

THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

[Podcast 36 of 50]

BOOK EIGHTEENTH. ARGUMENT. AUGUSTINE TRACES THE PARALLEL COURSES OF THE EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY CITIES FROM THE TIME OF ABRAHAM TO THE END OF THE WORLD; AND ALLUDES TO THE ORACLES REGARDING CHRIST, BOTH THOSE UTTERED BY THE SIBYLS, AND THOSE OF THE SACRED PROPHETS WHO WROTE AFTER THE FOUNDATION OF ROME, HOSEA, AMOS, ISAIAH, MICAH, AND THEIR SUCCESSORS.

[End of Argument]

1. Of those things down to the times of the Saviour which have been discussed in the seventeen books. I promised to write of the rise, progress, and appointed end of the two cities, one of which is God's, the other this world's, in which, so far as mankind is concerned, the former is now a stranger. But first of all I undertook, so far as His grace should enable me, to refute the enemies of the city of God, who prefer their gods to Christ its founder, and fiercely hate Christians with the most deadly malice. And this I have done in the first ten books. Then, as regards my threefold promise which I have just mentioned, I have treated distinctly, in the four books which follow the tenth, of the rise of both cities.

After that, I have proceeded from the first man down to the flood in one book, which is the fifteenth of this work; and from that again down to Abraham our work has followed both in chronological order. From the patriarch Abraham down to the time of the Israelite kings, at which we close our sixteenth book, and thence down to the advent of Christ Himself in the flesh, to which period the seventeenth book reaches, the city of God appears from my way of writing to have run its course alone; whereas it did not run its course alone in this age, for both cities, in their course amid mankind, certainly experienced chequered times together just as from the beginning. But I did this in order that, first of all, from the time when the promises of God began to be more clear, down to the virgin birth of Him in whom those things promised from the first were to be fulfilled, the course of that city which is God's might be made more distinctly apparent, without interpolation of foreign matter from the history of the other city, although down to the revelation of the new covenant it ran its course, not in light, but in shadow. Now, therefore, I think fit to do what I passed by, and show, so far as seems necessary, how that other city ran its course from the times of Abraham, so that attentive readers may compare the two.

2. Of the kings and times of the earthly city which were synchronous with the times of the saints, reckoning from the rise of Abraham. The society of mortals spread abroad through the earth everywhere, and in the most diverse places, although bound together by a certain fellowship of our common nature, is yet for the most part divided against itself, and the strongest oppress the others, because all follow after their own interests and lusts, while what is longed for either suffices for none, or not for all, because it is not the very thing. For the vanquished succumb to the victorious, preferring

any sort of peace and safety to freedom itself; so that they who chose to die rather than be slaves have been greatly wondered at. For in almost all nations the very voice of nature somehow proclaims, that those who happen to be conquered should choose rather to be subject to their conquerors than to be killed by all kinds of warlike destruction. This does not take place without the providence of God, in whose power it lies that any one either subdues or is subdued in war; that some are endowed with kingdoms, others made subject to kings. Now, among the very many kingdoms of the earth into which, by earthly interest or lust, society is divided (which we call by the general name of the city of this world), we see that two, settled and kept distinct from each other both in time and place, have grown far more famous than the rest, first that of the Assyrians, then that of the Romans. First came the one, then the other. The former arose in the east, and, immediately on its close, the latter in the west. I may speak of other kingdoms and other kings as appendages of these. Ninus, then, who succeeded his father Belus, the first king of Assyria, was already the second king of that kingdom when Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldees. There was also at that time a very small kingdom of Sicyon, with which, as from an ancient date, that most universally learned man Marcus Varro begins, in writing of the Roman race. For from these kings of Sicyon he passes to the Athenians, from them to the Latins, and from these to the Romans. Yet very little is related about these kingdoms, before the foundation of Rome, in comparison with that of Assyria. For although even Sallust, the Roman historian, admits that the Athenians were very famous in Greece, yet he thinks they were greater in fame than in fact. For in speaking of them he says, "The deeds of the Athenians, as I think, were very great and magnificent, but yet

somewhat less than reported by fame. But because writers of great genius arose among them, the deeds of the Athenians were celebrated throughout the world as very great. Thus the virtue of those who did them was held to be as great as men of transcendent genius could represent it to be by the power of laudatory words.” This city also derived no small glory from literature and philosophy, the study of which chiefly flourished there. But as regards empire, none in the earliest times was greater than the Assyrian, or so widely extended. For when Ninus the son of Belus was king, he is reported to have subdued the whole of Asia, even to the boundaries of Libya, which as to number is called the third part, but as to size is found to be the half of the whole world. The Indians in the eastern regions were the only people over whom he did not reign; but after his death Semiramis his wife made war on them. Thus it came to pass that all the people and kings in those countries were subject to the kingdom and authority of the Assyrians, and did whatever they were commanded. Now Abraham was born in that kingdom among the Chaldees, in the time of Ninus. But since Grecian affairs are much better known to us than Assyrian, and those who have diligently investigated the antiquity of the Roman nation’s origin have followed the order of time through the Greeks to the Latins, and from them to the Romans, who themselves are Latins, we ought on this account, where it is needful, to mention the Assyrian kings, that it may appear how Babylon, like a first Rome, ran its course along with the city of God, which is a stranger in this world. But the things proper for insertion in this work in comparing the two cities, that is, the earthly and heavenly, ought to be taken mostly from the Greek and Latin kingdoms, where Rome herself is like a second Babylon. At Abraham’s birth, then, the second kings of Assyria and Sicyon

respectively were Ninus and Europs, the first having been Belus and Ægialeus. But when God promised Abraham, on his departure from Babylonia, that he should become a great nation, and that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, the Assyrians had their seventh king, the Sicyons their fifth; for the son of Ninus reigned among them after his mother Semiramis, who is said to have been put to death by him for attempting to defile him by incestuously lying with him. Some think that she founded Babylon, and indeed she may have founded it anew. But we have told, in the sixteenth book, when or by whom it was founded. Now the son of Ninus and Semiramis, who succeeded his mother in the kingdom, is also called Ninus by some, but by others Ninias, a patronymic word. Telexion then held the kingdom of the Sicyons. In his reign times were quiet and joyful to such a degree, that after his death they worshipped him as a god by offering sacrifices and by celebrating games, which are said to have been first instituted on this occasion.

3. What kings reigned in Assyria and Sicyon when, according to the promise, Isaac was born to Abraham in his hundredth year, and when the twins Esau and Jacob were born of Rebecca to Isaac in his sixtieth year. In his times also, by the promise of God, Isaac, the son of Abraham, was born to his father when he was a hundred years old, of Sarah his wife, who, being barren and old, had already lost hope of issue. Aralius was then the fifth king of the Assyrians. To Isaac himself, in his sixtieth year, were born twin-sons, Esau and Jacob, whom Rebecca his wife bore to him, their grandfather Abraham, who died on completing a hundred and seventy years, being still alive, and reckoning his hundred and sixtieth year. At that time there reigned as the seventh kings,—among the Assyrians, that more ancient Xerxes, who was also called Balæus; and

among the Sicyons, Thuriachus, or, as some write his name, Thurimachus. The kingdom of Argos, in which Inachus reigned first, arose in the time of Abraham's grandchildren. And I must not omit what Varro relates, that the Sicyons were also wont to sacrifice at the tomb of their seventh king Thuriachus. In the reign of Armamitres in Assyria and Leucippus in Sicyon as the eighth kings, and of Inachus as the first in Argos, God spoke to Isaac, and promised the same two things to him as to his father,—namely, the land of Canaan to his seed, and the blessing of all nations in his seed. These same things were promised to his son, Abraham's grandson, who was at first called Jacob, afterwards Israel, when Belocus was the ninth king of Assyria, and Phoroneus, the son of Inachus, reigned as the second king of Argos, Leucippus still continuing king of Sicyon. In those times, under the Argive king Phoroneus, Greece was made more famous by the institution of certain laws and judges. On the death of Phoroneus, his younger brother Phegous built a temple at his tomb, in which he was worshipped as God, and oxen were sacrificed to him. I believe they thought him worthy of so great honour, because in his part of the kingdom (for their father had divided his territories between them, in which they reigned during his life) he had founded chapels for the worship of the gods, and had taught them to measure time by months and years, and to that extent to keep count and reckoning of events. Men still uncultivated, admiring him for these novelties, either fancied he was, or resolved that he should be made, a god after his death. Io also is said to have been the daughter of Inachus, who was afterwards called Isis, when she was worshipped in Egypt as a great goddess; although others write that she came as a queen out of Ethiopia, and because she ruled extensively and justly, and instituted for her subjects letters and many useful

things, such divine honour was given her there after she died, that if any one said she had been human, he was charged with a capital crime.

4. Of the times of Jacob and his son Joseph. In the reign of Balæus, the ninth king of Assyria, and Mesappus, the eighth of Sicyon, who is said by some to have been also called Cephisos (if indeed the same man had both names, and those who put the other name in their writings have not rather confounded him with another man), while Apis was third king of Argos, Isaac died, a hundred and eighty years old, and left his twin-sons a hundred and twenty years old. Jacob, the younger of these, belonged to the city of God about which we write (the elder being wholly rejected), and had twelve sons, one of whom, called Joseph, was sold by his brothers to merchants going down to Egypt, while his grandfather Isaac was still alive. But when he was thirty years of age, Joseph stood before Pharaoh, being exalted out of the humiliation he endured, because, in divinely interpreting the king's dreams, he foretold that there would be seven years of plenty, the very rich abundance of which would be consumed by seven other years of famine that should follow. On this account the king made him ruler over Egypt, liberating him from prison, into which he had been thrown for keeping his chastity intact; for he bravely preserved it from his mistress, who wickedly loved him, and told lies to his weakly credulous master, and did not consent to commit adultery with her, but fled from her, leaving his garment in her hands when she laid hold of him. In the second of the seven years of famine Jacob came down into Egypt to his son with all he had, being a hundred and thirty years old, as he himself said in answer to the king's question. Joseph was then thirty-nine, if we add seven years of plenty and two of famine to the thirty he reckoned when honoured by the king.

5. Of Apis king of Argos, whom the Egyptians called Serapis, and worshipped with divine honours. In these times Apis king of Argos crossed over into Egypt in ships, and, on dying there, was made Serapis, the chief god of all the Egyptians. Now Varro gives this very ready reason why, after his death, he was called, not Apis, but Serapis. The ark in which he was placed when dead, which every one now calls a sarcophagus, was then called in Greek σαρκοφάγος, and they began to worship him when buried in it before his temple was built; and from Soros and Apis he was called first [Sorosapis, or] Sorapis, and then Serapis, by changing a letter, as easily happens. It was decreed regarding him also, that whoever should say he had been a man should be capitally punished. And since in every temple where Isis and Serapis were worshipped there was also an image which, with finger pressed on the lips, seemed to warn men to keep silence, Varro thinks this signifies that it should be kept secret that they had been human. But that bull which, with wonderful folly, deluded Egypt nourished with abundant delicacies in honour of him, was not called Serapis, but Apis, because they worshipped him alive without a sarcophagus. On the death of that bull, when they sought and found a calf of the same colour,—that is, similarly marked with certain white spots,—they believed it was something miraculous, and divinely provided for them. Yet it was no great thing for the demons, in order to deceive them, to show to a cow when she was conceiving and pregnant the image of such a bull, which she alone could see, and by it attract the breeding passion of the mother, so that it might appear in a bodily shape in her young, just as Jacob so managed with the spotted rods that the sheep and goats were born spotted. For what men can do with real colours and substances, the

demons can very easily do by showing unreal forms to breeding animals.

6. Who were kings of Argos, and of Assyria, when Jacob died in Egypt. Apis, then, who died in Egypt, was not the king of Egypt, but of Argos. He was succeeded by his son Argus, from whose name the land was called Argos and the people Argives, for under the earlier kings neither the place nor the nation as yet had this name. While he then reigned over Argos, and Eratus over Sicyon, and Balæus still remained king of Assyria, Jacob died in Egypt a hundred and forty-seven years old, after he had, when dying, blessed his sons and his grandsons by Joseph, and prophesied most plainly of Christ, saying in the blessing of Judah, "A prince shall not fail out of Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until those things come which are laid up for him; and He is the expectation of the nations." In the reign of Argus Greece began to use fruits, and to have crops of corn in cultivated fields, the seed having been brought from other countries. Argus also began to be accounted a god after his death, and was honoured with a temple and sacrifices. This honour was conferred in his reign, before being given to him, on a private individual for being the first to yoke oxen in the plough. This was one Homogyrus, who was struck by lightning.
7. Who were kings when Joseph died in Egypt. In the reign of Mamitus, the twelfth king of Assyria, and Plemnæus, the eleventh of Sicyon, while Argus still reigned over the Argives, Joseph died in Egypt a hundred and ten years old. After his death, the people of God, increasing wonderfully, remained in Egypt a hundred and forty-five years, in tranquillity at first, until those who knew Joseph were dead. Afterward, through envy of their increase, and the suspicion that they would at length gain their freedom, they were oppressed with persecutions and the labours of

intolerable servitude, amid which, however, they still grew, being multiplied with God-given fertility. During this period the same kingdoms continued in Assyria and Greece.

8. Who were kings when Moses was born, and what gods began to be worshipped then. When Saphrus reigned as the fourteenth king of Assyria, and Orthopolis as the twelfth of Sicyon, and Criasus as the fifth of Argos, Moses was born in Egypt, by whom the people of God were liberated from the Egyptian slavery, in which they behoved to be thus tried that they might desire the help of their Creator. Some have thought that Prometheus lived during the reign of the kings now named. He is reported to have formed men out of clay, because he was esteemed the best teacher of wisdom; yet it does not appear what wise men there were in his days. His brother Atlas is said to have been a great astrologer; and this gave occasion for the fable that he held up the sky, although the vulgar opinion about his holding up the sky appears rather to have been suggested by a high mountain named after him. Indeed, from those times many other fabulous things began to be invented in Greece; yet, down to Cecrops king of Athens, in whose reign that city received its name, and in whose reign God brought His people out of Egypt by Moses, only a few dead heroes are reported to have been deified according to the vain superstition of the Greeks. Among these were Melantomice, the wife of king Criasus, and Phorbas their son, who succeeded his father as sixth king of the Argives, and Iasus, son of Triopas, their seventh king, and their ninth king, Sthenelas, or Stheneleus, or Sthenelus,—for his name is given differently by different authors. In those times also, Mercury, the grandson of Atlas by his daughter Maia, is said to have lived, according to the common report in books. He was famous for his skill in many

arts, and taught them to men, for which they resolved to make him, and even believed that he deserved to be, a god after death. Hercules is said to have been later, yet belonging to the same period; although some, whom I think mistaken, assign him an earlier date than Mercury. But at whatever time they were born, it is agreed among grave historians, who have committed these ancient things to writing, that both were men, and that they merited divine honours from mortals because they conferred on them many benefits to make this life more pleasant to them. Minerva was far more ancient than these; for she is reported to have appeared in virgin age in the times of Ogyges at the lake called Triton, from which she is also styled Tritonia, the inventress truly of many works, and the more readily believed to be a goddess because her origin was so little known. For what is sung about her having sprung from the head of Jupiter belongs to the region of poetry and fable, and not to that of history and real fact. And historical writers are not agreed when Ogyges flourished, in whose time also a great flood occurred,—not that greatest one from which no man escaped except those who could get into the ark, for neither Greek nor Latin history knew of it, yet a greater flood than that which happened afterward in Deucalion's time. For Varro begins the book I have already mentioned at this date, and does not propose to himself, as the starting-point from which he may arrive at Roman affairs, anything more ancient than the flood of Ogyges, that is, which happened in the time of Ogyges. Now our writers of chronicles—first Eusebius, and afterwards Jerome, who entirely follow some earlier historians in this opinion—relate that the flood of Ogyges happened more than three hundred years after, during the reign of Phoroneus, the second king of Argos. But whenever he may have lived, Minerva was

already worshipped as a goddess when Cecrops reigned in Athens, in whose reign the city itself is reported to have been rebuilt or founded.

9. When the city of Athens was founded, and what reason Varro assigns for its name. Athens certainly derived its name from Minerva, who in Greek is called Ἀθηνῆ, and Varro points out the following reason why it was so called. When an olive-tree suddenly appeared there, and water burst forth in another place, these prodigies moved the king to send to the Delphic Apollo to inquire what they meant and what he should do. He answered that the olive signified Minerva, the water Neptune, and that the citizens had it in their power to name their city as they chose, after either of these two gods whose signs these were. On receiving this oracle, Cecrops convoked all the citizens of either sex to give their vote, for it was then the custom in those parts for the women also to take part in public deliberations. When the multitude was consulted, the men gave their votes for Neptune, the women for Minerva; and as the women had a majority of one, Minerva conquered. Then Neptune, being enraged, laid waste the lands of the Athenians, by casting up the waves of the sea; for the demons have no difficulty in scattering any waters more widely. The same authority said, that to appease his wrath the women should be visited by the Athenians with the threefold punishment—that they should no longer have any vote; that none of their children should be named after their mothers; and that no one should call them Athenians. Thus that city, the mother and nurse of liberal doctrines, and of so many and so great philosophers, than whom Greece had nothing more famous and noble, by the mockery of demons about the strife of their gods, a male and female, and from the victory of the female one through the women, received the name of Athens; and, on being damaged by the

vanquished god, was compelled to punish the very victory of the victress, fearing the waters of Neptune more than the arms of Minerva. For in the women who were thus punished, Minerva, who had conquered, was conquered too, and could not even help her voters so far that, although the right of voting was henceforth lost, and the mothers could not give their names to the children, they might at least be allowed to be called Athenians, and to merit the name of that goddess whom they had made victorious over a male god by giving her their votes. What and how much could be said about this, if we had not to hasten to other things in our discourse, is obvious.

10. What Varro reports about the term Areopagus, and about Deucalion's flood. Marcus Varro, however, is not willing to credit lying fables against the gods, lest he should find something dishonouring to their majesty; and therefore he will not admit that the Areopagus, the place where the Apostle Paul disputed with the Athenians, got this name because Mars, who in Greek is called Ἄρης, when he was charged with the crime of homicide, and was judged by twelve gods in that field, was acquitted by the sentence of six; because it was the custom, when the votes were equal, to acquit rather than condemn. Against this opinion, which is much most widely published, he tries, from the notices of obscure books, to support another reason for this name, lest the Athenians should be thought to have called it Areopagus from the words "Mars" and "field," as if it were the field of Mars, to the dishonour of the gods, forsooth, from whom he thinks lawsuits and judgments far removed. And he asserts that this which is said about Mars is not less false than what is said about the three goddesses, to wit, Juno, Minerva, and Venus, whose contest for the palm of beauty, before Paris as judge, in order to obtain the golden apple, is

not only related, but is celebrated in songs and dances amid the applause of the theatres, in plays meant to please the gods who take pleasure in these crimes of their own, whether real or fabled. Varro does not believe these things, because they are incompatible with the nature of the gods and of morality; and yet, in giving not a fabulous but a historic reason for the name of Athens, he inserts in his books the strife between Neptune and Minerva as to whose name should be given to that city, which was so great that, when they contended by the display of prodigies, even Apollo dared not judge between them when consulted; but, in order to end the strife of the gods, just as Jupiter sent the three goddesses we have named to Paris, so he sent them to men, when Minerva won by the vote, and yet was defeated by the punishment of her own voters, for she was unable to confer the title of Athenians on the women who were her friends, although she could impose it on the men who were her opponents. In these times, when Cranaos reigned at Athens as the successor of Cecrops, as Varro writes, but, according to our Eusebius and Jerome, while Cecrops himself still remained, the flood occurred which is called Deucalion's, because it occurred chiefly in those parts of the earth in which he reigned. But this flood did not at all reach Egypt or its vicinity.

11. When Moses led the people out of Egypt; and who were kings when his successor Joshua the son of Nun died. Moses led the people out of Egypt in the last time of Cecrops king of Athens, when Ascatades reigned in Assyria, Marathus in Sicyon, Triopas in Argos; and having led forth the people, he gave them at Mount Sinai the law he received from God, which is called the Old Testament, because it has earthly promises, and because, through Jesus Christ, there was to be a New Testament, in which the kingdom of heaven should be

promised. For the same order behoved to be observed in this as is observed in each man who prospers in God, according to the saying of the apostle, "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural," since, as he says, and that truly, "The first man of the earth, is earthly; the second man, from heaven, is heavenly." Now Moses ruled the people for forty years in the wilderness, and died a hundred and twenty years old, after he had prophesied of Christ by the types of carnal observances in the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices, and many other mystic ordinances. Joshua the son of Nun succeeded Moses, and settled in the land of promise the people he had brought in, having by divine authority conquered the people by whom it was formerly possessed. He also died, after ruling the people twenty-seven years after the death of Moses, when Amyntas reigned in Assyria as the eighteenth king, Coracos as the sixteenth in Sicyon, Danaos as the tenth in Argos, Erichthonius as the fourth in Athens.

12. Of the rituals of false gods instituted by the kings of Greece in the period from Israel's exodus from Egypt down to the death of Joshua the son of Nun. During this period, that is, from Israel's exodus from Egypt down to the death of Joshua the son of Nun, through whom that people received the land of promise, rituals were instituted to the false gods by the kings of Greece, which, by stated celebration, recalled the memory of the flood, and of men's deliverance from it, and of that troublous life they then led in migrating to and fro between the heights and the plains. For even the Luperci, when they ascend and descend the sacred path, are said to represent the men who sought the mountain summits because of the inundation of water, and returned to the lowlands on its subsidence. In those times, Dionysus, who was also called Father Liber, and was esteemed a god after death, is said to

have shown the vine to his host in Attica. Then the musical games were instituted for the Delphic Apollo, to appease his anger, through which they thought the regions of Greece were afflicted with barrenness, because they had not defended his temple which Danaos burnt when he invaded those lands; for they were warned by his oracle to institute these games. But king Ericthonius first instituted games to him in Attica, and not to him only, but also to Minerva, in which games the olive was given as the prize to the victors, because they relate that Minerva was the discoverer of that fruit, as Liber was of the grape. In those years Europa is alleged to have been carried off by Xanthus king of Crete (to whom we find some give another name), and to have borne him Rhadamanthus, Sarpedon, and Minos, who are more commonly reported to have been the sons of Jupiter by the same woman. Now those who worship such gods regard what we have said about Xanthus king of Crete as true history; but this about Jupiter, which the poets sing, the theatres applaud, and the people celebrate, as empty fable got up as a reason for games to appease the deities, even with the false ascription of crimes to them. In those times Hercules was held in honour in Tyre, but that was not the same one as he whom we spoke of above. In the more secret history there are said to have been several who were called Father Liber and Hercules. This Hercules, whose great deeds are reckoned as twelve (not including the slaughter of Antæus the African, because that affair pertains to another Hercules), is declared in their books to have burned himself on Mount Cæta, because he was not able, by that strength with which he had subdued monsters, to endure the disease under which he languished. At that time the king, or rather tyrant Busiris, who is alleged to have been the son of Neptune

by Libya the daughter of Epaphus, is said to have offered up his guests in sacrifice to the gods. Now it must not be believed that Neptune committed this adultery, lest the gods should be criminated; yet such things must be ascribed to them by the poets and in the theatres, that they may be pleased with them. Vulcan and Minerva are said to have been the parents of Erichthonius king of Athens, in whose last years Joshua the son of Nun is found to have died. But since they will have it that Minerva is a virgin, they say that Vulcan, being disturbed in the struggle between them, poured out his seed into the earth, and on that account the man born of it received that name; for in the Greek language ἔρις is "strife," and χθὼν "earth," of which two words Erichthonius is a compound. Yet it must be admitted that the more learned disprove and disown such things concerning their gods, and declare that this fabulous belief originated in the fact that in the temple at Athens, which Vulcan and Minerva had in common, a boy who had been exposed was found wrapped up in the coils of a dragon, which signified that he would become great, and, as his parents were unknown, he was called the son of Vulcan and Minerva, because they had the temple in common. Yet that fable accounts for the origin of his name better than this history. But what does it matter to us? Let the one in books that speak the truth edify religious men, and the other in lying fables delight impure demons. Yet these religious men worship them as gods. Still, while they deny these things concerning them, they cannot clear them of all crime, because at their demand they exhibit plays in which the very things they wisely deny are basely done, and the gods are appeased by these false and base things. Now, even although the play celebrates an unreal crime of the gods, yet to delight in the ascription of an unreal crime is a real one.

13. What fables were invented at the time when judges began to rule the Hebrews. After the death of Joshua the son of Nun, the people of God had judges, in whose times they were alternately humbled by afflictions on account of their sins, and consoled by prosperity through the compassion of God. In those times were invented the fables about Triptolemus, who, at the command of Ceres, borne by winged snakes, bestowed corn on the needy lands in flying over them; about that beast the Minotaur, which was shut up in the Labyrinth, from which men who entered its inextricable mazes could find no exit; about the Centaurs, whose form was a compound of horse and man; about Cerberus, the three-headed dog of hell; about Phryxus and his sister Hellas, who fled, borne by a winged ram; about the Gorgon, whose hair was composed of serpents, and who turned those who looked on her into stone; about Bellerophon, who was carried by a winged horse called Pegasus; about Amphion, who charmed and attracted the stones by the sweetness of his harp; about the artificer Dædalus and his son Icarus, who flew on wings they had fitted on; about Œdipus, who compelled a certain four-footed monster with a human face, called a sphynx, to destroy herself by casting herself headlong, having solved the riddle she was wont to propose as insoluble; about Antæus, who was the son of the earth, for which reason, on falling on the earth, he was wont to rise up stronger, whom Hercules slew; and perhaps there are others which I have forgotten. These fables, easily found in histories containing a true account of events, bring us down to the Trojan war, at which Marcus Varro has closed his second book about the race of the Roman people; and they are so skilfully invented by men as to involve no scandal to the gods. But whoever have pretended as to Jupiter's rape of Ganymede, a very beautiful boy, that king Tantalus

committed the crime, and the fable ascribed it to Jupiter; or as to his impregnating Danæ as a golden shower, that it means that the woman's virtue was corrupted by gold: whether these things were really done or only fabled in those days, or were really done by others and falsely ascribed to Jupiter, it is impossible to tell how much wickedness must have been taken for granted in men's hearts that they should be thought able to listen to such lies with patience. And yet they willingly accepted them, when, indeed, the more devotedly they worshipped Jupiter, they ought the more severely to have punished those who durst say such things of him. But they not only were not angry at those who invented these things, but were afraid that the gods would be angry at them if they did not act such fictions even in the theatres. In those times Latona bore Apollo, not him of whose oracle we have spoken above as so often consulted, but him who is said, along with Hercules, to have fed the flocks of king Admetus; yet he was so believed to be a god, that very many, indeed almost all, have believed him to be the selfsame Apollo. Then also Father Liber made war in India, and led in his army many women called Bacchæ, who were notable not so much for valour as for fury. Some, indeed, write that this Liber was both conquered and bound; and some that he was slain in Persia, even telling where he was buried; and yet in his name, as that of a god, the unclean demons have instituted the sacred, or rather the sacrilegious, Bacchanalia, of the outrageous vileness of which the senate, after many years, became so much ashamed as to prohibit them in the city of Rome. Men believed that in those times Perseus and his wife Andromeda were raised into heaven after their death, so that they were not ashamed or afraid to mark out their images by constellations, and call them by their names.

14. Of the theological poets. During the same period of time arose the poets, who were also called theologues, because they made hymns about the gods; yet about such gods as, although great men, were yet but men, or the elements of this world which the true God made, or creatures who were ordained as principalities and powers according to the will of the Creator and their own merit. And if, among much that was vain and false, they sang anything of the one true God, yet, by worshipping Him along with others who are not gods, and showing them the service that is due to Him alone, they did not serve Him at all rightly; and even such poets as Orpheus, Musæus, and Linus, were unable to abstain from dishonouring their gods by fables. But yet these theologues worshipped the gods, and were not worshipped as gods, although the city of the ungodly is wont, I know not how, to set Orpheus over the sacred, or rather sacrilegious, rites of hell. The wife of king Athamas, who was called Ino, and her son Melicertes, perished by throwing themselves into the sea, and were, according to popular belief, reckoned among the gods, like other men of the same times, [among whom were] Castor and Pollux. The Greeks, indeed, called her who was the mother of Melicertes, Leucothea, the Latins Matuta; but both thought her a goddess.
15. Of the fall of the kingdom of Argos, when Picus the son of Saturn first received his father's kingdom of Laurentum. During those times the kingdom of Argos came to an end, being transferred to Mycene, from which Agamemnon came, and the kingdom of Laurentum arose, of which Picus son of Saturn was the first king, when the woman Deborah judged the Hebrews; but it was the Spirit of God who used her as His agent, for she was also a prophetess, although her prophecy is so obscure that we could not demonstrate, without a long discussion, that it was uttered

concerning Christ. Now the Laientes already reigned in Italy, from whom the origin of the Roman people is quite evidently derived after the Greeks; yet the kingdom of Assyria still lasted, in which Lampares was the twenty-third king when Picus first began to reign at Laurentum. The worshippers of such gods may see what they are to think of Saturn the father of Picus, who deny that he was a man; of whom some also have written that he himself reigned in Italy before Picus his son; and Virgil in his well-known book says,—

“That race indocile, and through mountains high Dispersed,
he settled, and endowed with laws, And named their
country Latium, because Latent within their coasts he
dwelt secure. Tradition says the golden ages pure Began
when he was king.” But they regard these as poetic fancies,
and assert that the father of Picus was Sterces rather, and
relate that, being a most skilful husbandman, he discovered
that the fields could be fertilized by the dung of animals,
which is called stercus from his name. Some say he was
called Stercutius. But for whatever reason they chose to
call him Saturn, it is yet certain they made this Sterces or
Stercutius a god for his merit in agriculture; and they
likewise received into the number of these gods Picus his
son, whom they affirm to have been a famous augur and
warrior. Picus begot Faunus, the second king of
Laurentum; and he too is, or was, a god with them. These
divine honours they gave to dead men before the Trojan
war. 16. Of Diomedes, who after the destruction of Troy was
placed among the gods, while his companions are said to
have been changed into birds. Troy was overthrown, and its
destruction was everywhere sung and made well known
even to boys; for it was signally published and spread
abroad, both by its own greatness and by writers of
excellent style. And this was done in the reign of Latinus
the son of Faunus, from whom the kingdom began to be

called Latium instead of Laurentum. The victorious Greeks, on leaving Troy destroyed and returning to their own countries, were torn and crushed by divers and horrible calamities. Yet even from among them they increased the number of their gods, for they made Diomedes a god. They allege that his return home was prevented by a divinely imposed punishment, and they prove, not by fabulous and poetic falsehood, but by historic attestation, that his companions were turned into birds. Yet they think that, even although he was made a god, he could neither restore them to the human form by his own power, nor yet obtain it from Jupiter his king, as a favour granted to a new inhabitant of heaven. They also say that his temple is in the island of Diomedæa, not far from Mount Garganus in Apulia, and that these birds fly round about this temple, and worship in it with such wonderful obedience, that they fill their beaks with water and sprinkle it; and if Greeks, or those born of the Greek race, come there, they are not only still, but fly to meet them; but if they are foreigners, they fly up at their heads, and wound them with such severe strokes as even to kill them. For they are said to be well enough armed for these combats with their hard and large beaks. 17. What Varro says of the incredible transformations of men. In support of this story, Varro relates others no less incredible about that most famous sorceress Circe, who changed the companions of Ulysses into beasts, and about the Arcadians, who, by lot, swam across a certain pool, and were turned into wolves there, and lived in the deserts of that region with wild beasts like themselves. But if they never fed on human flesh for nine years, they were restored to the human form on swimming back again through the same pool. Finally, he expressly names one Demænetus, who, on tasting a boy offered up in sacrifice by the Arcadians to their god Lycæus according to their custom, was changed into a wolf, and, being restored to his proper form in the tenth year, trained himself as a

pugilist, and was victorious at the Olympic games. And the same historian thinks that the epithet Lycæus was applied in Arcadia to Pan and Jupiter for no other reason than this metamorphosis of men into wolves, because it was thought it could not be wrought except by a divine power. For a wolf is called in Greek λυκὸς, from which the name Lycæus appears to be formed. He says also that the Roman Luperci were as it were sprung of the seed of these mysteries. 18. What we should believe concerning the transformations which seem to happen to men through the art of demons. Perhaps our readers expect us to say something about this so great delusion wrought by the demons; and what shall we say but that men must fly out of the midst of Babylon? For this prophetic precept is to be understood spiritually in this sense, that by going forward in the living God, by the steps of faith, which worketh by love, we must flee out of the city of this world, which is altogether a society of ungodly angels and men. Yea, the greater we see the power of the demons to be in these depths, so much the more tenaciously must we cleave to the Mediator through whom we ascend from these lowest to the highest places. For if we should say these things are not to be credited, there are not wanting even now some who would affirm that they had either heard on the best authority, or even themselves experienced, something of that kind. Indeed we ourselves, when in Italy, heard such things about a certain region there, where landladies of inns, imbued with these wicked arts, were said to be in the habit of giving to such travellers as they chose, or could manage, something in a piece of cheese by which they were changed on the spot into beasts of burden, and carried whatever was necessary, and were restored to their own form when the work was done. Yet their mind did not become bestial, but remained rational and human, just as Apuleius, in the books he wrote with the title of The Golden Ass, has told, or feigned, that it happened to his own self

that, on taking poison, he became an ass, while retaining his human mind. These things are either false, or so extraordinary as to be with good reason disbelieved. But it is to be most firmly believed that Almighty God can do whatever He pleases, whether in punishing or favouring, and that the demons can accomplish nothing by their natural power (for their created being is itself angelic, although made malign by their own fault), except what He may permit, whose judgments are often hidden, but never unrighteous. And indeed the demons, if they really do such things as these on which this discussion turns, do not create real substances, but only change the appearance of things created by the true God so as to make them seem to be what they are not. I cannot therefore believe that even the body, much less the mind, can really be changed into bestial forms and lineaments by any reason, art, or power of the demons; but the phantasm of a man, which even in thought or dreams goes through innumerable changes, may, when the man's senses are laid asleep or overpowered, be presented to the senses of others in a corporeal form, in some indescribable way unknown to me, so that men's bodies themselves may lie somewhere, alive, indeed, yet with their senses locked up much more heavily and firmly than by sleep, while that phantasm, as it were embodied in the shape of some animal, may appear to the senses of others, and may even seem to the man himself to be changed, just as he may seem to himself in sleep to be so changed, and to bear burdens; and these burdens, if they are real substances, are borne by the demons, that men may be deceived by beholding at the same time the real substance of the burdens and the simulated bodies of the beasts of burden. For a certain man called Præstantius used to tell that it had happened to his father in his own house, that he took that poison in a piece of cheese, and lay in his bed as if sleeping, yet could by no means be aroused. But he said that after a few days he as it were woke up and

related the things he had suffered as if they had been dreams, namely, that he had been made a sumpter horse, and, along with other beasts of burden, had carried provisions for the soldiers of what is called the Rhœtian Legion, because it was sent to Rhœtia. And all this was found to have taken place just as he told, yet it had seemed to him to be his own dream. And another man declared that in his own house at night, before he slept, he saw a certain philosopher, whom he knew very well, come to him and explain to him some things in the Platonic philosophy which he had previously declined to explain when asked. And when he had asked this philosopher why he did in his house what he had refused to do at home, he said, "I did not do it, but I dreamed I had done it." And thus what the one saw when sleeping was shown to the other when awake by a phantasmal image. These things have not come to us from persons we might deem unworthy of credit, but from informants we could not suppose to be deceiving us. Therefore what men say and have committed to writing about the Arcadians being often changed into wolves by the Arcadian gods, or demons rather, and what is told in song about Circe transforming the companions of Ulysses, if they were really done, may, in my opinion, have been done in the way I have said. As for Diomedes's birds, since their race is alleged to have been perpetuated by constant propagation, I believe they were not made through the metamorphosis of men, but were slyly substituted for them on their removal, just as the hind was for Iphigenia, the daughter of king Agamemnon. For juggleries of this kind could not be difficult for the demons if permitted by the judgment of God; and since that virgin was afterward found alive, it is easy to see that a hind had been slyly substituted for her. But because the companions of Diomedes were of a sudden nowhere to be seen, and afterward could nowhere be found, being destroyed by bad avenging angels, they were believed to have been changed into those birds, which

were secretly brought there from other places where such birds were, and suddenly substituted for them by fraud. But that they bring water in their beaks and sprinkle it on the temple of Diomedes, and that they fawn on men of Greek race and persecute aliens, is no wonderful thing to be done by the inward influence of the demons, whose interest it is to persuade men that Diomedes was made a god, and thus to beguile them into worshipping many false gods, to the great dishonour of the true God; and to serve dead men, who even in their lifetime did not truly live, with temples, altars, sacrifices, and priests, all which, when of the right kind, are due only to the one living and true God.

