

## THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

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BOOK TENTH.

[continues]

17. Concerning the ark of the covenant, and the miraculous signs whereby God authenticated the law and the promise. On this account it was that the law of God, given by the disposition of angels, and which commanded that the one God of gods alone receive sacred worship, to the exclusion of all others, was deposited in the ark, called the ark of the testimony. By this name it is sufficiently indicated, not that God, who was worshipped by all those rites, was shut up and enclosed in that place, though His responses emanated from it along with signs appreciable by the senses, but that His will was declared from that throne. The law itself, too, was engraven on tables of stone, and, as I have said, deposited in the ark, which the priests carried with due reverence during the sojourn in the wilderness, along with the tabernacle, which was in like manner called the tabernacle of the testimony; and there was then an accompanying sign, which appeared as a cloud by day and as a fire by night; when the cloud moved, the camp was shifted, and where it stood the camp was pitched. Besides these signs, and the voices

which proceeded from the place where the ark was, there were other miraculous testimonies to the law. For when the ark was carried across Jordan, on the entrance to the land of promise, the upper part of the river stopped in its course, and the lower part flowed on, so as to present both to the ark and the people dry ground to pass over. Then, when it was carried seven times round the first hostile and polytheistic city they came to, its walls suddenly fell down, though assaulted by no hand, struck by no battering-ram. Afterwards, too, when they were now resident in the land of promise, and the ark had, in punishment of their sin, been taken by their enemies, its captors triumphantly placed it in the temple of their favourite god, and left it shut up there, but, on opening the temple next day, they found the image they used to pray to fallen to the ground and shamefully shattered. Then, being themselves alarmed by portents, and still more shamefully punished, they restored the ark of the testimony to the people from whom they had taken it. And what was the manner of its restoration? They placed it on a wagon, and yoked to it cows from which they had taken the calves, and let them choose their own course, expecting that in this way the divine will would be indicated; and the cows, without any man driving or directing them, steadily pursued the way to the Hebrews, without regarding the lowing of their calves, and thus restored the ark to its worshippers. To God these and such like wonders are small, but they are mighty to terrify and give wholesome instruction to men. For if philosophers, and especially the Platonists, are with justice esteemed wiser than other men, as I have just been mentioning, because they taught that even these earthly and insignificant things are ruled by Divine Providence, inferring this from the numberless beauties which are observable not only in the bodies of

animals, but even in plants and grasses, how much more plainly do these things attest the presence of divinity which happen at the time predicted, and in which that religion is commended which forbids the offering of sacrifice to any celestial, terrestrial, or infernal being, and commands it to be offered to God only, who alone blesses us by His love for us, and by our love to Him, and who, by arranging the appointed times of those sacrifices, and by predicting that they were to pass into a better sacrifice by a better Priest, testified that He has no appetite for these sacrifices, but through them indicated others of more substantial blessing,—and all this not that He Himself may be glorified by these honours, but that we may be stirred up to worship and cleave to Him, being inflamed by His love, which is our advantage rather than His?

18. Against those who deny that the books of the Church are to be believed about the miracles whereby the people of God were educated. Will some one say that these miracles are false, that they never happened, and that the records of them are lies? Whoever says so, and asserts that in such matters no records whatever can be credited, may also say that there are no gods who care for human affairs. For they have induced men to worship them only by means of miraculous works, which the heathen histories testify, and by which the gods have made a display of their own power rather than done any real service. This is the reason why we have not undertaken in this work, of which we are now writing the tenth book, to refute those who either deny that there is any divine power, or contend that it does not interfere with human affairs, but those who prefer their own god to our God, the Founder of the holy and most glorious city, not knowing that He is also the invisible and unchangeable Founder of this visible and

changing world, and the truest bestower of the blessed life which resides not in things created, but in Himself. For thus speaks His most trustworthy prophet: "It is good for me to be united to God." Among philosophers it is a question, what is that end and good to the attainment of which all our duties are to have a relation? The Psalmist did not say, It is good for me to have great wealth, or to wear imperial insignia, purple, sceptre, and diadem; or, as some even of the philosophers have not blushed to say, It is good for me to enjoy sensual pleasure; or, as the better men among them seemed to say, My good is my spiritual strength; but, "It is good for me to be united to God." This he had learned from Him whom the holy angels, with the accompanying witness of miracles, presented as the sole object of worship. And hence he himself became the sacrifice of God, whose spiritual love inflamed him, and into whose ineffable and incorporeal embrace he yearned to cast himself. Moreover, if the worshippers of many gods (whatever kind of gods they fancy their own to be) believe that the miracles recorded in their civil histories, or in the books of magic, or of the more respectable theurgy, were wrought by these gods, what reason have they for refusing to believe the miracles recorded in those writings, to which we owe a credence as much greater as He is greater to whom alone these writings teach us to sacrifice?

19. On the reasonableness of offering, as the true religion teaches, a visible sacrifice to the one true and invisible God. As to those who think that these visible sacrifices are suitably offered to other gods, but that invisible sacrifices, the graces of purity of mind and holiness of will, should be offered, as greater and better, to the invisible God, Himself greater and better than all others, they must be oblivious that these visible

sacrifices are signs of the invisible, as the words we utter are the signs of things. And therefore, as in prayer or praise we direct intelligible words to Him to whom in our heart we offer the very feelings we are expressing, so we are to understand that in sacrifice we offer visible sacrifice only to Him to whom in our heart we ought to present ourselves an invisible sacrifice. It is then that the angels, and all those superior powers who are mighty by their goodness and piety, regard us with pleasure, and rejoice with us and assist us to the utmost of their power. But if we offer such worship to them, they decline it; and when on any mission to men they become visible to the senses, they positively forbid it. Examples of this occur in holy writ. Some fancied they should, by adoration or sacrifice, pay the same honour to angels as is due to God, and were prevented from doing so by the angels themselves, and ordered to render it to Him to whom alone they know it to be due. And the holy angels have in this been imitated by holy men of God. For Paul and Barnabas, when they had wrought a miracle of healing in Lycaonia, were thought to be gods, and the Lycaonians desired to sacrifice to them, and they humbly and piously declined this honour, and announced to them the God in whom they should believe. And those deceitful and proud spirits, who exact worship, do so simply because they know it to be due to the true God. For that which they take pleasure in is not, as Porphyry says and some fancy, the smell of the victims, but divine honours. They have, in fact, plenty odours on all hands, and if they wished more, they could provide them for themselves. But the spirits who arrogate to themselves divinity are delighted not with the smoke of carcasses, but with the suppliant spirit which they deceive and hold in subjection, and hinder from drawing near to God,

preventing him from offering himself in sacrifice to God by inducing him to sacrifice to others.

20. Of the supreme and true sacrifice which was effected by the Mediator between God and men. And hence that true Mediator, in so far as, by assuming the form of a servant, He became the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, though in the form of God He received sacrifice together with the Father, with whom He is one God, yet in the form of a servant He chose rather to be than to receive a sacrifice, that not even by this instance any one might have occasion to suppose that sacrifice should be rendered to any creature. Thus He is both the Priest who offers and the Sacrifice offered. And He designed that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrifice of the Church, which, being His body, learns to offer herself through Him. Of this true Sacrifice the ancient sacrifices of the saints were the various and numerous signs; and it was thus variously figured, just as one thing is signified by a variety of words, that there may be less weariness when we speak of it much. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have given place.

21. Of the power delegated to demons for the trial and glorification of the saints, who conquer not by propitiating the spirits of the air, but by abiding in God. The power delegated to the demons at certain appointed and well-adjusted seasons, that they may give expression to their hostility to the city of God by stirring up against it the men who are under their influence, and may not only receive sacrifice from those who willingly offer it, but may also extort it from the unwilling by violent persecution;—this power is found to be not merely harmless, but even useful to the Church, completing as it does the number of martyrs,

whom the city of God esteems as all the more illustrious and honoured citizens, because they have striven even to blood against the sin of impiety. If the ordinary language of the Church allowed it, we might more elegantly call these men our heroes. For this name is said to be derived from Juno, who in Greek is called Hêrê, and hence, according to the Greek myths, one of her sons was called Heros. And these fables mystically signified that Juno was mistress of the air, which they suppose to be inhabited by the demons and the heroes, understanding by heroes the souls of the well-deserving dead. But for a quite opposite reason would we call our martyrs heroes,—supposing, as I said, that the usage of ecclesiastical language would admit of it,—not because they lived along with the demons in the air, but because they conquered these demons or powers of the air, and among them Juno herself, be she what she may, not unsuitably represented, as she commonly is by the poets, as hostile to virtue, and jealous of men of mark aspiring to the heavens. Virgil, however, unhappily gives way, and yields to her; for, though he represents her as saying, “I am conquered by Æneas,” Helenus gives Æneas himself this religious advice: “Pay vows to Juno: overbear Her queenly soul with gift and prayer.” In conformity with this opinion, Porphyry—expressing, however, not so much his own views as other people’s—says that a good god or genius cannot come to a man unless the evil genius has been first of all propitiated, implying that the evil deities had greater power than the good; for, until they have been appeased and give place, the good can give no assistance; and if the evil deities oppose, the good can give no help; whereas the evil can do injury without the good being able to prevent them. This is not the way of the true and truly holy religion; not thus do our martyrs conquer Juno, that is to say, the powers of the air, who envy the

virtues of the pious. Our heroes, if we could so call them, overcome Hêrê, not by suppliant gifts, but by divine virtues. As Scipio, who conquered Africa by his valour, is more suitably styled Africanus than if he had appeased his enemies by gifts, and so won their mercy.

22. Whence the saints derive power against demons and true purification of heart. It is by true piety that men of God cast out the hostile power of the air which opposes godliness; it is by exorcising it, not by propitiating it; and they overcome all the temptations of the adversary by praying, not to him, but to their own God against him. For the devil cannot conquer or subdue any but those who are in league with sin; and therefore he is conquered in the name of Him who assumed humanity, and that without sin, that Himself being both Priest and Sacrifice, He might bring about the remission of sins, that is to say, might bring it about through the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, by whom we are reconciled to God, the cleansing from sin being accomplished. For men are separated from God only by sins, from which we are in this life cleansed not by our own virtue, but by the divine compassion; through His indulgence, not through our own power. For, whatever virtue we call our own is itself bestowed upon us by His goodness. And we might attribute too much to ourselves while in the flesh, unless we lived in the receipt of pardon until we laid it down. This is the reason why there has been vouchsafed to us, through the Mediator, this grace, that we who are polluted by sinful flesh should be cleansed by the likeness of sinful flesh. By this grace of God, wherein He has shown His great compassion toward us, we are both governed by faith in this life, and, after this life, are led onwards to the fullest perfection by the vision of immutable truth.



23. Of the principles which, according to the Platonists, regulate the purification of the soul. Even Porphyry asserts that it was revealed by divine oracles that we are not purified by any sacrifices to sun or moon, meaning it to be inferred that we are not purified by sacrificing to any gods. For what mysteries can purify, if those of the sun and moon, which are esteemed the chief of the celestial gods, do not purify? He says, too, in the same place, that “principles” can purify, lest it should be supposed, from his saying that sacrificing to the sun and moon cannot purify, that sacrificing to some other of the host of gods might do so. And what he as a Platonist means by “principles,” we know. For he speaks of God the Father and God the Son, whom he calls (writing in Greek) the intellect or mind of the Father; but of the Holy Spirit he says either nothing, or nothing plainly, for I do not understand what other he speaks of as holding the middle place between these two. For if, like Plotinus in his discussion regarding the three principal substances, he wished us to understand by this third the soul of nature, he would certainly not have given it the middle place between these two, that is, between the Father and the Son. For Plotinus places the soul of nature after the intellect of the Father, while Porphyry, making it the mean, does not place it after, but between the others. No doubt he spoke according to his light, or as he thought expedient; but we assert that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit not of the Father only, nor of the Son only, but of both. For philosophers speak as they have a mind to, and in the most difficult matters do not scruple to offend religious ears; but we are bound to speak according to a certain rule, lest freedom of speech beget impiety of opinion about the matters themselves of which we speak.

24. Of the one only true principle which alone purifies and renews human nature. Accordingly, when we speak of God, we do not affirm two or three principles, no more than we are at liberty to affirm two or three gods; although, speaking of each, of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost, we confess that each is God: and yet we do not say, as the Sabellian heretics say, that the Father is the same as the Son, and the Holy Spirit the same as the Father and the Son; but we say that the Father is the Father of the Son, and the Son the Son of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son is neither the Father nor the Son. It was therefore truly said that man is cleansed only by a Principle, although the Platonists erred in speaking in the plural of principles. But Porphyry, being under the dominion of these envious powers, whose influence he was at once ashamed of and afraid to throw off, refused to recognise that Christ is the Principle by whose incarnation we are purified. Indeed he despised Him, because of the flesh itself which He assumed, that He might offer a sacrifice for our purification,—a great mystery, unintelligible to Porphyry's pride, which that true and benignant Redeemer brought low by His humility, manifesting Himself to mortals by the mortality which He assumed, and which the malignant and deceitful mediators are proud of wanting, promising, as the boon of immortals, a deceptive assistance to wretched men. Thus the good and true Mediator showed that it is sin which is evil, and not the substance or nature of flesh; for this, together with the human soul, could without sin be both assumed and retained, and laid down in death, and changed to something better by resurrection. He showed also that death itself, although the punishment of sin, was submitted to by Him for our sakes without sin, and must not be evaded by sin on our part, but rather, if

opportunity serves, be borne for righteousness' sake. For he was able to expiate sins by dying, because He both died, and not for sin of His own. But He has not been recognised by Porphyry as the Principle, otherwise he would have recognised Him as the Purifier. The Principle is neither the flesh nor the human soul in Christ, but the Word by which all things were made. The flesh, therefore, does not by its own virtue purify, but by virtue of the Word by which it was assumed, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." For, speaking mystically of eating His flesh, when those who did not understand Him were offended and went away, saying, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" He answered to the rest who remained, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." The Principle, therefore, having assumed a human soul and flesh, cleanses the soul and flesh of believers. Therefore, when the Jews asked Him who He was, He answered that He was the Principle. And this we carnal and feeble men, liable to sin, and involved in the darkness of ignorance, could not possibly understand, unless we were cleansed and healed by Him, both by means of what we were, and of what we were not. For we were men, but we were not righteous; whereas in His incarnation there was a human nature, but it was righteous, and not sinful. This is the mediation whereby a hand is stretched to the lapsed and fallen; this is the seed "ordained by angels," by whose ministry the law also was given enjoining the worship of one God, and promising that this Mediator should come.

25. That all the saints, both under the law and before it, were justified by faith in the mystery of Christ's incarnation. It was by faith in this mystery, and godliness of life, that purification was attainable even

by the saints of old, whether before the law was given to the Hebrews (for God and the angels were even then present as instructors), or in the periods under the law, although the promises of spiritual things, being presented in figure, seemed to be carnal, and hence the name of Old Testament. For it was then the prophets lived, by whom, as by angels, the same promise was announced; and among them was he whose grand and divine sentiment regarding the end and supreme good of man I have just now quoted, "It is good for me to cleave to God." In this psalm the distinction between the Old and New Testaments is distinctly announced. For the Psalmist says, that when he saw that the carnal and earthly promises were abundantly enjoyed by the ungodly, his feet were almost gone, his steps had well-nigh slipped; and that it seemed to him as if he had served God in vain, when he saw that those who despised God increased in that prosperity which he looked for at God's hand. He says, too, that, in investigating this matter with the desire of understanding why it was so, he had laboured in vain, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and understood the end of those whom he had erroneously considered happy. Then he understood that they were cast down by that very thing, as he says, which they had made their boast, and that they had been consumed and perished for their iniquities; and that that whole fabric of temporal prosperity had become as a dream when one awaketh, and suddenly finds himself destitute of all the joys he had imaged in sleep. And, as in this earth or earthy city they seemed to themselves to be great, he says, "O Lord, in Thy city Thou wilt reduce their image to nothing." He also shows how beneficial it had been for him to seek even earthly blessings only from the one true God, in whose power are all things, for he says, "As a beast was I before Thee, and I am always with

Thee." "As a beast," he says, meaning that he was stupid. For I ought to have sought from Thee such things as the ungodly could not enjoy as well as I, and not those things which I saw them enjoying in abundance, and hence concluded I was serving Thee in vain, because they who declined to serve Thee had what I had not. Nevertheless, "I am always with Thee," because even in my desire for such things I did not pray to other gods. And consequently he goes on, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand, and by Thy counsel Thou hast guided me, and with glory hast taken me up;" as if all earthly advantages were left-hand blessings, though, when he saw them enjoyed by the wicked, his feet had almost gone. "For what," he says, "have I in heaven, and what have I desired from Thee upon earth?" He blames himself, and is justly displeased with himself; because, though he had in heaven so vast a possession (as he afterwards understood), he yet sought from his God on earth a transitory and fleeting happiness,—a happiness of mire, we may say. "My heart and my flesh," he says, "fail, O God of my heart." Happy failure, from things below to things above! And hence in another psalm he says, "My soul longeth, yea, even faileth, for the courts of the Lord." Yet, though he had said of both his heart and his flesh that they were failing, he did not say, O God of my heart and my flesh, but, O God of my heart; for by the heart the flesh is made clean. Therefore, says the Lord, "Cleanse that which is within, and the outside shall be clean also." He then says that God Himself,—not anything received from Him, but Himself,—is his portion. "The God of my heart, and my portion for ever." Among the various objects of human choice, God alone satisfied him. "For, lo," he says, "they that are far from Thee shall perish: Thou destroyest all them that go a-whoring from Thee,"—that is, who prostitute themselves to many

gods. And then follows the verse for which all the rest of the psalm seems to prepare: "It is good for me to cleave to God,"—not to go far off; not to go a-whoring with a multitude of gods. And then shall this union with God be perfected, when all that is to be redeemed in us has been redeemed. But for the present we must, as he goes on to say, "place our hope in God." "For that which is seen," says the apostle, "is not hope. For what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Being, then, for the present established in this hope, let us do what the Psalmist further indicates, and become in our measure angels or messengers of God, declaring His will, and praising His glory and His grace. For when he had said, "To place my hope in God," he goes on, "that I may declare all Thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion." This is the most glorious city of God; this is the city which knows and worships one God: she is celebrated by the holy angels, who invite us to their society, and desire us to become fellow-citizens with them in this city; for they do not wish us to worship them as our gods, but to join them in worshipping their God and ours; nor to sacrifice to them, but, together with them, to become a sacrifice to God. Accordingly, whoever will lay aside malignant obstinacy, and consider these things, shall be assured that all these blessed and immortal spirits, who do not envy us (for if they envied they were not blessed), but rather love us, and desire us to be as blessed as themselves, look on us with greater pleasure, and give us greater assistance, when we join them in worshipping one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, than if we were to offer to themselves sacrifice and worship.

26. Of Porphyry's weakness in wavering between the confession of the true God and the worship of demons. I know not how it is so, but it seems to me that Porphyry blushed for his friends the theurgists; for he knew all that I have adduced, but did not frankly condemn polytheistic worship. He said, in fact, that there are some angels who visit earth, and reveal divine truth to theurgists, and others who publish on earth the things that belong to the Father, His height and depth. Can we believe, then, that the angels whose office it is to declare the will of the Father, wish us to be subject to any but Him whose will they declare? And hence, even this Platonist himself judiciously observes that we should rather imitate than invoke them. We ought not, then, to fear that we may offend these immortal and happy subjects of the one God by not sacrificing to them; for this they know to be due only to the one true God, in allegiance to whom they themselves find their blessedness, and therefore they will not have it given to them, either in figure or in the reality, which the mysteries of sacrifice symbolized. Such arrogance belongs to proud and wretched demons, whose disposition is diametrically opposite to the piety of those who are subject to God, and whose blessedness consists in attachment to Him. And, that we also may attain to this bliss, they aid us, as is fit, with sincere kindness, and usurp over us no dominion, but declare to us Him under whose rule we are then fellow-subjects. Why, then, O philosopher, do you still fear to speak freely against the powers which are inimical both to true virtue and to the gifts of the true God? Already you have discriminated between the angels who proclaim God's will, and those who visit theurgists, drawn down by I know not what art. Why do you still ascribe to these latter the honour of declaring divine truth? If they do not declare the will of the Father, what

divine revelations can they make? Are not these the evil spirits who were bound over by the incantations of an envious man, that they should not grant purity of soul to another, and could not, as you say, be set free from these bonds by a good man anxious for purity, and recover power over their own actions? Do you still doubt whether these are wicked demons; or do you, perhaps, feign ignorance, that you may not give offence to the theurgists, who have allured you by their secret rites, and have taught you, as a mighty boon, these insane and pernicious devilries? Do you dare to elevate above the air, and even to heaven, these envious powers, or pests, let me rather call them, less worthy of the name of sovereign than of slaves, as you yourself own; and are you not ashamed to place them even among your sidereal gods, and so put a slight upon the stars themselves?

27. Of the impiety of Porphyry, which is worse than even the mistake of Apuleius. How much more tolerable and accordant with human feeling is the error of your Platonist co-sectary Apuleius! for he attributed the diseases and storms of human passions only to the demons who occupy a grade beneath the moon, and makes even this avowal as by constraint regarding gods whom he honours; but the superior and celestial gods, who inhabit the ethereal regions, whether visible, as the sun, moon, and other luminaries, whose brilliancy makes them conspicuous, or invisible, but believed in by him, he does his utmost to remove beyond the slightest stain of these perturbations. It is not, then, from Plato, but from your Chaldæan teachers you have learned to elevate human vices to the ethereal and empyreal regions of the world and to the celestial firmament, in order that your theurgists might be able to obtain from your gods divine revelations; and yet you



make yourself superior to these divine revelations by your intellectual life, which dispenses with these theurgic purifications as not needed by a philosopher. But, by way of rewarding your teachers, you recommend these arts to other men, who, not being philosophers, may be persuaded to use what you acknowledge to be useless to yourself, who are capable of higher things; so that those who cannot avail themselves of the virtue of philosophy, which is too arduous for the multitude, may, at your instigation, betake themselves to theurgists by whom they may be purified, not, indeed, in the intellectual, but in the spiritual part of the soul. Now, as the persons who are unfit for philosophy form incomparably the majority of mankind, more may be compelled to consult these secret and illicit teachers of yours than frequent the Platonic schools. For these most impure demons, pretending to be ethereal gods, whose herald and messenger you have become, have promised that those who are purified by theurgy in the spiritual part of their soul shall not indeed return to the Father, but shall dwell among the ethereal gods above the aerial regions. But such fancies are not listened to by the multitudes of men whom Christ came to set free from the tyranny of demons. For in Him they have the most gracious cleansing, in which mind, spirit, and body alike participate. For, in order that He might heal the whole man from the plague of sin, He took without sin the whole human nature. Would that you had known Him, and would that you had committed yourself for healing to Him rather than to your own frail and infirm human virtue, or to pernicious and curious arts! He would not have deceived you; for Him your own oracles, on your own showing, acknowledged holy and immortal. It is of Him, too, that the most famous poet speaks, poetically indeed, since he applies it to the

person of another, yet truly, if you refer it to Christ, saying, "Under thine auspices, if any traces of our crimes remain, they shall be obliterated, and earth freed from its perpetual fear." By which he indicates that, by reason of the infirmity which attaches to this life, the greatest progress in virtue and righteousness leaves room for the existence, if not of crimes, yet of the traces of crimes, which are obliterated only by that Saviour of whom this verse speaks. For that he did not say this at the prompting of his own fancy, Virgil tells us in almost the last verse of that 4th Eclogue, when he says, "The last age predicted by the Cumæan sibyl has now arrived;" whence it plainly appears that this had been dictated by the Cumæan sibyl. But those theurgists, or rather demons, who assume the appearance and form of gods, pollute rather than purify the human spirit by false appearances and the delusive mockery of unsubstantial forms. How can those whose own spirit is unclean cleanse the spirit of man? Were they not unclean, they would not be bound by the incantations of an envious man, and would neither be afraid nor grudge to bestow that hollow boon which they promise. But it is sufficient for our purpose that you acknowledge that the intellectual soul, that is, our mind, cannot be justified by theurgy; and that even the spiritual or inferior part of our soul cannot by this act be made eternal and immortal, though you maintain that it can be purified by it. Christ, however, promises life eternal; and therefore to Him the world flocks, greatly to your indignation, greatly also to your astonishment and confusion. What avails your forced avowal that theurgy leads men astray, and deceives vast numbers by its ignorant and foolish teaching, and that it is the most manifest mistake to have recourse by prayer and sacrifice to angels and principalities, when at the same time, to save yourself from the charge of

spending labour in vain on such arts, you direct men to the theurgists, that by their means men, who do not live by the rule of the intellectual soul, may have their spiritual soul purified?

28. How it is that Porphyry has been so blind as not to recognise the true wisdom—Christ. You drive men, therefore, into the most palpable error. And yet you are not ashamed of doing so much harm, though you call yourself a lover of virtue and wisdom. Had you been true and faithful in this profession, you would have recognised Christ, the virtue of God and the wisdom of God, and would not, in the pride of vain science, have revolted from His wholesome humility. Nevertheless you acknowledge that the spiritual part of the soul can be purified by the virtue of chastity without the aid of those theurgic arts and mysteries which you wasted your time in learning. You even say, sometimes, that these mysteries do not raise the soul after death, so that, after the termination of this life, they seem to be of no service even to the part you call spiritual; and yet you recur on every opportunity to these arts, for no other purpose, so far as I see, than to appear an accomplished theurgist, and gratify those who are curious in illicit arts, or else to inspire others with the same curiosity. But we give you all praise for saying that this art is to be feared, both on account of the legal enactments against it, and by reason of the danger involved in the very practice of it. And would that in this, at least, you were listened to by its wretched votaries, that they might be withdrawn from entire absorption in it, or might even be preserved from tampering with it at all! You say, indeed, that ignorance, and the numberless vices resulting from it, cannot be removed by any mysteries, but only by the πατρικὸς νοῦς, that is, the Father's mind or intellect

conscious of the Father's will. But that Christ is this mind you do not believe; for Him you despise on account of the body He took of a woman and the shame of the cross; for your lofty wisdom spurns such low and contemptible things, and soars to more exalted regions. But He fulfils what the holy prophets truly predicted regarding Him: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the prudence of the prudent." For He does not destroy and bring to nought His own gift in them, but what they arrogate to themselves, and do not hold of Him. And hence the apostle, having quoted this testimony from the prophet, adds, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." This is despised as a weak and foolish thing by those who are wise and strong in themselves; yet this is the grace which heals the weak, who do not proudly boast a blessedness of their own, but rather humbly acknowledge their real misery.

29. Of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Platonists in their impiety blush to acknowledge. You proclaim the Father and His Son, whom you call the Father's intellect or mind, and between these a third, by whom we suppose you mean the Holy Spirit, and in your own fashion you call these three Gods. In this,

though your expressions are inaccurate, you do in some sort, and as through a veil, see what we should strive towards; but the incarnation of the unchangeable Son of God, whereby we are saved, and are enabled to reach the things we believe, or in part understand, this is what you refuse to recognise. You see in a fashion, although at a distance, although with filmy eye, the country in which we should abide; but the way to it you know not. Yet you believe in grace, for you say it is granted to few to reach God by virtue of intelligence. For you do not say, "Few have thought fit or have wished," but, "It has been granted to few,"—distinctly acknowledging God's grace, not man's sufficiency. You also use this word more expressly, when, in accordance with the opinion of Plato, you make no doubt that in this life a man cannot by any means attain to perfect wisdom, but that whatever is lacking is in the future life made up to those who live intellectually, by God's providence and grace. Oh, had you but recognised the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, and that very incarnation of His, wherein He assumed a human soul and body, you might have seemed the brightest example of grace! But what am I doing? I know it is useless to speak to a dead man,—useless, at least, so far as regards you, but perhaps not in vain for those who esteem you highly, and love you on account of their love of wisdom or curiosity about those arts which you ought not to have learned; and these persons I address in your name. The grace of God could not have been more graciously commended to us than thus, that the only Son of God, remaining unchangeable in Himself, should assume humanity, and should give us the hope of His love, by means of the mediation of a human nature, through which we, from the condition of men, might come to Him who was so far off,—the immortal from the mortal; the unchangeable from the

changeable; the just from the unjust; the blessed from the wretched. And, as He had given us a natural instinct to desire blessedness and immortality, He Himself continuing to be blessed, but assuming mortality, by enduring what we fear, taught us to despise it, that what we long for He might bestow upon us. But in order to your acquiescence in this truth, it is lowliness that is requisite, and to this it is extremely difficult to bend you. For what is there incredible, especially to men like you, accustomed to speculation, which might have predisposed you to believe in this,— what is there incredible, I say, in the assertion that God assumed a human soul and body? You yourselves ascribe such excellence to the intellectual soul, which is, after all, the human soul, that you maintain that it can become consubstantial with that intelligence of the Father whom you believe in as the Son of God. What incredible thing is it, then, if some one soul be assumed by Him in an ineffable and unique manner for the salvation of many? Moreover, our nature itself testifies that a man is incomplete unless a body be united with the soul. This certainly would be more incredible, were it not of all things the most common; for we should more easily believe in a union between spirit and spirit, or, to use your own terminology, between the incorporeal and the incorporeal, even though the one were human, the other divine, the one changeable and the other unchangeable, than in a union between the corporeal and the incorporeal. But perhaps it is the unprecedented birth of a body from a virgin that staggers you? But, so far from this being a difficulty, it ought rather to assist you to receive our religion, that a miraculous person was born miraculously. Or, do you find a difficulty in the fact that, after His body had been given up to death, and had been changed into a higher kind of body by resurrection, and was now no longer

mortal but incorruptible, He carried it up into heavenly places? Perhaps you refuse to believe this, because you remember that Porphyry, in these very books from which I have cited so much, and which treat of the return of the soul, so frequently teaches that a body of every kind is to be escaped from, in order that the soul may dwell in blessedness with God. But here, in place of following Porphyry, you ought rather to have corrected him, especially since you agree with him in believing such incredible things about the soul of this visible world and huge material frame. For, as scholars of Plato, you hold that the world is an animal, and a very happy animal, which you wish to be also everlasting. How, then, is it never to be loosed from a body, and yet never lose its happiness, if, in order to the happiness of the soul, the body must be left behind? The sun, too, and the other stars, you not only acknowledge to be bodies, in which you have the cordial assent of all seeing men, but also, in obedience to what you reckon a profounder insight, you declare that they are very blessed animals, and eternal, together with their bodies. Why is it, then, that when the Christian faith is pressed upon you, you forget, or pretend to ignore, what you habitually discuss or teach? Why is it that you refuse to be Christians, on the ground that you hold opinions which, in fact, you yourselves demolish? Is it not because Christ came in lowliness, and ye are proud? The precise nature of the resurrection bodies of the saints may sometimes occasion discussion among those who are best read in the Christian Scriptures; yet there is not among us the smallest doubt that they shall be everlasting, and of a nature exemplified in the instance of Christ's risen body. But whatever be their nature, since we maintain that they shall be absolutely incorruptible and immortal, and shall offer no hindrance to the soul's

contemplation by which it is fixed in God, and as you say that among the celestials the bodies of the eternally blessed are eternal, why do you maintain that, in order to blessedness, every body must be escaped from? Why do you thus seek such a plausible reason for escaping from the Christian faith, if not because, as I again say, Christ is humble and ye proud? Are ye ashamed to be corrected? This is the vice of the proud. It is, forsooth, a degradation for learned men to pass from the school of Plato to the discipleship of Christ, who by His Spirit taught a fisherman to think and to say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." The old saint Simplicianus, afterwards bishop of Milan, used to tell me that a certain Platonist was in the habit of saying that this opening passage of the holy gospel, entitled "According to John," should be written in letters of gold, and hung up in all churches in the most conspicuous place. But the proud scorn to take God for their Master, because "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." So that, with these miserable creatures, it is not enough that they are sick, but they boast of their sickness, and are ashamed of the medicine which could heal them. And, doing so, they secure not elevation, but a more disastrous fall.

30. Porphyry's emendations and modifications of Platonism. If it is considered unseemly to emend anything which Plato has touched, why did Porphyry himself make emendations, and these not a few? for it is very certain that Plato wrote that the souls of men return after death to the bodies of beasts. Plotinus also,



Porphyry's teacher, held this opinion; yet Porphyry justly rejected it. He was of opinion that human souls return indeed into human bodies, but not into the bodies they had left, but other new bodies. He shrank from the other opinion, lest a woman who had returned into a mule might possibly carry her own son on her back. He did not shrink, however, from a theory which admitted the possibility of a mother coming back into a girl and marrying her own son. How much more honourable a creed is that which was taught by the holy and truthful angels, uttered by the prophets who were moved by God's Spirit, preached by Him who was foretold as the coming Saviour by His forerunning heralds, and by the apostles whom He sent forth, and who filled the whole world with the gospel,—how much more honourable, I say, is the belief that souls return once for all to their own bodies, than that they return again and again to divers bodies? Nevertheless Porphyry, as I have said, did considerably improve upon this opinion, in so far, at least, as he maintained that human souls could transmigrate only into human bodies, and made no scruple about demolishing the bestial prisons into which Plato had wished to cast them. He says, too, that God put the soul into the world that it might recognise the evils of matter, and return to the Father, and be for ever emancipated from the polluting contact of matter. And although here is some inappropriate thinking (for the soul is rather given to the body that it may do good; for it would not learn evil unless it did it), yet he corrects the opinion of other Platonists, and that on a point of no small importance, inasmuch as he avows that the soul, which is purged from all evil and received to the Father's presence, shall never again suffer the ills of this life. By this opinion he quite subverted the favourite Platonic dogma, that as dead men are made out of living ones,

so living men are made out of dead ones; and he exploded the idea which Virgil seems to have adopted from Plato, that the purified souls which have been sent into the Elysian fields (the poetic name for the joys of the blessed) are summoned to the river Lethe, that is, to the oblivion of the past, "That earthward they may pass once more, Remembering not the things before, And with a blind propension yearn To fleshly bodies to return." This found no favour with Porphyry, and very justly; for it is indeed foolish to believe that souls should desire to return from that life, which cannot be very blessed unless by the assurance of its permanence, and to come back into this life, and to the pollution of corruptible bodies, as if the result of perfect purification were only to make defilement desirable. For if perfect purification effects the oblivion of all evils, and the oblivion of evils creates a desire for a body in which the soul may again be entangled with evils, then the supreme felicity will be the cause of infelicity, and the perfection of wisdom the cause of foolishness, and the purest cleansing the cause of defilement. And, however long the blessedness of the soul last, it cannot be founded on truth, if, in order to be blessed, it must be deceived. For it cannot be blessed unless it be free from fear. But, to be free from fear, it must be under the false impression that it shall be always blessed,—the false impression, for it is destined to be also at some time miserable. How, then, shall the soul rejoice in truth, whose joy is founded on falsehood? Porphyry saw this, and therefore said that the purified soul returns to the Father, that it may never more be entangled in the polluting contact with evil. The opinion, therefore, of some Platonists, that there is a necessary revolution carrying souls away and bringing them round again to the same things, is false. But, were it true, what were the advantage of knowing

it? Would the Platonists presume to allege their superiority to us, because we were in this life ignorant of what they themselves were doomed to be ignorant of when perfected in purity and wisdom in another and better life, and which they must be ignorant of if they are to be blessed? If it were most absurd and foolish to say so, then certainly we must prefer Porphyry's opinion to the idea of a circulation of souls through constantly alternating happiness and misery. And if this is just, here is a Platonist emending Plato, here is a man who saw what Plato did not see, and who did not shrink from correcting so illustrious a master, but preferred truth to Plato.

31. Against the arguments on which the Platonists ground their assertion that the human soul is co-eternal with God. Why, then, do we not rather believe the divinity in those matters, which human talent cannot fathom? Why do we not credit the assertion of divinity, that the soul is not co-eternal with God, but is created, and once was not? For the Platonists seemed to themselves to allege an adequate reason for their rejection of this doctrine, when they affirmed that nothing could be everlasting which had not always existed. Plato, however, in writing concerning the world and the gods in it, whom the Supreme made, most expressly states that they had a beginning and yet would have no end, but, by the sovereign will of the Creator, would endure eternally. But, by way of interpreting this, the Platonists have discovered that he meant a beginning, not of time, but of cause. "For as if a foot," they say, "had been always from eternity in dust, there would always have been a print underneath it; and yet no one would doubt that this print was made by the pressure of the foot, nor that, though the one was made by the other, neither was prior to the other; so," they say, "the world and the

gods created in it have always been, their Creator always existing, and yet they were made." If, then, the soul has always existed, are we to say that its wretchedness has always existed? For if there is something in it which was not from eternity, but began in time, why is it impossible that the soul itself, though not previously existing, should begin to be in time? Its blessedness, too, which, as he owns, is to be more stable, and indeed endless, after the soul's experience of evils,—this undoubtedly has a beginning in time, and yet is to be always, though previously it had no existence. This whole argumentation, therefore, to establish that nothing can be endless except that which has had no beginning, falls to the ground. For here we find the blessedness of the soul, which has a beginning, and yet has no end. And, therefore, let the incapacity of man give place to the authority of God; and let us take our belief regarding the true religion from the ever-blessed spirits, who do not seek for themselves that honour which they know to be due to their God and ours, and who do not command us to sacrifice save only to Him, whose sacrifice, as I have often said already, and must often say again, we and they ought together to be, offered through that Priest who offered Himself to death a sacrifice for us, in that human nature which He assumed, and according to which He desired to be our Priest.

32. Of the universal way of the soul's deliverance, which Porphyry did not find because he did not rightly seek it, and which the grace of Christ has alone thrown open. This is the religion which possesses the universal way for delivering the soul; for, except by this way, none can be delivered. This is a kind of royal way, which alone leads to a kingdom which does not totter like all temporal dignities, but stands firm on eternal

foundations. And when Porphyry says, towards the end of the first book *De Regressu Animæ*, that no system of doctrine which furnishes the universal way for delivering the soul has as yet been received, either from the truest philosophy, or from the ideas and practices of the Indians, or from the reasoning of the Chaldæans, or from any source whatever, and that no historical reading had made him acquainted with that way, he manifestly acknowledges that there is such a way, but that as yet he was not acquainted with it. Nothing of all that he had so laboriously learned concerning the deliverance of the soul, nothing of all that he seemed to others, if not to himself, to know and believe, satisfied him. For he perceived that there was still wanting a commanding authority which it might be right to follow in a matter of such importance. And when he says that he had not learned from any truest philosophy a system which possessed the universal way of the soul's deliverance, he shows plainly enough, as it seems to me, either that the philosophy of which he was a disciple was not the truest, or that it did not comprehend such a way. And how can that be the truest philosophy which does not possess this way? For what else is the universal way of the soul's deliverance than that by which all souls universally are delivered, and without which, therefore, no soul is delivered? And when he says, in addition, "or from the ideas and practices of the Indians, or from the reasoning of the Chaldæans, or from any source whatever," he declares in the most unequivocal language that this universal way of the soul's deliverance was not embraced in what he had learned either from the Indians or the Chaldæans; and yet he could not forbear stating that it was from the Chaldæans he had derived these divine oracles of which he makes such frequent mention. What, therefore, does he mean by this universal way of

the soul's deliverance, which had not yet been made known by any truest philosophy, or by the doctrinal systems of those nations which were considered to have great insight in things divine, because they indulged more freely in a curious and fanciful science and worship of angels? What is this universal way of which he acknowledges his ignorance, if not a way which does not belong to one nation as its special property, but is common to all, and divinely bestowed? Porphyry, a man of no mediocre abilities, does not question that such a way exists; for he believes that Divine Providence could not have left men destitute of this universal way of delivering the soul. For he does not say that this way does not exist, but that this great boon and assistance has not yet been discovered, and has not come to his knowledge. And no wonder; for Porphyry lived in an age when this universal way of the soul's deliverance,—in other words, the Christian religion,—was exposed to the persecutions of idolaters and demon-worshippers, and earthly rulers, that the number of martyrs or witnesses for the truth might be completed and consecrated, and that by them proof might be given that we must endure all bodily sufferings in the cause of the holy faith, and for the commendation of the truth. Porphyry, being a witness of these persecutions, concluded that this way was destined to a speedy extinction, and that it, therefore, was not the universal way of the soul's deliverance, and did not see that the very thing that thus moved him, and deterred him from becoming a Christian, contributed to the confirmation and more effectual commendation of our religion.

This, then, is the universal way of the soul's deliverance, the way that is granted by the divine compassion to the nations universally. And no nation to which the knowledge of it has already come, or may hereafter come, ought to

demand, Why so soon? or, Why so late?—for the design of Him who sends it is impenetrable by human capacity. This was felt by Porphyry when he confined himself to saying that this gift of God was not yet received, and had not yet come to his knowledge. For, though this was so, he did not on that account pronounce that the way itself had no existence. This, I say, is the universal way for the deliverance of believers, concerning which the faithful Abraham received the divine assurance, “In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.” He, indeed, was by birth a Chaldæan; but, that he might receive these great promises, and that there might be propagated from him a seed “disposed by angels in the hand of a Mediator,” in whom this universal way, thrown open to all nations for the deliverance of the soul, might be found, he was ordered to leave his country, and kindred, and father’s house. Then was he himself, first of all, delivered from the Chaldæan superstitions, and by his obedience worshipped the one true God, whose promises he faithfully trusted. This is the universal way, of which it is said in holy prophecy, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.” And hence, when our Saviour, so long after, had taken flesh of the seed of Abraham, He says of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” This is the universal way, of which so long before it had been predicted, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” This way, therefore, is not the property of one, but of all nations. The law and the

word of the Lord did not remain in Zion and Jerusalem, but issued thence to be universally diffused. And therefore the Mediator Himself, after His resurrection, says to His alarmed disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This is the universal way of the soul's deliverance, which the holy angels and the holy prophets formerly disclosed where they could among the few men who found the grace of God, and especially in the Hebrew nation, whose commonwealth was, as it were, consecrated to prefigure and fore-announce the city of God which was to be gathered from all nations, by their tabernacle, and temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices. In some explicit statements, and in many obscure foreshadowings, this way was declared; but latterly came the Mediator Himself in the flesh, and His blessed apostles, revealing how the grace of the New Testament more openly explained what had been obscurely hinted to preceding generations, in conformity with the relation of the ages of the human race, and as it pleased God in His wisdom to appoint, who also bore them witness with signs and miracles, some of which I have cited above. For not only were there visions of angels, and words heard from those heavenly ministrants, but also men of God, armed with the word of simple piety, cast out unclean spirits from the bodies and senses of men, and healed deformities and sicknesses; the wild beasts of earth and sea, the birds of air, inanimate things, the elements, the stars, obeyed their divine commands; the powers of hell gave way before them, the dead were restored to life. I say



nothing of the miracles peculiar and proper to the Saviour's own person, especially the nativity and the resurrection; in the one of which He wrought only the mystery of a virgin maternity, while in the other He furnished an instance of the resurrection which all shall at last experience. This way purifies the whole man, and prepares the mortal in all his parts for immortality. For, to prevent us from seeking for one purgation for the part which Porphyry calls intellectual, and another for the part he calls spiritual, and another for the body itself, our most mighty and truthful Purifier and Saviour assumed the whole human nature. Except by this way, which has been present among men both during the period of the promises and of the proclamation of their fulfilment, no man has been delivered, no man is delivered, no man shall be delivered. As to Porphyry's statement that the universal way of the soul's deliverance had not yet come to his knowledge by any acquaintance he had with history, I would ask, what more remarkable history can be found than that which has taken possession of the whole world by its authoritative voice? or what more trustworthy than that which narrates past events, and predicts the future with equal clearness, and in the unfulfilled predictions of which we are constrained to believe by those that are already fulfilled? For neither Porphyry nor any Platonists can despise divination and prediction, even of things that pertain to this life and earthly matters, though they justly despise ordinary soothsaying and the divination that is connected with magical arts. They deny that these are the predictions of great men, or are to be considered important, and they are right; for they are founded, either on the foresight of subsidiary causes, as to a professional eye much of the course of a disease is foreseen by certain premonitory symptoms, or the unclean demons predict what they have resolved to do, that they may thus work upon the thoughts and desires of the wicked with an appearance of authority, and incline human frailty to

imitate their impure actions. It is not such things that the saints who walk in the universal way care to predict as important, although, for the purpose of commending the faith, they knew and often predicted even such things as could not be detected by human observation, nor be readily verified by experience. But there were other truly important and divine events which they predicted, in so far as it was given them to know the will of God. For the incarnation of Christ, and all those important marvels that were accomplished in Him, and done in His name; the repentance of men and the conversion of their wills to God; the remission of sins, the grace of righteousness, the faith of the pious, and the multitudes in all parts of the world who believe in the true divinity; the overthrow of idolatry and demon worship, and the testing of the faithful by trials; the purification of those who persevered, and their deliverance from all evil; the day of judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the eternal damnation of the community of the ungodly, and the eternal kingdom of the most glorious city of God, ever-blessed in the enjoyment of the vision of God,—these things were predicted and promised in the Scriptures of this way; and of these we see so many fulfilled, that we justly and piously trust that the rest will also come to pass. As for those who do not believe, and consequently do not understand, that this is the way which leads straight to the vision of God and to eternal fellowship with Him, according to the true predictions and statements of the Holy Scriptures, they may storm at our position, but they cannot storm it. And therefore, in these ten books, though not meeting, I dare say, the expectation of some, yet I have, as the true God and Lord has vouchsafed to aid me, satisfied the desire of certain persons, by refuting the objections of the ungodly, who prefer their own gods to the Founder of the holy city, about which we undertook to speak. Of these ten books, the first five were directed against those who think we should

worship the gods for the sake of the blessings of this life, and the second five against those who think we should worship them for the sake of the life which is to be after death. And now, in fulfilment of the promise I made in the first book, I shall go on to say, as God shall aid me, what I think needs to be said regarding the origin, history, and deserved ends of the two cities, which, as already remarked, are in this world commingled and implicated with one another.

