonderful craftsman, knew had to be added?

WHETHER THE BODIES OF ALL THE DEAD WILL RISE TO THE MEASURE OF THE LORD'S BODY

All will rise at the size of youthful maturity, the age Christ reached, not at his exact size.

22.15 But Christ certainly rose in the bodily size in which he died. Nor is it right to say that, when the time of the resurrection of all has come, his body will be given a size it did not have when he appeared to his disciples in the form in which they knew him, so that it could be made equal to the tallest. But if we say that everyone else's larger bodies must be reduced to the measure of the Lord's body, a great deal will perish from the bodies of many, though he himself promised that not even a hair would perish. It remains, then, that each person receives his own measure: either the one he had in his youth, even if he died an old man, or the one he would have had, if he died before reaching it. As for what the apostle said about "the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ," we should understand it in one of two ways. Either it was said with reference to something else—namely, that the measure of Christ's age is completed for that Head when the perfection of all the members among the Christian peoples is added to it. Or, if it was said of the resurrection of bodies, we should take it to mean that the bodies of the dead will rise neither below nor beyond the form of youth, but in the age and strength that we know Christ reached here. (For even the most learned men of this world have defined youth as lasting to about thirty years; when it has run its proper span, a person begins from then on to decline toward the losses of the heavier age of old age.) And that is why it was not said "to the measure of the body" or "to the measure of stature," but "to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ."

HOW WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE CONFORMING OF THE SAINTS TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON OF GOD

Being conformed to the Son's image refers to the inner self or to immortality, not to bodily size.

22.16 That other text, too, where he says that the predestined are "conformed to the image of the Son of God," can be understood with reference to the inner self. This is why he says to us in another place, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind." So where we are reformed so as not to be conformed to this world, there we are conformed to the Son of God. It can also be taken to mean that, just as he became conformed to us in mortality, so we become conformed to him in immortality; and this certainly does concern the resurrection of bodies. But if in these words, too, we are being told in what form bodies will rise, then, like that "measure," this "conformity" is to be understood not of size but of age. So all will rise as large in body as they either were, or would have been, at the age of youth. And yet it will do no harm even if the body has the form of an infant or an old man, since there no weakness will remain, either of mind or of the body itself.[38] So even if someone maintains that each person will rise in the bodily size in which he died, there is no need to fight him with laborious contradiction.

WHETHER WOMEN'S BODIES WILL BE RAISED AND REMAIN IN THEIR OWN SEX

Women will rise as women; sex is nature, not a defect, though there will be no lust or marriage.

22.17 Some, because of the words "until we all come to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ," and "conformed to the image of the Son of God," believe that women will not rise in the female sex; they say that all will rise male,

38 Romans 12:2.

since God made only the man from clay, and the woman from the man. But those seem to me to be wiser who do not doubt that both sexes will rise. For there will be no lust there, which is the cause of shame. Before they sinned, "they were naked, and the man and the woman were not ashamed." So defects will be removed from those bodies, but their nature will be preserved.[39] Now the female sex is not a defect but nature. It will then indeed be free from intercourse and childbirth; yet the female organs will remain, suited not to their old use but to a new beauty. This beauty will not arouse the desire of the one who looks—there will be no such desire—but will move him to praise the wisdom and kindness of God, who both made what was not and freed from corruption what he made. For at the beginning of the human race a woman was made from a rib taken from the side of the man as he slept; and it was fitting that by such a deed Christ and the Church should already then be foretold. That sleep of the man was the death of Christ, whose side, as he hung lifeless on the cross, was pierced with a spear, and from it flowed blood and water; and these, we know, are the sacraments by which the Church is built up. For Scripture used this very word: we do not read "he formed" or "he fashioned," but "He built her into a woman." That is why the apostle too speaks of the building up of the body of Christ, which is the Church. So the woman is God's creature just as the man is. But by her being made from the man, unity is commended; and by her being made in that way, Christ and the Church, as has been said, were prefigured. He, then, who established both sexes will re-establish both.[40] Finally, Jesus himself was asked by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, whose wife the woman would be whom each of seven brothers had had in turn, as each sought to raise up offspring for his dead brother, as the law had commanded. He said, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Here there was an opening for him to say, "For the woman you are asking me about will herself

39 Genesis 2:25.
40 Genesis 2:22.

be a man, not a woman." But he did not say this. Instead he said, "For in the resurrection they will neither be given in marriage nor take wives, but they are like the angels of God in heaven"—equal to the angels, that is, in immortality and happiness, not in flesh, just as they are not equal in resurrection either, which the angels did not need, since they could not die. So the Lord denied that there would be marriages in the resurrection, not that there would be women. And he denied it in a context where such a question was being discussed that he could have settled it more quickly and easily by denying the female sex, if he had foreknown that it would not exist there. Indeed, he even affirmed that it would exist, by saying, "They will not be given in marriage," which refers to women, "nor take wives," which refers to men.[41] So there will be those who here are given in marriage, and those who here take wives; but there they will not do so.

THE PERFECT MAN, THAT IS, CHRIST, AND HIS BODY, THAT IS, THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS FULLNESS

The 'perfect man' is Christ with the whole Church as his body, not a rule for individual bodies.

22.18 Accordingly, as for the apostle's saying that we shall all come to the perfect man, we must consider the whole context of the passage, which runs as follows: "He who descended," he says, "is the same one who also ascended above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human trickery, by cunning that contrives error; but that, doing the truth in love, we may grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ. From him the whole body,

41 Matthew 22:29–30.

joined and knit together by every contact that supplies it, according to the working in the measure of each part, brings about the body's growth, building itself up in love."[42] See who the perfect man is: the head and the body. The body consists of all the members, which will be completed in their own time, but which are added to that same body every day, while the Church is being built up. To the Church it is said, "Now you are the body of Christ and its members"; and elsewhere, "For the sake of his body," he says, "which is the Church"; and again elsewhere, "We, though many, are one bread, one body."[43] It is of the building up of this body that it is said here too: "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." Then comes the passage we are now dealing with: "until we all come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ," and so on—until he showed in what body that measure was to be understood, saying, "that we may grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and knit together by every contact that supplies it, according to the working in the measure of each part." So just as there is a measure of each part, so the whole body, which consists of all its parts, surely has a measure of fullness; and of this it is said, "to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ." He also mentioned this fullness in the place where he says of Christ, "And he gave him as head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who is filled all in all." But even if this were to be referred to the form in which each person will exist at the resurrection, what would prevent us from understanding the woman as included when "man" is named, taking "man" to stand for "human being"? So in the saying "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord," women who fear the Lord are surely included too.[44]

42 Ephesians 4:10–16.
43 1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 10:17.
44 Ephesians 1:22–23; Psalm 111:1 (112:1 in most English Bibles).

THAT ALL BODILY DEFECTS THAT MAR HUMAN BEAUTY IN THIS LIFE WILL NOT BE PRESENT IN THE RESURRECTION, WHERE, THE NATURAL SUBSTANCE REMAINING, QUALITY AND QUANTITY WILL COME TOGETHER INTO ONE BEAUTY

Cut hair and nails will return to the body's substance without deformity; martyrs' scars may remain as honors.

22.19 What answer shall I give now about hair and nails? Once it is understood that nothing will perish from the body in such a way that nothing in the body will be unsightly, it is understood at the same time that whatever would have produced an unsightly excess will be added to the mass of the body as a whole, not to those places where it would spoil the shape of the limbs. Suppose a pot were made of clay, then reduced again to the same clay and made again, whole from the whole. It would not be necessary for the part of the clay that had been in the handle to return to the handle, or for the part that had formed the base to form the base again, provided only that the whole returned into the whole—that is, that all that clay returned into the whole pot, with no part of it lost. Therefore, if hair cut so many times, or nails trimmed, would return to their own places in an unsightly way, they will not return there. Yet they will not perish for anyone who rises, because, through the changeability of matter, they will be turned into the same flesh, to occupy whatever place in the body they may, with the proportion of the parts preserved. And yet the Lord's words, "Not a hair of your head will perish," could be understood much more fittingly as said not of the length but of the number of the hairs; which is why he says elsewhere, "The hairs of your head are numbered." Nor do I say this because I think that anything naturally present in any body will perish. I mean rather that what had been born deformed—for no other reason, surely, than that this too might show how much this mortal condition is one of punishment—will return in such a way that the integrity of its substance is preserved while

the deformity perishes.[45] For a human craftsman can melt down a statue that for some reason he had made ugly, and make it most beautiful, so that nothing of its substance but only the ugliness perishes. And if something in that first figure protruded unbecomingly and was out of proportion with the other parts, he need not cut it off and separate it from the whole he had made it from; he can spread and mix it through the whole in such a way as neither to create ugliness nor reduce the quantity. If so, what are we to think of the almighty Craftsman? Will he not be able to take away and destroy every deformity of human bodies—not only the common ones but also the rare and monstrous ones, which suit this wretched life but are utterly foreign to the future happiness of the saints? Will he not be able to remove them in such a way that whatever excrescences of bodily substance they produce, natural perhaps but unbecoming, are taken away without any diminution of that substance?

And so the thin and the fat need not fear that there they will be what they would not have wished to be even here, if they could have helped it. For all beauty of body is a proportion of parts together with a certain pleasing color. Where there is no proportion of parts, something offends either because it is misshapen, or because it is too small, or because it is too large. Accordingly, there will be no deformity caused by lack of proportion among the parts. What is misshapen will be corrected; what is less than fitting will be supplied from the source the Creator knows; and what is more than fitting will be removed, with the integrity of the matter preserved. And how great will the pleasing color be, where "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father"! We must believe that this brightness in Christ's body, when he rose, was hidden from the disciples' eyes rather than absent.[46] For weak human sight could not have borne it, at a time when he had to be looked upon by his own in such a way that he could be recognized. This is also why he showed the scars of his wounds to those who touched

45 Matthew 10:30.
46 Matthew 13:43.

him, and why he even took food and drink—not because he needed nourishment, but by the power by which he could do this as well. Now when something that is present is not seen by people who see other things equally present—as we say that this brightness was present but unseen by those who saw other things—the Greek term for it is ἀορασία (*aorasia*) [failure to see]. Our translators, unable to express it in Latin, rendered it "blindness" in the book of Genesis. For this is what the men of Sodom suffered when they were looking for the righteous man's door and could not find it. If it had been blindness, which makes it impossible to see anything at all, they would have been looking not for the door by which to get in, but for guides to lead them away from there.[47]

Somehow, though, we are so moved by love for the blessed martyrs that we would wish to see in that kingdom, on their bodies, the scars of the wounds they endured for the name of Christ; and perhaps we shall see them. For in them this will not be a deformity but a mark of honor, and a certain beauty will shine out—in the body, yet not of the body, but of virtue. Still, it does not follow that if some limbs were cut off and taken from the martyrs, they will be without those limbs in the resurrection of the dead; for it was to them that it was said, "Not a hair of your head will perish." But if it is fitting in that new age that the marks of their glorious wounds should be seen in that immortal flesh, then where limbs were struck or cut in order to be severed, there scars will appear—but with those same limbs restored, not lost. So although none of the defects that befell the body will exist then, the marks of virtue are not to be counted or called defects.

47 Genesis 19:11, where the men of Sodom, trying to break into Lot's house, are struck so that they cannot find the door.

THAT IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD THE SUBSTANCE OF BODIES, HOWEVER SCATTERED, WILL BE FULLY CALLED BACK FROM WHEREVER IT IS

God can recall every particle; flesh eaten by the starving returns to its first owner.

22.20 Far be it from us to think that the Creator's omnipotence, in raising bodies and restoring them to life, cannot call back everything that beasts or fire have consumed, or that has crumbled into dust or ashes, dissolved into liquid, or evaporated into the air. Far be it from us to think that any recess or hidden place of nature can so hold something withdrawn from our senses that it escapes the knowledge or evades the power of the Creator of all things. Cicero, so great an authority among them, wanting to define God as best he could, says: "He is a kind of mind, free and unbound, separate from all mortal compound, perceiving and moving all things, and himself endowed with eternal motion." He found this in the teachings of great philosophers. So, to speak on their own terms: how can anything either be hidden from one who perceives all things, or escape beyond recall from one who moves all things?[48]

From this we can now also solve the question that seems harder than the rest: when the flesh of a dead man becomes the flesh of another, living man, to which of the two will it be restored at the resurrection? Suppose someone, worn out and driven by hunger, eats human corpses. Ancient history attests that this evil has happened more than once, and the unhappy experiences of our own times have taught us the same. Will anyone argue, with sound reasoning, that it was all digested and passed out through the lower passages, and none of it was changed and converted into his flesh? His very emaciation, which once existed and now does not, shows plainly enough what losses that food made good. I have already set out, a little earlier, some points that ought to help untie this knot as well.

48 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.66.

For whatever flesh hunger has wasted away has certainly been exhaled into the air, and from there, as we said, almighty God can call back what has escaped. That flesh, then, will be restored to the man in whom it first began to be human flesh. For it must be regarded as borrowed, so to speak, by the other man; like a debt, it must be returned to the one from whom it was taken. And his own flesh, which hunger had drained away, will be restored to him by the one who can call back even what has been exhaled. Indeed, even if it had perished in every way, and none of its matter remained in any of nature's hiding places, the Almighty would restore it from wherever he wished. But in view of the saying of the Truth, "Not a hair of your head will perish," it is absurd to suppose that, when not even a hair of a person's head can perish, so much flesh devoured and consumed by hunger could have perished.[49]

When all this has been considered and discussed to the best of our small ability, the conclusion is this: in the resurrection of the flesh, bodies will forever have the size that the principle of youth, whether still to be completed or already complete, had implanted in each body, with a fitting beauty preserved in the proportions of all the limbs as well. To preserve this beauty, if something is taken away from an unseemly largeness located in some one part, it will be spread over the whole, so that it is not lost and the harmony of the parts is kept everywhere. It is not absurd, then, to believe that something may even be added from it to the body's stature, since it is distributed to all the parts so that they keep their beauty, whereas if it were all in one part, out of proportion, it would certainly be unseemly. Or if it is maintained that each person will rise with the bodily stature he had when he died, we need not resist stubbornly—provided only that there is no deformity, no weakness, no sluggishness, no decay, nor anything else unbecoming to that kingdom in which the children of the resurrection and of the promise will be equal to the angels of God: if not in body, not in age, then certainly in happiness.

49 "The Truth" is Christ (John 14:6).

THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRITUAL BODY, INTO WHICH THE FLESH OF THE SAINTS WILL BE CHANGED

Risen flesh will be spiritual, wholly subject to spirit, yet still flesh.

22.21 Whatever has perished, then, from living bodies, or from corpses after death, will be restored. Together with what has remained in the tombs it will rise again, changed from the oldness of the natural body into the newness of the spiritual body, clothed in incorruption and immortality. And even if, through some grievous accident or the savagery of enemies, the whole body is ground utterly to dust, scattered to the winds or the waters, and left, as far as is possible, to exist nowhere at all, it can in no way be withdrawn from the omnipotence of the Creator; not a hair of its head will perish. The flesh, then, will be spiritual and subject to the spirit—yet still flesh, not spirit; just as the spirit itself was carnal and subject to the flesh—yet still spirit, not flesh. Of this we have experience in the deformity of our punishment. For those to whom the apostle says, "I could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal ones," were carnal not according to the flesh but certainly according to the spirit. And a person is called spiritual in this life in such a way that he is still carnal in body and sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind. But he will be spiritual in body as well when this same flesh has risen in such a way that what is written comes to pass: "It is sown a natural body; it will rise a spiritual body." But what the grace of the spiritual body is, and how great, has not yet come within our experience, and so I fear that anything said about it would be rash.[50] Yet the joy of our hope must not be passed over in silence, for the sake of God's praise; and from the inmost marrow of burning holy love it was said, "Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house." So let us, with his help, infer as best we can, from the gifts he lavishes on good and bad alike in this most wretched

50 1 Corinthians 3:1; the second quotation is 1 Corinthians 15:44, and the "other law" alludes to Romans 7:23.

life, how great that thing is which, having not yet experienced it, we certainly cannot describe worthily. I pass over the time when he made man upright. I pass over that happy life of the two spouses in the fruitfulness of paradise, since it was so brief that it did not even reach the awareness of their offspring. But in this life that we know, in which we still are, whose temptations—or rather, which is itself one whole temptation—we never cease to endure as long as we are in it, however far we advance: who will be able to set out the signs of God's goodness toward the human race?[51]

THE MISERIES AND EVILS TO WHICH THE HUMAN RACE IS SUBJECT BECAUSE OF THE FIRST TRANSGRESSION, AND FROM WHICH NO ONE IS FREED EXCEPT THROUGH THE GRACE OF CHRIST

The ignorance, vices and crimes of human life show that the whole race lies under condemnation.

22.22 As for our first origin, that the whole progeny of mortals was condemned, this very life—if it should be called life—filled with so many and such great evils, bears witness. For what else is shown by that dreadful depth of ignorance from which all error arises, which takes all the children of Adam into its dark embrace, so that no one can be freed from it without toil, pain and fear? What else is shown by the very love of so many vain and harmful things, and the gnawing cares that come from it—disturbances, griefs, fears, mad joys, quarrels, lawsuits, wars, plots, fits of anger, enmities, deceit, flattery, fraud, theft, plunder, treachery, pride, ambition, envy, murders, parricides, cruelty, savagery, wickedness, debauchery, wantonness, shamelessness, unchastity, fornications, adulteries, incests, and so many violations and impurities against nature by both sexes, which it is shameful even to mention, sacrileges, heresies, blasphemies, perjuries, oppression of the innocent, slanders, swindles, betrayals of trust, false testimony, unjust judgments,

51 Psalm 25:8 (26:8 in most English Bibles).

acts of violence, banditry, and whatever other such evils do not come to mind and yet never depart from this human life? These, it is true, belong to evil people; yet they come from that root of error and perverted love with which every child of Adam is born. For who does not know with how great an ignorance of the truth, already plain in infants, and with how great an abundance of vain craving, which begins to show itself in children, a human being comes into this life? So much so that, if he were left to live as he pleased and do whatever he pleased, he would arrive at all, or many, of the crimes and outrages I have mentioned, and those I could not mention.

But divine governance does not altogether abandon the condemned, and God does not in his anger hold back his compassion; and so prohibition and instruction keep watch, in the very faculties of the human race, against these darknesses with which we are born, and are set against these impulses—though they too are full of toil and pain. For what is the purpose of the many kinds of fear used to restrain the follies of little children? What is the point of tutors and teachers, of canes, straps and rods, of that discipline by which, as holy Scripture says, the sides of a beloved son must be beaten, so that he does not grow up untamed and, once hardened, can scarcely be tamed, or perhaps cannot be tamed at all? What is achieved by all these punishments, except that ignorance is overcome and depraved craving reined in—the evils with which we come into this world?[52] Why is it that we remember with effort and forget without effort; learn with effort and remain ignorant without effort; are active with effort and idle without effort? Does it not appear from this toward what our flawed nature is inclined and prone, as if by its own weight, and how much help it needs to be freed from this? Sloth, sluggishness, laziness and negligence are surely vices by which toil is avoided, since toil itself, even useful toil, is a punishment.

52 The beating of a son's sides refers to Sirach 30:12.

THE CALAMITIES OF HUMAN LIFE

Accidents, diseases, demons, dreams and disasters harass everyone; only Christ's grace frees us.

But apart from the punishments of childhood, without which children cannot learn what their elders want—and their elders scarcely want anything useful—who can set out in any words, who can grasp in any thought, how many and how great are the punishments by which the human race is harassed? These belong not to the malice and wickedness of the unjust but to our common condition and misery. How great is the fear, how great the calamity, that comes from bereavement and mourning, from losses and legal condemnations, from the deceptions and lies of others, from false suspicions, from all the violent crimes and wickedness of others! For from these often come plunder and captivity, chains and prisons, exile and torture, the cutting off of limbs and the loss of the senses, the overpowering of the body to satisfy the obscene lust of the one who overpowers it, and many other horrors. What more? There is the dread of countless accidents that threaten the body from outside: heat and cold, storms, rains, floods, lightning and thunder, hail and thunderbolts, earthquakes and chasms in the earth, being crushed by collapsing buildings; the stumbling, the panic, or even the viciousness of beasts of burden; so many poisons in plants, waters, airs and animals; the bites of wild beasts, some merely painful, some deadly; the madness that comes from a rabid dog, so that even an animal gentle and friendly to its master is sometimes feared more intensely and more bitterly than lions and dragons, and makes the person it happens to infect so mad with its deadly contagion that he is dreaded by his parents, wife and children worse than any beast! What evils sailors suffer! What evils those who travel by land! Who walks anywhere without being exposed to unforeseen accidents? A man returning home from the forum, his feet perfectly sound, fell, broke his foot, and from that injury ended this life. What seems safer than sitting?

Eli the priest fell from the chair on which he was sitting, and died. Farmers—indeed all people—how many and how great are the accidents they fear for the crops of their fields, from sky and earth or from harmful creatures! Yet once the grain is finally harvested and stored, they usually feel safe about it. But some people, as we know, have had an excellent harvest of grain swept out of their granaries and carried off by a sudden flood of a river, while they themselves fled. Who trusts in his own innocence against the thousand forms of assault by demons? For, so that no one should trust in it, they sometimes torment even baptized infants—and surely nothing is more innocent than they—in such a way that in them especially, by God's permission, the lamentable calamity of this life and the desirable happiness of the other are displayed.[53] Then from the body itself arise so many evils of disease that not even the books of physicians contain them all. In many of them, indeed almost all, even the aids and medicines are torments, so that people are rescued from deadly punishments by a help that is itself a punishment. Has not raging heat driven thirsty people to drink human urine, even their own? Has not hunger driven people to the point where they could not abstain from human flesh, and devoured not people they found dead but people they had killed for the purpose—and not just strangers, but mothers devouring their own children, with an unbelievable cruelty produced by ravenous hunger? Finally, sleep itself, which has properly received the name of rest: who could describe in words how restless it often is with the visions of dreams, and with what great terrors—though of false things—it disturbs the wretched soul and the senses, presenting and in a way shaping those things so vividly that we cannot distinguish them from real ones? By such false visions even waking people are tossed about more wretchedly in certain diseases and under the effect of certain poisons. And sometimes, with every variety of deceit, malicious demons deceive even healthy people with such visions, so that, even if

53 Eli, priest and judge of Israel, fell from his seat and died on hearing of the ark's capture (1 Samuel 4:18).

they cannot draw them over to their side by these means, they still play tricks on their senses, out of sheer desire to persuade them of falsehood in any way at all.

From this life, so wretched that it is a kind of hell, nothing frees us but the grace of Christ the Savior, our God and Lord (for this is what the name Jesus itself means: it is translated "Savior"). Above all, it frees us so that after this life we are not taken into one more wretched and everlasting, which is not life but death. For in this life, although there are great comforts of healing through holy things and holy people, even these benefits are not always granted to those who ask for them, precisely so that religion will not be sought for their sake; rather, it is to be sought for the sake of the other life, where there will be no evils at all. And to this end grace helps all the better people in these evils: that they may bear them with a heart as much stronger as it is more faithful. The learned of this world say that philosophy, too, helps in this matter—philosophy which the gods, says Cicero, have given in its true form to a few; and, he says, no greater gift has been given to human beings by them, nor could any be given. So true is it that even those we are arguing against have been compelled, one way or another, to acknowledge divine grace in the possession not of just any philosophy, but of true philosophy. Further, if the unique help of true philosophy against the miseries of this life has been given by divine gift to only a few, this too shows clearly enough that the human race has been condemned to pay the penalty of miseries. And just as, by their own admission, there is no greater divine gift than this, so we must believe it is given by no god except the one than whom even those who worship many gods say none is greater.

WHAT, BESIDES THE EVILS COMMON TO THE GOOD AND THE WICKED, BELONGS ESPECIALLY TO THE STRUGGLE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

The righteous also fight a constant inner war against vice, needing grace and daily forgiveness.

22.23 Besides these evils of this life, common to good and bad alike, the righteous also have in it certain struggles of their own, in which they fight against vices and are caught up in the temptations and dangers of such battles. For sometimes more fiercely, sometimes more slackly, but without ever ceasing, the flesh desires against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that we do not do what we want, which is to destroy all evil desire. Instead, as far as we can with divine help, we subdue it by not consenting to it, keeping watch with unbroken vigilance: so that no plausible opinion misleads us, no cunning speech deceives us, no darkness of some error spreads over us; so that we do not believe good to be evil or evil to be good; so that fear does not hold us back from what ought to be done, nor desire hurl us headlong into what ought not to be done; so that the sun does not go down on our anger; so that enmities do not provoke us to repay evil for evil; so that shameful or immoderate sorrow does not swallow us up; so that an ungrateful mind does not make us sluggish in doing kindnesses; so that a good conscience is not worn down by slanderous rumors; so that our own rash suspicion of another does not deceive us, nor another's false suspicion of us break us; so that sin does not reign in our mortal body, making us obey its desires; so that our members are not offered to sin as weapons of wickedness; so that the eye does not follow desire; so that the craving for revenge does not win; so that neither sight nor thought lingers on what gives wrongful delight; so that no wicked or indecent word is listened to with pleasure; so that what is not allowed is not done, however much it is wanted; so that in this war, so full of struggle and danger, we do not hope to win the victory by our own strength, or credit the victory, once won, to our own strength, but to the grace of him

of whom the apostle says:[54] "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And in another place he says: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."[55] Yet let us realize that, however much courage we show in fighting to resist our vices, or even in overcoming and subduing them, as long as we are in this body we cannot be without reason to say to God, "Forgive us our debts." But in that kingdom, where we shall live forever with immortal bodies, we shall have neither battles nor debts—which would have existed nowhere and never, if our nature had remained as it was created, upright. And so this conflict of ours too, in which we are in peril and from which we long to be freed by a final victory, belongs to the evils of this life, which we prove to be condemned by the testimony of so many and such great evils.[56]

THE GOOD THINGS WITH WHICH THE CREATOR HAS FILLED EVEN THIS LIFE, SUBJECT THOUGH IT IS TO CONDEMNATION

Even fallen humanity keeps God's gifts: fertility and the formation of bodies.

22.24 Now we must consider this very misery of the human race, in which the justice of the one who punishes is praised, and ask with what kinds of goods, and how many, it has been filled by the goodness of the same God who governs all that he created. First, the blessing he had pronounced before sin, when he said, "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth," he did not choose to withhold even after sin, and the fertility he had granted remained in the condemned stock. Nor could the fault of sin, which also thrust the necessity of death upon us, take away that wonderful power of seeds—or rather the still more wonderful power by which the seeds themselves are produced—implanted

54 Augustine weaves in Galatians 5:17, Ephesians 4:26 and Romans 6:12–13.
55 1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:37.
56 Matthew 6:12.

in human bodies and in a sense woven into them. Instead, both run together in this river, so to speak, this torrent of the human race: the evil drawn from the parent, and the good bestowed by the Creator. In the original evil there are two things, sin and punishment; in the original good there are two others, propagation and formation.[57] But as far as our present purpose is concerned, we have already said enough about the evils. One of them came from our own audacity, namely sin; the other came from God's judgment, namely punishment. Now I have undertaken to speak of God's goods, which he has conferred, and still confers to this day, even on a nature that is vitiated and condemned. For in condemning it he did not take away all that he had given, or it would not exist at all. Nor did he remove it from his own power, even when he subjected it to the devil as a punishment, since he does not withdraw even the devil himself from his rule. Indeed, even the devil's nature subsists only because it is made by him who supremely is, and who makes to be whatever in any way is.

We said that two goods flow, as from a kind of fountain of his goodness, even into a nature vitiated by sin and condemned by punishment. Of these, propagation he bestowed by his blessing in the first works of the world, the works from which he rested on the seventh day. Formation, however, belongs to that work of his by which he is working even now. For if he were to withdraw his effective power from things, they could neither move forward and run through their seasons in their measured motions, nor would they remain to any degree at all in what they were created to be. So God created man in such a way as to add to him a certain fertility, by which he would propagate other human beings, and he generated in them as well the very possibility of propagating, though not the necessity. From some people, as he chose, God did take it away, and they were barren; yet he did not take away from the human race what had once been given to the first couple by a general blessing. So although this propagation was not taken away by sin, it is still not such as it would have

57 Genesis 1:28.

been if no one had sinned. For ever since man, who had been placed in honor, was compared to the beasts after he transgressed, he begets as they do. Yet a kind of spark of reason, so to speak, in which he was made in the image of God, has not been wholly extinguished in him. But if formation were not applied to this propagation, propagation itself would not proceed into the forms and measures of its kind. For if human beings had not lain together, and God still wished to fill the earth with people, then just as he created one man without the union of male and female, so he could have created all. But those who lie together cannot become begetters unless he creates.[58] The apostle speaks of the spiritual instruction by which a person is formed for godliness and righteousness: "Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth." In the same way it can be said here: "Neither he who lies with a woman nor he who sows the seed is anything, but God who forms; nor is the mother who carries what is conceived and nurses what is born anything, but God who gives the growth." For by that very working with which he works even now, he causes seeds to unfold their numbers and to develop out of certain hidden and invisible wrappings into the visible forms of the beauty we behold. It is he who, joining and binding together in wonderful ways an incorporeal and a corporeal nature, the one set over the other and the other subject to it, makes a living being.[59] This work of his is so great and so wonderful that, for anyone who considers it well, it strikes the mind with amazement and gives birth to praise of the Creator—not only in a human being, a rational animal and therefore more excellent and outstanding than all the living things of earth, but in any tiny little fly.

58 An echo of Psalm 48:13 (49:12 in most English Bibles): "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he was compared to the senseless beasts."
59 1 Corinthians 3:7.

THE GIFTS OF THE HUMAN MIND

The human mind, capable of virtue, has invented countless arts, sciences and crafts.

It is he, then, who gave the human soul a mind. In an infant, reason and understanding lie in a sense asleep in it, as if they did not exist; but they are, of course, to be awakened and drawn out as age advances, so that the mind may become capable of knowledge and learning, and fit for perceiving truth and loving the good. By this capacity it may drink in wisdom and be endowed with the virtues, so that it may fight prudently, courageously, temperately, and justly against errors and the other vices born in us, and may overcome them by desiring nothing but that supreme and unchangeable good. And even if it does not do this, who can adequately express or even conceive how great a good this very capacity for such goods is, implanted by God in a rational nature, and how wonderful a work of the Almighty? Apart from the arts of living well and of attaining immortal happiness, which are called virtues and are given solely by the grace of God that is in Christ to the children of the promise and of the kingdom, has not human ingenuity discovered and practiced so many and such great arts, some necessary and some for pleasure? So excellent is this power of mind and reason that even in the things it seeks that are superfluous, or rather dangerous and destructive, it bears witness to how great a good it has in its nature, the source from which it was able to discover these arts, or learn them, or practice them. Think of the marvelous, astonishing works that human industry has achieved in clothing and in building; the progress it has made in agriculture and in navigation; what it has devised and executed in making all sorts of vessels, and in its variety of statues and paintings; what it has contrived to have performed and displayed in the theaters, wonders to those who watch and incredible to those who only hear of them. Think of what means it has found, and how many, for capturing, killing, and taming

irrational animals; how many kinds of poisons, of weapons, of engines it has devised against human beings themselves, and how many medicines and remedies it has acquired for protecting and restoring mortal health; how many seasonings and stimulants of appetite it has discovered for the pleasure of the palate. Think of the multitude and variety of signs it has devised for expressing thoughts and persuading others of them, among which words and letters hold the chief place; the ornaments of eloquence and the abundance of different kinds of poetry for delighting the mind; how many musical instruments and modes of song for soothing the ears. Think of how much skill in measurement and number it has gained, with what acuteness it has grasped the courses and orders of the stars, how much knowledge of the things of this world it has filled itself with. Who could put all this into words, especially if we wished not to heap everything together in a pile but to dwell on each thing in turn? Finally, who could estimate how brilliantly the great minds of philosophers and heretics have shone even in defending errors and falsehoods? For we are now speaking of the nature of the human mind, with which this mortal life is adorned, not of faith and the way of truth, by which that immortal life is gained. The creator of so great a nature is certainly the true and supreme God, and he himself governs all that he has made, possessing supreme power and supreme justice. Surely, then, this nature would never have fallen into these miseries, nor would it be passing from them into eternal miseries—all but those alone who will be set free—had not an exceedingly great sin gone before in the first man, from whom all the rest have sprung.

Now in the body itself, though we share mortality with the beasts and it is found to be weaker than the bodies of many of them, how great is the goodness of God, how great the providence of so great a Creator that appears! Are not the seats of the senses and the other members so arranged in it, and the appearance, shape, and stature of the whole body so proportioned, that it shows it was made for the service of a rational soul? For man was not created like the animals that lack reason, which we see

bent toward the ground. Rather, the form of his body, raised upright toward heaven, reminds him to set his mind on the things that are above. Moreover, the wonderful mobility given to the tongue and the hands, suited and fitted for speaking and writing and for carrying out the works of many arts and tasks—does it not show clearly enough what kind of soul such a body was joined to serve? And yet, even setting aside the necessities of function, all its parts agree in such rhythmic proportion and answer one another in such beautiful symmetry that you could not tell whether greater account was taken of usefulness or of beauty in making it. Certainly we see nothing created in the body for the sake of usefulness that does not also have a place for beauty. This would be still more evident to us if we knew the numerical proportions by which all its parts are connected and fitted together. Human skill, with diligent effort, might perhaps trace these in the parts that stand out on the surface. But in what is covered and removed from our sight—such as the great tangle of veins, sinews, and inner organs, the secret places of the vital parts—no one can discover them. Physicians called anatomists have, with a diligence that is in some measure cruel, cut up the bodies of the dead, and even of the dying under the hands of the one cutting and probing. Quite inhumanly, in human flesh, they have searched out everything hidden, in order to learn what should be treated, and how, and in what places. Yet those numbers I am speaking of, on which the fitting together of the whole body, outside and inside, depends, as of some musical instrument—what the Greeks call ἁρμονία [harmony]—why should I say that no one has been able to find them, when no one has dared to look for them? If they could have been known, then even in the inner organs, which display no beauty, the beauty of their design would delight us so much that the judgment of the mind, which uses the eyes, would prefer it to every visible form that pleases the eyes. There are indeed some things placed in the body in such a way that they have beauty only, and no use: the male chest has nipples, for instance, and the face a beard. That the beard serves not for protection but as a male ornament

is shown by the bare faces of women, who, being weaker, would certainly be more fittingly protected. If, then, there is no member—at least among those that are visible, about which no one is in doubt—so adapted to some function that it is not also beautiful, while there are some that have beauty alone and no use, I think it is easily understood that in the making of the body dignity was given preference over necessity. For necessity will pass away, and a time will come when we shall enjoy one another's beauty alone, without any lust. This above all must redound to the praise of the Creator, to whom it is said in the psalm: "You have put on praise and beauty."[60]

THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD

The beauty of creation, sea, sky and food are mere consolations for the condemned; what will the reward be?

Then there is all the rest of the beauty and usefulness of creation, which God's generosity has granted to man to behold and to use, even though he has been cast out and condemned to these toils and miseries. What words could ever reach the end of it? There is the manifold and varied beauty of sky and earth and sea; the great abundance and wonderful appearance of light itself; the sun and moon and stars; the shade of the woods; the colors and scents of flowers; the variety and multitude of birds, chattering and brightly painted; the many forms of so many and such great living creatures, of which those smallest in bulk excite the most wonder (for we are more amazed at the works of tiny ants and bees than at the immense bodies of whales). There is the vast spectacle of the sea itself, when it clothes itself in different colors as if in garments, and is sometimes green, in many shades, sometimes purple, sometimes blue. And how delightful it is to watch even when it is stormy—and the pleasure is all the greater because it soothes the onlooker without tossing and shaking the sailor! What of the abundance of food everywhere against hunger? What of the variety of flavors against boredom,

60 Psalm 103:1 (104:1 in most English Bibles).

spread abroad by the riches of nature, not sought out by the art and labor of cooks? What of the aids for preserving or recovering health found in so many things! How welcome the alternation of day and night! How gentle the mildness of the breezes! What a wealth of material for making clothing in plants and in flocks! Who could mention everything? Even these few, which I have packed together into a kind of heap—if I wished to untie them, like bundled packets, and examine them, how long I would have to linger over each one, since each contains so very many things! And all these are the consolations of the wretched and condemned, not the rewards of the blessed. What, then, will those rewards be, if these consolations are so many, of such a kind, and so great? What will he give to those whom he predestined to life, when he gave these things even to those whom he predestined to death? What goods will he have them receive in that blessed life, for whose sake he willed that his only-begotten Son should endure such evils in this wretched life, even to the point of death? Hence the apostle, speaking of those predestined to that kingdom, says: "He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us all things with him?" When this promise is fulfilled, what shall we be! What kind of beings shall we be! What goods shall we receive in that kingdom, since in Christ's dying for us we have already received such a pledge![61] What will the human spirit be like, when it has no vice at all—none to lie beneath, none to yield to, none even to fight against, however praiseworthily—perfected in a virtue wholly at peace! How great, how beautiful, how certain will be the knowledge of all things there, without any error or toil, where the wisdom of God will be drunk from its very source, with supreme happiness and without any difficulty! What will the body be like, which, wholly subject to the spirit and given life by it to the full, will need no nourishment! For it will not be an animal body but a spiritual one, having indeed the substance of flesh, but without any fleshly corruption.

61 Romans 8:32.

THE STUBBORNNESS OF SOME WHO ATTACK THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH, WHICH, AS WAS FORETOLD, THE WHOLE WORLD BELIEVES

The world has believed the resurrection as foretold; God cannot lie, and incorruptible flesh is no evil.

22.25 As for the goods of the soul which it will enjoy in perfect happiness after this life, the famous philosophers do not disagree with us. It is the resurrection of the flesh that they dispute, and they deny it as much as they can. But the many who believe —the learned and the unlearned, the wise of this world and the foolish—have left very few who deny it, and have turned with faithful hearts to Christ, who in his own resurrection displayed the very thing that seems absurd to these philosophers. For the world has believed what God foretold, and he also foretold that the world would believe it; nor was he compelled by Peter's sorceries to announce it so long beforehand, with praise for those who would believe. For he is the God before whom—as I have said several times already, and it does not weary me to remind you—the very deities tremble with dread, as Porphyry admits and is eager to prove from the oracles of his own gods; and Porphyry praised him so highly as to call him both God the Father and King.[62] Far be it from us, then, to understand what he foretold in the way these people want, who have not believed, along with the world, what he foretold the world would believe. For why not understand it rather as the world believed it, the world foretold so long beforehand as going to believe, and not as a very few chatter, who refused to believe, along with the world, what the world was foretold to believe? They say these things must be believed in some other sense, so that they will not insult the God to whom they bear such great testimony by saying that what is written is empty. But if they say these things must be understood otherwise than as the world believed them,

62 The "sorceries" refer to a pagan oracle, discussed in Book 18, claiming that Peter used magic to make the worship of Christ last 365 years.

they do him just as great an insult, or even a graver one. For it was the world's believing that he himself praised, he himself promised, he himself brought about. Is it that he cannot make the flesh rise again and live forever? Or is it that we must not believe he will do it because it is evil and unworthy of God? But we have already said a great deal about his omnipotence, by which he does so many and such great incredible things. If they want to find something the Almighty cannot do, they certainly have it; I will tell them: he cannot lie. Let us, then, believe what he can do by not believing what he cannot do. So let them, not believing that he can lie, believe that he will do what he promised he would do. And let them believe it as the world has believed it—the world which he foretold would believe, which he praised as going to believe, which he promised would believe, which he has now shown to have believed. But how do they show that this is evil? There will be no corruption there, and corruption is the evil of the body. We have already discussed the order of the elements; we have said enough about other human conjectures. How great the ease of movement will be in an incorruptible body, judging from the balance of good health in our present state—which in no way bears comparison with that immortality—we have shown sufficiently, I think, in the thirteenth book. Those who have not read the earlier parts of this work, or who wish to recall what they have read, should read them.

HOW PORPHYRY'S CLAIM THAT HAPPY SOULS MUST FLEE EVERY BODY IS OVERTHROWN BY THE VIEW OF PLATO HIMSELF, WHO SAYS THE SUPREME GOD PROMISED THE GODS THAT THEY WOULD NEVER BE STRIPPED OF THEIR BODIES

Plato's maker-god promised the gods immortality in their bodies, refuting Porphyry's flight from all bodies.

22.26 "But Porphyry says," they object, "that for the soul to be happy it must flee every kind of body." So it is no use our saying that the body will be incorruptible, if the soul will not be happy

unless it escapes every body. I have already discussed this as much as was needed in the book I mentioned; here I will recall just one point from that discussion. Let Plato, the teacher of all these men, correct his books and say that their gods, in order to be happy, will flee their bodies—that is, will die—the very gods whom he said were enclosed in heavenly bodies. Yet God, by whom they were made, promised them immortality so that they could be secure: that is, an everlasting abiding in those same bodies, not because their nature has this capacity but because his own design prevails. Here he also overturns their claim that the resurrection of the flesh should not be believed because it is impossible. For according to that same philosopher, God who was not made, when he promised immortality to the gods he had made, said quite openly that he would do what is impossible. This is how Plato reports him as speaking: "Since you have come into being," he says, "you cannot be immortal and indissoluble. Yet you will not be dissolved, nor will any fate of death destroy you, nor will it be stronger than my design, which is a greater bond for your perpetual existence than those by which you are bound together." Unless those who hear this are not merely senseless but deaf as well, they surely do not doubt that, according to Plato, the God who made those gods promised them something impossible. For when he says, "You cannot be immortal, but by my will you will be immortal," what else is he saying but "By my doing you will be what cannot be"?[63] He, then, who according to Plato promised that he would do what is impossible will raise the flesh incorruptible, immortal and spiritual. Why do they still cry out that what God has promised is impossible—what the world has believed on God's promise, the world which was itself promised as going to believe—when we cry out that God, who even according to Plato does impossible things, will do it? It is not, therefore, every body that souls must flee in order to be happy; rather, they must receive an incorruptible body. And in what incorruptible body will they rejoice more fittingly than in the one in which, when it was cor-

63 Plato, *Timaeus* 41a–b, which Augustine quotes in Cicero's Latin translation.

ruptible, they groaned? So they will not have that dreadful craving which Virgil took from Plato, where he says: "and they begin to wish to return again into bodies." They will not, I say, have the craving to return to bodies, since they will have with them the bodies to which they crave to return—and will have them in such a way that they are never without them, and never lay them down by any death, even for the briefest moment.[64]

THE CONTRARY CLAIMS OF PLATO AND PORPHYRY, IN WHICH, IF EACH HAD YIELDED TO THE OTHER, NEITHER WOULD HAVE STRAYED FROM THE TRUTH

If Plato and Porphyry had pooled their truths, they would have reached the Christian resurrection.

22.27 Plato and Porphyry each said certain things which, if they could have shared them with each other, might perhaps have made them Christians. Plato said that souls cannot exist forever without bodies. That is why he said that even the souls of the wise would, after however long a time, return to bodies. Porphyry, on the other hand, said that the thoroughly purified soul, once it has returned to the Father, will never return to the evils of this world. Suppose, then, that Plato had passed on to Porphyry what he truly saw—that even the thoroughly purified souls of the just and wise will return to human bodies—and Porphyry in turn had passed on to Plato what he truly saw—that holy souls will never return to the miseries of a corruptible body—so that each did not say only his own point, but both together, and each of them, said both. Then, I think, they would see that it follows that souls both return to bodies and receive bodies of such a kind that they can live in them happily and immortally. According to Plato, even holy souls will return to human bodies; according to Porphyry, holy souls will not return to the evils of this world. So let Porphyry say with Plato, "They will return to bodies"; let Plato say with Porphyry, "They will not return to evils"; and they will agree that souls return to bodies in which

64 Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.751.

they suffer no evils. These bodies, then, will be none other than those which God promises, who will make souls happy forever with their own eternal flesh. For, as far as I can judge, both would now readily grant us this: having admitted that the souls of the saints will return to immortal bodies, they would allow them to return to their own bodies—the bodies in which they endured the evils of this world, and in which they worshiped God piously and faithfully so as to be free of those evils.

WHAT PLATO, LABEO, OR EVEN VARRO COULD HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE TRUE FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION IF THEIR OPINIONS HAD BEEN COMBINED INTO ONE VIEW

Plato's myth, Labeo's tale and Varro's rebirth after 440 years all concede bodies can return to life.

22.28 Some of our own people, who love Plato for his splendid style and for some things he truly perceived, say that he held a view similar to ours even about the resurrection of the dead. Cicero touches on this in his books *On the Republic*, but in such a way as to assert that Plato meant to play rather than to say that it was true. For Plato brings in a man who came back to life and told certain things that agreed with Platonic teaching. Labeo, too, says that two men died on the same day and met each other at a crossroads; then they were ordered to go back to their bodies, and agreed between themselves to live as friends, and so it was until they later died. But these authors have told of a resurrection of the body like that of the people we know to have risen again and been restored to this life—though not in such a way that they would never die again.[65] Marcus Varro records something more remarkable in the books he wrote *On the Race of the Roman People*, and I thought his actual words should be quoted. "Certain horoscope-casters," he says, "have written that in the rebirth of human beings there is what the Greeks call *palingene-*

65 Plato's *Republic*, book 10, tells the myth of Er, a soldier who returned to life; Cicero imitated it in book 6 of *On the Republic*. Cornelius Labeo was a pagan writer on religion, probably of the 3rd century AD.

sia [rebirth]. They wrote that it is completed in a span of four hundred and forty years, so that the same body and the same soul, which were once joined in a human being, return again into union." This Varro, or those unknown horoscope-casters (for he did not give the names of those whose opinion he reported), said something that is false: once souls have returned to the same bodies they once wore, they will never afterward leave them. Yet it uproots and demolishes many of the arguments for that impossibility with which these people chatter against us.[66] For those who hold or held this view did not think it impossible that corpses which had dissolved into air, into dust, into ashes, into moisture, into the bodies of beasts that fed on them, or even of human beings, should return again to what they had been. So Plato and Porphyry—or rather, whoever loves them and is still alive—agree with us that even holy souls will return to bodies, as Plato says, and yet will return to no evils, as Porphyry says; and from this follows what the Christian faith proclaims: that they will receive bodies of such a kind that they can live in them happily forever, without any evil. If so, let them also take this point from Varro, that souls return to the same bodies in which they were before, and for them the whole question of the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life will be solved.

THE NATURE OF THE VISION BY WHICH THE SAINTS WILL SEE GOD IN THE WORLD TO COME

The saints will see God in a peace that surpasses understanding, now glimpsed only in a mirror.

22.29 Now let us see, as far as the Lord deigns to help us, what the saints will do in their immortal and spiritual bodies, when their flesh no longer lives in a fleshly way but spiritually. To tell the truth, I do not know what that activity—or rather that rest and leisure—will be like. For I have never seen it with the senses of the body. And if I were to say that I have seen it with the mind, that is, with the understanding, what is our understanding, how

66 This work of Varro's is lost.

great is it, compared with that excellence? For there is the peace of God, which, as the apostle says, "surpasses all understanding." Whose understanding, if not ours—or perhaps also that of the holy angels? Certainly not God's. If, then, the saints are to live in the peace of God, they will surely live in that peace which surpasses all understanding.[67] That it surpasses ours there is no doubt. But if it surpasses that of the angels too—for the one who said "all understanding" seems not to have made an exception even of them—then we must take it to have been said in this sense: that the peace of God, by which God himself is at peace, cannot be known by us, nor by any angels, in the way that God knows it. So it surpasses all understanding—except, no doubt, his own. But we too, made sharers in his peace according to our own measure, shall obtain the highest peace within ourselves, among ourselves and with him, as far as our highest goes. In this way the holy angels know it according to their measure; but human beings now know it far below that, however greatly they may excel in the progress of the mind. For we must consider how great a man it was who said: "We know in part and we prophesy in part, until what is perfect comes"; and: "Now we see through a mirror, in a riddle, but then face to face." This is how the holy angels already see, who are also called our angels. For we have been rescued from the power of darkness, have received the pledge of the Spirit, and have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ; and so we have already begun to belong to those angels with whom we shall share that holy and most sweet city of God itself, about which we have now written so many books. So the angels of God are our angels, just as the Christ of God is our Christ. They are God's because they did not forsake God; they are ours because they have begun to have us as their fellow citizens. And the Lord Jesus said: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones.[68] For I tell you, their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven." As they see, then, so we too shall see; but we do not yet see in that

67 Philippians 4:7.
68 1 Corinthians 13:9–10, 12; Matthew 18:10.

way. That is why the apostle says what I quoted a little earlier: "Now we see through a mirror, in a riddle, but then face to face." This vision, then, is kept for us as the reward of faith; and the apostle John, speaking of it, says: "When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." By the face of God, however, we must understand his manifestation, not some member like the one we have in our body and call by that name.[69]

So when I am asked what the saints will do in that spiritual body, I do not say what I already see; I say what I believe, in keeping with what I read in the psalm: "I believed, and therefore I have spoken." I say, then: They will see God in the body itself. But whether they will see him through it, as we now see through the body the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, the earth and the things on it, is no small question. For it is hard to say that the saints will then have bodies such that they cannot close and open their eyes when they wish; but it is harder still to say that anyone there who closes his eyes will not see God.[70] The prophet Elisha, though absent in body, saw his servant Gehazi accepting the gifts given him by Naaman the Syrian, whom the prophet had cleansed of the disfigurement of leprosy—something the wicked servant thought he had done in secret, unseen by his master. If so, how much more will the saints in that spiritual body see all things, not only when they close their eyes, but even from places where they are absent in body! For then will come that perfection of which the apostle speaks when he says: "We know in part and we prophesy in part; but when what is perfect comes, what is in part will be done away."[71] Then, to show by some comparison, as far as he could, how far this life falls short of the life to come—not the life of just anyone, but even of those who are endowed here with outstanding holiness—he says: "When I was a child, I understood like a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child; but when I became a man, I

69 1 John 3:2.
70 Psalm 115:10 (116:10 in most English Bibles).
71 The story is told in 2 Kings 5 (4 Kings in Augustine's Bible).

put away the things of a child. Now we see through a mirror, in a riddle, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known." In this life, then, the prophecy of wonderful men compares with that life as a small child with a young man; and yet here Elisha saw his servant accepting gifts in a place where he himself was not. When what is perfect comes, and the corruptible body no longer weighs down the soul, but an incorruptible one hinders nothing, are those saints really going to need bodily eyes to see what is to be seen—eyes that Elisha, though absent, did not need in order to see his servant? For according to the Seventy translators, the prophet's words to Gehazi are these: "Did not my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you, and you took the money?" and so on. But as the presbyter Jerome translated it from the Hebrew, he says: "Was not my heart present when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you?"[72] So the prophet said that he saw this with his heart—which, no one doubts, was wonderfully aided by God.

But how much more fully will all then abound in this gift, when God will be all in all! Yet those bodily eyes too will have their function and will be in their place, and the spirit will use them through the spiritual body. For that prophet, too, did not fail to use his eyes to see things present just because he did not need them to see someone absent—though he could have seen those present things with the spirit even if he closed his eyes, just as he saw absent things when he was not there with them. Far be it from us, then, to say that the saints in that life will not see God when their eyes are closed, since they will always see him with the spirit.[73]

72 2 Kings 5:26. The "Seventy" are the translators of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures; Jerome (c. AD 347–420) made a new Latin translation from the Hebrew.
73 1 Corinthians 15:28.

SEEING GOD WITH THE EYES OF THE BODY

Will risen eyes see God? Perhaps spiritual eyes will see him present in all bodies everywhere.

But whether they will also see him through the eyes of the body when they have them open—that is the question. For if, in the spiritual body, the eyes themselves, spiritual as they will be, can do only as much as the eyes we now have, then God will certainly not be able to be seen through them. They will therefore be of a very different power if through them that incorporeal nature is to be seen which is not contained in a place but is everywhere whole. For when we say that God is both in heaven and on earth—he himself says through the prophet, "I fill heaven and earth"—we are not going to say that he has one part in heaven and another part on earth. He is whole in heaven and whole on earth, not at alternate times but both at once, which no bodily nature can be.[74] So the power of those eyes will be far greater—not so that they see more sharply than certain serpents or eagles are said to see (for however keen their sight, these animals too can see nothing but bodies), but so that they see even incorporeal things. And perhaps this great power of sight was given for a moment, even in this mortal body, to the eyes of the holy man Job, when he says to God: "Before, I heard you with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I have despised myself and wasted away, and counted myself earth and ashes." Nothing here, however, prevents us from understanding the eye of the heart, the eyes of which the apostle says: "to have the eyes of your heart enlightened." That God is seen with these eyes, when he is seen, no Christian doubts who faithfully accepts what that God and teacher says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."[75] But whether he will also be seen there with bodily eyes—that is what we are considering in this question.

74 Jeremiah 23:24.
75 Job 42:5–6; Ephesians 1:18; Matthew 5:8.

For the text "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" can be understood without any knot of difficulty, as if it had said: "And every human being shall see the Christ of God," who was indeed seen in a body and will be seen in a body when he judges the living and the dead. That he himself is the salvation of God is shown by many other testimonies of Scripture as well; but it is declared most plainly by the words of that venerable old man Simeon, who took the infant Christ into his hands and said: "Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation." Again, in the saying of Job mentioned above, as it is found in the copies translated from the Hebrew—"And in my flesh I shall see God"—he certainly prophesied the resurrection of the flesh; yet he did not say "through my flesh."[76]

If he had said that, it could be understood of God the Christ, who will be seen through the flesh in the flesh. As it is, "In my flesh I shall see God" can also be taken as if he had said: "I shall be in my flesh when I see God." And the apostle's words "face to face" do not compel us to believe that we shall see God through this bodily face, where the bodily eyes are, since we shall see him with the spirit without interruption. For if the inner man did not also have a face, the same apostle would not say: "But we, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Nor do we understand otherwise what is sung in the psalm: "Come to him and be enlightened, and your faces will not be ashamed." For it is by faith that we come to God, and faith clearly belongs to the heart, not to the body.[77] But we do not know how far the spiritual body will be able to reach —for we are speaking of something we have not experienced. So where no authority of the divine Scriptures comes forward to meet us and to aid us, one that cannot be understood in any other way, what we read in the book of Wisdom must necessar-

76 Luke 3:6 (quoting Isaiah 40:5); Luke 2:29–30; Job 19:26.
77 2 Corinthians 3:18; Psalm 33:6 (34:5 in most English Bibles).

ily happen to us: "The thoughts of mortals are timid, and our foresight uncertain."[78]

The philosophers reason that intelligible things are seen by the gaze of the mind and sensible, that is, bodily, things by the senses of the body, in such a way that the mind can neither behold intelligible things through the body nor bodily things by itself. If this reasoning could be entirely certain for us, it would surely be certain that God cannot in any way be seen through the eyes of a body, even a spiritual one. But both true reason and prophetic authority laugh at this reasoning. For who is so turned away from the truth as to dare to say that God does not know these bodily things? Does he then have a body, through whose eyes he could learn about them? Again, does not what we said a little earlier about the prophet Elisha show clearly enough that bodily things can also be perceived by the spirit, not through the body? For when that servant accepted the gifts, it was certainly a bodily event; yet the prophet saw it not through the body but through the spirit. Since it is established, then, that bodies are seen by the spirit, what if the power of the spiritual body is so great that spirit too is seen by the body? For God is spirit. Again, each person knows his own life—the life by which he now lives in the body, and quickens these earthly limbs and makes them alive—by an inner sense, not through bodily eyes; but he sees the lives of others through the body, though lives are invisible. For how do we distinguish living bodies from those that are not living, unless we see bodies and lives together—lives which we cannot see except through the body? Lives without bodies we do not see with bodily eyes.[79]

It is therefore possible, and very credible, that we shall then see the material bodies of the new heaven and the new earth in such a way that, wherever we turn our eyes, we shall see God with the most brilliant clarity—present everywhere and governing all things, even bodily things—through the bodies we shall wear and through those we shall behold. It will not be as it is

78 Wisdom 9:14.
79 John 4:24.

now, when "the invisible things of God are seen, being understood through the things that are made," through a mirror, in a riddle and in part, and when faith, by which we believe, counts for more in us than the appearance of bodily things which we perceive through bodily eyes.[80] Consider the people among whom we live, who are alive and show the movements of life: as soon as we look at them, we do not believe that they live—we see it. We cannot see their life without bodies, yet through their bodies we perceive it in them beyond all doubt. In the same way, wherever we turn those spiritual lights of our bodies, we shall behold the incorporeal God ruling all things, even through bodies. Either, then, God will be seen through those eyes in such a way that, in their great excellence, they have something like mind, by which even an incorporeal nature can be perceived—and this is hard or impossible to demonstrate by any examples or testimonies of the divine Scriptures. Or else—and this is easier to understand—God will be so known to us and so visible that he will be seen by the spirit by each of us in each of us; seen by one in another; seen in himself; seen in the new heaven and the new earth and in every creature that will then exist; seen also through bodies in every body, wherever the eyes of the spiritual body are directed and their gaze reaches. Our thoughts, too, will lie open to one another. For then will be fulfilled what the apostle added immediately after saying, "Do not judge anything before the time": "until the Lord comes, who will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will reveal the thoughts of the heart; and then each will receive praise from God."[81]

THE ETERNAL HAPPINESS OF THE CITY OF GOD, AND THE EVERLASTING SABBATH

In heaven the saints will praise God without end, with degrees of glory but no envy.

22.30 How great that happiness will be, where there will be no evil, where no good will lie hidden, where we will be free for the

80 Romans 1:20.

praises of God, who will be all in all! For what else would be done there, where no one will stop out of idleness and no one will toil out of need, I do not know. I am reminded of this also by the holy song, where I read or hear: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they will praise you forever and ever." All the members and inner organs of the incorruptible body, which we now see assigned to the various uses of necessity, will contribute to the praises of God, since then there will be no necessity, but full, certain, secure, everlasting happiness. All those proportions of the body's harmony that I have already spoken of, which are now hidden, will be hidden no longer. They are arranged inside and out throughout the whole body, and together with the other things that will be seen there as great and wonderful, they will set rational minds on fire with delight in a beauty that speaks to reason, to the praise of so great an artist.[82] What the movements of such bodies will be there I do not dare to define rashly, since I cannot conceive it. Yet their movement and their rest, like their very form, will be seemly, for there, whoever is there, nothing unseemly will exist. Certainly, wherever the spirit wills, there the body will be at once; and the spirit will will nothing that could befit neither the spirit nor the body. There will be true glory, where no one will be praised through the error or the flattery of the one who praises; true honor, which will be denied to no one who is worthy and granted to no one who is unworthy—but no unworthy person will even seek it, where no one but the worthy will be allowed to be; true peace, where no one will suffer anything hostile, either from himself or from anyone else. The reward of virtue will be he himself who gave virtue and promised himself to it, than whom nothing better or greater could exist. For what else did he mean when he said through the prophet, "I will be their God, and they will be my people," but this: "I will be what satisfies them; I will be whatever people honorably desire—life and health and food and abundance and glory and honor and peace

81 1 Corinthians 4:5.
82 Psalm 83:5 (84:4 in most English Bibles).

and all good things"? This is also the right way to understand what the apostle says: "that God may be all in all." He himself will be the end of our desires, he who will be seen without end, loved without weariness, praised without tiring. This gift, this affection, this activity will surely be shared by all, as eternal life itself is.[83]

But as for the degrees of honor and glory that there will be, according to the merits that earn their rewards, who is capable of imagining them, let alone describing them? That there will be such degrees, however, is not to be doubted. And that blessed city will see in itself this great good as well: no one lower will envy anyone higher, just as now the other angels do not envy the archangels. Each will no more wish to be what he has not received—though he is bound to the one who has received it by the most peaceful bond of concord—than in the body the finger wishes to be the eye, since the peaceful structure of the whole flesh holds both members together. So one will have a lesser gift than another in such a way that he also has this further gift: not to want more.

FREEDOM THAT CANNOT SIN

Final freedom will be unable to sin; the saints will remember past evils only as knowledge.

Nor will they lack free will simply because sins will be unable to delight them. Rather, it will be all the freer, set free from the delight of sinning to an unwavering delight in not sinning. For the first free will, given to man when he was first created upright, was able not to sin, but was also able to sin. This last free will, however, will be all the more powerful in that it will not be able to sin—yet this too will be by the gift of God, not by the capacity of its own nature. For to be God is one thing; to be a partaker of God is another. God by nature cannot sin; but one who partakes of God receives from him the gift of being unable to sin. And the stages of the divine gift had to be kept: first a free

83 Leviticus 26:12 (compare Jeremiah 31:33); 1 Corinthians 15:28.

will was given by which man was able not to sin, and last one by which he is not able to sin; the first served to earn merit, the last to receive the reward. But because this nature sinned when it was able to sin, it is set free by a more generous grace, so that it may be brought to that freedom in which it cannot sin. For just as the first immortality, which Adam lost by sinning, was the ability not to die, and the last will be the inability to die, so the first free will was the ability not to sin, and the last will be the inability to sin. In this way the will for piety and righteousness will be as impossible to lose as the will for happiness. For certainly by sinning we kept neither piety nor happiness; yet the will for happiness we did not lose, even when happiness was lost. Surely we are not to deny that God himself has free will just because he cannot sin?

So in that city there will be a free will that is one in all and undivided in each, set free from every evil and filled with every good, enjoying without fail the delight of eternal joys, forgetful of faults, forgetful of punishments. Yet it will not be so forgetful of its own liberation as to be ungrateful to its liberator. As far as rational knowledge is concerned, then, it will remember even its own past evils; but as far as the felt experience is concerned, it will not remember them at all. For even a highly skilled physician knows nearly all the diseases of the body as they are known by his art; but as they are felt in the body, he does not know very many of them—those he has not suffered himself. So just as there are two kinds of knowledge of evils—one by which they are not hidden from the power of the mind, the other by which they cling to the senses of the one who experiences them (for all vices are known in one way through the teaching of wisdom, and in another through the wretched life of the foolish)—so there are also two kinds of forgetting evils. The learned and educated person forgets them in one way, the one who has experienced and suffered them in another: the former if he neglects his expertise, the latter if he is free of misery. It is by this second kind of forgetting, the one I mentioned last, that the saints will not remember their past evils; for they will be free of them all,

so completely that these will be wiped out of their feelings entirely. Yet by the power of knowledge, which will be great in them, not only their own past but also the everlasting misery of the damned will not be hidden from them. Otherwise, if they are not going to know that they were once miserable, how, as the psalm says, will they sing the mercies of the Lord forever? Nothing, surely, will be more delightful to that city than this song to the glory of the grace of Christ, by whose blood we have been set free.[84]

THE EVERLASTING SABBATH

The eternal Sabbath: history's seven ages end in rest, vision, love and praise without end.

There the words will be fulfilled: "Be at rest and see that I am God." That will truly be the greatest Sabbath, a Sabbath with no evening, which the Lord commended in the first works of the world, where we read: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it he rested from all his works which God had begun to make." For we ourselves will be the seventh day, when we have been filled and restored by his blessing and sanctification. There, at rest, we shall see that he is God—which is what we wanted to be ourselves when we fell away from him, listening to the seducer, "You will be like gods," and withdrawing from the true God. Yet by his doing we would have been gods by participating in him, not by deserting him. For what have we done without him, except fail and waste away in his anger?[85] Restored by him and perfected by a greater grace, we shall be at rest forever, seeing that he is God, with whom we shall be filled when he will be all in all. For even our good works themselves, when they are understood to be his rather than ours, are then credited to us for attaining this Sabbath. If we attribute them to ourselves, they will be servile works, and of

84 Psalm 88:2 (89:1 in most English Bibles).
85 Psalm 45:11 (46:10 in most English Bibles); Genesis 2:2–3; Genesis 3:5.

the Sabbath it is said: "You shall do no servile work." That is why it is also said through the prophet Ezekiel: "And I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them." This we shall know perfectly then, when we are perfectly at rest and perfectly see that he is God.[86]

The very number of the ages, too, like that of the days, if it is reckoned according to the divisions of time that seem to be set out in the Scriptures, will make this Sabbath rest still more evident, since it turns out to be the seventh. The first age, like the first day, runs from Adam to the flood; the second from then to Abraham—equal not in length of time but in number of generations, for each is found to have ten. From there, as the evangelist Matthew marks out, three ages follow up to the coming of Christ, each unfolding over fourteen generations: one from Abraham to David, another from then to the deportation to Babylon, the third from then to Christ's birth in the flesh. That makes five in all. The sixth is now in progress, and it is not to be measured by any number of generations, because of what was said: "It is not for you to know the times which the Father has set in his own authority."[87] After this age God will rest, as on the seventh day, when he makes that same seventh day, which we shall be, rest in himself, in God. To discuss each of these ages carefully now would take too long. But this seventh will be our Sabbath, whose end will not be an evening but the Lord's Day, an eighth and eternal day, as it were, which has been made holy by the resurrection of Christ and prefigures the eternal rest not only of the spirit but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what will be in the end, without end. For what other end do we have but to reach the kingdom of which there is no end?

I think that, with the Lord's help, I have paid the debt of this huge work. Let those who find it too little, or too much, forgive

86 Leviticus 23:7 and elsewhere; Ezekiel 20:12.
87 Matthew 1:17; Acts 1:7.

me; but let those for whom it is enough give thanks, not to me, but to God, rejoicing with me. Amen.