

works are *The Young Augustine*, *Porphyr's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine*, *Charter of Christendom: The Significance of the City of God and Eriugena*.

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ST AUGUSTINE



Concerning

THE CITY OF GOD

against the Pagans



A NEW TRANSLATION
BY HENRY BETTENSON
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY JOHN O'MEARA

Stephen M. McDonald

PENGUIN BOOKS

Then, in the period of the judges, there was alternation of success and failure in war, according to the sins of the people and the mercy of God. After this comes the period of the kings, Saul being the first to exercise the royal power. When he was rejected by God and fell in a military disaster and his line was abandoned, so that it should not be the source of kings, David succeeded to the throne; and 'Son of David' is the chief title of Christ. David marks the beginning of an epoch, and with him there is what may be called the start of the manhood of God's people, since we may regard the period from Abraham to David as the adolescence of this race. And there is a special significance in the fact that the evangelist Matthew records the generations in such a way as to attribute fourteen generations to this first stage, that is, the period from Abraham to David. For it is at adolescence that a man becomes capable of procreation; and that is why the list of generations starts with Abraham, who was also marked out as the 'father of nations' when he received his change of name.¹⁹⁸ Before that time there was, as it were, the boyhood of this race of God's people from Noah down to Abraham himself; and that is why this boyhood is found to have a language, namely Hebrew. For it is at boyhood that man begins to talk, after he leaves infancy – which is so called because it has not the power of speech.¹⁹⁹ And this first age of infancy is sunk in oblivion, as the first age of mankind was wiped out by the Flood. For there are very few men who have any recollection of their infancy.

Thus the previous book covers one age, the first, in the development of the City of God, and this present book deals with the second and third. In this third age, as symbolized by the heifer, goat, and ram – all three years old – the yoke of the Law was imposed, a multitude of sinners came on the scene, and the earthly kingdom entered its first stage. Yet at the same time there were not lacking spiritual men who were prophetically indicated by the symbol of the dove and the pigeon.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Joshua being called *Jesus Nave* ('son of Nave') to distinguish him from the Jesus of the New Testament.

¹⁹⁹ cf. ch. 28.

²⁰⁰ *Infans* in Latin means literally 'not speaking'.

²⁰⁰ cf. ch. 24.

BOOK XVII

1. *The era of the prophets*

WE have learned that it is from the line of Abraham that the Israelite race derives its origin, in respect of physical descent; while, in respect of faith, all nations have issued from him; and this is according to God's promise. And the history of the City of God, as it develops through succeeding periods, will show how the promises made to Abraham are being fulfilled. My previous book brought the story as far as David's reign; and now we touch on the events which followed that reign, in so far as seems sufficient for the task in hand.

The next period extends from the time when the holy Samuel began to prophesy down to the deportation of the Israelite people to captivity in Babylon, and from then on to the restoration of the House of God, fulfilling the prophecy of the holy Jeremiah,¹ after the return of the Israelites, seventy years later. This whole period is the era of the prophets. It is true that we can quite rightly give the title of prophet to Noah himself, in whose time the whole earth was wiped out by the Deluge; and also to others, before and after him, down to the time when kings first arose among God's people. They have a right to this title because through them certain future events connected with the City of God and the kingdom of heaven were in some fashion symbolized or foretold. This is particularly true of some of these men, Abraham and Moses, for example, of whom we read that they were expressly given this appellation. For all that, 'the days of the prophets' is a name given chiefly and especially to the era beginning with the prophetic activity of Samuel, who at God's bidding first anointed Saul and then, when Saul proved unsatisfactory, David himself, from whose stock the whole succession of kings derived, so long as this succession was permitted.

Now it would develop into an immense undertaking if I were to try to record all the predictions about Christ uttered by the prophets while the City of God was running its course during this era, as generation succeeded generation. For, in the first place, the scriptural narrative itself gives an account of the succession of kings and their

¹ Jer. 25, 11.

achievements and the events of their reigns; and yet a careful examination of the narrative, with the help of God's spirit, reveals it to be more concerned – or at least not less concerned – with foretelling the future than with recording the past. And no one who gives the slightest thought to the matter can fail to realize what a laborious and boundless task it would be to track down all those points, by a minute scrutiny of the record, and then to discuss them so as to show their relevance. It would, in fact, require many volumes. Moreover, even the matters which are unambiguously prophetic in character refer in so many cases to Christ and the kingdom of heaven, which is the City of God, that merely to broach the subject would entail a more elaborate disquisition than the scope of this work demands. From now on, therefore, I shall do my best to control my pen so as neither to include anything superfluous, nor to omit anything necessary for the accomplishment of this undertaking, according to God's will.

2. *The fulfilment of God's promise about the land of Canaan: Israel 'according' to the flesh obtained possession of it*

In the previous book I have said that two things were promised to Abraham from the beginning. One was that his descendants would possess the land of Canaan; and this is signified in the passage which says, 'Go into the land which I shall show you; and I will make of you a great nation.'² The other, far more important, related not to his physical descendants but to his spiritual posterity, through whom he is the father not of the one nation of Israel, but of all nations which follow in the footsteps of his faith. This promise begins with these words: 'And all the tribes of the earth will be blessed in you.'³ And I have shown that these two promises were repeated thereafter, according to the evidence of a large number of passages. Thus Abraham's descendants, in the physical sense, that is, the people of Israel, were already in the land of promise and had already started their kingdom there, not only in the sense of holding in possession the cities of their enemies, but also by having kings. Thus God's promises about this people had already been fulfilled in large measure, not only the promise which had been made to the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others made in their period, but also those given through Moses, by whom this people was set free from slavery in Egypt, and through whom all the events of the past were revealed, when he led the people through the desert.

² Gen. 12, 1f.

³ Gen. 12, 3.

However, the promise of God about the land of Canaan was not fulfilled through the great leader Joshua, by whom the people was brought into the land of promise. What Joshua did was to conquer and dispossess the nations of the land, and divide the country, as God had bidden, among the twelve tribes. Then he died; and the promise was not fulfilled in the whole period of the judges which followed his death. For the promise spoke of the land of Canaan stretching from a certain river of Egypt to the great River Euphrates.⁴ But this was by now no longer a prophecy for the distant future: its immediate fulfilment was awaited; and the fulfilment came through David and his son Solomon, whose dominion was extended over the whole area mentioned in the promise. For they subdued all those peoples and made them tributary nations.⁵ Thus under those kings the descendants of Abraham had been established in the land of promise, in the physical sense, that is, in the land of Canaan; and this meant that nothing further remained for the fulfilment of that promise which concerned worldly territory, except that the Hebrew people should continue in the same land in undisturbed stability, as far as temporal prosperity is concerned, through the successive ages of posterity right down to the end of this mortal age, provided that they obeyed the laws of the Lord their God. But since God knew that they would not do so, he also imposed on them temporal punishments, for the training of the few faithful men in that nation, and for a warning to those who were to come in future times among all nations, a warning needed by those in whom he was to fulfil his second promise by the revelation of the new covenant through the incarnation of Christ.

3. *The threefold meanings of the prophets, referring sometimes to the earthly Jerusalem, sometimes to the Heavenly City, sometimes to both at once*

Now the divine oracles given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the other prophetic signs or words found in previous sacred writings, refer partly to the nation physically derived from Abraham, but partly to those descendants of his in whom all nations are blessed as co-heirs of Christ through the new covenant, so as to obtain possession of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. The same is true of the rest of the prophecies, from this period of the kings. Thus the prophecies refer in part to the maidservant whose children are born into slavery, that is, the earthly Jerusalem, who is in slavery, as are also her sons;

⁴ Gen. 15, 18.

⁵ cf. 1 Kings 4, 21.

but in part they refer to the free City of God, the true Jerusalem, eternal in heaven, whose sons are the men who live according to God's will in their pilgrimage on earth. There are, however, some prophecies which are understood as referring to both; literally to the bondmaid, symbolically to the free woman.⁶

Thus the utterances of the prophets are found to have a threefold meaning, in that some have in view the earthly Jerusalem, others the heavenly, and others refer to both. It is clear to me that I ought to prove my point by examples. Nathan the prophet was sent to convict King David of a grave sin and to predict the coming misfortunes, misfortunes which in fact followed? Can anyone doubt that these statements and others of the same tenor had reference to the earthly city, whether they were public pronouncements, that is, uttered for the welfare and betterment of the people, or private communications, when an individual earned the privilege of divinely inspired utterances for his own benefit, imparting some knowledge of the future to his advantage in his temporal life? On the other hand we have such a passage as,

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall ratify a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. It will not be in the terms of the covenant that I drew up for their fathers at the time when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not keep to my covenant, and I have abandoned them, says the Lord. Now this is the covenant that I establish for the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I shall establish it by putting my laws in their minds; and I shall write them on their hearts, and I shall look on them. And I shall become their God; and they will become my people.⁸

This is, without doubt, a prophecy of the Jerusalem above, whose 'reward' is God himself; and to possess him, and to be his possession, is the Highest Good, and the Entire Good, in that City.

But the fact that Jerusalem is called the city of God has a double reference, combined as it is with the prophecy of the future house of God in that city. This prophecy seems to have its fulfilment when King Solomon builds that renowned temple. But this was not only an event in the history of the earthly Jerusalem; it was also a symbol of the Jerusalem in heaven. Now this class of prophecy, in which there is a compounding and commingling, as it were, of both references, is of the greatest importance in the ancient canonical books, which contain historical narratives; and it has exercised and still exercises the wits of

6. cf. Gal. 4, 21-31.

7. 2 Sam. 12, 1-15.

8. Jer. 31, 31ff.

9. cf. Gen. 15, 1.

those who examine the sacred literature. And so, when we read of prophecy and fulfilment in the story of Abraham's physical descendants, we also look for an allegorical meaning which is to be fulfilled in those descended from Abraham in respect of faith. So much so that some interpreters have decided that everything prophesied and accomplished in those books, or accomplished without being prophesied, has, without exception, some meaning which is to be referred by symbolical application to the City of God in heaven, and the sons of that City who are pilgrims in this life. On this theory the utterances of the prophets will be of two types only, not three - or rather, this will be true of all those scriptures which are classed under the title of the Old Testament. For there will be nothing there which relates only to the earthly Jerusalem, if whatever is said there, and accomplished, either about that city or in connection with that city, has a reference, by prophetic allegory, to the Heavenly Jerusalem. So there will be only two kinds of prophecy; one concerned with the 'free' Jerusalem, and the other with both cities.

Now in my opinion it is certainly a complete mistake to suppose that no narrative of events in this type of literature has any significance beyond the purely historical record; but it is equally rash to maintain that every single statement in those books is a complex of allegorical meanings. That is why I have spoken of a triple, instead of a double classification; for this is my own considered judgement. In spite of that, I do not censure those who have succeeded in carving out a spiritual meaning from each and every event in the narrative, always provided that they have maintained its original basis of historical truth. There are also statements which cannot be made to apply to events either past or future, whether brought about by human or divine activity; and no believing man would doubt that those were uttered from some good purpose. Such a man would certainly attach a spiritual sense to them, if he could; or at least he would acknowledge that they should be so interpreted by anyone who is able to do so.

4. *The change in the Israelite kingship, and its prophetic significance. The prophecies of Hannah, Samuel's mother, who personifies the Church*

The City of God thus developed down to the period of the kings, to the time when Saul was rejected and David first ascended the throne, so that his descendants thereafter reigned in the earthly Jerusalem in a succession which lasted a long time. This change was symbolic; it was

an event which pointed prophetically to the future, and its significance must not be passed over in silence. It betokened the change which was to come in the future in respect of the two covenants, the old and the new, and the transformation of priesthood and monarchy by the new and eternal priest-king, who is Christ Jesus. For when Eli the priest had been rejected, and Samuel was substituted for him in the service of God, and performed the double function of priest and judge, and when Saul was put aside and King David was established in the royal power, those events prophetically symbolized the change which I have mentioned.

Besides this, Hannah, Samuel's mother, who had formerly been barren and was now gladdened with fertility, is shown as prophesying exactly the same transformation, when in exaltation she pours out her thanksgiving to the Lord, when she gives back to God the same child, after he had been born and weaned, with the same devotion with which she had made her vow. For she says,

My heart is strengthened in the Lord: my horn is exalted in my God. My mouth is enlarged over my enemies; I have rejoiced in your salvation. For there is none who is holy as the Lord is holy; there is none who is just as our God is just; there is none holy besides you. Do not boast; do not speak lofty words; let no bragging talk come from your lips. For the Lord is the God of all knowledge, and a God who prepares his own designs. He has made weak the bow of the mighty ones; and the weak have girded themselves with strength. Those who were full of bread have been reduced to want; and the hungry have passed over the earth. Because the barren woman has given birth to seven children while she who has many sons is enfeebled. The Lord brings death, and he brings life; he leads men down to the grave and leads them back again. The Lord makes men poor, and he enriches them; he humbles them, and he exalts them. He raises up the poor man from the earth, and lifts up the needy from the dunghill, that he may station them with the men of power among the people, giving them also the seat of glory as their inheritance, granting fulfilment to the man who makes a vow; and he has blessed the years of the righteous, since man is not powerful in his own strength. The Lord will make weak his adversary; the Lord is holy. Let the prudent man not glory in his prudence, nor the powerful glory in his power, nor the rich man glory in his riches. He who glories, let him glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to perform justice and righteousness in the midst of the earth. The Lord has ascended into the heavens and has thundered; he himself will judge the ends of the earth, because he is just; and he gives strength to our kings, and will exalt the horn of his anointed.¹⁰

10. 1 Sam. 2, 1-10.

Are these words going to be regarded as simply the words of one mere woman giving thanks for the birth of her son? Are men's minds so turned away from the light of truth that they do not feel that the thoughts poured out by this woman transcend the limit of her own thoughts? In truth, anyone who is appropriately moved by the events whose fulfilment has already begun, even in this earthly pilgrimage, cannot but attend to these words, and observe and recognize that through this woman (whose very name, Hannah, means 'God's grace'¹¹), there speaks, by the spirit of prophecy, the Christian religion itself, the City of God itself, whose king and founder is Christ; there speaks, in fact, the grace of God itself, from which the proud are estranged so that they fall, with which the humble are filled so that they rise up, which was in fact, the chief theme that rang out in her hymn of praise. Now it may be that someone will be ready to say that the woman gave voice to no prophecy, but merely praised God in an outburst of exultation for the son who was granted in answer to her prayer. If so, what is the meaning of this passage, 'He has made weak the bow of the mighty ones, and the weak have girded themselves with strength. Those who were full of bread have been reduced to want, and the hungry have passed over the earth. Because the barren woman has given birth to seven, while she who has many children has become weak.' Had Hannah herself really borne seven children, although she was barren? She had only one son when she spoke these words; and even afterwards she did not give birth to seven, or to six, which would have made Samuel the seventh. She had in fact three male and two female children. And then observe her concluding words, spoken among that people at a time when no one had yet been king over them: 'He gives strength to our kings, and will exalt the horn of his anointed.' How is it that she said this, if she was not uttering a prophecy?

Therefore, let the Church of Christ speak, the 'City of the great king',¹² the Church that is 'full of grace',¹³ fruitful in children; let her speak the words that she recognizes as spoken prophetically about herself, so long ago, by the lips of this devout mother, 'My heart is strengthened in the Lord; my horn is exalted in my God.' Her heart is truly strengthened and her horn truly exalted, because it is 'in the Lord her God' not in herself that she finds strength and exaltation. 'My mouth is enlarged over my enemies'; because even in the straits of oppression 'the word of God is not bound',¹⁴ not even when its

11. *hannah* = 'graciousness'.

12. Ps. 48, 2.

13. Luke 1, 28.

14. cf. 2 Tim. 2, 9.

heralds are bound. 'I have rejoiced', she says, 'in your salvation.' This salvation is Christ Jesus; for we read in the Gospel that Simeon took him in his arms, an old man embracing a little child and recognizing his greatness, and he said, 'Lord, you are now discharging your servant in peace; for my eyes have seen your salvation.'¹⁵ And so let the Church say, 'I have rejoiced in your salvation. For there is none who is holy as the Lord is holy; there is none who is just as our God is just; for he is holy – and he makes men holy; he is just – and he makes men just. 'There is none holy besides you.' For no one is made holy except by you. Then there follow these words: 'Do not boast; do not speak lofty words; let no bragging talk come from your lips. For God is the God of all knowledge.' He himself knows you, even where no one knows, since 'he who thinks himself to be something important, when he is nothing, is fooling himself.'¹⁶

These words are directed to the adversaries of the City of God, who belong to Babylonia, who presume on their own strength, and glory in themselves, instead of in God. Among them are also the Israelites by physical descent, the earth-born citizens of the earthly Jerusalem, who, in the words of the Apostle, 'know nothing of God's righteousness'¹⁷ – that is, the righteousness which God gives, who alone is righteous and makes men righteous – 'and desire to establish their own righteousness' – that is, they suppose it to be something gained by themselves, instead of given by God and so they have not submitted to God's righteousness. Arrogant as they are, they think that by their own righteousness, not God's, they can please God, who is 'the God of all knowledge' and therefore also the judge of men's inner thoughts; for in them he sees men's imaginations, knowing them to be futile,¹⁸ if they are only men's, and do not come from him.

'God', says Hannah, 'prepares his own designs.' What do we suppose these designs are, except that the proud should fall and the humble arise? For no doubt she is elaborating these designs when she says, 'The bow of the mighty ones has been weakened, and the weak have girded themselves with strength.' The bow has been weakened – that is, the intention of those who seem to themselves so powerful that without the gift of God and without his aid they can fulfil the divine commands in human self-reliance. And men gird themselves with strength when their inner voice says, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak.'¹⁹

'Those who were full of bread', says Hannah, 'have been reduced to want; and the hungry have passed over the earth.' Who are to be understood by those who were full of bread, except those supposedly 'powerful ones', that is, the Israelites, to whom the utterances of God were entrusted? But among that people the sons of the maidservant²⁰ were 'reduced'. Now the verb *minorati sunt* ('have been reduced') is not a good Latin expression; but it expresses the meaning well, since they were reduced from major to minor importance. They were reduced, because while possessed of this bread, that is, the divine utterances, which the Israelites, alone of all the nations at that time, had received, they had a taste only for earthly things. On the other hand, nations to whom that Law had not been given, after they came to the knowledge of these utterances through the new covenant, passed over the earth in great hunger, since in these words it was the heavenly meaning, not the earthly, that they savoured. And Hannah seems to be looking for an explanation of how this happened, when she says, 'For the barren woman has given birth to seven; while she who has many children is enfeebled.' Here the whole of the prophecy becomes illuminated for those who recognize the significance of the number seven: for by that number the perfection of the universal Church is symbolized. This is the reason why the apostle John writes to seven churches;²¹ it is his way of showing that he is writing to the entirety of the one Church. In the Proverbs of Solomon also Wisdom prefigured this Church long before, when she 'built her house and supported it on seven columns.'²² For the City of God was barren in all nations before the birth of the offspring we now behold. We also behold the enfeeblement of the earthly Jerusalem, who had many children: for her strength lay in whatever sons of the free woman were in that city. But now only the letter is there and not the spirit;²³ and so her strength has been lost, and she has been enfeebled.

'The Lord brings death, and he brings life.' He brought death to her who had many sons; he brought life to the barren woman who gave birth to seven children. However, this might more suitably be understood to mean that he brings life to the same persons to whom he has brought death. For it looks as if she is repeating this statement when she adds, 'He leads men down to the grave, and leads them back again.' Now the Apostle says, 'If you are dead with Christ, seek the realms on high, where Christ is seated on God's right hand.'²⁴ and

15. Luke 2, 29f.

18. cf. Ps. 94, 11.

16. Gal. 6, 3.

19. Ps. 6, 2.

17. Rom. 10, 3.

20. cf. Gal. 4, 21–31.

21. cf. Rev. 1, 4. On seven as a 'perfect number' cf. Bk XI, 30f.; XV, 20; XX, 5.

22. Prov. 9, 1. 23. cf. 2 Cor. 3, 6–16.

24. Col. 3, 1; cf. Rom. 6, 8.

those to whom this is addressed are certainly brought to death by God for their own well-being. And he adds these words to them, 'Savour the things on high, not the things on earth'; so that these are the same persons who 'have passed over the earth in hunger'.

For St Paul says, 'You are dead.' But see how healthfully God brings men to death! He goes on to say, 'and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'²⁵ See how God brings life to these same men! But is it true that those whom he has brought to the realm of the dead and those he has brought back again are the same people? Indeed it is, since there is, for believers, no disputing that we see both these actions fulfilled in him (and, remember, he is 'our head') 'with whom', as the Apostle says, 'our life is hidden in God'. For he 'who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up on behalf of us all',²⁶ surely brought him to death in so doing; and in raising him from the dead, he brought him to life again. And since his voice is recognized in the prophecy, 'You will not leave my soul in the underworld',²⁷ it was the same person whom he brought down to the realm of the dead and brought back again. By this poverty of his we have been enriched;²⁸ for 'the Lord makes men poor, and enriches them.' Now to understand what this means, we must listen to what follows: 'The humbles, and he exalts'; which clearly means that he humbles the arrogant and exalts the humble. For elsewhere we find those words: 'God resists the proud, while he gives grace to the humble';²⁹ and this is the message of the whole discourse of Hannah, whose name means his 'grace'.

As for the words that follow, 'He raises up the poor from the earth'; I can find no better application of them than to him who 'became poor for our sake, though he was rich, so that by his poverty' – as I said just now – 'we might be enriched.'³⁰ For God raised him up from the earth so quickly that his flesh did not 'see corruption'.³¹ And I shall not withdraw from him the application of what follows: 'And he lifts up the needy from the dunghill.' 'The needy' is certainly identical with 'the poor'; and the dung from which he is raised is most correctly understood of the Jewish persecutors, among whom the Apostle counted himself, as having persecuted the Church, when he used these words: 'The things which were my assets I have written off as losses for the sake of Christ; in fact I have counted them not only as drawbacks, but even as so much dung, so that I might have Christ as

my assets.'³² Thus that poor man was raised up from the earth above all the rich, so as to sit 'with the men of power among the people' to whom he says, 'You will sit on twelve thrones.'³³ 'Giving them also the seat of glory as their inheritance' – for those 'men of power' had said, 'Look, we have abandoned everything and have become your followers.' This vow they had made with the utmost power. But whence did they derive the ability to do so, unless from him of whom Hannah's song immediately goes on to say that he 'grants fulfilment to him who makes a vow'? For no one could ever make a rightful vow to the Lord without receiving from him the fulfilment of his prayer.

The words that follow, 'and he has blessed the years of the righteous', mean, we can be sure, that the righteous will live without end with him to whom it was said, 'Your years will never come to an end.'³⁴ For there the years stand still, whereas here they pass by; in fact, they perish. For before they come they do not exist, and when they have come, they will exist no more, because when they come they bring with them their own end. Now of the two statements, 'granting fulfilment to one who makes a vow' and 'he has blessed the years of the righteous', one refers to something we do, the other to something we get. But the second is not acquired through God's generosity, unless the former has been accomplished with his assistance. For 'man is not powerful in his own strength; the Lord will make weak his adversary', which means, of course, one who in malice resists the man who makes a vow, so that he may be incapable of fulfilling his vow. But there is an ambiguity in the Greek, and it may be taken as 'his own adversary'. For as soon as God has begun to possess us, then straightway he who was our adversary becomes God's adversary, and will be conquered by us, but not by our own powers, 'because a man is not powerful in his own strength'. Thus 'the Lord will make weak his own adversary; the Lord is holy'; so that the adversary is overcome by holy men, sanctified by the holy Lord of holy people.

And for this reason 'let the prudent man not glory in his prudence, nor the powerful glory in his power, nor the rich man glory in his riches. He who glories, let him glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to perform justice and righteousness in the midst of the earth.' It is in no trivial measure that a man understands and knows God, when he understands and knows that his knowledge and understanding is itself the gift of God. 'For what do you possess', says the Apostle, 'which you have not received? Then, if you have received it,

25. Col. 3, 3.

26. Rom. 8, 21.

27. Ps. 16, 10.

28. Cf. 2 Cor. 8, 9.

29. Jas. 4, 6.

30. 2 Cor. 8, 6.

31. Ps. 16, 10.

32. Phil. 3, 7f.

33. Matt. 19, 28.

34. Ps. 102, 27; Hebr. 1, 12.

why do you boast, as if you had not received it?³⁵ That is, why do you behave as if the ground of your boasting came from your own achievement? Now the man who lives rightly 'performs justice and righteousness'; and that man is he who obeys God's bidding. And 'the end of the commandment', that is the object to which it is directed, 'is the love that springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a faith that is without pretence.'³⁶ Moreover, as the apostle John testifies, 'this love comes from God.'³⁷ Thus the ability to 'perform justice and righteousness' comes from God.

But what is the meaning of 'in the midst of the earth'? It is certainly not that those who live at the ends of the earth are exempt from the duty of doing justice and righteousness. Would anyone say this? Why, then, the addition of the words, 'in the midst of the earth'? Without the addition, the remaining words, 'to perform justice and righteousness' would make the command applicable to both classes: those who live in the midst of the earth, and those on the shores of the ocean. My belief is that the words were added to preclude the notion that after the end of the life lived in this mortal body a period remains for the performance of justice and righteousness, which a man has failed to achieve while in the flesh, and so there is a chance of escaping the divine judgement. The words therefore mean, in my view, 'while each man lives in the body'. Certainly in this life each man carries his 'earth' around him, and the common earth receives it when he dies, to restore it, as we know, when the man rises again. It follows that 'in the midst of the earth', that is, as long as our soul is enclosed in this earthly body, we must 'perform justice and righteousness' for our benefit in the future when 'everyone receives either good or bad, according to his actions done through the body.'³⁸ Here we can see that by 'through the body' the Apostle means 'throughout the time when he lived in the body'. For it is not implied that anyone who blasphemes against God, the wickedness being in his mind and the impiety in his thoughts, without his bodily organs being involved, is exempt from judgement simply because there was no bodily activity in this behaviour; for he behaved in this way during the time when he inhabited the body. We can appropriately apply the same line of interpretation to a passage in the psalms, where it says, 'Now God our king before the ages has achieved salvation in the midst of the earth.'³⁹ We may take 'our God' to mean the Lord Jesus, who is before the ages (since the ages were created by him); for he 'achieved

35. 1 Cor. 4. 7.
38. 2 Cor. 5. 10.

36. 1 Tim. 1. 5.
39. Ps. 74. 12.

37. 1 John 4. 7.

salvation in the midst of the earth' when the Word was made flesh and dwelt in a human body.

These words in Hannah's prophecy describe how a man who glories ought to glory, not in himself, of course, but in the Lord. Hannah next alludes to the retribution which is to come on the day of judgement. 'The Lord has ascended into the heavens and has thundered; he himself will judge the ends of the earth, because he is just.' Here she kept precisely to the order of the confession of the faithful,⁴⁰ 'The Lord ascended into heaven, and thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.' For, as the Apostle says, 'Who ascended, except him who also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same person as he who ascended above all the heavens, so that he might fulfil all things.'⁴¹ Thus it was through his own clouds that he thundered, the clouds which he filled with the Holy Spirit when he ascended. It was concerning these clouds that he speaks to Jerusalem the maidservant (the 'ungrateful vine'), in the book of Isaiah, threatening that the clouds would not send rain upon it.⁴² Now to say 'he himself will judge the ends of the earth' is as much as to say 'even to the ends of the earth'. For it is not that he will fail to judge the other parts of the world; he will, without a shadow of doubt, judge all men. But it is better to take 'the ends of the earth' to mean 'the latter end of man'. For the judgement will not be passed on situations which change for better or worse in the intermediate period. The judgement will be on the final state in which the man who will be judged is found. That is why it is said that 'the man who perseveres to the end is the man who will be saved.'⁴³ Therefore the man who perseveres in the performance of justice and righteousness 'in the midst of the earth' will not be condemned when 'the ends of the earth' are judged.

'He gives strength to our kings', she says. The purpose of this is that he may not condemn them in his judgement. He gives them strength by which they may, like kings, rule over the flesh, and overcome the world in the power of him who shed his blood for them. 'And he will exalt the horn of his anointed.' In what way will Christ exalt the horn of his anointed? For it was said earlier of him, 'The Lord has ascended into the heavens', and this was taken to mean 'the Lord Christ'. It is Christ himself, as is said here, who 'will exalt the horn of his anointed'. Who then is the anointed (*christus*) of Christ? Does it mean that he will exalt the horn of every faithful follower of his, just as Hannah herself says at the start of her hymn, 'My horn is exalted in my God'?

40. The Apostles' Creed.
42. cf. Is. 5. 6.

41. Eph. 4. 9.
43. Matt. 10. 22.

Certainly we can properly apply the name 'anointed' (*christus*) to all who have been anointed with his chrism; and yet it is the whole body, with its head, which is the one Christ.

This was what Hannah prophesied; and she was the mother of Samuel, a holy man, a man highly praised. In him indeed the transformation of the ancient priesthood was then symbolically represented, a transformation which has now been fulfilled, when she who had many sons has become feeble, with the result that the barren woman who has borne seven children has received a new priesthood in Christ.

5. *The meaning of the prophecy addressed to Eli by the 'man of God'; the supersession of the Aaronic priesthood*

This change in the priesthood is more explicitly stated by the 'man of God' who was sent to Eli the priest himself. His name, to be sure, is not revealed, but the nature of his office and ministry puts it beyond doubt that he was a prophet. The account runs like this:

Now a man of God came to Eli and said: 'This is what the Lord says: "I revealed myself clearly to your father's house, when they were in the land of Egypt as slaves in the house of Pharaoh; and I chose your father's house out of all the sceptres of Israel to perform the priestly office for me, to go up to my altar, and to burn incense and to wear the ephod. And I gave to your father's house for their food all that was offered as burnt sacrifice by the sons of Israel. Why have you looked upon my incense and my sacrifice with disrespectful eyes, and have honoured your sons above me, so that they bless the first fruits of every sacrifice in my sight?" Therefore, the Lord God says this: "I have said: "Your house and your father's house will pass by in my presence for ever." But now the Lord says: "This will not be so; but I shall honour those who honour me, and those who spurn me will be spurned. Behold, the days are coming when I shall banish your seed and the seed of your father's house, and you will not have an elder in my house all your days, and I will banish all the men of your family from my altar, so that their eyes will fail and their spirit will fade away. Every one of your family that survives, they all will fall by the sword of men. And this will be a sign for you, that will come upon those two sons of yours, Ophni and Phineas: they will both die on one day." Then I shall raise up a faithful priest for me, who will do all that is in my heart and in my soul. I shall build him a faithful house, and he will pass by in the presence of my anointed all his days. And it will happen that any who survives in your family will come to do him obeisance for a piece of silver, and will say: "Thrust me into some part of your priestly office, so that I may have bread to eat."'"⁴⁴

This is a prophecy of a change in the ancient priesthood, announced in quite unmistakable terms; but there is no reason for maintaining that it was finally fulfilled in Samuel. It was in a degree fulfilled: for although Samuel was not of a different tribe from the one which had been appointed by the Lord to serve the altar, still he was not among the sons of Aaron, whose descendants had been granted the privilege of supplying the priesthood.⁴⁵ And in this way the transformation that was to come about through Jesus Christ was hinted at; and the prophecy contained in the event, not the prophecy expressed in the words, was concerned directly with the old covenant; but it had a figurative application to the new. In the event, what was said to Eli the priest in words through the mouth of the prophet had reference to the new covenant. However, there were in later times priests of the stock of Aaron, Zadok, for example, and Abiathar in the reign of David, and others thereafter, until the time came when the prophecies about the transformation of the priesthood, uttered so long before, were destined to be brought to effect in Christ. No one who looks at these prophecies with the eye of faith could fail to see that they have been fulfilled. For now, to be sure, no tabernacle has been left to the Jews, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice and, it follows, no priesthood; although the Jews had once been commanded by God's law to have a priesthood established belonging to the line of Aaron.

This was indeed mentioned in the passage, where the prophet says, 'This is what the Lord says: "I have said: "Your house and your father's house will go to and fro before me for ever." But now the Lord says: "This will not be so; but I shall honour those who honour me, and those who spurn me will be spurned."'" The prophet speaks of 'your father's house'; but he does not mean his immediate father, but the great Aaron who was ordained as the first priest, from whose

45. St Augustine corrects himself on this point in *Retract.*, 11, 69. "The statement that "Samuel was not among the sons of Aaron" should rather have been put in this way: "Samuel was not the son of a priest." The regular custom was for priests to be succeeded by their sons. Samuel's father is in fact listed among the sons of Aaron, but in the same way as all the people are called 'sons of Israel.' The present passage is somewhat opaque, but St Augustine's argument goes like this: The prophecy to Eli remained unfulfilled in its direct application, inasmuch as the Aaronic priesthood continued. But it had a temporary fulfilment in Samuel's succession to the priesthood, since he was not 'a son of Aaron' (or, rather, not a son of a priest). This event was itself a prophecy of the supersession of the Jewish priesthood by the Christian; and so in this event, concerned with the old covenant, the words of the prophet pointed to the new covenant.

descendants all other priests were to follow in succession. This is shown by his previous words, where he says, 'I revealed myself to your father's house, when they were in the land of Egypt as slaves in the house of Pharaoh; and I chose your father's house out of all the sceptres of Israel, to perform the priestly office for me.' Which of his fathers was in that slavery in Egypt, and was elected to the priesthood after the liberation? Only Aaron. It follows that it was of Aaron's stock that the prophet was speaking in this passage, when he said that the time would come when they would no longer be priests. We now see this prophecy fulfilled. Let faith be on the alert! The reality is before our eyes; the facts are observed and laid to heart; they are thrust upon the notice even of those who have no wish to see them. 'Behold, the days are coming', he says, 'when I shall banish your seed, and the seed of your father's house, and you will not have an elder in my house all your days; and I shall banish all the men of your family from my altar, so that their eyes will fail and their spirit fade away.'

Look, the days which were foretold have now arrived. There is no priest in the line of Aaron; and any man who belongs to his line sees the Christian sacrifice prevailing all over the world, while that great honour has been taken from him; and seeing this, his 'eyes fail and his spirit fades away', wasted with grief.

Now the following statement applies directly to the house of Eli, to whom it was spoken, 'Everyone of your house that survives, they all will fall by the sword of men. And this will be a sign for you, that will come upon those two sons of yours, Ophni and Phineas: they will both die on one day.' This, therefore, happened as a sign of the transference of the priesthood from this man's family; and by this sign it was indicated that the priesthood of Aaron's house was to be changed. It is plain that the death of this man's sons did not signify the death of individuals, but the death of the priesthood itself in the line of Aaron. Again, the following words refer to that priest who was prefigured by Samuel, in succeeding Eli. Hence the statement that follows was spoken about Christ Jesus, the true priest of the new covenant: 'Then I shall raise up a faithful priest for me, who will do all that is in my heart and in my soul. I shall build him a faithful house, and he shall go to and fro in the presence of my anointed all his days.' By 'he shall go to and fro' (the word is *transibit*) he means 'he shall live with me'; just as he had previously said, about the house of Aaron, 'I have said: "Your house and your father's house will pass by in my presence for ever."' Now the statement, 'he will pass by in the presence of my anointed' must certainly be understood to refer to the house itself, not

to that priest who is himself the anointed Christ, the mediator and saviour. His house, then, will 'pass by' before the Christ. But 'will pass by' (*transibit*) can also be interpreted of the passing from death to life in 'all his days' the days in which life is spent in this mortal condition, up to the end of this world. We may also observe that when God says, 'he will do all that is in my heart and in my soul', this should not suggest to us that God has a soul, since he is the creator of the soul. It is, in fact, said of God in a metaphorical sense, not literally, in the same way as we speak of the hands of God, or his feet, or other parts of the body. And to prevent our supposing, on account of such statements, that man is made in God's image in respect of his physical appearance, we have the addition of wings also, and man certainly does not possess these. Statements such as, 'Under the shadow of your wings you will protect me',⁴⁶ are intended to make men realize that such descriptions of God's ineffable nature are employing words not in a literal but in a transferred application.

To pass to the next statement: 'And it will happen that anyone who survives in your family will come to do him obeisance.' This is not said directly about the family of Eli, but about that of Aaron, of which there were individual survivors up to the time of the coming of Jesus Christ; and even now the line has not died out. For it had earlier been said, about that family of Eli, that 'everyone of your family that survives, they will all fall by the sword of men.' Then how could it be truly said in this verse, 'And it will happen that anyone who survives in your family will come to do him obeisance', if it was true that none of them would survive the avenging sword? This latter statement could only be true if the prophet meant it to be understood of those who belong to the same stock, in the sense of the whole priesthood in the line of Aaron. We may assume, then, that this refers to the predestined remnant, of whom another prophet says, 'A remnant will be saved';⁴⁷ and the Apostle says, 'In the same way a remnant has come into being at the present time through God's gracious choice.'⁴⁸ Therefore, since it is well understood that the man described as 'the survivor in your family's is one of this remnant, then without doubt, that man believes in Christ, in the same way as in the time of the apostles very many of that race believed; and even now there is not a complete absence of believers from among them, though they are few and far between. In this we see the fulfilment of the next prophecy of the man of God, 'He will come to do him obeisance for a piece of silver.' Obeisance to whom? It can only be to that high priest who is also God. For

⁴⁶ Ps. 17, 8.

⁴⁷ Is. 10, 22.

⁴⁸ Rom. 11, 5.

not even in that priesthood following Aaron's line did men come to the temple or the altar of God in order to do obeisance to the priest. And then, what is the meaning of 'a piece of silver'? It must be the short statement of the faith: for in reference to this the Apostle quotes this saying, 'The Lord will make his statement on the earth final and short.'⁴⁹ And evidence for the use of 'silver' for 'utterance' is given by a verse of one of the psalms, 'The utterances of the Lord are pure, they are silver tested in the fire.'⁵⁰

Then what is this man saying when he comes to do obeisance to the priest of God, and to the priest who is God? "Thrust me into some part of your priestly office, so that I may have bread to eat." I do not desire to be established in the honoured rank of my ancestors: that has now vanished. Thrust me into some part of *your* priesthood. For 'I have chosen to be a menial servant in the house of God'⁵¹ I long to be a member of your priesthood, in however lowly a capacity. Doubtless by 'priesthood' he means the people itself, the people whose priest is 'the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.⁵² This is the people whom the apostle Peter calls 'a holy people, a royal priesthood'.⁵³ It is true that some translators give the rendering 'your sacrifice, not following the line of Aaron, but the line of Melchizedek, same Christian people. That is why the apostle Paul says, 'We are many, but we are one loaf, one body.'⁵⁴ And so the addition of 'to have bread to eat' neatly describes the kind of sacrifice referred to; for the priest himself says of this sacrifice, 'The bread that I shall give you is my flesh, given for the life of the world.'⁵⁵ This is the sacrifice, not following the line of Aaron, but the line of Melchizedek, let the reader understand this.⁵⁶ Here, then, we have a short confession of faith, a confession of salutary humility, in these words: 'Thrust me into some part of your priestly office, so that I may have some bread to eat.' This confession is itself the 'piece of silver'; it is short, and it is the utterance of God, dwelling in the heart of the believer. God had said earlier that he had given portions of food to the family of Aaron, from the sacrificial victims of the old covenant. That was when he said, 'I gave your father's house all the burnt-sacrifices of the children of Israel, for their food'; and those were, of course, the sacrifices of the Jews. Accordingly, the man of God at this point used the words 'to eat bread'; for that, in the new covenant, is the sacrifice of the Christians.

49. cf. Rom. 9, 28; Is. 10, 23.

52. 1 Tim. 2, 5.

55. John 6, 51.

50. Ps. 12, 6.

53. 1 Pet. 2, 9.

56. Matt. 24, 15.

51. Ps. 84, 10.

54. 1 Cor. 10, 17.

6. *The Jewish priesthood and kingdom, said to have been established for ever, no longer exist. The promised eternity must be interpreted as applying to others*

These prophecies were uttered at that time in such an elevated strain, and are now revealed with such clarity; and yet someone may be puzzled, not without justification, and may ask, 'How can we be confident that all the things prophesied in these books as due to happen in the future will in fact happen, if a particular statement, made there by divine inspiration was not capable of fulfilment? This is the statement: "Your house and your father's house will pass by in my presence for ever." Now we observe that that priesthood has been superseded and that the promise made to that house has no hope of fulfilment at any time; because the priesthood which succeeded, on the rejection and supersession of the old order, is proclaimed as eternal in its stead.' This questioner does not yet understand, or does not recall, that the priesthood of Aaron's line was itself set up as a kind of shadow of the eternal priesthood that was to be. It follows that when eternity was promised to it, it was not promised for the shadow, the prefigurement, but for what was foreshadowed and prefigured by it. We were not intended to suppose that the shadow itself was to continue; and for that reason its supersession had to be foretold.

In the same way, the kingdom of Saul himself, who was certainly rejected and cast aside, was a shadow of the future kingdom which was to continue for ever. Undoubtedly the oil with which he was anointed – and because of that christm he was called the anointed (*christus*) – is to be taken in a mystical sense and interpreted as a great sacrament.⁵⁷ In fact, David himself had such reverence for this sacrament in the person of Saul that he was smitten to the heart and shaken with dread when, after hiding in the dark cave which Saul had entered, under the compulsion of a call of nature, he secretly cut off a tiny piece of Saul's robe from behind, so as to have a proof of how he had spared him when he could have taken his life. David's purpose was to remove from Saul's mind the suspicions that led him to pursue the holy David with violence, supposing him to be his enemy. But David was filled with terror in consequence, for fear that he should be guilty of violating so great a sacrament in the person of Saul, simply because he had so treated even his clothing. The scriptural narrative says, 'Now David's heart smote him, because he took away the tail of Saul's cloak.' Furthermore, when the men who were with him were

57. i.e. an event or action with an ulterior meaning; cf. Bk XVI, 37n.

urging him to make away with Saul, now that he was delivered into their hands, David said to them, 'May the Lord preserve me from doing what you suggest, to my lord, the Lord's anointed, that I should lay hands on him, for he is the Lord's anointed.'⁵⁸ So great, we see, was the reverence displayed to this shadow of what was to come, not on its own account, but for the sake of what it foreshadowed.

The same consideration applies to what Samuel said to Saul,

'You have not observed my command, an order given to you by the Lord; and therefore, just as the Lord had once designed that your kingdom over Israel should be everlasting, so now your kingdom will not endure for you. The Lord will look for a man after his own heart, and the Lord will command him to be the ruler over his people, because you have not kept the commands of the Lord.'⁵⁹

We must not take this to mean that God had designed that Saul himself should reign for ever, and then refused to carry out his design when Saul sinned, for God was not unaware that Saul would sin. No; the meaning is that God had designed his kingship to be a prefiguration of the eternal kingship. That is why Samuel added, 'and now your kingdom will not endure for you.' Thus what was symbolized in that kingdom endured, and will endure; but the kingship 'will not endure' for Saul, since he was not destined to reign for ever, nor was his line – for in that case, with his posterity succeeding one after the other, the promise of an 'everlasting' kingdom would have seemed, in that sense, to have been fulfilled. But Samuel goes on to say, 'The Lord will look for a man'; and this means either David or the Mediator of the new covenant⁶⁰ himself, who was prefigured also in the *christus* with which David and his descendants were anointed. Now when God 'looks for' a man for himself, it does not mean that God does not know where that man is. The truth is that when God speaks through the mouth of a man he speaks in human fashion; for he uses the same way of speaking when he 'seeks' us. The only-begotten Son came 'to seek what was lost',⁶¹ although we were already so well-known to him, as well as to God the Father, that we were 'chosen in him before the foundation of the world'.⁶² Thus in saying 'he will look for', Samuel means 'he will have as his own.' Hence in Latin this verb *quaerere*, 'to seek', receives a preposition and becomes *ad-quirere*, 'to acquire'; and the meaning then is quite clear. And yet even without the prefix the simple verb can mean 'acquire'; in fact, from this simple verb is derived the noun *questus*, meaning 'profit'.

^{58.} 1 Sam. 24, 1–6.

^{61.} Luke 19, 10.

^{59.} 1 Sam. 13, 13f.

^{62.} Eph. 1, 4.

^{60.} Hebr. 12, 24

7. The disruption of the Israelite kingdom, prefiguring the perpetual separation of spiritual from carnal Israel

Saul sinned again through disobedience, and again Samuel said to him, speaking the word of the Lord, 'Because you have spurned the word of the Lord, the Lord has spurned you, so that you will not be king over Israel.' And again, for the same sin, when Saul confessed and prayed for pardon, and besought Samuel to return with him to make his peace with God, Samuel said,

'I shall not return with you, because you have spurned the word of the Lord and he has spurned you, so that you will not be king over Israel.' Then Samuel turned his face away, to leave Saul; and Saul held on to the tail of his robe, and tore it. And Samuel said to him: 'The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel, out of your hand, today; and he will give it to a neighbour of yours, who is a better man than you, and Israel will be divided in two. The Lord will not go back on his word, nor will he change his mind; for he is not like a man, so as to change his mind. A mere man threatens, and does not stand by his threats.'⁶³

Thus Saul was told, 'The Lord will spurn you, so that you will not be king over Israel', and, 'The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel, out of your hand, today.' And yet he reigned over Israel for forty years, in fact the same length of time as David himself; and he heard this prophecy in the early part of his reign. So the purpose of the prophecy is that we may realize that none of his line was destined to reign, and may turn our attention to the stock of David, from which sprang, by physical descent, 'the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.⁶⁴

Now the Scripture does not show the reading found in most Latin texts: 'The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel out of your hand', but the reading we have followed, which is found in the Greek version: 'The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel, out of your hand.' The purpose of this reading is to make it plain that 'out of your hand' means the same as 'from Israel'. Thus the man Saul figuratively personified Israel, the people which was to lose its kingdom when Christ Jesus our Lord should take the kingship under the new covenant, a spiritual instead of a physical kingship. When it is said of him, 'And he will give it to a neighbour of yours', the reference is to physical kingship; for Christ was descended from Israel by physical descent, just as Saul was. Now the following phrase, *bono super te*, can be rendered

^{63.} 1 Sam. 15, 23–9. The last sentence is not in the Hebrew, nor in LXX.

^{64.} 1 Tim. 2, 5.

'a better man than you', and that is how some interpreters have translated it. But it is better to take it as meaning 'good, above you', indicating that his superiority is based on his goodness. This would fit in with the prophetic saying, 'until I put all your enemies under your feet'.⁶⁵ Israel is one of these enemies, and Christ has taken away your kingdom from Israel, his persecutor. And yet there was even there an Israel 'in whom there was no trickery',⁶⁶ like some grain among that chaff. For the apostles, as we know, came from Israel, as did all those martyrs, of whom Stephen was the first; and so did all those churches, which the apostle Paul mentions as giving glory to God for his conversion.⁶⁷

I have no doubt that the next words are to be interpreted along these lines. 'And Israel will be divided into two' must mean, into Israel the enemy of Christ, and Israel which attaches itself to Christ – the Israel connected with the maidservant, and the Israel connected with the free woman.⁶⁸ For these two kinds of Israel were at first together, just as Abraham was still attached to the maidservant until the barren wife, made fertile by the grace of Christ, exclaimed, 'Throw out the maidservant and her son.'⁶⁹ We know, of course, that because of Solomon's sin Israel was divided into two in the reign of his son Rehoboam, and that it continued so divided, each part having its own king, until that whole nation was overthrown with enormous devastation and deported by the Chaldeans. But what has this to do with Saul? If any such threat had to be uttered, it should have been levelled at David, rather than Saul, for Solomon was David's son. And then again, the Hebrew race at the present time is not divided, but dispersed indiscriminately throughout the world, though united by association in the same error. But that division with which God threatened this same kingdom and people in the person of Saul, who personified that kingdom and people, was shown to be eternal and unchangeable by the words which follow: 'The Lord will not go back on his word, nor will he change his mind; for he is not like a man, so as to change his mind. A mere man threatens, and does not stand by his threats: That is, a man threatens and does not stand by his threats, unlike God, who does not change his mind, as a man does. For when we are told that God changes his mind, or repents, this signifies an alteration in the course of history, though the divine prescience remains unchanged. Thus when it is said that God does not change his mind the meaning is that there is no alteration in him.

65. Ps. 110, 1.

66. John 1, 47.

67. cf. Gal. 1, 24.

68. cf. Gal. 4, 21-31.

69. Gen. 21, 10.

We see that by these words an utterly irrevocable sentence was divinely proclaimed concerning this division of the people of Israel, a sentence absolutely perpetual. For all those who have passed over from that people to Christ, or who are now passing over, or who will pass over, were not of that people according to God's foreknowledge, nor by reason of the one common nature of the human race. Moreover, all those of the Israelites who attach themselves to Christ and continue steadfastly in his fellowship will never be associated with those Israelites who persist in their hostility to him to the end of his life; in fact, they will continue for ever in that state of separation which is prophesied here. For the old covenant from Mount Sinai which 'has children destined for slavery'⁷⁰ is of no value except in so far as it bears witness to the new covenant. Otherwise, as long as 'Moses' is read, 'a veil is laid on their hearts'; on the other hand, whenever anyone passes over from that people to Christ, the veil will be taken away.⁷¹ For we may be sure that the very aim of those who pass over is transformed from the old to the new, so that the aim of each is no longer the attainment of material felicity, but spiritual happiness. That explains the action of the great prophet Samuel himself, before he had anointed King Saul.

Samuel cried out to the Lord on behalf of Israel, and God heard him; and when he offered a whole burnt-offering, and the foreigners approached to do battle with the people of God, the Lord thundered over them and they were thrown into confusion and panic as they faced Israel, and so they were overcome. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between the old and the new Mizpah, and gave it the name Ebenezer, which means 'the stone of the helper'. And he said: 'So far the Lord has helped us.'⁷²

Now Mizpah means 'aim'.⁷³ That 'stone of the helper' is the mediation of the Saviour, through whom we must pass over from the old Mizpah to the new, that is from the aim which looked for material bliss – a false bliss, in a material kingdom – to the aim which looks for spiritual bliss – the really true bliss, in the kingdom of heaven. And since there is nothing better than this, God helps us 'so far'.

70. Gal. 4, 24.

71. cf. 2 Cor. 3, 15f.

72. 1 Sam. 7, 9-12. (LXX. 'Old and new Mizpah' is in the Hebrew 'Mizpah and Shen'.)

73. The Hebrew word means 'watch-tower'.

8. God's promises to David about his son; in no way fulfilled in Solomon, but abundantly fulfilled in Christ

It is clear to me that my next task is to explain the promises given by God to David himself, who succeeded Saul on the throne. This transference of the royal power was a symbol of that final transference, and all these things were said and recorded by divine inspiration with reference to that change; and these promises are relevant to our present subject. After King David had met with much prosperity, he contemplated the building of a house for God. What he had in mind was that world-famous Temple which was afterwards erected by King Solomon, his son. While David was contemplating this prospect the word of the Lord came to Nathan the prophet, for him to convey it to the king. The first part of God's message was that his house would not be built by David himself, and that he had never given orders to any member of his people, during all that length of time, that a house of cedar should be constructed for him. He then went on to say,

'And now you will say this to my servant David: "This is the message of the Lord omnipotent: 'I took you from the sheepfold so that you should become the leader over my people, over Israel; and I was with you in your every enterprise. I have banished all your enemies from before your face; and I have given you a title borne by all the great ones who are on the earth. I shall provide a place for my people Israel, and I shall plant them there, and they will dwell by themselves; and they will be troubled no longer. The son of wickedness will not continue to oppose them, as he has done from the beginning from the time when I established judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies, and the Lord will give you news that you will build a house for him. What will happen is that when your days are ended, and you are at rest with your ancestors, I shall raise up your offspring after you, the issue of your body, and I shall prepare his kingdom. He will build me a house for my name, and I shall direct his throne for all eternity. I shall be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. If any wickedness appears in him, I shall chastise him with the rod that men use, with the touches that human beings inflict. Yet I shall not withdraw my mercy from him, as I did from those whom I banished from my presence. His house will be faithful, and his sovereignty will be secure for ever in my presence, and this throne will stand for all eternity.'"⁷⁴

It is a great mistake to pay attention only to the words 'he will build me a house', and, because Solomon erected that famous Temple, to imagine that this magnificent promise was fulfilled in Solomon, overlooking the statement that 'his house will be faithful to me and his

74. 2 Sam. 7, 8-16.

sovereignty will be secure for ever in my presence.' Anyone who supposes this should turn his attention to Solomon's household, and consider the state of things there; for his house was full of foreign women who worshipped false gods; and the king himself, who had been a man of wisdom, was seduced and degraded to the same idolatry. Such a reader must not dare to imagine that God made this promise untruthfully, nor to suppose that God could not foresee that Solomon and his house would be like this. We ought not, in fact, to have any doubt about this even if we did not see these prophecies now fulfilled in Christ our Lord, who was born of the line of David by physical descent. This would prevent us from vainly and foolishly looking for someone else, as the 'Jews after the flesh' still look. For they realize that the son promised, as they read in this passage, to King David, was not Solomon; but so amazing is their blindness that they go on to profess their hope for another, even when the promised son has been so clearly manifested.

No doubt a partial reflection of the future reality was shown even in Solomon, in that he did build the Temple, and that he enjoyed the peace that fits his name - for 'Solomon' means 'peacemaker'.⁷⁵ And at the start of his reign he was remarkably praiseworthy. Even so, Solomon himself in his own person merely gave notice of the coming of Christ, by a foreshadowing of the future; he did not show men the Lord Christ himself. Hence some things are written about him as if they were predictions of Solomon himself, while in fact holy Scripture, which prophesies by historical events also, sketches, as it were, in him a pattern of the future. For besides the books of sacred history in which the events of his reign were recorded, the seventy-first psalm also has his name inscribed in its title. In this psalm there are many sayings which cannot conceivably apply to Solomon, but are appropriate - nothing could be clearer - to the Lord Christ. So much so that there is no mistaking the fact that in Solomon there is a kind of shadowy sketch, while in Christ the reality itself is presented to us. For the limits bounding Solomon's kingdom are well known; yet we read in this psalm, to mention only one point, 'His sway will extend from sea to sea, and from the river as far as the bounds of the earth.'⁷⁶ It is in Christ that we see the fulfilment of these words. It was certainly from the river that he began his lordship; for there, after his baptism by John, he began to be recognized, at John's prompting,

75. A popular etymology; the Hebrew word *shalom* = 'peace'.

76. Ps. 72, 8.

by his disciples. And they called him not only 'Master' but also 'Lord'.

Moreover, the reason why Solomon began to reign while his father David was still alive (a thing which did not happen to any other of their kings) was simply to make it sufficiently obvious, in this way as well as in others, that he himself was not the man designated by that prophecy which was addressed to his father. For the prophecy said, 'What will happen is that when your days are ended, and you are at rest with your ancestors, I shall raise up your offspring after you, the issue of your body, and I shall prepare his kingdom.' How can it be supposed that this is a prophecy about Solomon, just because of the following statement: 'He will build me a house?' Instead, we should notice what precedes: 'When your days are ended, and you are at rest with your ancestors, I shall raise up your offspring after you', and infer from this that another 'peacemaker' is promised, who is to be raised up, according to the prediction, after David's death, not, like Solomon, before it. It may be that there was a long interval before the coming of Jesus Christ, but certainly it was after the death of King David, to whom the promise was made, that he was to come who would build God a house, not of wood and stone, but of human beings, the kind of house that he makes us glad by building. It is to this house, that is, to all Christ's faithful believers, that the Apostle addresses the words, 'For the temple of God is holy; and you are that temple.'⁷⁷

9. *The prophecy of Christ in the eighty-ninth psalm compared with Nathan's prophecy*

For the same reason God's promises to King David are also recorded in the eighty-eighth psalm, which has the title 'For the understanding of Ethan the Israelite'. Some of the things said in the psalm are similar to those set down in the book of Kingdoms:⁷⁸ for example, 'I have sworn to David my servant: "I shall establish your offspring for ever."⁷⁹ Again,

Then you spoke in a vision to your sons, and you said: 'I have conferred help on a mighty man, I have exalted a man chosen from my people. I have found David my servant; I have anointed him with my holy oil. For my hand will help him, and my arm will support him. The enemy will not get the better of him, and the son of wickedness will not hurt him. I shall strike

down his enemies from before his face, and I shall put to flight those who hate him. My truth and mercy will be with him, and in my name his prosperity will be exalted. I shall give him authority over the sea and supreme power over the rivers. He will invoke me thus: "You are my father, my God, and the upholder of my safety"; and I shall make him my first-born, exalted among the kings of the earth. I shall keep my mercy for him for ever, and my covenant will be faithfully kept for him. I shall establish his line to last for ever and ever, and his throne to endure as long as the heavens.'⁸⁰

All these prophecies, when rightly interpreted, are referred to the Lord Jesus, under the name of David because of the 'form of a servant'⁸¹ which that same mediator took from the virgin, from the line of David.

There follows immediately a mention of the sins of his son, very similar to that found in the book of Kingdoms. This is too easily assumed to apply to Solomon. For here, in the book of Kingdoms, the Lord says, 'If any wickedness appears in him, I shall chastise him with the rod that men use, with the touches that human beings inflict. Yet I shall not withdraw my mercy from him.'⁸² 'Touches' means here the strokes of correction. Hence the saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones',⁸³ which can only mean 'Do not injure them.' Now in the psalm, when ostensibly dealing with David, the Lord's intention is to say something of the same sort there also; and so he says, 'If his sons desert my Law and cease to live according to my rulings: if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, I shall punish their wickedness with the rod and their sins with the scourge; yet I shall not sweep away my mercy from him.'⁸⁴ He did not say 'from them', although he was speaking of his sons, not of David himself. He said 'from him', which, if correctly interpreted, has exactly the same force. For no sins could be found in Christ himself, who is the head of the Church, which would need to be disciplined by human correction, while the divine mercy continued unchanged. Such sins could only be found in his body and limbs, that is, in his people. Now in the book of Kingdoms 'his iniquity' is spoken of, whereas in the psalm we find 'the iniquity of his sons'. The purpose of this is to make us realize that what is said about his body is in some measure spoken of himself. (For the same reason he himself also spoke from heaven, when Saul was persecuting his body, that is, his faithful followers, and his words were: 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?')⁸⁵ Then in the fol-

77. 1 Cor. 3, 17.

78. The LXX title for the books of Samuel and Kings.

79. Ps. 89 (LXX 88), 3f; cf. n. 124.

80. Ps. 89, 19-29.

81. cf. Phil. 12, 7.

82. Ps. 89, 30ff.

83. 2 Sam. 7, 14f.

84. Ps. 89, 30ff.

85. Acts 9, 4.

lowing verses of the psalm he says, 'I shall not do injury to my truth, nor shall I violate my covenant; and I shall not revoke the words that issue from my lips. I have sworn once by my holiness, if I prove a liar to David - ' that is, I shall in no way prove a liar to David, this being a common idiom in Scripture. Now as to the subject on which he will not prove a liar, he adds this when he says, 'His line endures for ever, and his throne in my sight is like the sun, like the moon that is established for ever, the faithful witness in the sky.'⁸⁶

10. *The contrast between God's promises and the actual history of the earthly Jerusalem teaches us that the promise refers to the glory of the other king and the other kingdom*

After these solid guarantees of such an important promise the psalmist prevents us from supposing that the prophecies were fulfilled in Solomon, for he suggests that these things were hoped for, and not found in actuality, by adding, 'But you have cast him aside and reduced him to nothing, O Lord.' This is certainly what happened to the kingdom of Solomon under his successors, whose history culminated in the overthrow of the earthly Jerusalem itself, which was the seat of that kingdom, and, above all, in the destruction of the very Temple which had been erected by Solomon. But we are not allowed to suppose that God acted in contradiction of his promise, for the psalm immediately continues, 'You have deferred your anointed.'⁸⁷ It follows that, if the anointed of the Lord was deferred, the anointed is not Solomon, nor even David himself. It is true that all kings consecrated with that mystic chrism were called 'the Lord's anointed', not only in David's time, and subsequently, but even in the time of Saul, who was first anointed king over that people. David himself, as we know, called Saul 'the Lord's anointed'. For all that, there was just one true anointed, the one whom these kings represented symbolically in virtue of an anointing which was prophetic. In relation to the general assumption that 'the anointed' was to be identified with David or Solomon, the coming of the true anointed was long deferred; but in respect of God's design, his future coming, in God's own time, was already in preparation.

The psalm then continues with an account of what happened to the

86. Ps. 89, 33-7.

87. Ps. 89, 38 (LXX; Hebrew: 'You have been enraged with your anointed'.)

kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem, where it was certainly expected that Christ would reign, while his coming was deferred.

You have overthrown the covenant of your servant, you have dishonoured his sanctity and cast it to the ground. You have destroyed all his walls, you have brought dread upon his defences. All the wayfarers have looted him; he has become an object of scorn to his neighbours. You have given his enemies the upper hand over him; you have gladdened the hearts of all his foes. You have turned aside the sword that should have helped him; you have not supported him in war. You have stripped him of his immaculate attire; you have dashed his throne to the ground. You have diminished the length of his sovereignty; you have covered him with confusion.⁸⁸

All this came upon Jerusalem the maidservant, in which there reigned also some sons of the free woman,⁸⁹ holding that kingdom on a temporary lease, while possessing, by true faith, the kingdom of the Heavenly Jerusalem, whose sons they were, and placing their hope in the true Christ. How these things happened to that kingdom is revealed in the historical records to those who care to read them.

11. *The substance of the people of God, in Christ in virtue of his incarnation*

After these prophecies, the prophet turns to address supplications to God; but the prayer is itself also an act of prophecy. 'How long, Lord, do you turn away, to the end?'⁹⁰ We must supply 'your face', on the analogy of another passage, 'How long do you turn away your face from me?'⁹¹ That is why some texts read here 'are you turned away', instead of 'do you turn away'. Still, a possible interpretation is, '... do you turn away your mercy, which you promised to David?' Then what is the meaning of 'to the end'? It must be 'right up to the end'; and 'the end' is to be understood as the last time, when even that nation is destined to believe in Christ Jesus.⁹² Before that end those distressing events were bound to happen which the psalmist had lamented previously. This is the reason for the next words, 'Your anger blazes out like fire; remember what my substance is.'⁹³ The best way of taking this is to refer it to Jesus as the substance of that people from whom he derived his physical nature.

88. Ps. 89, 39-45. 89. cf. Gal. 4. 90. Ps. 89, 46.

91. Ps. 13, 1. 92. cf. Bk XX, 29.

93. Ps. 89, 46f. (*substantia*; LXX, *hypostasis*, taken by St Augustine as 'essential being').

The psalm continues, 'For you have not created all the sons of men for nothing.' The truth is that all the sons of men would have been created for nothing, had there not been one Son of Man who was the 'substance' of Israel, a Son of Man through whom many sons of men would be set free. For at this time all mankind had fallen from the truth into futility through the sin of the first man; that is why another psalm says, 'Man has become like a thing of futility; his life passes away like a shadow.'⁹⁴ And yet God did not create all the sons of men for nothing, seeing that he sets many free from this futility through Jesus the Mediator; while as for those who, in his foreknowledge, were not to be set free, he created them for the advantage of those who were to be liberated, and to mark the contrast between the two mutually opposed cities. Thus we may be sure that their creation was not in vain; it was included in a design of supreme beauty and justice, a design for the whole rational creation.

Then follows this passage: 'What man is there who will live and not see death? Who will rescue his own soul from the clutches of hell?' What man indeed, unless it is that 'substance' of Israel, the descendant of David, Christ Jesus. For it is of him that the Apostle says, 'in rising from the dead he dies no more; and death will no more hold sway over him.'⁹⁵ For he will live and will not see death, though on this condition: that he will first have died, but will have rescued his soul from the clutches of hell, where he descended in order to undo the bonds of hell from some of the dead. Moreover, he will have rescued his soul in virtue of that power he speaks of in the Gospel: 'I have the power to lay down my life; and I have the power to resume it again.'⁹⁶

12. *Who are represented in this psalm as appealing for God's 'ancient mercies'?*

The rest of the psalm runs like this: 'Lord, where are your mercies of ancient times, which you promised to David, swearing an oath on your truth? Remember, Lord, the insult offered to your servants, the insult of many peoples that I took to heart, the insult whereby your enemies, Lord, have taunted you, whereby they have taunted the transformation of your anointed.' Now the question can justly be raised whether this represents the complaint of those Israelites who longed to receive the fulfilment of the promise made to David; or is it rather the appeal of the Christians, who are Israelites not by physical

94. Ps. 144, 4.

95. Rom. 6, 9.

96. John 10, 18.

descent but by spiritual kinship? Now these words, as we know, were said or written in the time of Ethan, from whose name the psalm received its title; and this was the time of David's reign. It follows that it would not have been put in this form, 'Lord, where are your mercies of ancient times, which you promised to David, swearing an oath on your truth?' unless this prophecy assumed the person of those who were to come long afterwards, for whom the period when those promises were given to David would be 'ancient times'. It can, indeed, be taken as meaning that many nations, when they were persecuting the Christians, taunted them with the passion of Christ, which the Scripture calls his 'transformation'; because by dying he became immortal. The 'transformation' of Christ can also be taken, on this line of interpretation, as a reproach to the Israelites; for Christ was expected to come as their saviour, but in fact he became the saviour of the Gentiles, and many nations who have believed in him through the new covenant make this a reproach to the Israelites, who continued in the old. This would give point to the words, 'Remember, Lord, the insult offered to your servants', since if God does not forget those servants, but takes pity on them instead, they themselves will come to believe, after this reproach.

Still, the first interpretation I suggested seems the more appropriate. For the cry, 'Remember, Lord, the insult offered to your servants', is incongruous if it is put into the mouths of Christ's enemies, suffering reproach because Christ has abandoned them and gone over to the Gentiles; for such Jews are not to be called 'servants of God'. On the other hand, these words are fitting for those who, when they endured oppressive persecutions for Christ's name, could recall that a kingdom on high had been promised to David's line, and in their longing for it could make their appeal, not despairing, but seeking, searching, and knocking, in these words: 'Lord, where are your mercies of ancient times, which you promised to David, swearing an oath on your truth? Remember, Lord, the insult offered to your servants, the insult of many peoples that I took to heart' – that is, which I patiently endured in my inner being – 'the insult whereby your enemies, Lord, have taunted you, whereby they have taunted the transformation of your anointed' – supposing it to be a destruction rather than a transformation. Then what does 'Remember, Lord' mean except this: 'Remember to have mercy, and in return for the humiliation patiently endured, repay me with the exaltation which you promised to David, swearing by your truth'?

On the other hand, we may assign these words to the Jews, since an

appeal could have been made by those 'servants of God' who, after the sack of the earthly Jerusalem, before the birth of Jesus Christ in human form, were taken into captivity. We should then interpret 'the transformation of the anointed' in this sense, that it was not an earthly, material happening, such as was seen during the few years of Solomon's reign, that was to be awaited with faith, but a heavenly, spiritual felicity. The heathen nations had no idea of such happiness at that time, when they were exulting over God's people and taunting them in their captivity. But what else were they insulting but 'the transformation of the anointed', reviling, in their ignorance, those who knew the truth? That is the reason for the concluding words of the psalm, which follow this verse: 'The blessing of the Lord for ever. So be it! So be it!' These words are eminently suitable for the whole people of God who belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem, whether among those who were hidden in the time of the old covenant, before the revelation of the new, or among those who, after its revelation, are clearly manifested as belonging to Christ. And we may be sure that 'the blessing of the Lord' on David's line is not something to be hoped for a limited period, like that which was seen in the days of Solomon; it is something to be expected to last for all eternity; and in the supreme certainty of that hope we have the words, 'So be it! So be it!'

This repeated phrase is a confirmation of that hope. David, then, understands this, when he says, in the second book of Kingdoms, from which we have digressed to deal with this psalm, 'You have spoken on behalf of your servant's house for a distant future.' Again, when he says, a little farther on, 'Now begin, and bless the house of your servant for all eternity...'⁹⁷ the reason is that he was then about to have a son through whom his posterity would be traced down to Christ, and thanks to Christ his house was destined to become eternal, and to be the house of God. It is the house of David because of its descent from him; but it is also the house of God because it is God's temple, built not of stones, but of human beings, for the people to dwell there for ever with their God and in their God, and for God to dwell there with his people and in his people. Thus God will fill his people and the people will be full of their God, when God will be all in all,⁹⁸ being himself our prize in peace, as he is our strength in war. For this reason Nathan's words, 'the Lord will bring you news that you will build him a house', were afterwards repeated in David's state-

ment: 'For you, Lord omnipotent, the God of Israel, have made a revelation to your servant, saying that I shall build you a house.'⁹⁹ Now we build this house by living good lives, and God also builds it by helping us so to live. For 'unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it have laboured to no purpose.'¹⁰⁰ When the final dedication of this house arrives, then will come the fulfillment of what God said to Nathan in this passage, 'Then I shall establish a place for my people Israel; and I shall set them there, and they will dwell by themselves, and shall be disturbed no more. And the son of wickedness will not continue to humiliate them as he has done from the start, from the time when I set up judges over my people Israel.'¹⁰¹

13. *Can we suppose that the promised peace became a reality in the time of Solomon?*

Anyone who hopes for so great a blessing in this world and on this earth has the wisdom of a fool. Can anyone really imagine that this blessing was fully granted in the peace of Solomon's reign? No doubt the Scripture paints a glowing picture of that peace by way of a prophecy of an ideal, a foreshadowing of what was to be. Yet Scripture is careful to forestall the question of fulfilment under Solomon. It does this in the passage where, after the statement that 'the son of wickedness will not continue to humiliate them', those words are immediately added, 'as he has done from the start, from the time when I set up judges over my people Israel'. Now before the beginning of the rule of kings, judges had been appointed over that people from the time when they received the land of promise. The 'son of wickedness', namely the foreign enemy, certainly humiliated them, during those periods in which we are told that intervals of peace alternated with times of war. And yet during that era we find periods of peace more prolonged than the peace which Solomon enjoyed during the forty years of his reign. For example, under the judge named Ehud there were eighty years of peace.¹⁰² So we must never imagine that it was Solomon's time that was predicted in this promise, not to speak of the reign of any other king; for none of the other kings reigned in such peace as Solomon. Yet that people never possessed the kingdom so securely as not to fear subjugation by their enemies; in fact, such is the instability of human affairs that no people has ever been allowed such a degree of tranquillity as to remove all dread of hostile attacks

97. 2 Sam. 7, 19; 29.

98. cf. Eph. 2, 20; 1 Pet. 3, 5; Rev. 21, 3; 1 Cor. 15, 28.

99. 2 Sam. 7, 11; 27.

100. 2 Sam. 7, 10f.

101. Ps. 127, 1.

102. Judg. 3, 30.

on their life in this world. That place, then, which is promised as a dwelling of such peace and security is eternal, and is reserved for eternal beings, in 'the mother, the Jerusalem which is free'.¹⁰⁸ There they will be in truth the people of Israel; for the name 'Israel' means 'seeing God'.¹⁰⁹ It is in the longing for this reward that we must lead devout lives, guided by faith, during this troublesome pilgrimage.

14. *David's careful arrangement of the psalms to give a mystical significance*

In the course of the temporal history of the City of God, David at first reigned in the earthly Jerusalem, which was a shadow of what was to come. Now David was a man highly skilled in songs, a man who loved the harmony of music. But David was not the ordinary man for whom music is merely for pleasure; for him it served the purpose of his faith. He used it in the service of his God, the true God, by giving a mystical prefiguration of a matter of high importance. For the concord of different sounds, controlled in due proportion, suggests the unity of a well-ordered city, welded together in harmonious variety. Indeed, almost all his prophecy is in the psalms, and the book called Psalms contains a hundred and fifty of them. Some people have it that only those of the psalms which are inscribed with David's name were composed by him. Others suppose that none were his work except those which are headed 'Of David himself'; while those who have in their titles the note 'For David himself' were composed by others in a manner appropriate to David's personality. But this suggestion is refuted by the statement of the Saviour himself in the Gospel, where he says that David, inspired by the Spirit, said that Christ was his Lord, since the 109th psalm begins thus: 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I put your enemies as a stool for your feet."' ¹⁰⁵ And this psalm certainly does not have 'Of David himself' in its title. Like the majority of the psalms it has 'For David himself'.

For my part, I find more credible the judgement of those who attribute all the 150 psalms to David's authorship, and consider that he also supplied the prefatory notes to some of them, giving the names of other men who stood for something relevant to the subject, whereas he decided that the others should not have the name of any man in their titles. Similarly, it was at the inspiration of the Lord that he made his arrangement of diverse material, an arrangement which is

¹⁰³ cf. Gal. 4, 26.

¹⁰⁴ cf. Bk XVI, 39 and n.

¹⁰⁵ Ps. 110 (LXX 109); Matt. 22, 43.

not without purpose, obscure though the purpose may be. No one should be led to reject this hypothesis by the fact that we find inscribed above some of the psalms in this book the names of some prophets who lived a long time after the reign of David,¹⁰⁶ and that the contents of these psalms give the appearance of having been uttered by them. For the prophetic spirit was not incapable of revealing to King David, when he was prophesying, those names of prophets to come, and of ensuring that something appropriate to their personalities should be sung prophetically. In the same way the birth and reign of King Josiah, which was then more than 300 years in the future, was revealed together with his name, to a prophet, who also predicted his future achievements.¹⁰⁷

15. *This book cannot include all the prophecies of Christ and his Church in the psalms*

I am aware that what is now expected from me in this part of my book is an explanation of David's prophecies in the psalms about Jesus Christ and his Church. In fact, although I have done this in respect of one psalm, I am prevented from meeting the apparent demands of this expectation by the abundance of matter rather than the lack of it. For I am prevented from including everything by my intention to shun prolixity; on the other hand, I am afraid that if I select a limited number of points, I may seem to many who are versed in the subject to have omitted more essential matter. Again, the evidence adduced needs to be corroborated by the context of the whole psalm, at least to the extent of showing that there is nothing there to refute it, even if every detail does not support it. Otherwise I might seem to be collecting short excerpts suitable to a chosen theme, using the method of a *cento*, where selections are taken from a long poem not written on the subject in hand, but about something else, something very different.¹⁰⁸ Now to be able to demonstrate this in every psalm, the whole of it has to be explained; and this is no small task, as can be seen from the works of other authors and from my own, in which I have done just this. Anyone who has the wish and the capacity may read those books; he will discover the large number and the

¹⁰⁶ Haggai and Zechariah in the LXX version of Psalms.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Kings 13, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Christian *centos* ('patchworks') were constructed from the classical works; e.g. an epic on the life of Christ composed of material from Virgil's *Aeneid* in the fourth century.

great importance of the prophecies uttered by David, who was both king and prophet, about Christ and his Church, that is, about the king and the community which he founded.

16. *The witness, direct and allegorical, to Christ and his Church in Psalm 45*

Though there may be direct and clear prophetic statements on any subject, allegorical statements are inevitably intermingled with them, and it is those especially that force upon scholars the laborious business of discussion and exposition for the benefit of the more slow-witted. However, some of these point to Christ and his Church at first glance, as soon as they are uttered, although some details are less easily intelligible and are reserved for exposition at leisure. An example can be taken from the same book of Psalms:

My heart has given vent to a noble subject; I am addressing my position to the king. My tongue is the pen of a swift writer. You are more handsome than all the sons of men; grace has been poured on your lips, because God has blessed you for ever. Gird your sword on your thigh, most mighty one, in your majesty and beauty; arise and advance in prosperity and reign in the cause of truth, kindness and justice; and your right hand will lead you marvellously. Your arrows are sharp, most mighty one – peoples will fall beneath your sway – against the hearts of the king's enemies. Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the sceptre of your rule is a sceptre of uprightness. You have loved justice and hated unrighteousness: therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of exultation, in preference to your fellows. Myrrh, aloes, and cassia give fragrance from your garments, from palaces of ivory, from which the king's daughters have given you delight, in your honour.¹⁰⁹

No one, however slow of wit, could fail to recognize in this passage the Christ whom we proclaim and in whom we believe, when he hears of 'God, whose throne is for ever and ever', and to recognize God's anointed, anointed, be it understood, as God anoints – not with the visible oil but with the spiritual and intelligible chrism. For is there anyone so uninformed about our religion, or so deaf to its widespread renown, that he does not know that the name Christ is derived from 'chrism', that is from anointing? But as soon as he has recognized Christ as the king, let him subject himself to the king who reigns in the cause of truth, kindness, and justice, and let him inquire at leisure into all the allegorical descriptions of this psalm. Let him discover how

¹⁰⁹ Ps. 45, 1-9.

Christ's beauty excels all the sons of men, with a kind of loveliness that calls forth the more love and admiration for not being mere physical grace, and let him find the meaning of his sword, his arrows and all the other details which are given for their allegorical meaning, not as literal description.

Then let him turn his attention to Christ's Church, wedded to so great a husband by a spiritual marriage and a divine love, the Church which is described in the following verses:

The queen has taken her place at your right hand, in a garment of cloth of gold, swathed in a many-coloured robe. Listen, daughter; see, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's home. For the king has desired your beauty, because he himself is your God. And the daughters of Tyre will do you reverence with gifts: the rich among the people will beg for your regard. All the glory of that king's daughter is within, swathed in a many-coloured robe with golden fringes. Her maidens will be brought to the king after her, her companions will be brought to you. They will be brought with joy and exultation; they will be led into the king's temple. In place of your fathers there are sons born to you; you will make them princes over all the earth. They will remember your name in every succeeding generation. Therefore the nations will acknowledge your praise for ever and ever.¹¹⁰

I do not imagine that anyone is such a fool as to think that some mere woman is here praised and described, as the wife, that is, of one who is thus addressed: 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness. You have loved justice and hated unrighteousness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness, in preference to your fellows.'¹¹¹ Obviously, this is Christ, anointed above his Christian followers. For they are his followers, from whose unity and concord in all nations that queen comes into being, who in another psalm is described as 'the city of the great king'.¹¹²

This queen is Zion, in the spiritual sense. The name Zion means 'contemplation',¹¹³ for she contemplates the great blessing of the age to come, since all her striving is directed to that end. She is also Jerusalem, in the same spiritual sense, which is a point on which I have already said a great deal. Her enemy is Babylon, the city of the Devil, whose name means 'confusion'.¹¹⁴ However, this queen among the nations is set free from that Babylon by rebirth, and passes over

¹¹⁰ Ps. 45, 10-17.

¹¹¹ Ps. 48, 2.

¹¹² Ps. 18, 43f.

¹¹³ Impossible. Probably 'stronghold', or 'dry place'.

¹¹⁴ cf. Gen. 11, 10; Bk XVI, 4.

from the worst to the best of kings, that is, from the Devil to Christ. That is why she is told to 'forget your people and your father's home.' Those who are Israelites only by physical descent, and not by faith, are a part of that godless city; they are also enemies of this great king himself, and of his queen. For Christ came to them; but he was slain by them; and so he became instead the Christ of other men, men whom he did not see in his incarnate life. Hence he himself, our king, says in prophecy in one of the psalms. 'You will rescue me from the attacks of the people; you will set me at the head of the nations. A people I did not know has become my servant; when they heard with their ears they obeyed me.'¹¹⁵ Thus the people of the Gentiles, whom Christ did not know in his bodily presence, believed in him, nevertheless, when he was announced to them. So it was justly said of them that 'when they heard with their ears they obeyed me', because 'faith results from hearing'.¹¹⁶ This people, I say, added to those who are true Israelites both by descent and by faith, constitute the City of God, the City which also gave birth to Christ himself in the flesh, when it consisted solely of those Israelites. For the Virgin Mary, as we know, was of that race, and in her Christ assumed the flesh, so as to become man.

Another psalm speaks of this City in these terms: "'Mother Zion', a man will say, and, 'a man was born in her, and the Most High founded her.'"¹¹⁷ Who is this 'Most High' but God? This means that Christ, who is God before he became man by Mary in that City, himself founded the City in the persons of the patriarchs and prophets. Thus what we now see fulfilled was said in prophecy so long before to this queen, 'In place of your fathers there are sons born to you; you will make them princes over all the earth'; for it is true that from her sons throughout all the earth come her leaders and fathers, since the people acknowledge her pre-eminence, as they flock together to confess her everlasting praise for all time to come. There can be no doubt then that whatever is said in this passage, though somewhat obscurely, in allegorical fashion, whatever the precise line of interpretation, must be consistent with those very obvious facts.

17. *Christ's priesthood described in Psalm 110, and his passion in Psalm 22.*

In the psalm we have been examining Christ is proclaimed as king. Similarly, in another psalm he is set forth as priest. The pro-

115. Ps. 17, 44ff.

116. Rom. 10, 17.

117. Ps. 87; 5.

nouncement is made in the clearest terms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit on my right hand, until I put your enemies as a stool for your feet."¹¹⁸ That Christ is at the right hand of the Father is a matter of belief, not of sight; and it is not yet obvious that his enemies are put under his feet. But this is what is happening, and it will be obvious in the end; so here we have something else which is now a matter of belief and will later be a matter of sight. As for the following statement: 'The Lord will send out of Zion the rod of your strength; rule amidst your enemies!' this is so plain that its denial would show not only the loss of faith and of happiness but even the failure of conscience. For even our enemies acknowledge that the law of Christ, which we call the gospel, was issued out of Zion, and in it we recognize the 'rod of his strength'. While the fact that he 'rules amidst his enemies' is witnessed by the very men among whom he rules, as they gnash their teeth and waste away¹¹⁹ and are powerless against him.

A little later we have these words: 'The Lord has taken an oath, and he will not change his mind', and this statement indicates the unchangeable nature of the following pronouncement: 'You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedech.' Now who could take leave to doubt of whom these words are spoken, given the fact that there is at this time nowhere a priesthood or sacrifice in the line of Aaron, and that under Christ's priesthood there is offered everywhere the oblation presented by Melchizedech, when he blessed Abraham?¹²⁰ So we see that matters which are somewhat obscurely expressed in this psalm are, when rightly taken, referred to these obvious facts. I have already so related them in my sermons to the people.

We find the same thing in the psalm where Christ in a prophecy gives an eloquent description of the humiliation of his passion, in those words: 'They have pierced my hands and feet; they have counted all my bones. Yes, they have looked me over and stared at me.'¹²¹ In this description, we may be sure, he points to his body stretched out on the cross, with his hands and feet pierced and fastened by the nails driven through them, and the spectacle he thus provided for those who looked him over and stared at him. He also adds, 'They have divided my clothing among them and have cast lots for my garment', and the gospel account records how this prophecy was fulfilled. Then there are other sayings in the psalm which are less explicit in their

118. Ps. 110, 1f. 119. cf. Ps. 112, 10.

121. Ps. 22, 16f; cf. Matt. 27, 35; John 19, 24.

120. cf. Gen. 14, 18.

reference; but there can be no question that they are rightly taken when the interpretation is consistent with the passages where the meaning is so patent, so luminously clear. We have the best of reasons for this conviction in that other events, not events of the past which we believe but of the present time which we behold, events which are now presented to observation over the whole world, answer precisely to the predictions we read in this same psalm, uttered so long ago. For example, these words occur a little later in the psalm: 'All the ends of the earth will remember, and they will turn back to the Lord: all the families of the nations will offer worship in his sight. For the sovereignty belongs to the Lord, and he will hold sway over the nations.'¹²²

18. *The death and resurrection of the Lord prophesied in*

Psalms 3, 41, 16 and 69

Moreover, the oracles of the psalms are by no means silent about the Lord's resurrection. For what else is meant by the song which he is represented as singing in the third psalm, 'I went to bed and fell asleep; I arose from sleep, for the Lord upheld me?'¹²³ Or is there anyone silly enough to believe that the prophet wanted to let us know, as an important piece of information, that he slept and got up again? That sleep must stand for death, and that awakening for resurrection; and the psalmist had to prophesy about Christ's death and resurrection in this way.

This appears much more obviously in the fortieth psalm.¹²⁴ There, in the usual manner, prophecies of the future are put into the mouth of the Mediator himself, in the form of a narrative of past events, because coming events had already, in a sense, happened, in the predestination and foreknowledge of God. 'My enemies,' he says,

spoke maliciously of me, saying: 'When will he die, and his name perish?' And if anyone came in to see me, his heart spoke empty words, and he heaped up wickedness for himself. They went out of doors and spoke all together with one intent. All my enemies whispered against me, they planned evil against me. They put about an evil saying against me: 'Will not he who sleeps go on to rise up again?'¹²⁵

122. Ps. 22, 27f.

123. Ps. 3, 5.

124. Ps. 40 in LXX and hence in St. Augustin's text; Ps. 41 in the Hebrew Bible and English Versions.

125. Ps. 41, 5ff.

This is surely so phrased here as to suggest the same meaning as if he had said: 'Will not he who sleeps go on to come to life again?' The earlier words prove that his enemies planned and arranged his death, and this was carried out by the agency of someone who came in to see him and went out to betray him. Here, inevitably, there comes to mind the disciple who turned traitor — Judas.

Thus because they were going to accomplish their designs, that is, they were about to kill him, he shows that they would kill him to no purpose in their futile malice, since he would rise again. He makes this plain by adding the verse, in which he says in effect, 'You futile men, what are you achieving? What is a crime in you will be sleep for me. Will not he who sleeps go on to rise again?' Nevertheless, he points out that they will not commit so grievous a crime with impunity, by saying, in the following verses: 'Indeed, the man of my peace, in whom I placed my hope, who used to eat my bread, has enlarged his heel over me', that is, he has trodden me down. 'But Lord', he says, 'have mercy on me, and revive me, and I shall pay them back.'¹²⁶ Who would now reject this interpretation, when he sees that the Jews, after the passion and resurrection of Christ, have been extirpated, root and branch, from their homes by the slaughter and destruction of war? For after the Lord had been killed by them he rose again and repaid them, in the meanwhile, with temporal discipline, which is temporal only if we discount the recompense reserved for those who have not amended, when he comes to judge the living and the dead.

For the Lord Jesus himself pointed out to his apostles that this Judas was his betrayer by handing him the bread; and in so doing he recalled this verse of our psalm and said that it was fulfilled in himself: 'The who used to eat my bread has enlarged his heel over me.'¹²⁷ But the words 'in whom I placed my hope' are appropriate not to the head but to the body. What I mean is that the Saviour himself was not ignorant of the character of the man of whom he had said earlier, 'One of you will betray me', and 'One of you is a devil.'¹²⁸ But it is his habit to transfer to himself the role of his members, and to attribute to himself what belongs to them, because Christ is at one and the same time both the head and the body. This explains the Gospel saying, 'I was hungry and you gave me food to eat', which he explains by saying, 'When you did it for one of the least of my people, you did it for me.'¹²⁹ So in this passage he ascribes to himself the hopes that

126. Ps. 41, 9.

127. John 6, 70f.

128. John 13, 18; 26.

129. Matt. 25, 35; 40.

the disciples had placed in Judas when he was included in the number of the apostles.

Now the Jews do not expect that the Messiah ('the Anointed', the Christ) whom they hope for, will die. For that reason they do not think that the one whom the Law and the Prophets announced is our Christ, but some kind of Messiah of their own, a fiction of their imagination, a being remote from the suffering of death. This explains why with amazing stupidity and blindness, they maintain that the words we have quoted do not signify death and resurrection, but simply sleep and awakening.

But the fifteenth psalm¹³⁰ also cries aloud, 'For this cause my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; my body, too, will rest in hope. For you will not abandon my soul in hell, nor will you allow your holy one to see corruption.' Who would claim that his body had rested in hope, with the result that his soul was not abandoned in hell, but the soul quickly returned to his body and came to life again, so that his body should not suffer corruption as corpses normally do? No one, surely, but he who rose again on the third day. The Jews certainly cannot make this claim for their prophet and king, David.

The sixty-seventh¹³¹ psalm also cries out, 'Our God is the God who brings men salvation, and to the Lord belongs the way of escape of death.'¹³² What clearer statement could there be? For 'the God who brings men salvation' is the Lord Jesus, whose name means 'saviour', or 'saving'. In fact the reason for his name was given when before his birth from the Virgin these words were said, 'She will bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus; for he will save his people from their sins.'¹³³ Now since his blood was shed for the remission of those sins, it was, we can see, inevitable that he had no other 'way of escape' from this life, but only the way of death. Therefore after the statement that 'our God is the God who brings men salvation' we have the immediate addition of 'and to the Lord belongs the way of escape of death', to make it plain that it was by dying that he would bring salvation. But the words 'and to the Lord belongs' were said in a tone of wonder. They amount to saying, 'Such is this mortal life that the Lord himself could not leave it except by the way of death.'

130. Ps. 16 (LXX 15), 19f.

131. Ps. 68 (LXX 67), 20.

132. The Latin is ambiguous; 'escape of' or 'escape from'.

133. Matt. 1, 21. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which in Hebrew (Yhōshū'ā, Yeshū'ā) means, probably, 'Yahweh is salvation.'

19. Psalm 69 exposes the unbelief and obstinacy of the Jews

However, the Jews refuse to yield an inch in the face of such clear evidence as that of this prophecy, even when events have brought it so plainly and certainly to fulfilment; and therefore the words of the next psalm are, without question, fulfilled in them. For in that psalm also when the events connected with Christ's passion are being prophetically described, with Christ represented as the speaker, a detail is recorded whose meaning is revealed in the Gospel story, 'They gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.'¹³⁴ Then after such a feast, as it were, and such a banquet had been offered him, he went on to say, 'Let their table become a trap before them, and a retribution and a snare. May their eyes be dimmed so that they may not see, and their backs always bowed . . .'¹³⁵ This was not said by way of a wish: it was a prophetic prediction in the form of a wish. Is it any wonder, then, if those whose eyes were dimmed to prevent their seeing fail to observe these obvious facts? Is it any wonder if those whose backs are always bowed so that they bend down towards things of earth, fail to look upwards towards things in heaven? For these bodily metaphors refer to spiritual failings.

But this discussion must be kept within bounds, and so let this suffice for my treatment of the psalms, that is of the prophecy of King David. I hope that my readers who are familiar with the whole subject will forgive me, and will not complain if they know or suppose that I have passed over passages which perhaps provide stronger evidence.

20. The reign and achievements of David and Solomon: the prophecies of Christ in the writings of Solomon, and in associated books

Thus David reigned in the earthly Jerusalem, a son of the Heavenly Jerusalem, highly praised by the testimony of inspired writings, because even his sins were overcome by such great devotion, shown in a penitence of healthy humility, that he is certainly among those of whom he himself says, 'Blessed are those whose wickedness is pardoned, whose sins are covered.'¹³⁶ After him there reigned over that whole people his son Solomon who, as was stated above,¹³⁷ began to reign while his father was still alive. He made a good start, but

134. Ps. 69 (LXX 68) 21; cf. Matt. 27, 34; 48.

135. Ps. 69, 22f. 136. Ps. 32, 1.

137. ch. 8.

finished badly. Prosperity, in fact, which 'wears the resolution of the wise',¹³⁸ did him more damage than his wisdom brought him profit, that wisdom which even now is memorable and will be remembered in the future, which in his own time also earned such widespread renown. He, too, is found to have uttered prophecies in his books, three of which have been included in the authorized canon, namely, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. There are, indeed, two others, one entitled *Wisdom* and the other *Ecclesiasticus*, which are, by general custom, ascribed to Solomon on the ground of a considerable resemblance to his literary style; however, the weightier authorities have no hesitation in rejecting the attribution. Nevertheless, the Church, and in particular the Western Church, has from early times accepted them as canonical.

In one of these books, called the *Wisdom of Solomon*, Christ's passion is most expressly prophesied. For without question it is his godless murderers who are recorded as saying,

Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is displeasing to us and opposed to our activities, and accuses us of offences against the Law, and blames us for sins against our upbringing. He claims to have knowledge of God, and calls himself God's son. He has become a reproach to our way of thinking. The very sight of him depresses us, because his manner of life is different from that of other men, and his paths are unchanged. In his opinion we are men of no account, and he holds aloof from our ways as though from filth. He holds in honour the latter end of the righteous, and boasts of having God for his father. Let us see then if what he says is true; let us test what will happen to him, and we shall know what his latter end will be. For if the righteous man is God's son, God will uphold him and set him free from the clutches of his adversaries. Let us examine him with insult and torture, so that we may explore the extent of his devotion, and put his endurance to the proof. Let us condemn him to the most degrading death, since, on the evidence of his own words, he will be well looked after. This is how they reasoned, but they were misled; for they were blinded by their own malice.¹³⁹

Moreover, in *Ecclesiasticus* the future faith of the nations is predicted thus:

Have mercy on us, God, the ruler of all, and send the fear of yourself upon all nations. Raise your hand over the foreign nations and let them see your power. As you have been sanctified in us in their sight, so prove yourself great in them in our sight; and let them recognize you just as we have recognized you, that there is no God besides you, Lord.¹⁴⁰

138. Sall. Cat. 11, 8.

139. Wisd. 2, 12-21.

140. Eclus. 36, 1-5.

This prophecy, in the form of a wish and a prayer, we see fulfilled through Jesus Christ. However, the writings not included in the Jewish canon do not carry as much weight as the canonical books when put forward as evidence against the opposition.

On the other hand, when we turn to the three books universally accepted as Solomon's and taken as canonical by the Jews, laborious discussion is essential if we are to prove that anything of this kind found in those books is relevant to Christ and his Church; and the undertaking would be an unnecessary digression. However, we find these words put into the mouth of the ungodly in the book of Proverbs: 'Let us hide the righteous man in the earth unrighteously; let us act the part of hell and swallow him up alive, and let us sweep away his memory from the earth, and get hold of his valuable property';¹⁴¹ and this is not so obscure that it cannot be understood to refer to Christ and his property, the Church. This needs no laborious explanation. It is something of this sort, to be sure, that the Lord Jesus himself represents the wicked tenants as saying, in the Gospel parable, 'Here is the heir! Come on, let us kill him, and we shall get his inheritance.'¹⁴²

There is another passage in the same book which we touched on earlier, when we were concerned with the barren woman who bore seven children.¹⁴³ This is generally understood, even at first hearing, to refer simply and solely to Christ and his Church; understood, that is, by those who have come to know that Christ is the *Wisdom of God*. The passage runs thus:

Wisdom has built herself a house, supported on seven columns. She has sacrificed her victims, has mixed her wine in the bowl and laid her table. She has sent her slaves, summoning guests to the bowl with a proclamation from the heights, saying: 'Who is foolish? Let him put up at my house.' And to those lacking wit she has said: 'Come and eat my bread and drink the wine that I have mixed for you.'¹⁴⁴

Here we recognize with certainty the *Wisdom of God*, that is, the *Word*, co-eternal with the Father, who built, as a house for himself, a human body, in the virgin's womb, and united the Church to it, as limbs are united to the head; who sacrificed the martyrs as her victims; who set his table with wine and bread, the table at which also appears the priesthood in the line of Melchizedek; and who has invited foolish men, men lacking in wit, because, in the words of the Apostle he 'has

141. Prov. 1, 11ff.

143. 1 Sam. 2, 5. cf. ch. 4.

142. Matt. 21, 38.

144. Prov. 9, 1-5.

chosen weak things, by the world's standards, to put to shame the strong.¹⁴⁴ But to those weak objects he goes on to say, 'Abandon folly so that you may live; acquire discretion so that you may have life.'¹⁴⁵ Now to become a guest at that table is to begin to have life.

There is also a text in another book, called Ecclesiastes, where it says, 'The only good for man is in eating and drinking';¹⁴⁶ and surely the most plausible interpretation of this saying is that it refers to partaking of this table which the priest himself, the mediator of the new covenant, provides, in the line of Melchizedek, the table furnished with his body and blood. For that is the sacrifice which superseded all the sacrifices of the old covenant, which were offered as a foreshadowing of what was to come. That is why we also recognize in the thirty-ninth psalm the voice of the same mediator, speaking in prophecy, when he says, 'Sacrifice and oblation you have refused; but you have perfected a body for me.'¹⁴⁷ We recognize the speaker, because in place of all those sacrifices and oblations his body is offered and served to the participants. For our 'preacher' (*ecclesiastes*) is not thinking of feasts of bodily indulgence, in his saying, often repeated and underlined, about eating and drinking. This is made plain enough when he says, 'It is better to go into a house of mourning than into a house of drinking'; and, a little later, 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning: the heart of fools is in the house of feasting.'¹⁴⁸

Even more worth quoting is the following passage in the same book. It is concerned with the two cities, that of the Devil, and that of Christ, and with their kings, the Devil and Christ. It says, 'You are in sorry case, a land whose king is a mere boy, whose leaders feast in the morning. Happy the land whose king is nobly born, whose leaders feast at a decent time, to give them strength, not to bring them shame.'¹⁴⁹ He calls the Devil 'a mere boy' because of his stupidity, his pride, his rashness, his indiscipline, and the other faults which are generally found in profusion at that age. Whereas he calls Christ 'nobly born', as being the descendant of the holy patriarchs, who belong to the free city, whose offspring he was, in the body of his incarnation. The leaders of the other city 'feast in the morning', that is before the appropriate hour, because they do not wait for the felicity which comes at the right time, the true felicity in the age to come, but are in a hurry in their desire to be made happy with the renown of this present age. The leaders of Christ's City, for their part, patiently await the time of that happiness which does not disappoint.

The preacher says that they feast 'to give them strength, not to bring them shame', because they are not disappointed in their hope; in the Apostle's words, 'Hope does not put men to shame.'¹⁵¹ There is also a saying in one of the psalms, 'Those who await you will not be put to shame.'¹⁵²

Then again, the Song of Songs voices a kind of spiritual delight felt by holy minds in the marriage of the king and queen of that city, namely, Christ and his Church. But this delight is wrapped up in allegorical draperies, so that it may be more eagerly longed for, and that its uncovering may afford more pleasure, and that the bridegroom may be revealed to whom it is said, in the same song, 'Righteousness has loved you',¹⁵³ and the bride also, who is told 'Love is among your delights.'¹⁵⁴ There are many points we pass over without mention, in our anxiety to reach the end of the work.

21. *The kings after Solomon, both in Judah and in Israel*

The other kings of the Hebrews, after Solomon, are found to have uttered scarcely any prophecies, by means of hidden meanings in their words or actions, with reference to Christ and his Church. This is true both of the kings of Judah and of those of Israel. Those were the names given to the two divisions of that people, from the time when it was divided, when God punished them for Solomon's offences, in the time of his son Rehoboam, who succeeded to his father's throne. From that time onwards the ten tribes taken over by Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, who was set up as their king in Samaria, were called Israel, this name being restricted to them, though it had been the title of the whole nation. While the name Judah was given to two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, which had remained subject to the city of Jerusalem for David's sake, so that the kingdom of his stock should not be completely uprooted. They took the name of Judah because this was David's own tribe. Benjamin was, as I have said, the other tribe attached to this kingdom; it was the tribe of Saul, the king before David. But the two tribes together were called Judah, as I said, and by this name they were distinguished from Israel, which was the special title of the ten tribes, who had their own king. We observe that Levi, as the priestly tribe, bound to the service of God instead of that of the kings, was counted as the thirteenth tribe. Joseph, as we know, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, did not found one tribe, as did each of the other sons; he founded two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. Never-

145. 1 Cor. 1, 27.

148. Ps. 40 (LXX 39) 6.

146. Prov. 9, 6.

149. Eccl. 7, 2; 4.

147. Eccl. 8, 15.

150. Eccl. 10, 16f.

151. Rom. 5, 5.

153. 1, 4 (LXX).

152. Ps. 25, 3.

154. 7, 7.

theless, the tribe of Levi had also a closer connection with the kingdom of Jerusalem, since the Temple of God, which they served, was situated there.

Now after the division of the people, Rehoboam, king of Judah, Solomon's son, was the first to reign in Jerusalem, while the first to reign in Samaria was Jeroboam, king of Israel, Solomon's servant. And when Rehoboam decided to engage in war against him as a usurper over that part of the divided kingdom, the people were prevented from fighting against their brothers by God's pronouncement, through the mouth of a prophet, that he was responsible for the division. Thus it was made clear that in this matter there had been no sin on the part of the king or the people of Israel; God's decision to punish had been fulfilled. On learning this both sides were pacified, and preserved a mutual peace; for it was not their religion that had suffered division, but only the kingdom.

22. Jeroboam's idolatry; its effects reduced by prophets under God's inspiration

Now Jeroboam, king of Israel, had had proof that God was true to his word, since he had promised him the kingdom, and had given it to him. Yet in the perversity of his heart he refused to put his faith in God. He was afraid that if his people visited the Temple of God in Jerusalem, to which the whole nation was bound to go to offer sacrifice, according to the divine Law, they would be seduced from his allegiance and restored to the line of David, as being the royal stock. That is why he established idolatry in his kingdom, and led God's people astray with his detestable apostasy, so that with him the people were addicted to the worship of images. Yet God did not cease to employ his prophets to reprove, by every means, not only that king, but his successors who imitated his apostasy, and the people themselves. For in that kingdom there emerged those great prophets of renown, who also performed many marvels, namely Elijah and his disciple Elisha. It was there also that Elijah said, 'Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; and I am left alone, and they are after my life', and he received the reply that there were in that kingdom seven thousand men who had not bent their knees before Baal.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ 1 Kings 19, 10; 14: 17.

23. The varying fortunes of the kingdoms till their captivity. The restoration of Judah, and its final transference to the Roman Empire

We find the same situation in the kingdom of Judah, which was attached to Jerusalem. There too there was no lack of prophets even in the times of the kings who succeeded David. They appeared as it pleased God to send them, either to make some necessary prediction, or to rebuke sins and to demand righteousness. For there also, although to a much lesser extent than in Israel, kings did arise who grievously offended God by their impieties, and who had to be chastised, along with the people who resembled them, with punishment in proportion to their faults. There were, it is true, pious kings in Judah, and their not inconsiderable merits receive praise, whereas we are told that in Israel all the kings were reprobate, though some more than others. Thus both parts, according to the command or with the permission of God's providence, experienced vicissitudes of fortune, now being lifted up by times of prosperity, now depressed by periods of adversity; and they were so afflicted, not only by foreign wars but even by civil strife among themselves, that it became clear that God was acting in mercy or in wrath when particular causes arose. Finally, as his indignation increased, the whole nation was not only crushed and overthrown by the Chaldeans in its own homeland, but was also for the most part transferred to the territory of the Assyrians; first that division called Israel, with its ten tribes, and later Judah also, after the destruction of Jerusalem and its world-famed Temple. In those lands the Judeans lived in peaceful captivity for seventy years. After that period they were allowed to return, and they restored the Temple which had been demolished; and although very many of them still lived in foreign lands, they did not thereafter have a kingdom divided in two, with separate kings for each part. There was now only one prince over them in Jerusalem; and all of them all over the world, wherever they were, used to come back at fixed times to the Temple of God, which was in Jerusalem, if they could travel there from their homes. But even then they did not lack enemies from other nations, and conquerors, for Christ found them in his time tributaries of the Romans.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Capture of Samaria by Sargon II of Assyria, 721 B.C.; end of the Kingdom of Israel. First deportation of Judeans to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, 596 B.C. Fall of Jerusalem and second deportation, 586 B.C. Capture of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia, 538 B.C.; Jews allowed to return. The return from Exile began in 537 B.C.; the building of the second Temple 520-516. Jerusalem was captured

24. *The prophets mentioned in the gospel narrative*

Now in the whole period following the return of the Jews from Bablylonia, after Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah, who prophesied at the time of the return, and after Ezra, the Jews had no prophets up to the time of the Saviour's coming, except the other Zechariah, the father of John, and his wife Elizabeth, when Christ's birth was near, and, after his birth, the old man Simeon, and Anna, a widow by then advanced in years, and, last of all, John himself. John, it is true, did not foretell the coming of Christ, for by that time Christ and he were both young men; still, he did recognize, by prophetic inspiration, the Christ who was yet unrecognized, and he pointed him out. This is why the Lord himself says, 'The Law and the Prophets down to John.'^{1st} Now the prophetic utterances of these five people are known to us from the Gospel, in which the Virgin herself, the Lord's mother, is also represented as prophesying, before John. But the rejected Jews do not accept the utterances of those prophets; however, the innumerable individuals from among them who have believed in the gospel do accept them. For at that time Israel was truly divided into two parts, by that division which was fore-announced to King Saul through Samuel the prophet, as an unalterable division. As for Malachi, Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra, even the rejected Jews accept them, as the last authors to be added to the list of inspired Scripture. For writings by these prophets are extant, as are those of others, who wrote books which were to enjoy canonical authority. But they form but a small proportion of the great host of prophets. It is clear to me that some of their predictions referring to Christ and his Church must be included in this work. It will be more convenient to fulfil this obligation, with God's help, in the next book, to avoid adding further to the burden of this volume, which is already so protracted.

by the Romans under Pompey, 63 B.C. Judea became part of the Roman province of Syria.

157. Matt. 11, 13.

BOOK XVIII

1. *The course of history down to the era of the Saviour, as discussed in seventeen books¹*

I PROMISED that (given God's gracious help) I would first refute the enemies of the City of God, who honour their own gods above Christ, the founder of that City, and display a bitter hatred of the Christians, with a rancour most ruinous to themselves. This task I achieved in my first ten books. I undertook after that to write about the origin, the development, and the destined ends of the two cities. One of these is the City of God, the other the city of this world; and God's City lives in this world's city, as far as its human element is concerned; but it lives there as an alien sojourner. The promise I have just mentioned was in three parts; and in the four books following my tenth I gave a summary of the origin of both these cities. Then in one book, the fifteenth of this work, I sketched their progress from the first man down to the Flood. After that the two cities proceeded on their course in our narrative, just as they did in history, down to the time of Abraham. But from the time of father Abraham down to the time of the kings of Israel (where the sixteenth book finished), and from then to the coming of the incarnate Saviour (the point reached in Book xvii), it is evident that my pen has been devoted solely to the progress of the City of God. And yet this City did not proceed on its course in this world in isolation; in fact, as we well know, just as both the cities started together, as they exist together among mankind, so in human history they have together experienced in their progress the vicissitudes of time. It was however, with set purpose that I followed this plan. My intention was first to bring out more distinctly the development of the City of God by describing its course, without interruption from its contrary, that other city, from the time when God's promises began to be more explicit, down to his birth from the Virgin, in which the original promises were fulfilled. This is in spite of the fact that the City of God developed not in the light, but in the shadow. Now, therefore, I am conscious that I must make good my

1. Augustine depends largely on the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, translated and continued by Jerome (ed. R. Helm C.G.S., 47) The obelus symbol (†) indicates this dependence in the account of the early empires and their kings.

omission, by outlining the progress of that other city from the time of Abraham, giving it what seems adequate treatment, so that my readers may observe both cities and mark the contrast between them.

2. *The earthly city; its kings and dates, corresponding to the dates of the saints, from the birth of Abraham*

Well then, the society of mortal men spread everywhere over the earth; and amid all the varieties of geographical situation it still was linked together by a kind of fellowship based on a common nature, although each group pursued its own advantages and sought the gratification of its own desires. In such pursuits not everyone, perhaps no one, achieves complete satisfaction, because men have conflicting aims. Hence human society is generally divided against itself, and one part of it oppresses another, when it finds itself the stronger. For the conquered part submits to the conqueror, naturally choosing peace and survival at any price – so much so that it has always provoked astonishment when men have preferred death to slavery. For in almost all nations the voice of nature, as we might say, has pealed out the message that those who have suffered the misfortune of defeat should prefer subjugation at the hands of the victors to total destruction by the devastation of war. The result has been – though under the providence of God, in whose power it rests to order conquest or subjugation in each case – that some nations have been entrusted with empire, while others have been subdued to alien domination. Now the society whose common aim is worldly advantage or the satisfaction of desire, the community which we call by the general name of 'the city of this world' has been divided into a great number of empires; and among these we observe that two empires have won a renown far exceeding that of all the rest. First comes the Assyrian Empire; later came that of the Romans. These two powers present a kind of pattern of contrast, both historically and geographically. For Assyria rose to power in earlier times; Rome's emergence was later. Assyria arose in the East, Rome in the West. And, to complete the pattern, the beginning of the one followed hard on the end of the other. All the other kingdoms and kings I should describe as something like appendages of those empires.

Ninus,² then, was already on the throne as the second king of

2. cf. Bk IV, 6; XVI, 17. It would be tedious to attempt a detailed annotation of St Augustine's sketch of ancient history. His sources show the vagueness of

Assyria, in succession to Belus his father, the first ruler of that kingdom, when Abraham was born in the territory of the Chaldeans. There was also at that time the empire of the Sicyonians, quite a small power; but Marcus Varro, an unrivalled authority in all fields of learning, begins his work *On the Race of the Roman People* with an account of the Sicyonian kingdom,³ on the grounds of its antiquity. For he starts with the kings of Sicyon and proceeds to the Athenians, passing from them to the Latins, and then to the Romans. But such powers as he records before the foundation of Rome are inconceivable in comparison with the Assyrian Empire. Yet even the Roman historian Sallust admits that the Athenians attained the highest renown in Greece, more, however, by prestige than in virtue of their real power. For he describes them in these words: 'The achievements of the Athenians, in my judgement, were great and impressive enough; and yet their importance was a good deal less than their reputation. But because writers of remarkable genius emerged in that city, the Athenian exploits are extolled throughout the world as incomparable. So true is it that the qualities of men of action are assumed to be in proportion to the ability of writers of outstanding genius to sing their praises.'⁴ Besides this, the city of Athens won no small glory from her literature and her philosophers, because such pursuits flourished there in a pre-eminent degree. But in fact, as far as empire is concerned, there was no power greater in early times than that of Assyria – none so widely extended: for, according to tradition, King Ninus, son of Belus, subdued the whole of Asia as far as the frontiers

antiquity about the great empires of the East; Assyria and Babylon are generally – and understandably – confused. But a few dates may be of service.

The First Babylonian Empire began towards the end of the third millennium B.C., and, for nearly a thousand years, the centre of power was in the South of Mesopotamia. By 1000 B.C. this power was crumbling; Egypt was dominant, and in the North of Mesopotamia the Assyrians (racially indistinguishable from the Babylonians) were asserting themselves, with their capital at Nineveh. By the middle of the ninth century the Mesopotamian Empire had its political centre in the North. This Assyrian Empire collapsed before the New Babylonian Empire founded by Nabopolassar in 625 B.C., and Nineveh fell in 612. In 538 Babylon in its turn fell to Cyrus, the Persian, who had started the Persian rise to empire with the overthrow of the Medes (northern allies of Babylon) in 549.

Sicyon was never a great power; in early times it was dependent on Argos. It attained independence and international importance under a series of 'tyrants' in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., and its list of ancient monarchs seems to have acquired for Sicyon some of the renown properly belonging to Mycenae and Argos in the Heroic Age; and its reputation was enhanced by its prominence in the Achaean League of the third century.

4. Sall., *Cat.*, 8, 7ff.

of Lydia, and Asia is said to be a third of the entire world, though in fact it proves to be as much as half the area of the earth.⁵ Actually, the only people of the East that he did not bring under his dominion were the Indians; and even the Indians were attacked, after his death, by Semiramis, his wife. Thus it came about that all the peoples and rulers in all those countries accepted the sway of the throne of Assyria and carried out all the commands laid upon them.

Abraham, then, was born in that Empire, among the Chaldeans, in the time of Ninus. But Greek history is much more familiar to us than Assyrian, and those who have explored the ancient origins of the Roman people have traced a chronological sequence through the Greeks to the Latins, and from them to the Romans, who are themselves also Latins. For this reason we are obliged to give the names of Assyrian kings, where necessary, to make it clear how Babylonia, the first Rome, as it were, proceeds on its course side by side with the City of God, on pilgrimage in this world. However, the points which we must insert into this work, with a view to contrasting the two cities, that is, the earthly city and the heavenly, must be taken for preference from Greek and Latin sources, in which Rome appears in the role of a second Babylon.

Well then, when Abraham was born, the second kings in the two lines were on the throne, Ninus in Assyria. Europs in Sicyon – the first kings being Belus in the former and Aegialeus in the latter line.† But when God promised Abraham, who had now left Babylonia, that a great nation would derive from him and that a blessing would come to all nations in his descendants, the Assyrians at that time were under their fourth king, the Sicyonians under their fifth. For the son of Ninus ascended the Assyrian throne after his mother Semiramis. It is said that she was killed by her son, because she, his mother, had dared to defile him by incestuous intercourse. Some people think that it was Semiramis who founded Babylon; and she may, indeed, have rebuilt the city. But I have stated in the sixteenth book when and how it was founded.⁶ We also note that the son of Ninus and Semiramis,

5. cf. Bk XVI, 17.

6. cf. Bk XVI, ch. 4. Justinus (1, 2) ad Diodorus Siculus (2, 7) attribute the building of Babylon to Semiramis. The Greek fables about Semiramis, representing her as the Assyrian equivalent of Catherine of Russia, came from Diodorus, who based this account on Ctesias, the Greek historian of Persia (fourth century B.C.). The historical Semiramis was probably a Babylonian princess, Sammura-mat, wife of the Assyrian king Shamsi-Adad V, and queen-regent 810–805 B.C. for her son Adad-Nirram III. It appears that she introduced the worship of Nebo into Nineveh.

who succeeded his mother on the throne, is himself also called Ninus by some authorities, while others call him Ninyas, a name derived from that of his father. The throne of Sicyon was at that time occupied by Telxion,† whose reign was a time of such undisturbed happiness that after his decease his people worshipped him as a god, offering sacrifices to him and celebrating games which they say were originally established in his honour.

3. *The kings on the throne of Assyria and Sicyon at the time of Isaac's birth, and of the birth of Esau and Jacob*

The reign of Telxion was also the time of the birth of Isaac to his centenarian father, in fulfilment of God's promise: he was the son of Abraham by his wife Sarah, who was barren and old, and by that time had abandoned all hope of children. The king of Assyria then was Arrius, the fifth on the throne.† Now to Isaac himself, at the age of sixty, twins were born, Esau and Jacob. Isaac's wife Rebecca bore those sons to him, while their grandfather Abraham was still alive, now in his 160th year. Abraham died after completing 175 years, at a time when the elder Xerxes, who is also called Balaus, was on the throne of Assyria, and Thuriacus (some authorities write Thurimachus) reigned in Sicyon; they were the seventh kings. Now the kingdom of the Argives started at the time of the birth of Abraham's grandsons. Varro tells us that the Sicyonians were also accustomed to sacrifice at the tomb of their seventh king, Thuriacus, and this is certainly a piece of information that should not be omitted. Then, during the reigns of the eighth kings of Assyria and Sicyon, Armanitrest and Leucippust respectively, God spoke to Isaac and gave him the same two promises which he had given to his father, namely, the land of Canaan for his descendants, and a blessing for all nations in his descendants. The very same promises were also given to his son, Abraham's grandson, who was first called Jacob, and afterwards Israel, at the time when Belacus, the ninth king, was reigning over Assyria,† and Phoroneus, son of Inachus, was the second king of Argos,† while Leucippus still remained on the throne of Sicyon.

It was during this period that Greece increased in renown under Phoroneus king of Argolis, owing to the institution of certain laws and law-courts.⁷ Yet it was at the tomb of Phegous, younger brother of Phoroneus, that a temple was erected, after his death, in which he was to be worshipped as a god, and cattle were to be sacrificed in his

7. Pausanias (2, 19, 5) says that he was credited with the invention of fire.

honour. I imagine that they counted him worthy of this high honour because in his part of the kingdom (his father, I should observe, had assigned territories to both his sons, for them to rule over in his lifetime) he had established shrines for the worship of the gods, and had taught his people to mark the passage of time by months and years, instructing them what to take as units of measurement and what number of them to count for larger divisions. In amazement at these novelties of his, men who were still primitive believed, or at least decreed, that at his death he had become a god. For there is also a story that Io was the daughter of Inachus, and she was afterwards called Isis, and was worshipped in Egypt as a great goddess. Other writers, however, say that she came to Egypt from Ethiopia as queen, and that because her rule was both widespread and just, and because she established many useful practices, especially the art of reading and writing, divine honours were accorded her in that country after her death.⁸ In fact, so great was the honour in which she was held that anyone who asserted that she was a mere human being was liable to a capital charge.

4. *The times of Jacob and Joseph*

During the reigns of Balaus, tenth king of Assyria, and Messapus, ninth king of Sicyon,[†] who is called Cephisus by some authorities (that is, if the two names belong to one man, and it is not a case of confusion between one man and another) and when Apist was the third king of Argos, Isaac died at the age of 180, leaving twin sons who were 120 years old. The younger twin, Jacob, belonged to the City of God, which is our subject, while the elder son had been rejected. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom, called Joseph, was sold by his brothers to merchants who were travelling to Egypt. This happened in the lifetime of Isaac, their grandfather. But in his thirtieth year Joseph was lifted up to a lofty position from this humiliation which he had endured, and he took his place before Pharaoh. This was because by divine inspiration he had interpreted the king's dreams and foretold from them that there would be seven years of plenty, whose abundance would be consumed by the seven years following, years of infertility. For this reason the king had set him free from prison and put him into control of Egypt. It was his inviolate chastity that had thrown him into prison; for he bravely guarded that chastity when he refused to consent to adultery with his mistress. She had conceived a

wicked love for him, and she was to tell a wicked lie to his credulous master; but he escaped from her, even leaving his garment behind in her hands, as she tried to drag him towards her. Now in the second of the seven infertile years, Jacob joined his son in Egypt, with all his household. He was then a hundred and thirty years old, as he himself declared in answer to the king's question.⁹ Joseph at the time was thirty-nine years of age, that is to say there had been seven years of plenty and two of famine added to the thirty years, which was his age when he was advanced by the king to a position of honour.

5. *Apis, king of Argos; worshipped by the Egyptians under the name of Serapis*

This was the time when Apis, the Argive king, sailed across to Egypt with his ships; and when he died in that country he became Serapis, the greatest of all the Egyptian gods.[†] Varro gives a very simple explanation of this change of names after his death, from Apis to Serapis. The suggestion is that the coffin in which a dead man is put, which is now called a sarcophagus, is called *soros* in Greek, and that people started to worship Apis when he had been buried in his coffin, before his temple was built, and thus he was first called Sorapis, a combination of *soros* and Apis, and then by the alteration of one letter – the kind of thing that often happens – his name became Serapis.¹⁰ And in his case also a decree was passed that anyone who asserted him to have been a mere human being should incur capital punishment. This, in Varro's opinion, is also the significance of the image, which was found in nearly all the temples where Isis and Serapis were worshipped, which had a finger pressed to its lips, apparently enjoining silence, thus indicating that not a word should be said of their having been human. On the other hand, that bull which Egypt, infatuated by a strange delusion, nourished with abundant delicacies in his honour, was called Apis, not Serapis, because the Egyptians worshipped it alive, without a sarcophagus. When this bull died, a calf of the same colouring was sought, that is, one similarly marked with special white patches; and it was always found. Therefore they supposed it to be some kind of miracle, divinely provided for them. It was, in fact, no great task for demons, bent on deceiving them, to

9. Gen. 47, 9.

10. The name Serapis is probably a combination of Osiris and Apis: cf. Bk. VI, 10; VIII, 26; 27. Serapis was a syncretistic deity, combining Egyptian and Greek elements and his worship was introduced by Ptolemy I, to unite the mixed population, especially in Alexandria.

8. Eusebius identifies Io and Isis.

display to a cow which had conceived and was pregnant a phantom of a bull, which the cow alone could see, so that the mother's desire should from that stimulus induce the marks which would then appear in her young. This was how Jacob ensured the birth of parti-coloured lambs and goats by the use of variegated rods.¹¹ Doubtless what men can achieve, by means of material things and colours, demons have no difficulty in effecting, by displaying unreal shapes to animals at the time of conception.

6. *The kings of Argos and Assyria at the time of Jacob's death in Egypt*

Apis then died in Egypt, though he was king of the Argives, not of the Egyptians. He was succeeded on the throne by his son Argus,[†] and it was from Argus that the people were called Argi, and by a development from this name, Argives. For under the previous kings neither the land nor the people bore this name. It was during the reign of Argus over the Argives, and of Erato in Sicyon,[†] and while Balens was still on the Assyrian throne, that Jacob died in Egypt at the age of 147. When death was approaching he had blessed his sons, and his grandsons by Joseph; and in this benediction he had made a prophecy of Christ in the clearest terms. For in blessing Judah he said, "There shall not be lacking a ruler from Judah, and a leader from his loins, until those things that are in store for him shall come to fulfilment; and he will be the expectation of the nations."¹² It was in the reign of Argus that Greece began to make use of cereal crops, and to keep cornfields in cultivation, having imported seed from foreign parts. Argus was another ruler who began to be considered a god after his death, and a temple and sacrifices were established in his honour. This honour had in fact been given before this, during his reign, to a private individual who was struck by lightning: this was a man called Homogyrus, and the reason for the cult was that he was the first to yoke oxen to the plough.

7. *The kings reigning at the time of Joseph's death*

It was during the reign of Mammythus,¹³ the twelfth king, in Assyria, and of Plemneus,[†] the eleventh king, in Sicyon, and while Argus was still on the Argive throne, that Joseph died in Egypt, at the age of 110.

11. Gen. 30, 37ff. 12. Gen. 49, 10.
13. Mammylus, according to Eusebius.

After his death God's people stayed in Egypt for 145 years, and increased remarkably. At first they lived in tranquillity, until the death of those Egyptians to whom Joseph was well-known. After that their increasing numbers aroused enmity and they were viewed with suspicion. Thus they suffered oppression in the form of persecutions and the hardships of intolerable slavery, until their liberation from that country; and yet amid all these sufferings they were made fertile by God's grace, and their numbers went on increasing. Meanwhile, in Assyria and Greece the same kings continued on the throne.

8. *The kings at the time of Moses' birth; and the gods whose cult arose at that time*

Now when the fourteenth king, Saphrus,¹⁴ was reigning in Assyria, and the twelfth king, Orthopolis, was on the throne of Sicyon, and Criasus was ruling as the fifth king of Argus,[†] Moses was born in Egypt. It was through him that the people of God were set free from slavery in Egypt, a slavery which was a necessary discipline for them, to induce a longing for the help of their creator. Some authorities believe that Prometheus lived in the reigns of the kings above mentioned. The story¹⁵ that he fashioned men out of mud derives from his reputation as an outstanding teacher of wisdom; and yet we are not informed who were the wise men living in his times. His brother Atlas is said to have been a great astrologer;¹⁶ and this is what gave rise to the legendary story that he carries the sky.¹⁷ There is, however, a mountain bearing his name whose height seems a more likely cause of the popular belief that he supports the heavens. Many other legendary stories were first made up in the Greece of those days; in fact, down to the reign of Cecrops at Athens,¹⁸ which was when the city was given its name, and when God led his people from Egypt through the agency of Moses, the Greeks enrolled a number of departed human beings among the number of the gods. Such was their blind superstition and their characteristic folly.

Among these deified mortals were Melantomice, wife of King Criasus, and Phorbas their son, who succeeded his father as the sixth king of Argos;[†] also Iasos, son of the seventh king, Triopas,[†] and the

14. Sphaenis, according to Eusebius.

15. Paus., 10, 4, 4; cf. Hor., *Carm.*, 1, 16, 13ff.

16. Plin., 7, 56, 283.

17. Hes., *Theog.*, 517ff; 746.

18. Mythical first king: civilizer and benefactor. cf. Eur., *Ion*, 116 3f; Apollod., 3, 177ff.; Paus., 1, 5, 3.

ninth king, Sthenelas, or Sthenelus, or Sthenelus – various forms of the name are given in different authorities. There is a story that Mercury also lived at this time. He was the grandson of Atlas through the latter's daughter Maia, and this story is made much of even in popular writings. Mercury was renowned as an expert in many accomplishments, and he also imparted them to mankind.¹⁹ In return for this service men wished him, after his death, to be a god – perhaps they even believed that he really was divine. Hercules is said to have been later than Mercury, though still belonging to the Argive era. Some authorities, it is true, put him before Mercury in time, but I think they are mistaken. All the same, whatever the time of the birth of those two, serious historians, who have committed those old tales to writing, are agreed that they both were originally human beings,²⁰ and that they won divine honours from men because they conferred on mortals many benefits to make this life a more comfortable experience.

Minerva, however, belonged to far more ancient times than they; for the tale is that she made her appearance as a young girl in the time of Ogygus,† near the lake called Tritonis²¹ – hence she is also called Tritonia. She was doubtless the inventor of many crafts and was the more easily believed to be a goddess because so little was known about her origin. For the romantic tale of her birth from the head of Jove must be classed with poetical fantasies, not reckoned among facts of history. And yet there is no consensus among historians about the date of Ogygus himself, in whose time there also occurred a great deluge. It was not that greatest of all floods, unknown to pagan history whether Greek or Roman, from which no human beings escaped, except those who were privileged to be in the ark. But it was a greater deluge than the flood which occurred afterwards, in the time of Deucalion. For Varro begins his book, which I mentioned earlier,²² with the reign of Ogygus, and he gives himself no earlier point from which to arrive at the history of Rome than the flood of Ogygus,† I mean the flood that happened during his reign. But our Christian writers of chronicles, first Eusebius, and afterwards Jerome, record that the flood of Ogygus occurred more than 300 years later, when Phoroneus, the second king of Argos, was already on the throne; and we may be sure that they based their belief on some previous historians. However that may be, whatever the date of Ogygus, Minerva was already receiving

19. Especially the Iyre, and the literary accomplishments in general.

20. The theory known as Euhemerism: cf. Bk. IV, 27n.

21. In Libya. 22. cf. Bk. IV, 3; 4; 5.

worship as a goddess when Cecrops was reigning at Athens; and it was during his reign, we are told, that the city was either rebuilt or founded.

9. Varro's explanation of the name of Athens

Now the name of Athens is certainly derived from Minerva, who is called Athene in Greek. Varro gives the following explanation of the reason why the city was so called. An olive tree suddenly appeared and in another spot water gushed out, and these portents so alarmed the king that he sent to Delphic Apollo to inquire their meanings and to ask what action he should take.²³ Apollo answered that the olive signified Minerva and the water stood for Neptune, and that it rested with the citizens to decide from which of the two deities thus symbolized their city should, for preference, take its name. On receipt of this oracle, Cecrops called an assembly of all the citizens, male and female, to vote on the question; for at that time and in that part of the world the custom was that women as well as men should take part in deliberations on matters of state. Now when the matter was put before the multitude, the men voted for Neptune, the women for Minerva; and, as it happened, the women outnumbered the men by one; and so the victory went to Minerva.

Then Neptune was furious, and devastated the Athenian territory by floods of sea-water – for it is quite easy for demons to spread waters about on any scale at their pleasure. To appease his wrath, according to the same authority, the women suffered a threefold punishment: they were never to have the vote again; their children were never to take their mother's name; and no one was ever to call them 'Athenian women'. And so that great city, the mother or nurse of liberal studies and of so many great philosophers, the greatest glory and renown of Greece, was fooled by the demons, and received its name of Athens as the result of a dispute between two of its deities, a male and a female, and from the victory of the female through the female vote. Then, when it was afflicted by the defeated male, that city was compelled to arrange the victory of the female conqueror, being in greater dread of Neptune's waters than of Minerva's arms. In fact, the victorious Minerva was vanquished in the persons of the women who were punished in this way; and the goddess did not come to the aid of the women who had voted for her. Though they had lost their voting rights and their sons were debarred from taking their mother's name,

23. cf. Apollod., 3, 14, 1. This account says that Zeus entrusted the verdict to a jury, of twelve gods; cf. also Hdt., 8, 55; Ovid, Met., 6, 70ff.

Minerva could at least have ensured them the right to be called 'Athenian women', and to be rewarded by bearing the name of the goddess to whom their votes had brought victory over the male divinity. What a great deal could be said on this subject, were it not that my discourse is hastening to other topics!

10. *Varro's account of the naming of the Areopagus, and of Deucalion's flood*

Marcus Varro, however, refuses to give credence to fantastic fables which dishonour the gods, for fear of entertaining an opinion unworthy of their majesty. That is why he will not have it that the Areopagus, where the apostle Paul disputed with the Athenians,²⁴ the place from which the councillors of that city derived their name of 'Areopagites', was so called because Mars – who in Greek is called Ares – stood trial for homicide²⁵ on that hill before a jury of twelve gods, and was acquitted by six votes. For when the voting was equal, the custom was that acquittal had precedence over condemnation. In opposition to this notion, which is the one most widely accepted, Varro attempts to construct another explanation of this name, derived from his recondite literary knowledge. He would not have it supposed that the Athenians named the Areopagus from Ares and pagus, as if it were 'the hill of Mars'. That would obviously be an insult to the gods, for, in his opinion, lawsuits and trials are alien to them. He maintains that this story about Mars is as false as the tale told about the three goddesses, Juno, Minerva, and Venus, who are related to have engaged in a beauty competition, with Paris as judge, for the prize of the golden apple – a story which is performed in song and dance, amid the applause of the theatre, when the intention is to appease, by such exhibitions, the gods who take delight in the misdeeds with which they are charged, whether they be fact or fiction.²⁶

Varro does not believe such tales, being unwilling to credit anything incongruous with the nature or character of the gods. And yet while he offers an explanation of the name of Athens which is historical instead of mythical, he includes in his writings that great lawsuit of Neptune against Minerva, by whose name, in preference to Neptune's, that city was called. The story goes that those two competed with a display of prodigies and Apollo, when appealed to, could

not bring himself to decide between them. But, to put an end to this quarrel between divinities, Apollo referred their case to human beings, in the same way as Jupiter sent the goddesses just mentioned to Paris for his verdict. In that trial Minerva won by the votes, but was defeated in the punishment of the women who voted for her. She was able to exercise power over Athens in the persons of the men, who were her opponents, and yet she could not secure for her friends the title of 'Athenian women'. In these times, writes Varro, when Cranaus, successor to Cecrops, was on the Athenian throne (or, according to our Christian authorities, Eusebius and Jerome, while Cecrops was still king) there occurred a deluge which is known as 'Deucalion's flood', because Deucalion ruled in those parts²⁷ of the world which suffered most. This deluge, however, certainly did not reach Egypt and its adjacent lands.

11. *The date of the Exodus; the kings reigning at the death of Joshua*

Moses led God's people out of Egypt at the very end of the reign of Cecrops, king of Athens, when Ascatades was on the Assyrian throne, Marathus was king of Sicyon, and Triopas king of Argos.[†] It was when the people had been led out that Moses conveyed to them the Law which he had received from God on Mount Sinai. This Law is called the 'old covenant' because it offers earthly promises, whereas the new covenant was to come into being through Jesus Christ, and in this the kingdom of heaven was to be promised. This order had to be kept, just as it has to be observed in the case of the individual, so that, in the Apostle's words, 'It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the animal: the spiritual comes later.' For it is true, as he says, that 'the first man is from the earth, is by nature earthy: the second man is from heaven.'²⁸ Now Moses ruled the people in the desert for forty years, and died at the age of 120 after having himself also prophesied of Christ by the symbols of material observances in the tabernacle and the priestly ministry, in sacrifices and other ordinances rich in mystical significance. Joshua succeeded Moses. He led the people into the land of promise and settled them there by God's authorization, after he had crushed the nations who were then in possession of that part of the

24. Acts 17, 19ff.

25. For the murder of Halirrhothius, cf. Appollod., 3, 14, 2.

26. cf. Bk II, 10.

27. Phthiotis, in Thessaly. Strab., 8, 7, 1. The story of the Flood is told in Ovid, Met., 1, 262–437.

28. 1 Cor. 15, 46f.

world. He ruled the people for twenty-seven years after the death of Moses, and then he also died. This was when Amyntas was on the throne of Assyria, as the eighteenth king, while Corax was reigning as the sixteenth king of Sicyon, Danaus as the tenth king of Argos, and Erichthonius as the fourth king of Athens.[†]

12. *The cult of false gods introduced in Greece in this period*

During this period, that is from the departure of Israel from Egypt down to the death of Joshua, through whose agency that people were given the land of promise, ceremonies in honour of false gods were established by the kings of Greece. These cults recalled the memory of the deluge and the liberation of mankind from it, as well as the troubles of life at that time, when men first migrated to high ground and then returned to the plains. That, indeed, is the interpretation put upon the ascent and descent of the Luperci along the Sacred Way.²⁹ It is said that they symbolize the men who made for the mountain tops because of the floods of water, and again returned to the lowlands when the floods subsided. It is in this period, as the story goes, that Dionysus (also called Father Liber)³⁰, who was regarded as a god after his death, introduced the vine to his host in the land of Attica.³¹ At the same time, musical festivals were instituted in honour of Delphic Apollo, to appease his anger, because they imagined that the regions of Greece had been punished with sterility by him in his wrath because they had not defended his temple when it was set on fire by King Danaus during his invasion of those parts.³² They were indeed advised by Apollo's oracle to institute those festivals. In Attica, however, it was King Erichthonius who was the first to institute festivals in honour of Apollo,³³ and not only for him, but

29. At the Feast of Lupercalia on 15 February, goats and a dog were sacrificed to Lupercus (identified, it seems, with Faunus) in a cave below the Palatine called the Lupercal. Two youths belonging to the college of Luperci, chosen from certain noble families, were smeared with the sacrificial blood and ran naked (or clad in the skins of the goats) round the Palatine 'beating the bounds' of the original city with thongs (*februa* = 'means of purification') and from this is was a purificatory ceremony (*februa* = 'means of purification') and from this is derived the name of the month. It was also a fertility rite, in which women desiring children tried to incur blows from the *februa*. cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2, 267-428; and Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, I, ii.

30. cf. Bk VI, 9; VII, 2; VII, 16.

31. Apollod. 3, 14, 7.

32. The authority for this has not been traced.

33. Erichthonius (Erechtheus) traditionally founded the temple of Apollo at Delos.

also for Minerva.³⁴ At these latter celebrations olive oil was the prize offered for the winners, because their tradition said that Minerva discovered the olive, as Liber introduced the vine.

During these years, so runs the tale, Europa³⁵ was carried off by Xanthus, king of Crete - though we find his name differently given by some authorities³⁶ - and the result was the birth of Rhadamanthus, Sarpedon, and Minos - though the more generally accepted story makes them the sons of Jupiter by the same woman. However, the worshippers of such gods reckon the story we have given about the Cretan king to be the historical truth, whereas they class as empty fable the tale about Jupiter which is such a theme for the poets, such a success in the theatre, such a favourite with the public. It gives a popular subject for those shows designed to appease the deities by tales - even false tales - of their own misdeeds.

During the same period Hercules was held in renown in Syria. This was no doubt a different person from the Hercules of whom we have spoken earlier. In fact, in the more recent history it is said that there was more than one Father Liber, and more than one Hercules.³⁷ It was certainly this Hercules of whom the twelve colossal achievements are recounted; but the slaying of Antaeus³⁸ of Africa was not one of them, since that exploit belongs to the other Hercules. These authorities in their writings tell the story of the suicide of Hercules on Mount Oeta, where he set himself on fire, because a disease was sapping his strength, and he was not able to endure it with the courage he had shown in his many conquests.

It was at that time that the king - or rather the tyrant - Busris³⁹ used to sacrifice his guests to his divinities. According to tradition, he was the son of Neptune by Libya, daughter of Epaphus.[†] But we must

34. The Panathenaic festival of Athena. Apollod., 3, 14, 6.

35. The standard myth told how Europa, daughter of Agenor of Tyre, was carried off to Crete by Zeus in the form of a bull (or by a bull sent by Zeus). There she bore to Zeus the three sons mentioned, and afterwards married Asterius, king of Crete. Apollod., 3, 1, 1; Ovid, *Met.*, 2, 836-875; *Fast.*, 5, 603ff.

36. Asterius, in Dioid. Sic. 4, 60.

37. According to Diodorus Siculus (3, 82) one tradition spoke of three Dionysii. Herodotus (2, 44) mentions two Heracles, a god and a hero; Diodorus (3, 73) says that there were three. Cicero (*De Nat. Deor.*, 3, 16, 42) six. Servius (on *Virg. Aen.*, 8, 564) quotes Varro as saying that Hercules was a title given to mighty heroes in general, and that hence we find the Thrynian, the Argive, the Theban and the Libyan Hercules.

38. Apollod., 2, 5, 10—supplementary to the Twelve Labours.

39. Busris, king of Egypt, used to sacrifice strangers to Zeus in order to avert drought. He was killed by Hercules. Apollod., 2, 5, 11; Dioid. Sic., 4, 18; Ovid, *Met.*, 9, 182f.; *Arts Amat.*, 1, 647-52.

never believe that Neptune perpetrated so immoral an act; the gods must not be accused! Such themes should be assigned to the poets and the theatres, as material for the propitiation of the gods! The parents of King Erichthonius are said to have been Vulcan and Minerva.⁴⁰ and the death of Joshua, as the evidence shows, fell within the last years of his reign. However, because they insist that Minerva was a virgin, we have the story that while the pair were struggling, Vulcan in his excitement discharged his seed on the ground, and that the man born as a result was given his name for that reason, for in Greek *eris* means struggle, and *chthôn* means earth, and the name Erichthonius is a compound of the two.

Still, it has to be admitted that the better authorities vigorously defend their gods against such allegations. They hold that this fantastic idea arose from the discovery of an abandoned child in the temple shared by Vulcan and Minerva at Athens.⁴¹ The infant was wrapped in the coils of a serpent, betokening his future greatness; and because the temple belonged jointly to Neptune and Minerva, and because the child's parents were unknown, he was said to be the son of the two deities. For all that, it is the legend rather than the historical account that explains the origin of the name. But does that concern us? The latter account, in reliable books, may serve for the instruction of the religious; the other story may give pleasure to the fowl demons in the shows, whose intent is to deceive. And yet it is these demons that receive divine worship from those religious pagans, and although they may deny those stories about them, they cannot clear their deities of all guilt, seeing that it is the gods who demand the holding of those shows wherein the myths, ostensibly rejected with such wisdom are enacted with such obscenity. And the gods are propitiated with such falsehoods, with such indecencies as these! The plays sing of the misdeeds of the gods. These may, it is true, be false charges; nevertheless, to find entertainment in a fictitious crime is itself a real crime.

13. The fables that arose in the pagan world at the beginning of the period of the judges

After Joshua's death the people of God had judges as their rulers, and in that period they experienced alternations of humiliating hardship

40. Apollod., 3, 14, 6; cf. Eur., *Ion*, 20ff; 266ff.

41. There was a temple of Hephaestus above the Ceramicus, and an image of Athena nearby. Paus., 1, 14, 5.

in retribution for their sins and encouraging prosperity, thanks to the mercy of God. It was in those times that fantastic tales were made up about Triptolemus; how at the bidding of Ceres, he was borne by winged serpents and bestowed grain, as he flew, on needy countries;⁴² tales about the minotaur, that a beast was shut up in the Labyrinth, and that when men entered the building they could not get out, but wandered 'in a maze inextricable';⁴³ stories of Centaurs, that they were beings compounded of horse and man; about Cerberus, the three-headed dog of the underworld; about Phryxus and his sister Helle, and how they flew on the back of a ram; about the Gorgon, who had serpent locks, and turned to stone those who looked upon her; about Bellerophon, and how he rode on a flying horse with wings, called Pegasus; about Amphion, who by the sweet music of his lyre charmed the stones and drew them to him; about the craftsman Daedalus and Icarus his son, and how they fitted themselves with wings, and flew; about Oedipus, the story that he compelled a monster, called the Sphinx, a quadruped with a human face, to hurl herself to death, by solving a riddle which she used to pose, supposing it insoluble; about Antaeus who was slain by Hercules, the tale that he was son of the earth, and therefore when he fell to the earth he always rose up stronger. There are other tales, perhaps, which I have omitted.

Down to the time of the Trojan War, which is where Marcus Varro ends the second book of his *On the Race of the Roman People*, these mythical stories were made up by the ingenuity of men, taking the opportunities offered by historical records which contain true accounts of actual events, but without linking them with slanders on the divinities. After that, however, we get the story of Ganymede, the beautiful boy snatched away to be Jupiter's catamite – a foul crime committed by King Tantalus and ascribed by legend to Jupiter – and the tale that Jupiter sought entrance to Danae's bed in the form of a shower of gold – meaning that a woman's purity was corrupted by gold. Whoever were the inventors of such tales, whether fact or fiction, or facts concerning others and fictitiously attributed to Jove, words fail to express what a low opinion these fable-mongers must have formed of human nature to assume that men could endure such lies with patience. And yet men gave them a delighted welcome. One would have thought that the more devotion men felt in their worship

42. The winged dragons are mentioned in Paus. 8, 18, 2; cf. Ovid, *Met.*, 5, 64 2ff. Triptolemus, a fertility god, was associated with Demeter in the Eleusian mysteries.

43. Virg., *Aen.*, 6, 14–30; Ovid, *Met.* 8, 152ff.

of Jupiter, the greater should have been their severity in punishing those who dared to tell such tales about him. But in fact, far from being angry with those who invented these fictions, men were even induced to enact those inventions in the theatre by their fear of incurring the anger of the gods.

It was in this period that Latona gave birth to Apollo, not the Apollo we were speaking of earlier, whose oracles were generally consulted, but the one who, with Hercules,[†] was a servant to Admetus.⁴⁴ In spite of that, so strong is the belief in his divinity that the majority, in fact almost all men, suppose the two to be identical. At that time also Father Liber engaged in wars in India.⁴⁵ He had many women in his army, who were called Bacchae, more renowned for their madness than for their valour. Some accounts, indeed, say that Liber was conquered and bound; others that he was slain in battle by Perseus;[†] going as far as to record his place of burial. Nevertheless, Bacchanalian sacred rites – or rather sacrileges – were instituted in his name, as if in the name of a god, by impure demons, and many years afterwards the senate was so ashamed of the frenzied obscenity of those observances that they prohibited their performance in Rome.⁴⁶ During the same period, after the death of Perseus and his wife Andromeda there was such a general conviction that they had been taken up into heaven, that men traced their likenesses in the stars, and gave their name to constellations, and felt neither shame nor fear in so doing.

14. The 'theological' poets

During the same period there emerged poets who were also called 'theologians',⁴⁷ because they wrote poems about the gods, but such gods as were only men, albeit great men; or else they are elements of this world which the true God created, or were set up in principalities and powers in accordance with their Creator's will and their own deserts. These poets may have had something to say about the one true God, among all their frivolous lies; but they did not rightly serve him, we may be sure, in worshipping him together with those others who are not gods, and offering to them the service which is due only to the one God. And even they could not refrain from those

44. In the story of Alcestis. Cicero (*De Nat. Deor.*, 3, 25, 57) says that there were four distinct Apollos.

45. Diod. Sic., 4, 3. For Liber cf. ch. 12n.

46. In 186 B.C. (*Liv.*, 39, 18; cf. *Bk VI*, ch. 9).

47. Herodotus (2, 53) so describes Homer and Hesiod.

legends which bring shame on their deities – I am thinking of the poets Orpheus, Musaeus, and Linus.⁴⁸ It is true that those 'theologians' worshipped the gods; they were not worshipped in the place of gods, and yet somehow or other the city of the ungodly generally puts Orpheus in charge of the sacred – or, rather, sacrilegious – ceremonies of the underworld. Moreover, the wife of King Athamas, Ino by name, and her son Melicertes hurtled themselves into the sea, of their own free will, and perished; and they were ranked among the gods in the opinion of men. Just as were those other human beings belonging to that time, Castor and Pollux. The Greeks, as we know, call the mother of Melicertes Leucothea, whereas the Latin authors give her name as Matura; but they agree in supposing her a goddess.

15. The fall of the Argive kingdom, contemporary with the start of the reign of Picus among the Laurentines

About that time the kingdom of the Argives ended, and was transferred to Mycenae, Agamemnon's city, and the Laurentine kingdom arose, in which Picus, son of Saturn, first received the throne. This was when the judge among the Hebrews was a woman, called Deborah; but it was the spirit of God that acted through her in this office, for she was also a prophetess, although the prophecy⁴⁹ is not clear enough for me to be able to prove its reference to Christ, without a lengthy explanation. The Laurentines, then, were by now established as a kingdom in Italy, and from those kings the Roman line of descent, after the Greeks, can be more plainly traced. However, the Assyrian kingdom still continued; and there I amparest was the twenty-third king when Picus became the first on the Laurentine throne.

As for Saturn, the father of Picus, those who deny he was a man should observe what is the opinion of the worshippers of such gods as these. Other writers say that he reigned in Italy before his son Picus, and Virgil also says in a more familiar passage,

48. Many poems were ascribed to Orpheus in early times; Plato quotes some, and Aristotle refers to them. Clement of Alexandria gives a list of Orphic poems compiled by Epigenes, an Alexandrian scholar, and Neoplatonists quote a *Rhapsodic Theogony*, of uncertain date, which went under the name of Orpheus. A collection of oracles was attributed in classical times to the mythical singer Musaeus. Linus was the name of a mournful song with a repeated sound, *dilinon*, which was assumed to mean 'Alas, for Linus!' and stories were told to explain why Linus should be lamented. Suidas mentions Linus (with Orpheus) as a pre-Homeric poet, but there is no record of any poems attributed to him in antiquity.

49. cf. *Judg.* 4: 5.

A race unfarmed, dispersed upon the mountains
He settled, gave them laws, and chose a name,
Latium, since he upon those shores had once
Lain hid in safety. Then beneath his rule
There passed the age called 'golden'.⁵⁰

But these are to be regarded as poetic fictions, and the story to be supported in preference is that the father of Picus was Sterces, a skilled farmer who discovered the secret of fertilizing the land with animal dung, which is called *stercus* from his name (which according to some authorities, was *Stercutius*). Moreover, whatever the reason for the decision to call him Saturn, this Sterces (or *Stercutius*) was certainly made a god for his services to agriculture. Similarly they also welcomed his son Picus into the number of such gods, and allege that he was a famous augur and warrior.⁵¹ Picus had a son called Faunus, the second king of the Laurentines; he too is, or at any rate was, a god in their estimation. It was before the Trojan war that they accorded these divine honours to dead men.

16. The deification of Diomedes, after the fall of Troy

Then came the fall of Troy, whose destruction is everywhere sung in poetry, and is known to every schoolboy. Its story has won outstanding fame and popularity both because of the greatness of the disaster and through the pre-eminent literary powers of the writers who recorded it. This happened during the reign of Latinus, son of Faunus, after whom the kingdom began to be called the kingdom of the Latins, the name Laurentine being dropped. When the Greek conquerors abandoned the ruins of Troy and were making their way back to their own homes they were afflicted to exhaustion by all kinds of horrible disasters; and yet some of them, too, increased the number of the gods. In fact, even Diomedes⁵² was turned into a god. The story

50. *Aen.*, 8, 321-5 (There is a play on *Latium* and *latusset*, 'had lain hid').

51. *Picus*, an Italian agricultural deity, generally described as the first king of Italy and as a warlike hero; he was also associated with the woodpecker (*picus*), a bird sacred to Mars and important in augury. Virgil (*Aen.*, 7, 187-9) makes him the father of Faunus and grandfather of Latinus. Ovid (*Met.*, 14, 320f ff.) tells the story of his transformation into a woodpecker by Circe, whose love he rejected.

52. Legend said that Diomedes, after his return from Troy, left home because of his wife's unfaithfulness and wandered to Italy, where he founded various towns in Magna Graecia, and was buried on one of the islands of Diomedes, near the Apulian coast, where he received divine or heroic honours as a founder of Greek culture in Italy; cf. Pind., *Nem.*, 10, 7; Strab., 6, 3, 9f.

goes that he was prevented from returning to his own people by a punishment divinely imposed; and the transformation of his companions into birds is not put forward as a baseless poetic fantasy;⁵³ it is attested as historical fact. But although supposedly a god he was not able of himself to restore his fellows to their human condition, nor yet, being a newcomer in the heavenly realm, did he obtain this boon from his King Jupiter. And yet we are assured that his temple is on the Island of Diomedea, not far from Mount Garganus in Apulia, and that those birds fly round the temple and make their abode there, displaying such wonderful devotion that they fill their beaks with water which they sprinkle on the shrine. And when Greeks, or men descended from Greek stock, arrive at that place they not only behave peaceably, they even fawn on them; on the other hand, if they catch sight of men of other races, they fly at their heads and wound them, inflicting injuries serious enough to prove fatal. For, it is said, they are adequately armed for these encounters with hard beaks of enormous size.

17. Varro's information about the incredible transformations of human beings

To bolster up this story Varro adduces the equally incredible tales about the notorious witch Circe, who transformed Ulysses' companions into animals, and about the Arcadians who were chosen by lot and swam across a certain lake and were there changed into wolves and lived in the desolate parts of that region in the company of wild beasts like themselves. However, if they had not eaten human flesh they used to swim back across the lake after nine years to be turned back into human beings.⁵⁴ To crown all, he expressly names a certain Demaenetus, telling a story of how he tasted the sacrifice which the Arcadians made to the god Lycaeus according to their custom, with a boy as the victim, whereupon Demaenetus was transformed into a wolf. Then in the tenth year he was restored to his proper shape; he trained as a boxer and won a prize at the Olympic games.⁵⁵ This same historian also thinks that the reason for the surname Lycaeus, given to Pan and to Jupiter⁵⁶ in Arcadia, can only be this transformation of human beings into wolves, which they supposed could only be effected by divine power. For 'wolf' in Greek is *lykos*, and

53. cf. Virg., *Aen.*, 11, 252-80; Ovid, *Met.*, 14, 455-511.

54. Plin., 8, 22.

55. This story is not found elsewhere.

56. *Hdt.* 4, 203. 'The hill of Zeus Lycaeus.'

the name *Lycæus* is evidently derived from it. Varro also asserts that the Roman *Lupercis*⁵⁷ took their origin from these mysteries, which were, we might say, the seed from which they developed.

18. *What are we to believe about these apparent transformations?*

Now it may well be that the readers of these accounts are waiting to hear what we have to say about them. And what can we say, except that we should 'escape from the midst of Babylon'?⁵⁸ This prophetic instruction is spiritually interpreted as meaning that we should escape from the city of this world (which is, of course, the society of wicked angels and of wicked men) advancing by the steps of faith which 'becomes active in love',⁵⁹ to take refuge in the living God. For it is obvious that the greater the power we observe in the demons, as regards this lower world, the greater the tenacity we should show in clinging to the Mediator through whom we climb from the depths to the heights. For if I were to say that we should refuse to believe these reports, there are men to be found, even today, who will assert that they have heard well-attested cases of this sort, or even that they have had first-hand experiences of them. In fact, when I was in Italy, I myself used to hear of such happenings from one district in that country. It was said that landladies conversant with these evil arts were in the habit of giving drugs in cheese to travellers, when they so wished and the opportunity offered, and by this means their guests were turned into pack-animals on the spot and were used to carry commodities of all kinds. Afterwards, when they had finished their jobs, they were restored to their original selves. And yet their minds did not become animal, but were kept rational and human. This is what Apuleius,⁶⁰ in the work bearing the title *The Golden Ass*, describes as his experience, that after taking a magic potion he became an ass, while retaining his human mind. But this may be either fact or fiction.

Stories of this kind are either untrue or at least so extraordinary that we are justified in withholding credence. And in spite of them we must believe with complete conviction that omnipotent God can do anything he pleases, by way of either punishing or of helping, while demons can effect nothing in virtue of any power belonging to their nature – since that nature is angelic by creation, though now it has

57. cf. ch. 12n.

58. Is. 48, 20.

59. Gal. 5, 6.

60. cf. Bk. IV, 2n.

become wicked by their own fault – except what God permits: and his judgements are often inscrutable, but never unjust. Demons do not, of course, create real entities; if they do indeed perform any feats of the kind we are now examining, it is merely in respect of appearance that they transform beings created by the true God, to make them seem to be what they are not. And so I should not believe, on any consideration, that the body – to say nothing of the soul – can be converted into the limbs and features of animals by the craft or power of demons. Instead, I believe that a person has a phantom which in his imagination or in his dreams takes on various forms through the influence of circumstances of innumerable kinds. This phantom is not a material body, and yet with amazing speed it takes on shapes like material bodies; and it is this phantom, I hold, that can in some inexplicable fashion be presented in bodily form to the apprehension of other people, when their physical senses are asleep or in abeyance. This means that the actual bodies of the people concerned are lying somewhere else, still alive, to be sure, but with their senses suspended in lethargy far more deep and oppressive than that of sleep. Meanwhile the phantom may appear to the senses of others as embodied in the likeness of some animal; and a man may seem even to himself to be in such a state and to be carrying burdens – one may have the same experience in dreams. But if these burdens are material objects, they are carried by demons to make game of men, who observe partly the actual bodies of the burdens, partly the unreal bodies of the animals.

For instance, there was a man called *Praestantius* who used to tell a story of something that happened, he said, to his father. He took that magic potion in some cheese in his home, and then lay in his bed; he was apparently asleep, and yet he could not be awakened by any means. After a few days, however, he woke up, said *Praestantius*, as if he had been asleep, and narrated his experiences as being a dream. He had, it appeared, become a horse and with other pack animals had carried *Rhaetic corn* (so called because sent to *Rhaetia*) to the soldiers. It was discovered that this had in fact happened just as he told the story; and yet it seemed to him to have been simply a dream. Another man reported that in his own house, at night-time, before he went to bed, he saw a philosopher coming to him, a man he knew very well; and this man explained to him a number of points in Plato, which he had formerly refused to explain when asked. Now this philosopher was asked why he had done something in the other's house which he had refused to do when requested in his own home, and he said in reply, 'I did not do it; I merely dreamed that I did.'

This shows that what one man saw in his sleep was displayed to the other, while awake, by means of a phantom appearance.

These stories were told us not by inconsiderable informants whom we should think it beneath us to believe, but by persons we could not imagine telling lies to us. For that reason it seems to me that this phenomenon, which is generally talked about, and which has been recorded in literature, could have happened (assuming that it did happen) in the way I have suggested – I mean the habitual changing of human beings into wolves by Arcadian gods (or rather demons) and the feat of Circe who

By charms transformed the comrades of Ulysses.⁶¹

But the birds of Diomedes are said to preserve their species through successive generations, and therefore I do not believe that they came into being by the transformation of men, but that they were substituted for the men who had been spirited away, as a doe was substituted for Iphigenia, daughter of King Agamemnon.⁶² For conjuring tricks of this kind could have presented no difficulty for demons who were allowed, by God's decision, to practise them; but because that maiden was afterwards found alive, it was easily realized that a doe had been substituted for her. The companions of Diomedes, in contrast, suddenly disappeared from sight and did not later reappear anywhere, but were destroyed by the avenging evil angels; that is why it is supposed that they were transformed into those birds, which were secretly brought to that spot from other parts of the world where this species of bird is found, and suddenly substituted for them. While as for the story that the birds bring water in their beaks and sprinkle Diomedes's temple, and that they show deference to men of Greek blood, but attack foreigners, it is not to be wondered at that the demons prompt this behaviour; for it is to their advantage to promote the belief that Diomedes became a god, so that they can deceive men in this way. Their purpose is that men should worship many false gods and thus insult the one true God, and should show their devotion to dead men (who were not truly living even when they were alive) by means of temples, altars, sacrifices, and priests – all of which belong of right solely to the one true and living God.

61. Virg., *Ecl.*, 8, 70.

62. Eur. *Iph.*, T., 26–30.

19. The arrival of Aeneas in Italy at the time when Labdon was judge over the Hebrews

At that time, after the capture and demolition of Troy, Aeneas with twenty ships, in which the survivors of the Trojans were conveyed, arrived in Italy. Latinus was then reigning there, while Mnestheus was king of Athens, Polyphides of Sicyon, Tantaranes of Assyria, and Labdon was judge of the Hebrews.[†] Then, after the death of Latinus, Aeneas reigned for three years, while the same kings continued in the places above-mentioned, except that Pelagus was by now on the throne of Sicyon, and Samson was judge of the Hebrews;[‡] Samson was so amazingly strong that he has been identified with Hercules. Now the Latins made Aeneas into one of their gods,⁶³ since he was not seen after his death. The Sabines also enrolled their first king among the gods; he was called Sancus, or, according to some authorities, Sanctus.⁶⁴ It was in the same period that Codrus, king of Athens, concealed his identity and exposed himself to the Peloponnesians, his city's enemies, for them to kill him, and achieved his object. It is claimed that in this way he rescued his country. For the Peloponnesians had received an oracle that they would only gain the victory if they refrained from killing the Athenian king. Accordingly, he fooled them by appearing in the dress of a poor man and by provoking them to kill him in a quarrel. Hence Virgil says, 'And the quarrel provoked by Codrus.' The Athenians worshipped him too as a god, with sacrifices in his honour.⁶⁵ When Silvius was on the throne as the fourth king of the Latins (he was the son of Aeneas, not by Crensa, the mother of Ascanius, the third king of that country, but by Lavinia, daughter of Latinus, a posthumous son, as they say, to Aeneas) Oneus was ruling as twenty-ninth king of Assyria, while Melanthus was sixteenth king of Athens, and Eli the priest was judge of the Hebrews; and it was then that the kingdom of Sicyon came to an end. Tradition says that it had lasted for 959 years.

63. Ovid, *Met.*, 14, 581–608.

64. *Semo Sancus Dius Fidius*, apparently a god of sewing, of Sabine origin. He had a temple on the Quirinal.

65. Virg., *Ecl.*, 5, 11. There is no evidence that Codrus received more than a hero-cult. For this story cf. Val. Max., 5, 6.

20. *The regal succession in Israel after the period of the judges*

Soon afterwards, while the same kings were reigning in the places just mentioned, the period of the judges reached its end and the kingdom of Israel made its beginning with King Saul, in the time of the prophet Samuel. Now at that time the kings called the Silvii began to reign in Latium. The first king to be called Silvius was the son of Aeneas, and after him his successors retained this cognomen in addition to the personal names they were given, in the same way as long afterwards the successors of Caesar Augustus were surnamed Caesar. Now after the rejection of Saul and the consequent exclusion from the throne of all his descendants, David succeeded to the kingdom on Saul's death, forty years after Saul had come to power. At that time the Athenians finally dispensed with the monarchy after the death of Codrus, and began to have magistrates for the administration of their commonwealth. David also reigned forty years and after him his son Solomon was king of Israel. He founded that world-famous Temple of God in Jerusalem. In his time Alba was founded in Latium, and from that time onwards the kings began to be called 'Kings of the Albans', instead of 'Kings of the Latins', although they reigned in the same district of Latium. Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, under whom the people was divided into two kingdoms, and each part thereafter had its own succession of kings.

21. *The kings of Latium, among whom Aeneas and Aventinus were deified*

After Aeneas, who was deified, Latium had eleven kings, none of whom was made into a god. But Aventinus, the twelfth successor of Aeneas, was cut down in battle, and was buried on that mountain still called by his name; and thereafter he was added to the number of that class of gods created for themselves by men. Some authorities, it is true, have refused to record that he was killed in battle, saying instead that he disappeared, and that the mountain was not named after Aventinus, but was so called from the advent of birds (*adventu avium*). After this king the only god created in Latium was Romulus, the founder of Rome. Now between these two we find two kings, of whom the first was, to quote a verse of Virgil,

Procas the next, the glory of Troy's race.⁶⁶

66. *Aen.*, 6, 767.

In his time Rome was already, in a manner of speaking, in the process of being born; and so Assyria, that greatest of all empires, reached the end of her long history. For the power passed over to the Medes after nearly 1,305 years, if we reckon in the time of Belus, father of Ninus, who as the first king was content with a small dominion in that part of the world.

Procas was the king before Aemilius. Now Aemilius had made his brother Numitor's daughter, named Rhea, a Vestal Virgin; she was also called Iliia, and was the mother of Romulus. It is alleged that she conceived twins by Mars, for in this way the Romans honoured or excused her unchastity, and they adduce as proof the fact that the infants after their exposure were suckled by a she-wolf. For they hold that this species of animal belongs to Mars, and so, naturally, the she-wolf is supposed to have presented her teats to the little children simply because she recognized in them the sons of Mars, her lord. All the same, there are those who assert that when the exposed babies lay wailing they were first taken in by some unknown harlot, and that hers were the first breasts they sucked – for 'she-wolves' (*lypae*) was the name they used to give to harlots, which is why houses of ill-fame are to this day called 'wolves' dens' (*lypanaria*). Afterwards, it is said, they came into the care of a shepherd named Faustulus, and were reared by his wife Acca. And yet, if we assume that God wished to convict the man who was king, who had cruelly ordered these infants to be thrown into the water, and that God therefore decided to help the children through whom such a great city was to be founded, by having them rescued from the water by his divine intervention and then suckled by a wild animal, is there anything amazing in this supposition? Amulius was succeeded on the throne of Latium by his brother Numitor, the grandfather of Romulus; and in the first year of Numitor's reign, Rome was founded. That is why he ruled after that in company with his grandson, Romulus.

22. *Rome's foundation coincides with the end of the Assyrian kingdom, and with the reign of Hezekiah in Judah*

Not to spend time over a multitude of detail, the city of Rome was founded to be a kind of second Babylon, the daughter, as it were, of the former Babylon. It was God's design to conquer the world through her, to unite the world into the single community of the Roman commonwealth and the Roman laws, and so to impose peace throughout its length and breadth. For there were at this time powerful and

valiant peoples, trained in arms, nations who would not lightly yield, whose conquest entailed enormous risks and no little devastation, with fearful hardships besides. Now at the time when the Assyrian Empire subjugated almost the whole of Asia, although this conquest was effected by war, it could be achieved without a great deal of cruel and difficult fighting, because the nations were still untrained to resist, and were not yet so numerous or so powerful. For we must remember that at the time when Ninus subdued the whole of Asia except India, not much more than a thousand years had elapsed after that great and world-wide Flood, when a mere eight souls escaped in Noah's ark. Rome, on the contrary, did not so speedily and easily subdue all those nations of the East and the West which we now see beneath her imperial sway, since her growth was a gradual process, and by the time she encountered them the nations were vigorous and warlike, in whatever direction she expanded. At the time of Rome's foundation the people of Israel had spent 718 years in the land of the promise, twenty-seven of which belong to Joshua's time, the following 329 to the period of the judges. Then, after the beginning of the monarchy in that country, 362 years had gone by. The king of Judah at this time was called Ahaz, or, according to another reckoning, it was his successor, Hezekiah. By common consent he was an excellent and extremely religious monarch, and his reign was contemporary with Romulus. Meanwhile Hoshua began to rule over the part of the Hebrew people which was called Israel.

23. *The Erythraean Sibyl and her prophecies of Christ*

It was at this same time, according to some accounts, that the Erythraean Sibyl made her predictions. Varro, we note, informs us that there were a number of Sibyls, not only one.⁶⁷ This Sibyl of Erythraea certainly recorded some utterances which are obviously concerned with Christ. I read these first in a Latin translation, in verses of bad Latinity and shaky metre, faults due, as I learned later, to the

67. Sibyls. The earliest of the inspired prophetesses, according to tradition, was the Erythraean Sibyl, so called either from the red soil of Marpessus, near Troy, or from Erythrae in Ionia. Her prophecies related to the Trojan war; but she is not mentioned by Homer or Herodotus. According to Varro there were ten Sibyls in all, the most famous being the Sibyl of Cumae, the reputed source of the Sibylline books kept on the Capitol. These were destroyed by fire in 83 B.C., and a collection of similar documents from various places. The surviving oracles are of late Judaeo-Hellenic or Judaeo-Christian provenance, containing warnings of dreadful calamities.

incompetence of some unknown translator. This I discerned in conversations with that eminent man Flaccianus, who was, amongst other things, proconsul, a man of most ready eloquence and profound learning. We were talking about Christ, and he produced a Greek manuscript, saying that it was the poems of the Erythraean Sibyl. He showed me that in the manuscript the order of initial letters in one passage was so arranged as to form these words: *IESOUS CHRISTOS THEOU UIOS SOTER*, the translation of which is 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour'. These verses, which form an acrostic giving this meaning, run as follows, in a verse translation made by someone in good Latin and sound metre:

In token of the judgement day the earth shall drip with sweat
Eternally to reign, a king shall come from heavenly seat,
Strictly to judge all flesh in power, to judge the world in might.
On this, belief and unbelief shall have our God in sight,
Uplifted with his saints on high when this world's end has come
So shall all souls in flesh attend before his throne of doom.

Choked with thick briars and all untilled the earth now lies forlorn:
Rejected all man's idols now, his treasures turned to scorn:
Each land shall be consumed by flames that search both sea and sky,
Infernal gates of foathsome hell in fiery ruin lie.

Salvation's light shall be shed forth on saints exempt from blame:
To guilty men that day shall bring the everlasting flame.
Obscurer acts shall be revealed, his secrets each impart,
So shall God bring all thoughts to light, unlocking every heart.

Then all shall gnash their teeth, the sound of wailing shall arise,
Extinct the sun's bright ray, the dance of planets in the skies.
O'erhead the sky shall roll away, quenched be the moon's bright glow;
Uplifted shall the valleys be, the hills shall be laid low,

Until in all the world remains no eminence or height;
Into the plains subside the hills: the seas of azure bright
On a sudden cease; the earth itself shall perish, riven and rent,
Springs shall likewise be parched by fire, the streams by heat be spent.

Sadly the trumpet then shall blare, and sound its mournful strains
On high, lamenting deed of woe and mortals' varied pains.
Tartarus shows its vast abyss, as earth gapes open wide.
Enthroned sits God, and kings shall stand for judgement side by side;
Rivers of fire and brimstone stream from heaven, a fearful tide.⁶⁸

In the Latin, these verses, translated, in a fashion, from the Greek,

68. *Oracc. Sibyll.* (ed. Geffcken) VIII, 217ff.

could not completely convey the sense of the initial letters of the original lines read in sequence; where the letter *upsilon* occupied that position in the original Latin, words could not be found which began with the equivalent letter and also suited the sense. There are three such lines, the fifth, the eighteenth and the nineteenth.⁶⁹ The result is that if one reads in sequence the initial letters of the verses, ignoring the first letters of these three lines and substituting *upsilon*, as if it were found in those places, a phrase of five words appears: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour; but this is only when it is read as Greek instead of Latin.

There are here twenty-seven verses; and twenty-seven is the cube of three. For three times three is nine; multiply nine by three – so that the figure may add height to length and breadth – and we arrive at twenty-seven. Now if you connect the initial letters of those five Greek words, *Iésous CHRÍstos THEou Uíos Sôtér* (Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour) you have the Greek word *ichthys*, which means 'fish',⁷⁰ and the allegorical meaning of this noun is Christ, because he was able to remain alive – that is, without sin – in the abyss of our mortal condition, in the depths, as it were, of the sea.

Now this Sibyl – whether the Sibyl of Erythrae or, as some are inclined to believe, of Cumae – has nothing in her whole poem, of which this is a tiny fragment, relating to the worship of false or created gods. In fact, she attacks them and their worshippers so strongly that she is evidently to be counted among those who belong to the City of God. Lactantius also inserts in his work some prophecies concerning Christ uttered by the Sibyl, though he does not state which Sibyl.⁷¹ He quotes them separately; but I have decided that they should be set consecutively, as if the many brief statements he records made one lengthy prophecy. 'Hereafter', he says,

he will come into the wicked hands of unbelievers; and they will deal God blows with their polluted hands and spit their poisoned spite from their unclean mouths; but he in his simplicity will offer his holy back to their strokes. And he will be silent as he receives the blows, so that no one may know that he comes as the Word, or whence he comes, so that he may speak to those in the underworld and be crowned with a crown of thorns. While for his food they have given him gall, and vinegar for his thirst; this is the

69. This does not appear in the English translation. The Latin translator did not attempt to find words beginning in U (they are rare in Latin) to preserve the acrostic.

70. One of the commonest symbols of the early Church.

71. *Div. Inst.*, 4, 18f.

table of inhospitality they will display. For you⁷² yourself in your foolishness have not recognized your God when he mocked the minds of mortals; no, you even crowned him with thorns, and mixed for him the repulsive gall. But the veil of the temple will be rent; and at midday there will be the utter darkness of night for three hours. And he will fall asleep and die in truth for three days; and then he will be the first to return from the underworld and come to the light, showing to those who have been recalled the beginning of the resurrection.

Lactantius produced those Sibylline testimonies piece by piece, at various stages in his discussion, as the points he was bent on establishing seemed to require. I have made it my business to arrange the quotations in one continuous series, and to mark the breaks between passages simply by capitals – assuming that the copyists are careful not to omit them.

It should be added that some authorities state that the Erythraean Sibyl was contemporary not with Romulus, but with the Trojan War.

24. *The Seven Sages contemporary with Romulus: The deportation of Israel at this time: Romulus deified*

It is generally said that the Thales of Miletus⁷³ lived when Romulus was on the throne. He was one of the Seven Sages, who came after the 'theological poets' (among whom Orpheus won the greatest renown) and were called *sophoi*, which means 'wise men'. At about the same time the ten tribes, which were called Israel in the divisions of the people, were crushed by the Chaldeans and taken away to captivity in Chaldean territory.⁷⁴ Meanwhile the other two tribes, which were called by the name of Judah, remained in Judaea and had Jerusalem as the seat of their kingdom. On the death of Romulus, when he too vanished from sight, the Romans, as everybody well knows, enrolled him among the gods. This practice had so far fallen into abeyance in Cicero's time – and when it was later resumed, in the time of Caesar, it was simply a matter of flattery, not of mistaken belief – that Cicero regards it as the highest tribute to Romulus that he won this honour not in times of primitive ignorance, but in what was already an age of culture and education, even though philosophy had not yet erupted in a teeming flood of subtle and ingenious loquacity.⁷⁵

Yet even if later periods did not establish dead men as gods, still

72. The Sibyl is addressing Judea.

73. cf. *Bk VIII*, 2n. 74. In 712 B.C.

75. *Cic. De Rep.*, 2, 10, 18. On the deification of Romulus cf. *Bk III*, 15.

they did not abandon the worship of those established by the men of old, and they continued to regard them as gods. Indeed, they went further, by increasing the allurements of empty and irreverent superstitions by means of images which the people of antiquity did not possess. This was due to the activity of foul demons at work in their hearts, deceiving them by misleading oracles as well as in other ways, so that although legends of the gods' misdeeds were not being made up in a more polished age, the existing stories were obscenely enacted in their shows as an act of homage to those false divinities.

Romulus was succeeded by Numa, who conceived the idea that the city needed the defence of a large number of gods – false gods, of course – but did not himself win the honour of enrolment in that multitude. It seems that he was reckoned to have packed heaven so tight with the hordes of divinities that he could find no room there. It is alleged that the Samian Sibyl was contemporary with Numa's reign at Rome, and with the beginning of the reign among the Hebrews of Manasseh, an impious king and, according to tradition, the murderer of the prophet Isaiah.⁷⁶

25. Eminent philosophers contemporary with Tarquinius

Priscus, king of Rome, and Zedekiah, king of the Hebrews, the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple

Now when Zedekiah was king of the Hebrews, and Tarquinius Priscus was reigning at Rome, as successor to Ancus Marcius, the people of the Jews were led away into captivity in Babylonia,⁷⁷ after the overthrow of Jerusalem and of the famous Temple built by Solomon. For the prophets who rebuked the Jews for their acts of wickedness and impiety had foretold that this would happen to them, and especially Jeremiah, who even stated the precise number of years of the exile.⁷⁸ It was at that period that Pittacus of Mitylene, another of the Seven Sages, is said to have lived. And Eusebius writes that the other five, who are added to Thales, already mentioned, and this Pittacus, to make up the number of seven, lived at the time when the people of God were kept in captivity in Babylonia. Their names are: Solon of Athens, Chilon of Sparta, Periander of Corinth, Cleobulus of Lindus, and Bias of Priene.⁷⁹ All these 'Seven Sages' attained to

76. Tradition said that he was sawn in two (Just. Mart., *Dial.*, 120, 14).

77. 586 B.C. 78. Jer., 25, 11.

79. Plato's list (*Prot.*, 343A) gives Myson instead of Periander.

fame, after the time of the 'theological' poets, because they excelled the rest of mankind in respect of a praiseworthy quality in their way of life, and because they enshrined a number of moral precepts in short aphorisms. But they did not leave to posterity anything in the way of literary memorials, except that Solon is reported as having laid down certain laws for the Athenians; Thales was a natural scientist, and he left books containing his teachings. During the same period of the Jewish captivity Anaximander, Anaximenes and Xenophanes were also renowned as students of nature. At that time also Pythagoras flourished, and from then onwards such thinkers began to be called 'philosophers'.⁸⁰

26. The end of the Jewish captivity coincides with the liberation of Rome from the royal tyranny

At the same period Cyrus, king of Persia, who was also ruling over the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, brought a considerable relaxation of the captivity of the Jews, and caused 50,000 of them to return, in order to restore the Temple.⁸¹ But they only made a beginning, with the first foundations, and built an altar. For when their enemies raided them they were by no means strong enough to make progress with the work of building, and the task was postponed until the time of Darius. During this period occurred the events described in the Book of Judith, though the Jews, to be sure, are said to have excluded that book from their canon. Under King Darius of Persia then, on the completion of the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah the prophet, the captivity was ended and freedom restored to the Jews.⁸² This was when Tarquin, the seventh king of Rome, was on the throne. After Tarquin's expulsion the Romans themselves also began to be free from the tyranny of their kings.

Up to this time the people of Israel had had prophets. Although there were many of these it is only a few whose writings are retained as canonical among the Jews and also among us. When I brought my last book to an end I promised that I would make some remarks about those prophets in this present book, and I recognize that it is now time for me to fulfil that undertaking.

80. On Anaximander and Anaximenes, cf. Bk VIII, 2. On Xenophanes, cf. Bk VII, 17n.

81. In 538 B.C. cf. Bk XVII, 23.

82. Darius came to the throne in 521 B.C. The captivity, as a compulsory exile, ended in 538.

27. *The prophets at the time of the fall of Assyria and the rise of Rome. The calling of the Gentiles foretold*

Now in order to survey the period of those prophets we must go back to a slightly earlier time. At the beginning of the book of the prophet Hosea, placed first of the twelve prophets, we find these words: 'The word of the Lord which was given to Hosea in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.' Amos also writes that he prophesied in the reign of Uzziah; he adds the name of Jeroboam, king of Israel, whose reign was about the same time. Isaiah too, lists at the beginning of his book the same four kings mentioned by Hosea, and says, by way of preface, that he prophesied in their reigns. Isaiah was the son of Amos, whether of Amos the prophet just mentioned or, as is more generally supposed, another man of the same name who was not a prophet. Michah also records this period, after the reign of Uzziah, as the time of his prophecy. For he names the three following kings, named also by Hosea: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. These men are found by their own statements to have prophesied simultaneously at this period. To them are added Jonah, also in Uzziah's reign, and Joel, when Jotham, Uzziah's successor, had by now ascended the throne. The dates of those two prophets can be found in the *Chronicle*,⁸³ not in their own books, since they say nothing about their times. Those times extend from Procas, king of Latium, or his predecessor Aventinus, to Romulus, now a king of Rome, or even to the opening of the reign of Numa Pompilius, his successor, seeing that Hezekiah, king of Judah, reigned up to that time. So we see that those men, two springs, as it were, of prophecy, gushed out together, at the time when the Assyrian Empire failed, and the Roman Empire started. It was obviously designed that, just as in the first period of the Assyrian Empire, Abraham made his appearance and to him were given the most explicit promises of the blessings of all nations in his descendants, so in the initial stages of the Western Babylon, during whose dominion Christ was destined to come, in whom those promises were to be fulfilled, the lips of the prophets should be opened, those prophets who in their writings as well as by their spoken words gave testimony to this great event in the future. For although there was scarcely any time from the beginning of the monarchy when the people of Israel had been deprived of prophets, those prophets had been solely for the benefit of the Israelites, with no message for the Gentiles. However, when a beginning was made of writings with a more openly prophetic

import, prophecies that would be of value to the Gentile nations at some later date, the appropriate time for that beginning was when this city of Rome was being founded, which was to have dominion over the nations.

28. *The prophecies of Hosea and Amos concerned with the good news of Christ*

Now, to take the prophet Hosea, he certainly has profound things to say, but his message is difficult of penetration in proportion to its profundity. But we must select some part of his work and quote it here, in fulfilment of our promise. 'And it will happen', he says, 'that in the place where they were told: "You are not my people", they, even they, will be called "sons of the living God".'⁸⁴ The apostles also understood this as a prophetic testimony to the calling of the people of the Gentile nations, who did not previously belong to God.⁸⁵ And because the people of the Gentile nations themselves are spiritually among the children of Abraham and for that reason are correctly called Israel, he therefore goes on to say, 'And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be assembled in the same place, and they will appoint for themselves one head and they shall ascend from the earth.'⁸⁶ If we were to attempt to explain this saying here and now, the flavour of its prophetic eloquence would be diluted. Nevertheless, let us call to mind that cornerstone and the two walls, one made up of Jews, the other of Gentiles;⁸⁷ and let us recognize them as 'ascending from the earth', the former under the name of 'sons of Judah' the latter under that of 'sons of Israel', and both supported 'in the same place' by the same 'one head'.

Again, the same prophet testifies that the Israelites by physical descent who now refuse to believe in Christ will afterwards believe; that is, their sons will believe – for, to be sure, those unbelievers will go 'to their own place'⁸⁸ when they die. He proclaims this when he says, 'Because the sons of Israel will dwell for many days without king, without leader, without sacrifice, without altar, without priest, without the outward ceremonies of their religion.' Who could fail to see that the Jews are now in this state? But let us listen to what he adds: 'And later the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they will be astonished before the Lord and his goodness in the last days.'⁸⁹ Nothing could be plainer than

83. The *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome.

84. Hos. 1, 10.

85. cf. Rom. 9, 26.

86. Hos. 1, 11.

87. cf. Eph. 2, 14; 20.

88. cf. Acts 1, 25.

89. Hos. 3, 4f.

this prophecy, since the name of King David is interpreted as signifying Christ, for, as the Apostle says, 'He came of the line of David by physical descent.'⁹⁰ This prophet foretold also that Christ's resurrection would happen on the third day, in the hidden manner suitable for such a prophecy, when he says, 'He will heal us after two days: on the third day we shall rise again.'⁹¹ For it is in harmony with this that the Apostle says to us, 'If you have risen with Christ, look for the things that are above.'⁹²

Amos also prophesies on this subject when he says, 'Prepare to call on your God, O Israel: for look, I am he that gives strength to the thunder, and creates the wind and announces to mankind their Christ.'⁹³ And in another place he says, 'In that day I shall raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen down; and I shall rebuild it as fallen ruins, and I shall raise up the parts destroyed, and rebuild it as it was in days of old; so that the residue of mankind may seek me out, and all the nations on whom my name is invoked. The Lord says this, and he puts it into effect.'⁹⁴

29. *Isaiah's prophecies about Christ and his Church*

The prophet Isaiah is not in the book of the Twelve Prophets. These twelve are called 'minor' prophets because their discourses are brief in comparison with those called 'major' by reason of the lengthy volumes they composed. Among these latter is Isaiah, whom I connect with the two discussed above because they were contemporaries in prophecy. Now Isaiah in the course of his arraignment of wrong and his teaching of righteousness, among his predictions of the disasters that were to come upon the sinful people, also made many more prophecies than the others about Christ and the Church, that is, about the king and the City which he founded, so much so that by some commentators Isaiah was called an evangelist rather than a prophet.⁹⁵ But because I am determined to keep my book within bounds I shall quote here only one of many passages. Speaking, it is to be understood, in the character of God the Father, he says,

See, my servant will understand; he will be exalted and glorified exceedingly. As many will be appalled at you, so will your appearance be deprived of glory from men and your glory be dishonoured by men. So will many nations wonder at him; and kings will keep their mouths shut: for those

90. Rom. 1, 3.

93. Amos 4, 12f.

91. Hos. 6, 2.

94. Amos 9, 11f.

92. Col. 3, 1.

95. e.g. by Jerome (*Præf. in Is.*).

who were told nothing of him will see, and those who had not heard will understand. Lord, who has believed what we have heard, and to whom has the strong arm of the Lord been revealed? We announced him in his presence as an infant, like a root in the thirsty ground. He has neither beauty nor glory. And we saw him, and he had neither looks nor grace; his appearance was without honour and inferior to that of all men. He was a man suffering punishment, one who knew how to bear infirmity. Because his face was turned away from us, he was dishonoured and not highly esteemed. He bears our sins and suffers for our sake; and we thought of him as someone in pain and punishment and affliction. But he was wounded for our wickedness and was weakened on account of our sins. The discipline which brings us peace fell on him, and by his bruises we have been healed. We have all strayed like sheep; man has strayed from his true way: and the Lord has handed him over for our sins; and he, for all his afflictions, did not open his mouth. As a sheep is led to slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was denied justice. Who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. Because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death. And I shall give him the wicked for his burial and the rich for his death; because he practised no iniquity and there was no deceit in his mouth. And the Lord chooses to cleanse him from suffering. If you give your life for sin, you will see a long-lived posterity; and the Lord chooses to rescue his soul from pain, to show him light and to form his understanding, to justify the righteous one who serves many well; and he himself will bear their sins. Therefore he will inherit many and divide the spoils of the mighty ones, because his soul was surrendered to death, and he was reckoned among the wicked and bore the sins of many, and was handed over for their sins.⁹⁶

So much was said about Christ. And now let us listen to what follows, which concerns the Church: 'Rejoice', he says,

you barren woman, you who bear no children; break out into shouts, you who do not give birth. For children of the deserted woman are many, more than those of her who has a husband. Widen the space of your tent and of your hangings; fix your pegs, do not hang back; lengthen your ropes and strengthen your tent-pole, extend still to the right and the left. For your descendants will take possession of the nations, and you will people the deserted cities. Do not be afraid because you are made ashamed; do not be dismayed because you have been reproached; for you will forget your endless shame, and you will not remember the reproach of your widowhood. Because it is the Lord who made you; his name is the Lord of Hosts: and he who rescues you, the God of Israel, will be called the God of the whole earth.⁹⁷

This must suffice. There are a number of points in it that demand

96. Is. 52, 13-53, 12 (LXX).

97. Is. 54, 1-5 (LXX).

explanation; but there are, in my judgement, enough points in the passage so plain that even our opponents are forced to recognize their meaning, though much against their will.

30. *The prophecies of Micah, Jonah and Joel connected with the new covenant*

The prophet Micah gives a picture of Christ in the image of a great mountain, when he says,

In the last days the mountain of the Lord will be revealed, set on top of the mountains, and will be lifted up above the hills. And peoples will hasten to it, and many nations will go to it, saying, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will show us his way and we shall walk in his paths; because the Law will go out from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' And he will judge between many peoples, and rebuke powerful nations even far off.⁹⁸

This prophet also foretold the place of Christ's birth. 'And you, Bethlehem', he says,

the house of Ephrata, are very small to be among the clans of Judah; yet out of you shall come forth for me one who is to be a leader over Israel. His origins are from the beginning and from the days of eternity. Therefore he will give them over, until the time when the woman in labour bears her child, and the remnant of his brothers will turn back to the sons of Israel. He will stand and look and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, and they will be in the honour of the name of his God; for now he will be magnified even to the end of the world.⁹⁹

The prophet Jonah, for his part, prophesied of Christ not so much by his verbal message as by some of his experiences; in fact, he prophesied more plainly in this way than if he had proclaimed Christ's death and resurrection in words. For why was he taken into the belly of the monster, and given back on the third day, except to signify that Christ would come back from the depths of hell on the third day?

All the prophecies of Joel demand much explanatory comment to throw light on the points which are connected with Christ and his Church. However, there is one passage which I shall not pass over. It is the text quoted also by the apostles, when, in fulfilment of Christ's promise, the Holy Spirit came down from above upon the assembled believers. 'It will happen', says Joel, 'after this, that I shall pour out my spirit over all mortals; and your sons and daughters will prophesy';

98. Mic. 4, 1ff.

99. Mic. 5, 2ff.

your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. Indeed, at that time I shall pour out my spirit on my servants and my maidservants.'¹⁰⁰

31. *The predictions about the salvation of the world in Christ found in Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk*

Three of the minor prophets, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk, do not tell us their dates; nor is the time of their prophecies to be found in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius and Jerome. Obadiah, it is true, is placed by them with Micah, but not in the passage where a note is given of the date when Micah is known from his own writings to have prophesied. This, I suppose, is due to the error of scribes inattentively copying the works of others. But I have not been able to find a mention of the other two in the copies of *Chronicle* in my possession. Nevertheless, since they are included in the canon, it is not right for me to pass them over.

Obadiah is the shortest of all the prophets in respect of his writings. He holds forth against Edom, that is the race of Esau, the elder of the twin sons of Isaac, grandsons of Abraham, the one who was rejected. Now if we take Edom as standing for the Gentiles, by the 'part for whole' figure of speech, we can recognize a prophecy of Christ where Obadiah says, among other things, 'Now on Mount Zion there will be salvation and there will be a holy place.' And a little later, at the end of this prophecy, 'And those who have been saved will go up from Mount Zion, to defend Mount Esau; and the kingdom will be the Lord's.'¹⁰¹ It is quite obvious that this was fulfilled when those saved from Mount Zion – that is, those from Judaea who believed in Christ, and in particular those recognized as apostles – went up to defend Mount Esau. How were they to defend it, except by bringing salvation, through the preaching of the gospel, to those who became believers, so that they should be rescued from the power of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God? This is expressed by the addition of the next words: 'And the kingdom will be the Lord's.' For Mount Zion signifies Judaea, where it was predicted that there would be salvation and a holy place, which is Christ Jesus. Whereas Mount Esau is Edom, by which is signified the Church of the Gentiles; and, as I have explained, the saved from Mount Zion defended it, so that it should be a kingdom for the lord. This was obscure before the event; but what believer could fail to recognize the event?

100. Joel 2, 28f.; cf. Acts 2, 17f.

101. Obad. 17; 21.

Now the prophet Nahum says – or rather God speaks through him, saying,

I shall abolish the carved and the moulded images, and I shall make your tomb. For look, the feet of the bringer of good news, the herald of peace, come swiftly over the mountains. Judah, celebrate your feast-days, fulfil your vows: for from now on they will not go on further, to pass into old age. It is finished, it is consumed, it is removed. He comes up who breathes in your face, snatching you away from tribulation.¹⁰²

Who is it who will come up from the underworld and will breathe the Holy Spirit on the face of Judah, that is on the Jewish disciples? Anyone who remembers the Gospel can recall.¹⁰³ For those whose feast-days are made new, in a spiritual sense, so that they cannot pass into old age, belong to the new covenant. Moreover, it is by the gospel that the carved and the moulded images, that is, the idols of false gods, have been abolished; and we already see them consigned to oblivion, as if to the tomb. And in this once again we recognize the fulfilment of a prophecy.

As for Habbakuk, we can scarcely understand him to be speaking of anything else but the coming of Christ, who was destined to appear, when he says,

Then the Lord answered me, saying: 'Write the vision plainly on a tablet so that he who reads these things may follow: for the vision is still awaiting its time, and it will come to reality in the end, and it will not be to no purpose. If it is slow in coming, wait for it, because it will surely come and will not be delayed.'¹⁰⁴

32. The prophecy in Habbakuk's prayer and song; an exposition

Again, in his prayer, combined with a song,¹⁰⁵ to whom but the Lord Christ is Habbakuk speaking when he says, 'Lord, I heard your discourse, and I was afraid: Lord, I considered your works, and I was filled with dread? For can this represent anything but the indescribable amazement aroused by the foreknowledge of a new and sudden salvation for mankind? 'Between the two living creatures you will be recognized' can surely only mean between the two covenants, or between the two thieves, or between Moses and Elijah conversing with him on the mountain. 'When the years approach you will be known, when the time has come you will be shown' needs no ex-

102. Nah. 1, 14f.; 2, 1 (LXX).

103. John 20, 22f.
104. Hab. 2, 2f. (LXX).

planation. 'When my soul is disturbed in wrath you will remember mercy' can only mean that the speaker assumes the role of the Jews, to whose nation he belonged; for when they were 'disturbed in great wrath' and were crucifying Christ, he 'remembered mercy' and said, 'Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.'¹⁰⁶

'God will come from Teman, and the Holy One from the darkly shaded, thickly covered mountain.' The words, 'he will come from Teman', are taken by some translators as meaning 'from the south' or 'from the south-east', signifying midday, that is, the warmth of affection and the brightness of truth. The shaded, thickly covered mountain is indeed susceptible of a variety of interpretations; but I should be inclined to take it as standing for the profundity of the inspired Scriptures in which Christ is prophesied. There are, to be sure, many 'shaded and thickly covered' passages there, to exercise the mind of the inquirer. But Christ 'comes from' there, when he is found there by the reader who understands the meaning. 'His glory has covered the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise' must mean the same as what is said in the psalm: 'Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and your glory over all the earth.'¹⁰⁷ 'His brightness will be like the light.' Can this mean anything except that his fame will enlighten those who believe in him? 'Horns are in his hands' can only refer to the trophy of the cross. 'And he has established a steadfast love for his strength' demands no explanation.

'His word will go before his face, and it will go out on to the plain after his feet.' This can only mean that even before he came here he was fore-announced, and after he had departed hence he was proclaimed. 'He stood still, and the earth was moved' must surely mean that he stood still to help us, and the world was moved to believe. 'He looked and the nations wasted away'; that is, he had mercy, and brought the people to repentance. 'The mountains were ground down by violence'; that is, the arrogance of the proud was ground down; the might displayed in his miracles. 'The eternal hills melted away'; that is, they were brought low for a time, so that they might be raised up for eternity. 'I saw his eternal entrances in return for his labours'; that is, I observed that his labour of love was not without eternal reward. 'The tents of the Ethiopians will cover in fear, also the pavilions of the land of Midian'; that is, the nations, suddenly terrified at the news of your wonderful deeds, will form part of the Christian people, even those nations who are not under Roman rule.

106. Luke 23, 34.

107. Ps. 57, 5.

'Can it be that you are angry with the rivers, Lord, or that your fury is against the rivers, and your attack against the sea?' The meaning of this is that he does not now come to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him.¹⁰⁸ 'Because you will mount your horses, and your riding will be salvation'; that is, your evangelists will convey you, and they will be guided by you, and your Gospel will be salvation for those who believe in you. 'You will surely bend your bow against scapitres, says the Lord'; that is, you will threaten even the kings of the earth with your judgement. 'The earth will be cleft by rivers'; that is, by the flowing in of the discourses of the preachers the hearts of men will be opened to acknowledge you, the men to whom it was said, 'Rend your hearts, not your clothes.'¹⁰⁹ 'What is meant by 'the peoples will see you and will grieve' except that they will be blessed by their lamentation?¹¹⁰ What is meant by 'scattering the waters as you go'? Surely that as you walk, in the persons of those who bring news of you in every place, you spread the streams of doctrine on this side and that.

What is expressed by 'the abyss uttered its voice' except that the depth of the human heart has declared its decision? 'The depth of its imagination' is a kind of explanation of the previous verse, for 'depth' is the same as 'abyss'. And with 'its imagination' the words 'uttered its voice' must be supplied, meaning, as I said, 'declared its decision'. For 'imagination' is, without doubt, a vision which the heart did not keep to itself, and did not hide; it burst out with it in acknowledgement. 'The sun was raised on high, the moon halted in her course'; that is, Christ ascended to heaven, and the Church took her appointed place beneath her king. 'Your javelins will go out into the light'; that is, your words will not be issued into obscurity but into the open. 'Into the brightness of the glittering of your arms'; here we must supply 'your javelins will go'. For he had said to his friends, 'What I am telling you in the darkness, speak out in the light.'¹¹¹ 'By your threatening you will diminish the earth'; that is, you will humble men by your threats. 'And in fury you will cast down nations', because by your vengeance you will crush those who exalt themselves. 'You have gone out for the salvation of your people, so that you may save your anointed ones; you have sent death on the heads of the wicked'; there is nothing here needing explanation.

'You have raised up bonds as far as the neck'; those bonds can be taken as meaning the good bonds of wisdom so that our feet are put

108. John 3, 17.

109. Joel 2, 13.

110. cf. Matt. 5, 4.

111. Matt. 10, 27.

into its fetters, and our neck into its collar. 'You have cut through, to the amazement of his mind'; we supply 'bonds', for he has raised up the good bonds, while cutting through the evil (which are referred to when he is told, 'You have broken my bonds'¹¹²), and this 'to the amazement of his mind'; that is, in miraculous fashion. 'The heads of the mighty will be moved in that'; in that *amazement*', to be sure. 'They will open wide their mouths to bite, like a poor man eating in secret.' For there were certain members of the Jewish ruling class who came to the Lord, in admiration of his deeds and words, and in hunger for the bread of doctrine; but they ate it in secret for fear of the Jews. They are revealed as doing this in the Gospel story.¹¹³

'Then you drove your horses into the sea, stirring up many waters', which simply means 'many people'; for it would not have happened that some were converted through fear, while others persecuted in fury, if they had not all been stirred up. 'I watched, and my heart was appalled at the sound of the speech of my lips; and trembling entered my bones, and all my body was troubled beneath me.' He gave his attention to what he was saying, and he was terrified at his own speech, which he was pouring out in prophetic manner, and in which he discovered things that were to be. For in the disturbance of many peoples he saw the tribulations impending for the Church. Immediately he recognized himself as a member of that Church, and said, 'I shall rest in the day of tribulation', as belonging to the company of those who are 'joyful because hopeful, steadfast under tribulation',¹¹⁴ 'so that I may go up to join the people of my pilgrimage', leaving, we may be sure, the wicked people, his own kin by blood, who were not on pilgrimage on this earth and were not looking for a heavenly country. 'Because the fig tree', he says, 'will not yield fruit, and there will be no produce on the vines; the labour of the olive will disappoint, and the fields afford no food. The sheep have disappeared from the pasture, and no cattle survive at the mangers.' He saw that the nation which was destined to kill Christ would lose its rich store of spiritual supplies, which he pictured allegorically, in prophetic fashion, in terms of the fertility of the land.

Now the reason why that nation suffered such an outburst of God's anger was that in their ignorance of God's way of righteousness they chose to set up their own.¹¹⁵ Hence he continues, 'But I shall exult in the Lord; I shall rejoice in God my saviour. The Lord God is my strength; he will establish my feet to the end; he will set me on the

112. Ps. 116, 16.

113. cf. John 3, 2; 19, 38.

114. Rom. 12, 12.

115. cf. Rom. 10, 3.

heights, so that I may triumph with his song.' The reference is obviously to the song about which something similar is said in one of the psalms, 'He has set my feet on a rock and guided my steps; and he has put into my mouth a new song, a hymn to our God.'¹¹⁶ Thus the man who triumphs with the Lord's song is one who pleases God by praising him instead of praising himself, so that 'he who is proud is proud of the Lord.'¹¹⁷ Some texts, by the way, have the reading, 'I shall rejoice in God my Jesus,'¹¹⁸ this, in my view, is preferable to the version given by those who, in attempting to put the original phrase into Latin, have not used the actual name which for us is more welcome and more delightful to utter.

33. The inspired prophecies of Jeremiah and Zephaniah about Christ and the calling of the Gentiles

Jeremiah is one of the major prophets, like Isaiah, not one of the minor prophets, like the others from whose writing I have quoted a number of passages. Now Jeremiah prophesied in the reign of Josiah in Jerusalem, when Ancus Martius was on the Roman throne, and when the captivity of the Jews was already imminent. His prophetic activity extended until the fifth month of the captivity, as we discover from his writings. Zephaniah, one of the minor prophets, is linked with him, in that he himself tells us that he prophesied in the time of Josiah, though he does not say for how long. Jeremiah then, prophesied not only in the time of Ancus Martius, but also in that of Tarquinius Priscus, whom the Romans had for their fifth king. For he had already begun his reign when the captivity came about.

In a prophecy of Christ, Jeremiah says, 'The breath of our nostrils, Christ the Lord, has been taken captive in our sins,'¹¹⁹ thus showing, in this brief statement, that Christ is our Lord, and that he suffered for us. Again, in another place he says, 'This is my God and no other will be compared with him. He discovered the whole way of knowledge and entrusted it to Jacob his servant and Israel his beloved; after this he was seen on earth and lived among men.'¹²⁰ Some authorities attribute this testimony not to Jeremiah but to his scribe, who was called Baruch; but it is more generally held to be the work of Jeremiah.

116. Ps. 40, 2.

117. 1 Cor. 1, 31.

118. Jesus is Greek for *Joshua* which in Hebrew differs in only one letter from the Hebrew for 'God my saviour'; cf. Bk XVII, 18n.

119. Lam. 4, 20.

120. Bar. 3, 36.

Again, the same prophet says about Christ, 'See, the time is coming, says the Lord, when I shall raise up for David a righteous son, who will reign as king, and will be wise, and will execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Israel dwell in confidence: and this is the name by which he will be called: "Our Righteous Lord."¹²¹ He spoke also about the calling of the Gentiles, which was then destined to happen and which we now see accomplished. He says, 'O Lord, my God, and my refuge in the day of disaster, to you the nations will come from the farthest part of the earth, saying: "It is true that our fathers worshipped delusive images, and in them there is no value."¹²² But the same prophet signifies that the Jews by whom he was destined to be killed would not recognize him; for he says, 'The heart is heavy in every way; and he is the man, and who recognizes him?'¹²³ This prophet is also the author of the passage I quoted in Book XVII,¹²⁴ concerning the new covenant, whose mediator is Christ. For, as we know, it is Jeremiah who says, 'See, the days are coming when I will ratify a new covenant for the house of Jacob', and the rest of the passage to be found there.¹²⁵

At this point I shall put in the prophecies of Christ made by Zephaniah, a prophet contemporary with Jeremiah. They are as follows: 'Wait for me, says the Lord, in the day of my resurrection in the future. For it is my decision to assemble the nations and gather together the kingdoms.'¹²⁶ And again, 'The Lord will be full of terror for them, and he will abolish all the gods of the earth, and every man will worship him, each in his own place, all the islands of the nations.'¹²⁷ And a little later,

At that time I shall change the language for the peoples and his posterity, so that all may call on the name of the Lord and serve him under one yoke: from the boundaries of the rivers of Ethiopia they will bring sacrifices to me. On that day you will feel no shame for all the misdeeds which you have wickedly practised against me; for I shall then take away from you the vile acts of your injustices; and you will no longer seek to make much of yourselves on my holy mountain. And I shall leave in your midst a gentle and humble people; and the remnant of Israel will reverence the name of the Lord.¹²⁸

This is the remnant about which there is a prophecy elsewhere,

121. Jer. 23, 5f.

122. Jer. 16, 19.

124. Bk XVII, 3.

125. Jer. 31, 31.

127. Zeph. 2, 11.

128. Zeph. 3, 9-12.

123. Jer. 17, 9 (LXX).

126. Zeph. 3, 8.

quoted by the Apostle, 'Even if the number of the sons of Israel should be like the sands of the sea, only a remnant will be saved.'¹²⁹ This remnant is, of course, those of that race who have believed in Christ.

34. *The prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel which harmonize with Christ and the Church*

Then again, during the actual period of the Babylonian captivity there were two other major prophets, Daniel and Ezekiel. They prophesied in the earlier part of the exile. Of these Daniel specified the time when Christ was destined to come and to suffer, by giving the number of years that were to intervene. It would be a tedious business to demonstrate this by computation, and it has been done by others before us. But Daniel has this to say on the power of Christ and on his Church,

I saw a vision of the night, and behold, there was one coming with the clouds of heaven like a son of man; and he came to the ancient of days and was brought forward in his presence. And to him was given sovereignty, honour and kingship; and all peoples, tribes, and languages will serve him. His power is an eternal power which will not pass away, and his kingdom will not be destroyed.¹³⁰

Ezekiel also points to Christ, in the prophetic manner, by presenting him in the person of David, because he took flesh from the line of David – and because of this 'form of a servant',¹³¹ in which he was made man, he is called the servant of God as well as God's son. This is Ezekiel's prediction of him, in which the prophet speaks in the role of God the Father: 'I shall raise up one shepherd, my servant David, to be in charge of my flocks, to pasture them. He will pasture them and be their shepherd; while I, the Lord, shall be their God, and my servant David will be ruler among them. I, the Lord, have spoken.'¹³² In another place he says,

There will be one king ruling over them: and there will no longer be two nations, and they will no more be divided into two kingdoms; nor will they any longer be defiled with their idols and their abominations and all their sins. And I shall save them out of all their dwellings in which they have sinned, and I shall cleanse them. And they will be my people, and I shall be their God. And my servant David will be king over them, and will be the one shepherd of them all.¹³³

129. Is. 10, 22; cf. Rom. 9, 27.
132. Ezek. 34, 23f.

130. Dan. 7, 13f.
133. Ezek. 37, 22ff.

131. cf. Phil. 2, 7.

35. *The predictions of the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*

There remain three minor prophets who prophesied at the end of the captivity. These are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Of these, Haggai gives the clearest prophecy of Christ and the Church, in this brief statement: 'This is what the Lord of Hosts says: "A little while now, and I shall shake the heaven and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I shall shake all nations; and then will come one who is longed for by all nations."¹³⁴ We observe the partial fulfilment of this prophecy; we await its completion at the end of history. For he shook the heavens by the testimony of the angels and the stars when Christ became incarnate; he shook the earth by the momentous miracle involved in the virgin birth; he has shaken the sea and the dry land now that Christ is being proclaimed both in the islands and in the whole world. Thus we see that all nations are being shaken, and stirred to faith in Christ. But as soon as we come to the next statement, 'then will come one who is longed for by all nations', we have something which is still awaited, which concerns his last coming. For he had first to be loved by those who believe, so that he might be longed for by those who look for his appearance.

Zechariah says of Christ and the Church, 'Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king is coming to you, a righteous king and a saviour. He comes as a poor man, mounted on a donkey, on a colt, a donkey's foal. His power will extend from sea to sea, and from the rivers as far as the ends of the earth.'¹³⁵ We read in the Gospel of the fulfilment of this prophecy, when the Lord Christ on his journey made use of a beast of burden of this kind; and part of this prophecy is quoted there, as much of it as seemed sufficient in the context.¹³⁶ In another place the prophet addresses Christ in the spirit of prophecy, speaking about the forgiveness of sins through his blood. Here he says, 'You also, by the blood of your covenant, have rescued your prisoners from the lake in which there is no water.'¹³⁷ The question of what he meant to be understood by 'the lake' is capable of a diversity of answers. But in my opinion there is no better meaning to be put to it than that of the depths of human misery, dry, as we may call it, and sterile, where there are no streams of righteousness but only the mud of iniquity.

134. Hagg. 2, 6. 135. Zech. 9, 9f.

136. Matt. 21, 5. 137. Zech. 9, 11.

There is, to be sure, a similar reference in one of the psalms, 'He has led me out of the lake of misery, and out of the muddy clay.'¹³⁸

Malachi gives a prophecy of the Church which we see propagated through Christ's action, when, as the mouthpiece of God, he speaks to the Jews in the most explicit terms, saying,

I am not pleased with you, and I shall not accept an offering from your hands. For from the farthest east to the farthest west my name is honoured among the nations, and in every place sacrifice will be offered and a pure oblation; because my name is honoured among the nations, says the Lord.¹³⁹

This sacrifice we now see being offered to God everywhere, through Christ's priesthood in the line of Melchizedech, from farthest east to farthest west; furthermore, the Jews, who were told 'I am not pleased with you and I shall not accept an offering from your hands', cannot deny that their sacrifices have ceased. This being so, why do the Jews still await another Christ? And they do this in spite of the fact that this prophecy, which they read, and which they see fulfilled, has in the person of Christ himself received its only possible fulfilment.

Then, a little later, Malachi speaks as the mouthpiece of God, and says,

My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, and I granted him that he should truly fear me and stand in reverence before my name. The Law of truth was in his mouth, and guiding himself in peace he walked with me, and he converted many from wickedness; because the priest's lips will safeguard knowledge, and they will seek the Law from his mouth, since he is the angel of God Almighty.¹⁴⁰

We should not be surprised that Christ Jesus is spoken of as the 'angel' of God Almighty; for just as he is called a 'servant' because of the 'form of a servant' in which he came to mankind, so he is called an 'angel' on account of the gospel which he announced to mankind. For if we translate the Greek words, 'gospel' means 'good news' and 'angel' means 'messenger'. Indeed, Malachi speaks of Christ in yet another place in these words:

Look, I am going to send my messenger, and he will survey the road in front of me; and the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come into his temple, and the angel of the covenant whom you wish for. See, he is

¹³⁸ Ps. 40, 2.

¹³⁹ Mal. 1, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Mal. 2, 5ff.

coming, says the Lord Almighty; and who will withstand the day of his coming in? And who will stand up to face his gaze?¹⁴¹

In this passage he predicts both the first and the second coming of Christ: the first, obviously, when he says, 'He will suddenly come into his temple', that is, into his physical body, to which he referred in the Gospel when he said, 'Destroy this temple, and I shall raise it up again in three days';¹⁴² and the second in saying, 'See, he is coming, says the Lord Almighty; and who will withstand the day of his coming in? And who will stand up to face his gaze?' While as for the words 'the Lord you are looking for, and the angel of the covenant, whom you wish for', the prophet here undoubtedly indicates that even the Jews look for and wish for Christ – the Messiah – in accordance with the Scriptures which they read. But many of them have not recognized that he whom they looked for and wished for has come, because they are blinded in their hearts by their previous merits.¹⁴³

The prophet is emphatic in his reference to a 'covenant'. He says above, 'My covenant was with him', and again, in this passage, he calls Christ 'the angel of the covenant'. Now we must undoubtedly take this to be the new covenant, in which eternal blessings are promised, not the old covenant which offered merely temporal rewards. Now the majority of mankind put a high value on such goods, and in their weakness they serve the true God for the sake of such temporal recompense; and so they are upset when they see the irreligious enjoying them in abundance. It is for this reason that the prophet is concerned to distinguish the eternal blessedness of the new covenant, which will be bestowed only on the good, from the worldly felicity of the old, which is often granted to the wicked also; and with that aim in view he says,

You have spoken harsh words about me, says the Lord. You ask: 'What have we said in your disparagement?' You have said: 'Anyone who serves God is wasting his time. What good have we got from observing his instructions, and from walking as suppliants before the face of Almighty God? And now we call the aliens happy, and all the evil-doers are restored; they have opposed God, and yet they have been preserved.' Such were the reproaches uttered by those who feared the Lord, each one to his neighbour. And the Lord noticed it and listened; and he wrote a book of remembrance in his presence for those who fear the Lord and reverence his name.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Mal. 3, 4.

¹⁴² John 2, 19.

¹⁴³ 'by their complacency about their merits'; or 'because they deserve such blindness'. The Latin is ambiguous, perhaps intentionally.

¹⁴⁴ Mal. 3, 13-16.

That 'book of remembrance' means the New Testament.

Finally, let us listen to what follows:

Then they will be mine, says the Lord Almighty, for my possession, on the day that I am preparing, and I shall choose them as a man chooses his son who serves him. And turn back, and you will see the difference between the righteous man and the unrighteous, between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve him. For look, the day is coming, blazing like a furnace, and it will burn them up; and all the aliens and the evildoers will be stubble. The day that is to come will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty; and there will be left of them neither root nor twig. And yet for you who fear my name there will arise the sun of righteousness, and there will be healing in his wings; and you will go out leaping for joy like calves, released from their pens. And you will trample down the wicked, and they will be like ashes under your feet in the day in which I do this, says the Lord Almighty.¹⁴⁵

This is the day called the Day of Judgement; and about it I shall speak, God willing, more fully in the appropriate place.

36. *Esdras and the Books of the Maccabees*

After these three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and during the same period of the liberation of the people from the Babylonian slavery, Esdras also wrote. He has been considered a historian rather than a prophet; and that is true of the book called *Esther*, which describes, in praise of God, events which prove to be not far removed from this period. But Esdras may perhaps be interpreted as prophesying Christ in the passage which tells of a discussion which arose among some young men on the question about the most influential factor in events.¹⁴⁶ One said 'kings', another 'wine'; the third said 'women', on the ground that women generally hold sway over kings. And yet this same third man proved that truth is the victor over all things. Now if we consult the Gospel we learn that Christ is the truth.¹⁴⁷ From this time, after the restoration of the temple, it was not kings who ruled in Judaea, but princes, down to the time of Aristobulus.¹⁴⁸ The reckoning of their dates is not to be found in the sacred writings which are called 'canonical', but in other documents, which include the books of the Maccabees. These are regarded as canonical by the Church (though not by the Jews) because of the savage, the amazing sufferings endured by some of the martyrs

145. Mal. 3, 17-4, 3.

146. Esdr. 3, 1-4, 41.

147. John 14, 16.

148. Aristobulus II, the last Hasmonean ruler, 66-63 B.C.

who, before Christ's coming in his human body, contended even unto death for the cause of God's Law, and held firm under the most appalling agonies.

37. *The prophetic authority antedates the beginnings of pagan philosophy*

We can now see that the philosophers of the Gentiles were active during the period of our prophets, whose writings had already come to the knowledge of nearly all nations, though these thinkers were much more in evidence after that time. I am speaking of the philosophers who actually bore that title, for the name began with Pythagoras of Samos,¹⁴⁹ who first achieved eminence and recognition at the time of the release of the Jews from captivity. It follows that the other philosophers must be considerably later than the prophets. In fact, Socrates the Athenian himself, the master of all the most famous thinkers of the time, who held the highest position of authority in that branch of philosophy called moral or practical, is found placed after Esdras in the *Chronicle*. Not much later occurred the birth of Plato also, who was destined to excel by far the other disciples of Socrates.¹⁵⁰

If we add to these thinkers the earlier men also, who were not yet called philosophers, namely the 'Seven Sages' and after them the natural philosophers who succeeded Thales, who followed him in their enthusiasm for research into natural phenomena, namely Anaximander, Anaximenes and Anaxagoras, and a number of others before Pythagoras first claimed the title of 'philosopher', even these men do not take precedence of our prophets, taken together, in point of temporal priority. In fact, Thales, to whom all the others were subsequent, is said to have risen to eminence in the reign of Romulus, at the time when the river of prophecy burst out from the springs of Israel in those writings which were to flow through the whole world. Thus only the great 'theological' poets, Orpheus, Linus, and Musaeus, and any others there were among the Greeks, are found to be prior to those Hebrew prophets whose writings we regard as authoritative.¹⁵¹

149. cf. Bk VIII, 2.

150. End of captivity, 538 B.C.: Pythagoras fl. c. 540; Socrates, 469-399; Plato, 428-349.

151. Thales c. 600; Anaximander c. 570; Anaximenes c. 500; Anaxagoras c. 460. cf. Bk VIII, 2. For the Seven Sages cf. ch. 25; on the 'theological' poets cf. ch. 15n.

But not even these poets were antecedent in date to Moses, our true theologian, who truthfully proclaimed the one true God, and whose writings now have the first place in our authorized canon. For this reason, as far as the Greeks are concerned – and it is in the Greek language that the literature of this world came to the greatest efflorescence – they have no justification for the boast that their wisdom, while not superior to our religion, in which true wisdom is to be found, at least makes up for this by being evidently more ancient. Nevertheless it has to be admitted that there existed before Moses, not indeed in Greece but among foreign nations, in Egypt, for example, a considerable amount of learning which might be called the wisdom of the men concerned. Otherwise it would not be said in the holy Scriptures that Moses was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians';¹⁵² as he assuredly was when, after his birth in Egypt, and his adoption and upbringing by Pharaoh's daughter, he had also received a liberal education. But not even the wisdom of the Egyptians could have preceded in time the wisdom of our prophets, seeing that Abraham also was a prophet. Then again, what degree of wisdom could exist in Egypt before the art of letters had been bestowed by Isis, whom the Egyptians, after her death, thought it right to worship as a great goddess?¹⁵³ Now Isis, according to tradition, was the daughter of Inachus, who became the first king of Argos at a time when we find that Abraham's grandsons had already been born.

38. *Some writings not admitted into the canon because of their great antiquity and doubtful authenticity*

But to go back to matters of far greater antiquity, our patriarch Noah certainly was living even before the great Flood; and I should be quite justified in calling him a prophet, seeing that the very ark which he built and in which he and his family escaped was a prophecy of our times.¹⁵⁴ Then again, Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam, is said to have prophesied; and the authority for this is the canonical epistle of the apostle Jude.¹⁵⁵ But the excessive antiquity of the writings of those men has had the effect of preventing their acceptance, either by the Jews or by us, as authoritative; on account of their remoteness in time it seemed advisable to hold them suspect, for fear of advancing false claims to authenticity. For there are some writings

152. Acts 7, 22.

154. cf. Hebr. 11, 7; 1 Pet. 3, 20.

153. cf. ch. 3.

155. Jude 14.

put forward as genuine works of those authors¹⁵⁶ by those who without discrimination believe what they want to believe, as suits their inclination. But the purity of the canon has not admitted these works, not because the authority of these men, who God approved, is rejected, but because these documents are not believed to belong to them.

It should not, indeed, appear surprising that writings put forward under a name of such antiquity are regarded with suspicion; for in the actual history of the kings of Judah and Israel, the contents of which we believe in as historical on the authority of the same canon of Scripture, there are frequent references to matters not fully treated there which, we are told, can be found in other books written by the prophets, and in some cases the names of those prophets are not suppressed; yet these books are not found in the canon accepted by the people of God.

The reason for this omission, I confess, escapes me; except that I conceive that even those writers to whom the Holy Spirit unquestionably revealed matters which were rightly accorded religious authority, may have written sometimes as men engaged in historical research, sometimes as prophets under divine inspiration. And the two kinds of writing were so distinct that it was decided that the first kind should be attributed to the writers themselves, while the other kind was to be ascribed, as we might say, to God speaking through them. Thus one sort was concerned with the development of knowledge, the other with the establishment of religious authority; and the canon was carefully guarded as bearing this authority. Outside the canon, though works may now be issued under the names of genuine prophets, they are of no value even as adding to our supply of knowledge, since it is uncertain whether they are authentic works of the authors to whom they are ascribed. That is why no reliance is placed on them; and this is particularly true of those in which statements are found that actually contradict the reliable evidence of the canonical books, so that it is immediately apparent that they are not authentic.

39. *Hebrew a written language from the start*

Now it is not to be believed, as some people suppose, that it was only as a spoken language that Hebrew was preserved by Heber (whose name is the origin of the name 'Hebrews'¹⁵⁷) and that from him it

156. e.g. Enoch; cf. Bk XV, 23.

157. cf. Bk XVI, 3.

passed on to Abraham, whereas the written language started with the Law given through Moses. We should rather believe that the recorded language, along with its literature, was safeguarded by that succession of fathers. In fact, Moses appointed men among the people to be responsible for teaching literacy, before the Hebrews had any acquaintance with the Law of God in its written form. Those men are called in Scripture *grammatotēsagōgoi*,¹⁵⁸ which may be rendered as 'instructors – or introducers – of letters', on the ground that, in a way, they induce, or introduce, letters into the minds of learners – or rather introduce their pupils to letters.

Therefore no race should boast with empty pride of the antiquity of its wisdom, and crow over our patriarchs and prophets, in whom divine wisdom was active. For not even Egypt, whose habit it is to plume herself, falsely and idly, on the antiquity of her learning, is found to antedate the wisdom of the patriarchs with any wisdom of her own, of any quality. In fact, no one will have the hardhood to assert that the Egyptians reached a remarkable level of cultural attainment before they became familiar with reading and writing, that is, before Isis arrived and taught those accomplishments in Egypt. And indeed, as for that oft-mentioned learning of theirs, which is given the name of wisdom, what did it amount to except, in particular, astronomy and other similar branches of study which generally serve rather to exercise men's ingenuity than to enlighten their minds with genuine wisdom?

For as far as concerns philosophy, which professes to teach men something which brings them happiness, pursuits of that kind came to the fore in those countries at about the time of Mercury, who was called Trismegistus;¹⁵⁹ and that, to be sure, was long before the sages or philosophers of Greece, and yet after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and, in fact, after Moses himself. For inquiry reveals that it was at the time of the birth of Moses that Atlas lived,¹⁶⁰ the great astronomer, the brother of Prometheus, and the maternal grandfather of the elder Mercury, whose grandson was this Mercury Trismegistus.

158. Exod. 18, 21 etc. (added after the list of officers in one MS of LXX).

159. cf. Bk VIII, 23. Hermes Trismegistus, a name given by Neoplatonists and other mystical writers to the Egyptian god Thoth, the reputed author of Hellenistic religio-philosophic treatises called *Hermetica*.

160. cf. ch. 8.

40. *The baseless lies of the Egyptians about the antiquity of their learning*

It is therefore quite useless for some talkers to make unfounded claims for the antiquity of Egyptian astronomy, asserting that Egypt understood the theory of the stars more than a hundred thousand years ago. For in what books could they have recorded that number of years, seeing that they learned the art of letters from their teacher Isis not much more than two thousand years ago? That is what Varro informs us, and he is no contemptible authority on history; and besides that, his statement is consonant with the truth of the divine documents. For when we consider that 6,000 years have not yet elapsed since the first man, called Adam, why should not those people be laughed out of court, instead of being refuted, when they try to establish a chronology so different and so contrary to the truth established by investigation.

For could we rely on a better chronicler of the past than one who also foretold the future as we now see it happening before our eyes? In fact, the very disagreement of historians with one another affords us good reason for trusting, in preference to the rest, the authority who does not clash with the inspired record which we possess. Moreover, the citizens of the irreligious city, who have spread all over the world, read authors of the profoundest erudition, and see no reason for rejecting the authority of any of them; but they find them differing from one another in their treatment of events most remote from the memory of the present age, and they cannot discover whom they ought particularly to trust. In contrast, we can place our reliance on the inspired history belonging to our religion and consequently have no hesitation in treating as utterly false anything which fails to conform to it, no matter what may be the position of the other works of secular literature which, whether true or false, offer nothing of value to help us to a life of righteousness and felicity.

41. *The disagreements of philosophers and the harmony of the Scriptures*

Again, to pass on from the question of historical knowledge, the philosophers themselves – from whom we digressed to discuss these points – do not seem to have had any other aim in their laborious pursuits than to discover how we should regulate our lives towards the attainment of happiness. How is it, then, that disciples have disagreed with

teachers, and fellow-disciples with one another? Must it not be because they sought the answers to these questions as men relying on human senses and human powers of reasoning?

Now it may be that there was here also the concern for self-glorification, which makes each man desire to seem wiser and cleverer than the rest and not to be a kind of retainer, pledged in loyalty to another's opinions,¹⁶¹ but rather the originator of a doctrine, holding views of his own. However, I am prepared to admit that some philosophers, perhaps even the majority of them, broke away from their teachers or fellow pupils simply from the love of truth so as to fight for what they conceived to be the truth, whether they were mistaken or not. Be that as it may, what does it matter in what direction or by what way the unhappy state of man sets out on its pursuit of felicity, if it is not guided by divine authority?

It is to be noted that our authors do not disagree with one another in any way. Perish the thought! It is not for nothing that they provide the fixed and final canon of sacred literature. This agreement justifies the belief that when they wrote these books God was speaking to them, or perhaps we should say through them. And this is a belief held not by a mere handful of talkers, engaged in acrimonious discussions in schools and colleges, but by all those numerous peoples, in the countryside and in the towns, educated and uneducated alike.

The authors themselves had to be few in number, to prevent the cheapening by over-production of what ought to be precious for religious reasons; and yet not so few that there should be nothing remarkable in their agreement. For among the multitude of philosophers who have also left records of their theories by their literary labours one would have difficulty in finding any group whose opinions agreed in every particular. But to demonstrate this in the present work would take too much time. However, is there an author of any philosophical sect whatsoever, who is so completely accepted in this city of demon-worship that all the others, who have advanced different and contrary theories, are rejected?¹⁶²

161. cf. Hor., *Ep.*, 1, 1, 14.

162. Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics believed in one world; Anaximander and the Epicureans in innumerable worlds. Plato assumed a beginning of the world; Porphyry denied it. The pantheistic Stoics held the world to be eternal; Plato that it would come to an end. The Stoics believed in a divine intelligence controlling the world; while the Epicureans saw only the interplay of chances. Plato believed in the soul's immortality; Pythagoreans spoke of souls passing into animals. Epicureans taught that the senses must be trusted; the Sceptics of the later Academy that they are never reliable.

Did not Athens have two flourishing sects: the Epicureans, who contended that human affairs are of no concern to the gods, and the Stoics, who held the opposite opinion, and argued that human affairs are under the guidance and protection of the gods, the helpers and defenders of men? Hence I wonder why Anaxagoras¹⁶³ was put on trial for saying that the sun is a red-hot stone, and denying utterly that it is a god,¹⁶⁴ while in the same city Epicurus enjoyed high renown and lived in undisturbed serenity, though he not only refused to believe in the divinity of the sun or of any other heavenly body, but also contended that neither Jupiter nor any of the gods dwells in the universe in any sense, so that men's prayers and supplications may reach him.

Aristippus enjoyed a reputation at Athens, and he placed the Highest Good in physical pleasure; and there also Antisthenes maintained that man becomes happy rather by the quality of his character.¹⁶⁵ Here were two eminent philosophers, both followers of Socrates, who yet located the highest ideal of life in ends so different and contradictory, one of whom said that the wise man should shun politics, while the other said that it was a wise man's duty to take part in the running of his country. And each of them collected a band of disciples to support his sect.

Certainly this all went on in full view. The philosophers contended, each supporting his own opinion, with the help of their private armies, in the conspicuous and well-known porch,¹⁶⁶ in the *gymnasia*,¹⁶⁷ in gardens,¹⁶⁸ in places public and private. Some maintained that there is one world,¹⁶⁹ others that there are countless worlds;¹⁷⁰ some that this one world came into being,¹⁷¹ others that it had no beginning;¹⁷² some that it is destined to perish,¹⁷³ others that it will continue for ever;¹⁷⁴ some that it is controlled by a divine mind,¹⁷⁵ others that it is dependent on the fortuitous play of chances;¹⁷⁶ some that souls are immortal,¹⁷⁷ others that they are

163. cf. Bk VIII, 2n.

164. 'The sun is a red-hot stone, bigger than the Peloponnese' (Diog. Laert., 2, 8).

165. cf. Bk VIII, 3n.

166. The *Stoa Poikile*, from which the Stoics took their name.

167. Aristotle taught in the Lyceum.

168. The grove of Plato's Academy and the garden of Epicurus.

169. Plato, Aristotle, Stoics.

170. Anaximander, Epicureans.

171. e.g. Plato.

172. Porphyry.

173. Plato and some Stoics.

174. Pantheistic Stoics.

175. e.g. Plato.

176. Epicureans.

177. Stoics.

mortal; of those who held that souls are immortal some alleged that they pass into animals,¹⁷⁸ others completely denying the possibility; while of those who held souls to be mortal, some asserted that they die soon after the death of the body, others that they live on for a shorter or a longer time, but not for ever; some setting up their final good in the body, others in the spirit, others in both, while still others added external goods to the spirit and the body; some supposing that the physical senses ought always to be trusted,¹⁷⁹ others that they are not always trustworthy,¹⁸⁰ still others maintaining that they are never to be relied on.¹⁸¹

There are all those conflicting opinions among philosophers, and there are others besides, almost beyond counting; and has any people, or senate, any government or authority in the irreligious city ever taken upon itself to adjudicate among all those diverse views, and to have some of them approved and accepted, others rejected and repudiated? Has not that city in fact held all these controversies in its embrace, without discrimination and without passing any judgement? And yet these disputants are not at variance about matters of lands, or houses, or questions of finance, but about issues which decide the misery or the happiness of our lives.

Some of their assertions, no doubt, were true; but they had equal licence for false assertions, with the inevitable result that there is every reason for giving that city the symbolic name of Babylon. For 'Babylon' means 'confusion', as we remember having said already.¹⁸² And it is of no concern to the ruler of that city how contradictory are the mistakes that produce these quarrels, since he already has them all alike in his power, in virtue of all their irreligion, in its many forms.

In contrast, that nation, that people, that city, that commonwealth, those Israelites, to whom the utterances of God were entrusted, certainly did not lump together false and true prophets by giving them an equal sanction. Instead of this, those prophets who were in accord with each other and showed no kind of dissent were recognized and remembered as genuine authors of sacred writings. These were their philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom, their theologians, their prophets, their teachers of integrity and piety.

Anyone who followed them in his thinking and in his manner of life was guided in his thinking and his living not by mere men, but by God who spoke through those men. If sacrilege is forbidden in these

178. Pythagoreans.

179. Epicureans, cf. Bk VIII, 5n.

180. Platonists, cf. Bk VIII, 7.
181. The sceptics of the New Academy, cf. Bk IV, 30n. Platonists, cf. Bk VIII, 7.
182. cf. Bk XVI, 4n.

writings it is God who has forbidden it. If it is said, 'You shall not commit adultery, shall not commit homicide, shall not steal', these and other like commandments have been uttered not by human mouths but by the mouthpieces of God.

Some of those philosophers, it is true, were able to perceive a certain amount of truth, among all their false notions, and they strove by laborious arguments to convince others of such truths as these: that God made this world, and himself controls it by providence, and truths about the nobility of virtue, about love of country and loyalty in friendship, about good works and all things belonging to an upright character. And yet they were ignorant of the end to which all these were to be referred and the standard by which they were to be assessed; whereas in that City of ours it was by prophetic, that is, by divine words (though conveyed by men) that they were set before the people. They were not inculcated by controversial disputations. In consequence, anyone who came to the knowledge of them dreaded to treat with scorn what was not the product of man's cleverness but the utterance of God.

42. *The Scriptures translated into Greek, by God's providence, for the benefit of the Gentiles*

Even one of the Ptolemies, kings of Egypt, was eager to become acquainted with these sacred writings and to possess them. The situation was as follows. The aggression of Alexander of Macedon, surnamed 'the Great', had won him an empire stupendous in extent but of no long duration.¹⁸³ He subdued the whole of Asia, and indeed practically the entire world, partly by force of arms, partly by terror; and among other lands of the East he entered Judaea also and acquired it.¹⁸⁴ Now, after his death his companions did not peaceably divide that enormous empire among themselves so as to enjoy possession of it; instead, they dissipated it by wars so as to produce general devastation. Egypt then came under the dynasty of the Ptolemies; and the first of these, the son of Lagus, deported a large number of prisoners from Judaea into Egypt.

However, his successor, another Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus,¹⁸⁵ permitted all the captives brought in by the first Ptolemy to return home as free men. In addition, he sent royal gifts to the Temple of God, and requested Eleazar, the high priest at the time, to

183. 336-323 B.C.

184. 332 B.C.

185. 285-247 B.C.

let him have a copy of the Scriptures, of which he had heard, since report proclaimed that they were certainly inspired by God. He had therefore been seized with a desire to have them in the world-famous library he had founded. The high priest sent him a copy in Hebrew, whereupon he asked for translators, and seventy-two scholars were allotted to him, six out of each of the twelve tribes, leading experts in the two languages, that is, in Greek as well as Hebrew. It is their translation that is now called, by established custom, the Septuagint.¹⁸⁶

The tradition is that the agreement in the words of their versions was marvellous, amazing, and plainly inspired by God: so much so that although each of them sat in a separate place when engaged on the task – for Ptolemy decided to test their reliability in this way – they did not differ from one another in a single word, not even by a synonym conveying the same meaning; they did not even vary in the order of words. There was such a unity in their translations that it was as if there had been one translator; for in truth there was the one Spirit at work in them all. And this was the purpose of their receiving such a marvellous gift of God; that in this way the authority of those Scriptures should be emphasized, as being not human but divine – as indeed they were – and thus should benefit the Gentiles who were destined to believe in Christ. And we now see this result achieved.

43. The authority of the Septuagint

It is true that there have been other translators who have turned these sacred utterances from Hebrew into Greek, for example, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.¹⁸⁷ There is also a well-known version of unknown authorship, which is therefore called anonymously 'the fifth edition'. However the Church has accepted this Septuagint as if it were the only version; the Greek-speaking Christian peoples use it, and most of them do not know whether there is any other. From this Septuagint a translation into Latin has also been made,¹⁸⁸ which the

¹⁸⁶ The full title is *Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta Septuaginta Interpretes*. The legend of the origin of LXX is told in the *Letter of Aristas* (second century B.C.) which is paraphrased in Joseph. *Ant.*, 12, 2, 4; 5; cf. Bk XV, 13n.

¹⁸⁷ Aquila; cf. Bk XV, 23n.; Symmachus (late second century) translated the Old Testament into readable Greek (in contrast to Aquila); Theodotion (fl. c. 180) made a revision of LXX.

¹⁸⁸ The 'Old Latin Version', or 'Versions', since there were many variants. They were all superseded by Jerome's Vulgate ('authorized version'), compiled in 404.

Latin-speaking churches retain, although our time has produced the presbyter Jerome, a man of great learning and a master of all three languages. He has translated these Scriptures into Latin not from the Greek but from the Hebrew.

Now the Jews acknowledge the reliability of the fruit of his learned labours, and maintain that the seventy translators were mistaken in many places. Nevertheless, it is the judgement of the churches of Christ that no one man should be preferred to the authority of so large a body of men chosen for this important task by Eleazar, the high priest at the time. For even supposing that there had not been obvious evidence of the presence in them of one Spirit, indubitably the Spirit of God, and that the seventy scholars had compared the words of their several translations, as men would normally do, so that what was approved by them all should stand, even so, no one translator should be given preference to them. But as so convincing a sign of God's inspiration was shown in their work, it is certain that any other reliable translator of these Scriptures from the Hebrew into any other language whatsoever will agree with the seventy translators; otherwise, if he evidently does not so agree, we must believe that the depth of prophetic meaning appears in that other version.

For the very same Spirit that was in the prophets when they uttered their messages was at work also in the seventy scholars when they translated them. And the Spirit could have said something else as well, with divine authority, as if the prophet had said both things, because it was the same Spirit that said both. The Spirit could also have said the same thing in a different way, so that even though the words were not the same, the same meaning would still shine through to those who properly understood them. He could also have omitted something, or added something, so that it might be shown in this way too that the task of translation was achieved not by the servile labour of a human bond-servant of words, but by the power of God which filled and directed the mind of the translator.

Some critics, it is true, have supposed that the Greek texts of the Septuagint version need to be corrected from the Hebrew texts. And yet they have not gone so far as to remove readings in the Septuagint which are not shown in the Hebrew. They have merely added what is found in the Hebrew but not in the Septuagint, marking those additions by putting certain signs in the forms of stars, called asterisks, at the head of those verses. Words not shown in the Hebrew but given by the Septuagint they have indicated similarly at the head of the verses by horizontal strokes, the marks used as the sign for ounces.

Many Latin texts also exhibit these signs, and they have had wide circulation.¹⁸⁹

However, it is impossible, without examining both the Hebrew and the Greek texts, to discover passages not omitted or added but put in different words, whether they give another meaning, though one not conflicting with the original, or whether they can be shown to express the same meaning, though in a different way. If then we see, as we ought to see, nothing in those Scriptures except the utterances of the Spirit of God through the mouths of men, it follows that anything in the Hebrew text that is not found in that of the seventy translators is something which the Spirit of God decided not to say through the translators but through the prophets. Conversely, anything in the Septuagint that is not in the Hebrew texts is something which the same Spirit preferred to say through the translators, instead of through the prophets, thus showing that the former and the latter alike were prophets. For in the same way the Spirit spoke, as he chose, some things through Isaiah, others through Jeremiah, others through one prophet or another; or he said the same things, differently expressed, through this prophet and that. Moreover, anything that is found in both the Hebrew and the Septuagint, is something which the one same Spirit wished to say through both, but in such a way that the former gave the lead by prophesying, while the latter followed with a prophetic translation. For just as the one Spirit of peace was present in the prophets when they spoke the truth with no disagreement, so the same one Spirit was manifestly present in the scholars when without collaboration they still translated the whole in every detail as if with one mouth.

44. *The meaning of the destruction of Nineveh, where the Hebrew gives forty days, the Septuagint three*

But someone may ask, 'How am I to be sure what the prophet Jonah said to the people of Nineveh? Was it "In three days Nineveh will be overthrown" or "in forty days"?'¹⁹⁰ For anyone can see that the prophet sent to terrify the city with the threat of imminent destruction could not have said both. And if it was destined for destruction on the third day it certainly could not be so destined on the fortieth; if on the fortieth, certainly not on the third. So if I am asked which of these Jonah said, I suppose that it was rather what we read in the Hebrew, 'In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown.' The seventy

translators, working so long afterwards, were surely able to say something else, yet something relevant, and conveying precisely the same meaning, though with another kind of significance. This was to warn the reader not to belittle the authority of either version, but to rise above the level of mere historical fact and to search for meanings which the historical record itself was intended to convey. Here we have, to be sure, historical events that occurred in the city of Nineveh. But they had another significance that went beyond the bounds of that city, just as it is an historical fact that the prophet himself was in the belly of the whale for three days, and yet he signified someone else, the Lord of all prophets, who was destined to be for three days in the depths of the underworld.

Therefore, if we are right in taking that city as standing in an allegorical prophecy for the Church of the Gentiles, after it had been 'overthrown' (that is, through penitence) so that it was no longer what it had been, then – since this was the result of Christ's action in the Church of the Gentiles, allegorically represented by Nineveh – it is Christ himself who is signified in respect both of the forty and of the three days. He is referred to in the forty days, because he spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection and then ascended to heaven, in the three days because he rose again on the third day. It is as if the seventy translators were rousing from his slumbers the reader who would like to do nothing but cling to the bare historical narrative, and as if the prophets were also appealing to him to search the depths of prophecy. They are saying, in effect, 'In the forty days look for him in whom you will be able to find the three days also. You will discover the former in his ascension, the latter in his resurrection.' That is how it was possible to convey a meaning in a most convenient way by both those numbers, one being given through the mouth of the prophet Jonah, the other through the prophecy of the seventy translators, and yet both being the utterance of the self-same Spirit. I am anxious to avoid prolixity and so I shall not demonstrate this point by many instances where the seventy translators are supposed to diverge from the truth of the Hebrew text, and yet are found to be in agreement with it when they are rightly understood. Hence even I, in my small measure, follow the footsteps of the apostles, because they themselves quoted prophetic testimonies from both sources, from the Hebrew and the Septuagint; and I have assumed that both sources should be employed as authoritative, since both are one, and both are inspired by God. But now let us carry out what remains of our task, to the best of our ability.

¹⁸⁹ St Augustine is our only authority for this.

¹⁹⁰ Jon. 3, 4; the Hebrew gives 40, the LXX gives 3.

45. The cessation of prophecy and the adversities of the Jews after the restoration of the temple were intended as proof that it was another temple whose building had been promised by the prophets

After the Jewish people had begun to be without prophets they deteriorated, without a shadow of doubt, at the very time, be it noted, when they expected to improve, on the restoration of the temple after the captivity in Babylon. It was in this way, we may be sure, that that people, the Jews by race, interpreted the prediction of the prophet Haggai who said, 'Great will be the glory of this latest house, above that of the first.'¹⁹¹ But a little before that he had made it clear that this was said about the new covenant, where he says, in an evident promise of Christ, 'Then I shall shake all nations, and there will come one who is desired by all nations.'¹⁹² In this passage the seventy translators gave another meaning, one appropriate to the body rather than to the head – that is to the Church rather than to Christ – in saying, with their prophetic authority, 'There will come the things which have been chosen by the Lord from all peoples'; 'the things' meaning 'the men', about whom Jesus himself said in the Gospel, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'¹⁹³ Now it is of such chosen ones of the nations, the 'living stones',¹⁹⁴ that a House of God is being built, through the new covenant, far more glorious than that temple erected by King Solomon, and restored after the captivity. This explains, then, how it was that the Jewish people had no prophets from that time onwards, and was afflicted by many disasters, at the hands of foreign kings and even at the hands of the Romans: it was to prevent their imagining that this prophecy of Haggai had been fulfilled in the restoration of the temple.

Not long afterwards, in fact, the nation was subjugated on the arrival of Alexander.¹⁹⁵ There was, to be sure, no devastation, since they did not dare to offer any resistance, with the result that they found him peaceably inclined when they received him with the most ready submission. For all that, the glory of that house was not as great as it had been when their kings were reigning in independent sovereignty. Alexander certainly sacrificed victims in the temple of God,¹⁹⁶ but this was not because he had been converted to the wor-

191. Hagg. 2, 9.

192. 2, 7; cf. ch. 35; ch. 48. The Hebrew means 'desire'; LXX has a neuter plural.

193. Matt. 22, 14. 194. 1 Pet. 2, 5. 195. 332 B.C. 196. Joseph., Ant., 11, 8, 5.

ship of God, but because in his irreligious folly he supposed that God was to be worshipped in company with the false gods. Later on, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, as I mentioned above, transported captives into Egypt after Alexander's death. His successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus, showed great benevolence in allowing them to return; and it is owing to him, as I related a little earlier, that we have the Scriptures in the Septuagint version.

The Jews were afterwards exhausted in the wars which are fully described in the books of the Maccabees. Then they were taken captive by Ptolemy, king of Alexandria, surnamed Epiphanes.¹⁹⁷ After that, they were forced to worship idols by Antiochus, king of Syria, under the stress of manifold and grievous sufferings, and the Temple itself was filled with the sacrilegious and superstitious rites of the Gentiles. In spite of this, their energetic leader Judas, surnamed Maccabeus, routed the enemy generals and purified the Temple from all the contamination of that idolatry.¹⁹⁸

Not long afterwards, however, a man called Alcimus¹⁹⁹ was made high priest. This was unlawful, since he was not of priestly descent. Then followed a period of almost fifty years, during which the Jews knew no peace, although they were prosperous in some respects; and after this time Aristobulus²⁰⁰ was the first among the Jews who, by assuming the priestly diadem became both king and high priest. Before that time, we must remember, after the return from the Babylonian captivity and the restoration of the Temple, the Jews had no kings, but commanders or leaders instead. A king, it is true, can be called a leader, because he takes the lead in ruling, and a commander because he commands the army. But it does not follow that anyone who is a commander or leader can also be called a king; and that is what this Aristobulus was.

197. Joseph., Ant., 12, 3, 3.

198. The account here is confused. Palestine was part of the empire of the Ptolemies after the Battle of Ipsus, 301 B.C. Antiochus III, ruler of the Asiatic empire, tried to wrest Coele-Syria from Egypt, but was defeated at Raphia in 217 by Ptolemy IV (Philopator). In 203 the infant Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) succeeded his father. Antiochus saw his chance; Egypt was defeated in 198 and Syria, including Palestine, passed into the Empire of the Seleucids. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) tried to stamp out Judaism in 168 B.C.; and this provoked the Maccabean rising. Jerusalem was taken from the Syrians, and the Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated in 164.

199. Leader of the pro-Syrian party in opposition to the Maccabees.

200. Aristobulus I, 103 B.C. His father, John Hyrcanus, was the first Hasmonean king.

He was succeeded by Alexander,²⁰¹ and he also was both king and high priest; and he, as report says, was a cruel ruler to his people. After him, his wife Alexandra was queen of the Jews;²⁰² and from her time onwards more grievous sufferings attended them. In fact, Alexandra's sons, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, in their struggle for the royal power, appealed to the Roman forces for help against the people of Israel – for Hyrcanus asked for Roman assistance against his brother.²⁰³ By that time Rome had already subjugated Africa and Greece and was mistress also of a widespread dominion in other parts of the world; and yet it seemed as if she had not the strength to bear her own weight, and she had, as it were, broken herself by her own size. In fact she reached the point of serious domestic broils, and had proceeded to wars with her allies, and soon afterwards to wars between citizens, and had so diminished her strength and worn herself out that a constitutional change to a monarchy was necessary and imminent. This was the situation when Pompey, a leader of the Roman people of the highest renown, entered Judaea with an army and took the city. He opened the doors of the Temple, not with the devotion of a suppliant but by the right of a conqueror, and made his way into the Holy of Holies which only the high priest was allowed to enter; and Pompey's entrance was not in the spirit of reverence but of profanation. After confirming Hyrcanus in the high priesthood, and imposing Antipater on the subjugated nation as protector, the name then given to procurators,²⁰⁴ he carried off Aristobulus as a prisoner. Henceforward the Jews also were tributaries of the Romans. At a later date Cassius²⁰⁵ even plundered the Temple. Then after a few years they met with their deserts in receiving a foreigner, Herod,²⁰⁶ for their king; and it was in his reign that Christ was born. For now had come the fullness of time signified by the prophetic spirit through the mouth of the patriarch Jacob, when he said, 'There shall not fail to be a prince out of Judah, nor a leader from his loins, until he comes for whom it is reserved; and he will be the expectation of the Gentiles.'²⁰⁷ Thus in fact there did not fail to be a prince of the Jews up to the time of this Herod, whom they received as their first king of foreign birth. This therefore was now the time when he should come

201. Alexander Jannaeus, 102-75 B.C. He alienated the Pharisees by his military activities.

202. 75-67 B.C. Her Jewish name was Salome.

203. 64 B.C.

204. 'Procurator' was the official name. Josephus varies in his translation of the title.

205. Crassus, in fact, 53 B.C.

206. 37-4 B.C. An Idumean.

207. Gen. 49, 10.

for whom was reserved that which was promised under the new covenant, so that he should be the expectation of the Gentiles. However, it would be impossible for the Gentiles to expect his coming to exercise judgement in the splendour of his power – as we now observe them expecting it – if they did not first believe in him as he came to submit to judgement in the humility of his patient endurance.

46. *The birth of our Saviour, the Word made flesh; and the dispersion of the Jews, in fulfilment of prophecy*

When Herod was on the throne of Judaea, and when Caesar Augustus was emperor, after a change in the Roman constitution, and when the emperor's rule had established a world-wide peace, Christ was born, in accordance with a prophecy of earlier times,²⁰⁸ in Bethlehem of Judah. He was shown in outward appearance as a human being, from a human virgin; in hidden reality he was God, from God the Father. For this is what the prophet foretold: 'See, a virgin will conceive in her womb and will bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which is translated, "God with us".'²⁰⁹ Then, in order to make known the godhead in his person, he did many miracles, of which the gospel Scriptures contain as many as seemed enough to proclaim his divinity. The first of these is the great miracle of his birth; the last, his ascension into heaven with his body which had been brought to life again from the dead. But the Jews who killed him and refused to believe in him, to believe that he had to die and rise again, suffered a more wretched devastation at the hands of the Romans and were utterly uprooted from their kingdom,²¹⁰ where they had already been under the dominion of foreigners. They were dispersed all over the world – for indeed there is no part of the earth where they are not to be found – and thus by the evidence of their own Scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ. In fact, very many of the Jews, thinking over those prophecies both before his passion and more particularly after his resurrection, have come to believe in him. About them this prediction was made: 'Even if the number of the sons of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, it is only a remnant that will be saved.'²¹¹ But the rest of them were blinded; and of them it was predicted: 'Let their own table prove a snare in their presence, and a retribution and a stumbling-block. Let

208. Mic. 5, 2.

209. Is. 7, 14

210. In A.D. 70.

211. Is. 10, 20.

their eyes be darkened, so that they may not see. Bend down their backs always.²¹² It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our Scriptures, their own Scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with blind eyes. Unless, perhaps, someone is going to say that the Christians fabricated the prophecies of Christ which are published under the name of the Sibyl,²¹³ or any prophecies that there may be which are ascribed to others, which have no connection with the Jewish people. As for us, we find those prophecies sufficient which are produced from the books of our opponents; for we recognize that it is in order to give this testimony, which, in spite of themselves, they supply for our benefit by their possession and preservation of those books, that they themselves are dispersed among all nations, in whatever direction the Christian Church spreads.

In fact, there is a prophecy given before the event on this very point in the book of Psalms, which they also read. It comes in this passage: 'As for my God, his mercy will go before me; my God has shown me this in the case of my enemies. Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law; scatter them by your might.'²¹⁴ God has thus shown to the Church the grace of his mercy in the case of her enemies the Jews, since, as the Apostle says, 'their failure means salvation for the Gentiles.'²¹⁵ And this is the reason for his forbearing to slay them - that is for not putting an end to their existence as Jews, although they have been conquered and oppressed by the Romans; it is for fear that they should forget the Law of God and thus fail to bear convincing witness on the point I am now dealing with. Thus it was not enough for the psalmist to say, 'Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law', without adding, 'Scatter them.' For if they lived with that testimony of the Scriptures only in their own land, and not everywhere, the obvious result would be that the Church, which is everywhere, would not have them available among all nations as witnesses to the prophecies which were given beforehand concerning Christ.

47. *Were there any citizens of the heavenly City outside the race of Israel before the Christian era?*

For the same reason, if it has come, or if it ever came, to our knowledge that any foreigner (I mean by that someone not born of the race of Israel, and not given a place by that people in the canon of holy

²¹² Ps. 69, 22.

²¹³ cf. ch. 23.

²¹⁴ Ps. 59, 10f.

²¹⁵ Rom. 11, 11.

Scripture) has written any prophecy about Christ, he can be quoted by us by way of surplus. It is not that we should stand in need of his support, if such a one failed to appear; but there is nothing far-fetched in the belief that among other peoples besides the Jews there existed men to whom this mystery was revealed, and who were compelled to go on to proclaim what they knew. It may be that they shared in the same gracious gift of God; or perhaps they did not, but were taught by evil angels; for those spirits, as we know, acknowledged Christ in his presence,²¹⁶ when the Jews did not recognize him. And I do not imagine that the Jews dare to maintain that no one has ever belonged to God apart from the Israelites, from the time when the line of Israel began, on the rejection of his elder brother. Now it is a fact that there was no other people to bear the distinctive title of the people of God; for all that, the Jews cannot deny that in other nations also there have been some men who belonged not by earthly but by heavenly fellowship to the company of the true Israelites, the citizens of the country that is above. In fact, if the Jews deny this, they are very easily proved wrong by the example of Job, that holy and amazing man. He was neither a native of Israel nor a proselyte (that is, a newly admitted member of the people of Israel). He traced his descent from the race of Edom; he was born in Edom; he died there. And such is the praise accorded him in inspired utterances that no man of his period is put on the same level as far as righteousness and devotion are concerned. And although we do not find his date in the *Chronicle*²¹⁷ we gather from the book of Job (which the Israelites received into their authoritative canon on its own merits) that he belonged to the time of the third generation after Israel.

I have no doubt that it was the design of God's providence that from this one instance we should know that there could also be those among other nations who lived by God's standards and were pleasing to God, as belonging to the spiritual Jerusalem. But it must not be believed that this was granted to anyone unless he had received a divine revelation of 'the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'²¹⁸ whose future coming in a material body was fore-announced to us as something achieved, so that one and the same faith may lead to God, through him, all who are predestined for the City of God, which is God's house and God's temple. Nevertheless, all the prophecies which are produced from non-Jewish sources concerning

²¹⁶ cf. Matt. 8, 29; Mark 1, 24; Luke 4, 34.

²¹⁷ The *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome; cf. ch. 31.

²¹⁸ 1 Tim. 2, 5.

the grace of God through Jesus Christ may be supposed to be Christian fabrications. That is why there is no surer way of refuting the 'foreigners' of whatever breed, in an argument on this subject, nothing more effective to bring them over to our side, if they are really intelligent, than to produce the inspired predictions about Christ in the texts of the Jewish Scriptures. For the expulsion of the Jews from their own home, and their dispersal throughout the world with a view to this testimony has resulted in the increase of the Church of Christ in every quarter of the globe.

48. *Haggai's prophecy of the future glory of God's house finds fulfilment in the Church of Christ*

This House of God is of greater glory than was that former house built of wood and precious stones and other costly materials and metals. Thus the prophecy of Haggai²¹⁹ was not fulfilled in the restoration of that earlier temple, for at no time after the restoration can it be shown to have had as great a glory as the temple had in Solomon's time. The truth is rather that the diminished glory of that house is demonstrated first in the cessation of prophecy, and then by great disasters of the nation itself down to the final destruction at the hands of the Romans, as witnessed by the record of events given above.²²⁰ In contrast, this house of ours, which belongs to the new covenant, has assuredly a greater glory in that its stones are of more worth; for they are 'living stones',²²¹ and the building is constructed of these men who believe and who have themselves been created anew. And yet this new house was symbolized in the restoration of that temple, just because the very renewing of the temple symbolizes in a prophetic message the second covenant, the 'new covenant', as it is called. Thus, when God said, through the mouth of the prophet just mentioned, 'And I shall grant peace in that place',²²² the word 'place' is symbolic, and by it we are to understand the person whom it symbolizes. And so the re-building 'in that place' stands for the Church which was destined to be built by Christ; and the only acceptable meaning of the saying, 'I shall grant peace in this place' is, 'I shall grant peace in the place which this place symbolizes.'

The fact is that all things with symbolic meaning are seen as in some way acting the part of the things they symbolize; for instance, the Apostle says, 'That rock was Christ'²²³ because the rock in

question undoubtedly symbolized Christ. And so the glory of this house, the new covenant, is greater than the glory of the former house, the old covenant, and it will be seen to be even greater when it is dedicated. For then 'will come the one who is longed for by all nations',²²⁴ as the Hebrew reads. Now his first coming was not yet longed for by all nations, for they did not know of him whom they were destined to long for, in whom they had not yet believed. Then too, in the version of the seventy translators (and their rendering is also prophetic), 'will come the chosen of the Lord from all nations'. For then, in truth, none but the elect will come, and it is of them that the Apostle says, 'Just as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.'²²⁵ Then, we may be sure, the master builder himself, who said, 'Many are called, but few are chosen',²²⁶ is going to show us a house, built not of those who were called but came in such a way that they were thrown out of the feast,²²⁷ but of those who have been chosen. And that house will thereafter dread no downfall, whereas at the present time when churches are made up of those, among the rest, who will be separated out as by a winnowing from on the threshing floor; and so the glory of this house is not shown in the splendour which will be seen, when all who make up the house are those who will be there for ever.

49. *The mixture of elect and reprobate in the Church*

In this wicked world, and in these evil times, the Church through her present humiliation is preparing for future exaltation. She is being trained by the stings of fear, the tortures of sorrow, the distresses of hardship, and the dangers of temptation; and she rejoices only in expectation, when her joy is wholesome. In this situation, many reprobates are mingled in the Church with the good, and both sorts are collected as it were in the dragnet of the gospel;²²⁸ and in this world, as in a sea, both kinds swim without separation, enclosed in nets until the shore is reached. There the evil are to be divided from the good; and among the good, as it were in his temple, 'God will be all in all.'²²⁹ In fact, we men recognize the fulfilment of the words of the speaker in the psalm, who said, 'I have made an announcement and said: "They are multiplied beyond counting."²³⁰ This has now been happening, ever since Christ spoke first through the mouth of John,

219. cf. Hagg. 2, 7.
222. Hagg. 2, 9.

220. In ch. 45.
223. 1 Cor. 10, 4.

221. 1 Pet. 2, 5.

224. Hagg. 2, 7.
227. cf. Matt. 22, 11ff.
230. Ps. 40, 5.

225. Eph. 1, 4.
228. cf. Matt. 13, 47ff.

226. Matt. 22, 14.
229. 1 Cor. 15, 28.

his forerunner, and then by his own mouth, and said, 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near.'²³¹

Christ chose disciples, whom he also called 'apostles'. They were men of humble birth, without position, without education, so that if there was any greatness in them or in their doings that greatness would be Christ himself present in them and acting in them. He had one among their number whom, though evil, he used for good, both to fulfil his destiny of suffering and to present to his Church a pattern of forbearance with wicked men. After sowing the seed of the holy gospel, as far as it belonged to him to sow it through his bodily presence, he suffered, he died, he rose again, showing by his suffering what we ought to undergo for the cause of truth, by his resurrection what we ought to hope for in eternity, to say nothing of the deep mystery by which his blood was shed for the remission of sins. Then he spent forty days on earth in the company of his disciples, and in their sight ascended into heaven. Ten days after that he sent the Holy Spirit he had promised; and the greatest and most unmistakable sign of the Spirit's coming to those who believed was that every one of them spoke in the languages of all nations; thus signifying that the unity of the Catholic Church would exist among all nations and would thus speak in all languages.

50. *The preaching of the Gospel made powerful through the sufferings of the preachers*

Then was fulfilled the prophecy: 'Out of Sion the law will go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem';²³² and the prediction of the Lord himself, when after his resurrection his disciples were dumb-founded and he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures; and he said to them: "You see that the Scriptures say that Christ was bound to suffer, and to rise again on the third day; and that in his name repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached among all nations, starting from Jerusalem."²³³ Again, when they asked him about his last coming, he answered by saying, 'It is not for you to know the times; the Father has reserved them for his own authority. But you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit when it comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and throughout the whole of Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'²³⁴

The Church first spread from Jerusalem, and when a great number of people in Judaea and Samaria had believed, other nations were

²³¹. Matt. 3, 2; 4, 17.

²³³. Luke 24, 45ff.

²³². Is. 2, 3.

²³⁴. Acts 1, 7f.

reached, the gospel being announced by those whom Christ himself had prepared like lamps, for he had trimmed them with his word and set them alight with the Holy Spirit. Now Christ had said to his disciples, 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.'²³⁵ And to prevent their being frozen with fear they burned with the fire of love. Finally, the gospel was proclaimed throughout the whole world, not only by the disciples who had seen and heard him both before his passion and after his resurrection, but also after their death by their successors, amid terrible persecutions and the manifold tortures and deaths of martyrs. And God bore witness by signs and manifestations and varied acts of power and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that the peoples of the Gentiles – believing in him who was crucified for their redemption – might reverence with Christian love the blood of the martyrs which they had shed in their diabolical fury, and so that the very kings, by whose laws the Church was being devastated, might for their salvation become subject to the name which they had ruthlessly tried to remove from the earth and might begin to persecute the false gods, in whose interests the worshippers of the true God had hitherto been persecuted.

51. *The Catholic faith actually strengthened by the heretics*

The Devil, however, seeing that the temples of demons were being abandoned, and that the human race was hastening to take the name of the Mediator who sets men free, stirred up heretics to oppose Christian doctrine – though they bore the Christian name – as if they could be retained indiscriminately in the City of God without reproof, just as the city of confusion²³⁶ retained indifferently the philosophers who held diverse and contradictory opinions. Just so there are those in the Church of Christ who have a taste for some unhealthy and perverse notion, and who if reproved – in the hope that they may acquire a taste for what is wholesome and right – obstinately resist and refuse to correct their pestilent and deadly dogmas, and persist in defending them. These become heretics and, when they part company with the Church, they are classed among the enemies who provide discipline for her. Even so they undoubtedly benefit by their wickedness the genuine, catholic members of Christ, since God makes good use even of the wicked, and makes all things co-operate for good for those who love him;²³⁷ In fact, all the enemies of the Church, however blinded

²³⁵. Matt. 10, 28.

²³⁷. Rom. 8, 28.

²³⁶. Babylon; cf. Bk XVI, 4n.

by error or depraved by wickedness, train the Church in patient endurance if they are given the power of inflicting bodily harm, while if they oppose her only by their perverse notions they train her in wisdom. Moreover they train her in benevolence, or even beneficence, so that love may be shown even to enemies, whether this takes the form of persuasive teaching or of stern discipline.

Thus even the Devil, the prince of that irreligious city, when he brings his instruments to bear upon the City of God on pilgrimage in this world, is permitted to do her no harm. Without any doubt, the providence of God provides her with the consolation of prosperity so that she is not shattered by adversity, and with the discipline of adversity so that she is not corrupted by prosperity. And he so tempers the one with the other that we recognize here the source of that saying in the psalm, 'According to the multitude of the sorrows in my heart, your consolations have gladdened my soul.'²⁴⁸ Hence also the words of the Apostle, 'Rejoicing in hope, steadfast in tribulation.'²⁴⁹

For we must not imagine that there can be any time when this saying of the same teacher fails to be true, 'All who want to live a devout life in Christ suffer persecution.'²⁴⁰ Because even when those who are outside do not rage and there seems to be, and really is, tranquillity, which brings great consolation, especially to the weak, even so there are always some, inside indeed there are many, who by their unprincipled behaviour torment the feelings of those who live devout lives. For such people cause the name of 'Christian' and 'Catholic' to be defamed. And the dearer this name is to those who want to live a devout life in Christ, the more they grieve that evildoers within the Church make that name less beloved than the hearts of the devout long for it to be. Besides this, when the heretics themselves are thought to have the Christian name and the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the creed, they cause great grief in the hearts of the devout. This is because many who wish to be Christians are forced to hesitate by their dissensions, and many slanderers find also among the heretics material for the defamation of the name of Christian, because these heretics too are called, in a manner of speaking, Christians. Owing to this kind of discreditable behaviour and this sort of human error, those who want to lead a devout life in Christ suffer persecution, even though they endure no physical violence or bodily torment. For they suffer this persecution not in their bodies but in their hearts. Hence the psalmist says, 'according to the multitude of sorrows in my heart' – not 'in my body'.

²³⁸ Ps. 94, 19.

²³⁹ Rom. 12, 12.

²⁴⁰ 2 Tim. 3, 12.

Again, the divine promises are thought of as unchangeable, and the Apostle says, 'The Lord knows his own; for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be fashioned in the likeness of his Son.'²⁴¹ It follows that none of these can perish. That is why the psalm continues, 'Your consolations have gladdened my soul.' For the actual grief that arises in the hearts of the devout who are persecuted by the behaviour of bad Christians or false Christians is of profit to those who grieve, since it issues from a love which makes them hate the thought that these persecutors should perish or should hinder the salvation of others. Above all, great consolations appear also when they are brought out of error; and those consolations overflow the souls of the devout with a joy as great as were the pains that tormented them at the thought of their perdition.

In this manner the Church proceeds on its pilgrim way in this world, in these evil days. Its troubled course began not merely in the time of the bodily presence of Christ and the time of his apostles; it started with Abel himself, the first righteous man slain by an ungodly brother; and the pilgrimage goes on from that time right up to the end of history, with the persecutions of the world on one side, and on the other the consolations of God.

52. *The belief that after the ten persecutions that have occurred only one is still to come, in the time of Antichrist*

Accordingly, I do not imagine that we should rashly assert or believe the theory that some have entertained or still do entertain: that the Church is not going to suffer any more persecutions until the time of Antichrist, beyond the number she has already endured, namely ten.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Rom. 8, 29.

²⁴² The notion of ten persecutions is first found in Orosius (7, 17). It simplifies a complicated story. Christians were always liable to prosecution as members of an unlicensed sect (not a *religio licita*), and for refusal to worship the Emperor; but in general the persecutions were local and transitory. Nero's attack (64) seems to have been confined to Rome, where the Christians were made scapegoats for the great fire; the Revelation apparently refers to persecution under Domitian (81–96) for rejecting Emperor-worship. Trajan, Antoninus and the two Severi were not persecutors, but Maximinus Thrax in 235 reversed the tolerant policy of Alexander Severus. The first general persecution throughout the Empire was ordered by Decius (251); Valerian in 257 concentrated his attack on the clergy and the laymen of rank; Aurelian did not disturb the Church. Diocletian showed tolerance until 303, when he ordered the destruction of churches and the burning of Scriptures; this was followed by wholesale

On this theory the eleventh and last persecution will come from Antichrist. The first persecution they reckon to be that of Nero, the second that of Domitian, the third of Trajan, the fourth of Antoninus, the fifth of Severus, the sixth of Maximinus, the seventh of Decius, the eighth of Valerian, the ninth of Aurelian, the tenth of Diocletian and Maximian, their assumption being that the fact that there were ten plagues of Egypt, before the people of God began their exodus from that country, should be taken as signifying that the last persecution, that of Antichrist, is to be regarded as the counterpart of the eleventh plague, in which the Egyptians in their vengeful pursuit of the Hebrews, perished in the Red Sea, while the people of God passed over on dry land. In my judgement, however, those events in Egypt were not prophetic symbols of these persecutions, although those who hold this theory have shown such highly-wrought ingenuity in comparing the details in each case – but they did this not so much by prophetic inspiration as by the speculation of the human mind, which sometimes arrives at the truth, but sometimes misses the mark.

For what will the supporters of this theory have to say about the persecution in which the Lord himself was crucified? What place is this to have in their enumeration? If, however, they consider that this persecution is to be omitted from the list, on the assumption that the only instances to be reckoned are those which concern the body, and that the one in which the head was attacked and slain is to be excluded, what will they do about the one which broke out after Christ's ascension into heaven? This was in Jerusalem, where the blessed Stephen was stoned, where James the brother of John was butchered with the sword, and where the apostle Peter was imprisoned to be put to death and was rescued by an angel. Then, too, the brethren were put to flight and dispersed from Jerusalem, and Saul (who afterwards became Paul the apostle) was wreaking havoc on the Church; and Saul himself, when he was spreading the Gospel which he had persecuted, suffered the same treatment as he had inflicted, both in Judaea and among the Gentiles, wherever, with his burning enthusiasm, he proclaimed Christ. Why, then, do they decide to start with Nero, seeing that the Church in its growth reached the time of Nero amidst the most ruthless persecutions, which it would take too long to describe in full detail? But if they consider that only persecutions inflicted by

bloodshed, mainly due to Galerius and Maximian, which continued after Diocletian's abdication (305), especially in Syria under Maximinus Data. Orosius ignores the severe persecution sanctioned by Marcus Aurelius in Lyons (177): Christians assumed that only bad Emperors were persecutors.

kings should be included in the list, it was a king, Herod, who inflicted the most severe persecution even after the ascension of the Lord.

Again, what answer will they give about Julian, whom they do not list among the ten? Did he not persecute the Church in forbidding the Christians to give or to receive a liberal education? Under him the elder Valentinian, who was the third emperor after him, showed himself a confessor of the Christian faith, and was deprived of his military rank. I shall pass over what Julian began to do at Antioch, and would have accomplished had it not been for one young man of unswerving faith and constancy. When many people were being arrested and taken for torture, this youth was the first to be taken, and he was tortured for a whole day, but continued singing hymns of praise while he was torn and racked. The emperor was awestricken in amazement at his bold cheerfulness, and was afraid to persecute the other victims in case he should be put to the blush with greater ignominy. Lastly, within our own memory, did not Valens, the Arian, the brother of the before-mentioned Valentinian, wreak havoc on the Catholic Church in the East in a great persecution? What a strange thing it is not to consider that the Church, as it grows and bears fruit throughout the whole world, can suffer persecution from kings among some peoples, even when it does not suffer the same among other nations! Or are we to suppose that it was not to be counted as a persecution when the king of the Goths persecuted the Christians²⁴³ in the actual kingdom of the Goths with stupendous ferocity, since there were only Catholics there? Many of these were crowned with martyrdom, as we have heard from some of the brethren, who were boys at the time in that country, and who immediately recalled that they had witnessed these events. Then what of the recent happenings in Persia?²⁴⁴ Did not persecution boil up so hotly against the Christians (if indeed it has yet calmed down) that a number of refugees from Persia fled as far as to Roman towns? When I think over events like these it seems to me that no limit can be set to the number of persecutions which the Church is bound to suffer for her training. On the other hand, it is no less rash to assert that there are to be other persecutions by kings, apart from that final persecution about which no Christian has any doubt. And so I leave the question undecided, offering no support or opposition to either side. I merely call upon both sides to renounce the audacious presumption of making any pronouncement on the question.

243. King Athamansius, in A.D. 370 (Oros., 6, 32).

244. In A.D. 420, under Isdigerdas (Thdt. H.E., 5, 38).

53. *The time of the final persecution has been revealed to no human being*

That last persecution, to be sure, which will be inflicted by Antichrist, will be extinguished by Jesus himself, present in person. For the Scripture says that 'he will kill him with the breath of his mouth and annihilate him by the splendour of his coming.'²⁴⁵ Here the usual question is, 'When will this happen?' But the question is completely ill-timed. For had it been in our interest to know this, who could have been a better informant than the master, God himself, when the disciples asked him? For they did not keep silent about it with him, but put the question to him in person, 'Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the sovereignty to Israel?' But he replied, 'It is not for you to know the times which the Father has reserved for his own control.'²⁴⁶ Now in fact they had not asked about the hour or the day or the year, but about the time, when they were given this answer. It is in vain, therefore, that we try to reckon and put a limit to the number of years that remain for this world, since we hear from the mouth of the Truth that it is not for us to know this. And yet some have asserted that 400, 500, or as much as 1,000 years may be completed between the Lord's ascension and his final coming. But to show how each of them supports his opinion would take too long; and in any case it is unnecessary, for they make use of human conjectures, and quote no decisive evidence from the authority of canonical Scripture. In fact, to all those who make such calculations on this subject comes the command, 'Relax your fingers, and give them a rest.'²⁴⁷ And it comes from him who says, 'It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has reserved for his own control.'

But since this statement is given in the Gospel, it is not to be wondered at that the worshippers of many false gods have not been restrained by it from pretending that the length of the future duration of the Christian religion has been defined by the responses of the demons whom they worship as gods. For when those pagans saw that Christianity could not be wiped out by all those great persecutions, but on the contrary had made astonishing advances because of them, they thought up some sort of Greek verses, supposedly the effusions of a divine oracle, given to someone consulting it. In them they do indeed make Christ innocent of this alleged offence of sacrilege, but go on to

say that Peter used sorcery to ensure that the name of Christ should be worshipped for 365 years, and that on the completion of that number of years it should come to an immediate end.

What intelligence! What scholarship! It takes educated wits to believe such things about Christ, while refusing to believe in Christ. To believe, that is, that Peter, his disciple, did not learn magical arts from his master, yet, that though his master was innocent, his disciple was a sorcerer, and preferred that through his magical arts his master's name rather than his own should be worshipped, at the cost of great hardships and dangers to himself and at last even at the cost of shedding his own blood. If Peter the sorcerer ensured that the world should so love Christ, what had Christ done to make Peter so love him? Let them give the answer to themselves; and let them realize if they can, that by that grace from on high it came about that the world loved Christ with a view to eternal life, and by the same grace it came about that Peter loved Christ both with a view to receiving eternal life from him, and even to the extent of suffering temporal death for him. Then again, what kind of gods are those who can make this prediction but cannot avert it, who succumb to a single sorcerer and a single act of criminal magic (a child of a year old, they allege, was slain, torn to pieces, and buried with abominable ceremonies), so much so that they allowed a sect opposed to them to gather strength over such an extended period, and to survive the terrible savageries of so many great persecutions, not by resistance but by endurance, and to reach the point of overthrowing their own images, temples, ceremonies and oracles? Lastly, who was the god – it was assuredly not ours, but one of their own – who was either enticed or compelled by such a criminal act to provide that result? For it was not by using his magic on some demon, but on a god, as those verses inform us, that Peter determined this period. That is the kind of god possessed by those who do not possess Christ!

54. *The foolish pagan falsehood that limits the Christian religion to 365 years*

I might have amassed many other arguments of similar tenor, had it not been that that year has already gone by, which was foretold by a trumped-up divination and believed in by deluded idiots. In fact the 365 years were completed some time ago, starting the count from the time when the worship of Christ was established by his presence in bodily form, and by his apostles, so why should we seek any other argument to refute this falsehood? Now we need not take the time of

²⁴⁵ 2 Thess. 2, 8.

²⁴⁶ Acts 1, 6f.

²⁴⁷ The finger-counting of antiquity was a complicated and laborious process.

Christ's birth as the start of this period, because he had no disciples in his infancy and boyhood. Still, from the time when he began to have disciples, the Christian doctrine and religion undoubtedly became widely known through his bodily presence, that is, after his baptism in the river Jordan by the ministry of John. This in fact is the reason for the famous prophecy about him uttered long before, 'He will have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river as far as to the ends of the earth.'²⁴⁸

But before Christ's passion and resurrection the Christian faith had not yet reached its final formulation for all mankind. That formulation was, of course, reached at the resurrection, for this is what the apostle Paul has to say, addressing the Athenians, 'This is now the time when God gives all men everywhere notice to repent, because he has fixed a day for the judgement of the world in righteousness, by a man in whose person he has defined the faith for all mankind, by raising him from the dead.'²⁴⁹ Consequently, this is a better starting-point for us to take in looking for the answer to this question: especially as it was also the time for the giving of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as the Spirit had to be bestowed after the resurrection of Christ, in that City from which the second Law, that is, the new covenant, was due to come into operation. For the first Law, called the old covenant, came from Mount Sinai, through Moses; whereas about this second Law, which was to be given through Christ, there was a prediction which said, 'Out of Zion the Law will issue, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.'²⁵⁰ That is why Christ himself said that repentance had to be preached in his name among all nations, yet the start was to be made from Jerusalem.²⁵¹ Thus it was at Jerusalem that the worship of this name began, so that men believed in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. It was there that this faith blazed up, with such remarkable beginnings that some thousands of people were converted to the name of Christ with amazing promptness. They sold their possessions to give the proceeds to the needy, and to attain to a voluntary poverty by holy resolution and burning love, and they prepared themselves, surrounded as they were by the bloodthirsty fury of the Jews, to fight for the cause of truth even unto death, and to fight not by armed force, but by the mightier power of steadfast endurance. If so much was achieved without any magical

²⁴⁸ Ps. 72, 8; cf. Bk. XVII, 8.

²⁴⁹ Acts 17, 30f. (The Greek means 'by a man whom he appointed, giving an assurance of this by raising . . .').

²⁵⁰ Is. 2, 3; cf. ch. 50.

²⁵¹ cf. Luke 24, 27.

arts, why are the pagans reluctant to believe that the same result could have been attained throughout the whole world by the same divine power that effected it here?

But let us assume that Peter had already performed his act of sorcery, with this result; that at Jerusalem such great numbers of men were fired to worship the name of Christ, men who had taken him and fastened him to the cross, or had jeered at him when fastened there. If so, then that is the very year from which to start when trying to find out when the 365 years came to an end. Well, then, Christ died on the twenty-fifth of March in the consulship of the two Gemini (A.D. 29). He rose again on the third day, as the apostles proved by the evidence of their own senses. Then, after forty days, he ascended to heaven; and ten days later (that is, on the fiftieth day after his resurrection) he sent the Holy Spirit. It was then that 3,000 people believed when the apostles proclaimed Christ. It was then, therefore, that the worship of that name arose, as we believe and as the truth holds, through the effective working of the Holy Spirit, but according to the story invented – or supposed true – by the blasphemy of fools, by Peter's magic arts. Again, a little later, 5,000 people believed, after an amazing miracle, effected through the words of this same Peter, when a beggar man, so lame from his mother's womb that he was carried by others to the door of the temple to beg for alms, was cured in the name of Jesus Christ and leaped to his feet. After that the Church grew by successive additions to the number of believers.

Hence we can establish the actual day from which the year takes its start, namely the day when the Holy Spirit was sent – on the Ides of May. By reckoning the consuls from this date, the 365 years are found to be completed on the same Ides in the consulship of Honorius and Eutychianus.²⁵² Now in the next year, when Malius Theodorus was consul, the Christian religion should have ceased to exist, according to that oracle of the demons or fiction of men; and yet we know that at Carthage, that famous and important city – there was no need for research into what may have happened in other parts – at Carthage, Gaudentius and Jovius, the officials of the Emperor Honorius, on the eighteenth of March demolished the temples of the false gods and broke up their images. No one could fail to see how much the worship of Christ's name has increased in the space of about thirty years from that time to the present day,²⁵³ and especially after many people had

²⁵² A.D. 398; but 29 + 365 = 394.

²⁵³ Apparently St Augustine corrected his addition; 394 + 30 = 424, and the City of God was probably completed in 426.

become Christians who had formerly been kept from joining the faith by that oracular prophecy, supposing it to be genuine, and who now, after the completion of the number of years specified, saw it to be ridiculous nonsense. We, therefore, who are Christians and are called by that name, do not believe in Peter but in the one in whom Peter believed. We are edified by Peter's discourses about Christ; we are not poisoned by Peter's spells, we are not deluded by his evil arts, but we are assisted by his good offices. That same Christ, who was Peter's master in the teaching that leads to eternal life, is himself our master also.

But now at last we must bring this book to its close. In it we have brought our discussion to this point, and we have shown sufficiently, as it seemed to me, what is the development in this mortal condition of the two cities, the earthly and the Heavenly, which are mingled together from the beginning to the end of their history. One of them, the earthly city, has created for herself such false gods as she wanted, from any source she chose – even creating them out of men – in order to worship them with sacrifices. The other city, the Heavenly City on pilgrimage in this world, does not create false gods. She herself is the creation of the true God, and she herself is to be his true sacrifice. Nevertheless, both cities alike enjoy the good things, or are afflicted with the adversities of this temporal state, but with a different faith, a different expectation, a different love, until they are separated by the final judgement, and each receives her own end, of which there is no end. And those different ends of the two cities must be the next subject for our discussion.

BOOK XIX

1. *The philosophic debate on the Supreme Good and Evil*

It is clear to me that my next task is to discuss the appointed ends of these two cities, the earthly and the heavenly. Hence I must first explain, as far as is allowed by the limits I have designed for this work, the arguments advanced by mortal men in their endeavour to create happiness for themselves amidst the unhappiness of this life. My purpose is to make clear the great difference between their hollow realities and our hope, the hope given us by God, together with the realization – that is, the true bliss – which he will give us; and to do this not merely by appealing to divine authority but also by employing such powers of reason as we can apply for the benefit of unbelievers. Now the philosophers have engaged in a great deal of complicated debate about the supreme ends of good and evil; and by concentrating their attention on this question they have tried to discover what it is that makes a man happy. For our Final Good is that for which other things are to be desired, while it is itself to be desired for its own sake. The Final Evil is that for which other things are to be shunned, while it is itself to be shunned on its own account. Thus when we now speak of the Final Good we do not mean the end of good whereby good is finished so that it does not exist, but the end whereby it is brought to final perfection and fulfilment. And by the Final Evil we do not mean the finish of evil whereby it ceases to be, but the final end to which its harmful effects eventually lead. These two ends, then, are the Supreme Good and the Supreme Evil. The search to discover these, and the quest for the attainment of the Supreme Good in this life and the avoidance of the Supreme Evil has been the object of the labours of those who have made the pursuit of wisdom their profession, amid the follies of this world. And although they have gone astray in different ways, the limits imposed by nature set bounds to their deviation from the path of truth, so that there were none who did not set the Supreme Good and the Supreme Evil in one of three locations: in the soul, or in the body, or in both. On the basis of this threefold classification into what we may call the genera of philosophic schools, Marcus Varro by careful and minute examination noted such a wide variety of opinions,