



Tertullian of Carthage

Excerpts from *To the Nations & Apology*

To the Nations/Ad nationes 2.9-17 (ANF 3:137-46)

Apology/Apologeticum 29-40 (ANF 3:41-48)

These two texts give us examples of Tertullian presenting himself to two different audiences.

To the Nations is written to a Carthaginian audience, attacking Roman injustices and impieties. *The Apology*, on the other hand, is a defense of Christian practices, written to a Roman audience.

To the Nations (excerpt)

Chapter IX.—The Power of Rome. Romanized Aspect of All the Heathen Mythology. Varro's Threefold Distribution Criticised. Roman Heroes (Æneas Included,) Unfavourably Reviewed.

Such are the more obvious or more remarkable points which we had to mention in connection with Varro's threefold distribution of the gods, in order that a sufficient answer might seem to be given touching the physical, the poetic, and the gentile classes. Since, however, it is no longer to the philosophers, nor the poets, nor the nations that we owe the substitution of all (heathen worship for the true religion) although they transmitted the superstition, but to the dominant Romans, who received the tradition and gave it wide authority, another phase of the widespread error of man must now be encountered by us; nay, another forest must be felled *by our axe*, which has obscured the childhood of the degenerate worship⁹²² with germs of superstitions gathered from all quarters. Well, but even the gods of the Romans have received from (the same) Varro a threefold classification into the *certain*, the *uncertain*, and the *select*. What absurdity! What need had they of uncertain gods, when they possessed certain ones? Unless, forsooth, they wished to commit themselves to⁹²³ such folly as the Athenians did; for at Athens there was an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown gods."⁹²⁴ Does, then, a man worship that which he knows nothing of? Then, again, as they had certain gods, they ought to have been contented with them, without requiring select ones. In this want they are even found to be irreligious! For if gods are selected as onions are,⁹²⁵ then such as are not chosen are declared to be worthless. Now we on our part allow that the Romans had two sets of gods, *common* and *proper*; in other words, those which they had in common with other nations, and those which they themselves devised. And were not these called the *public* and the *foreign*⁹²⁶ gods? Their altars tell us so; there is (a specimen) of the foreign gods at the fane of Carna, of the public gods in the Palatium. Now, since their common gods are comprehended in both the physical and the mythic classes, we have already said enough concerning them. I should like to speak of their particular kinds of deity. We ought then to admire the Romans for that third set of *the gods of their enemies*,⁹²⁷ because no other nation ever discovered for itself so large a mass of superstition. Their other deities we arrange in two classes: those which have become gods from human beings, and those which have had their origin in some other way. Now, since there

922 Vitii pueritatem.

923 Recipere (with a dative).

924 Ignotis Deis. Comp. [Acts xvii. 23](#).

925 Ut bulbi. This is the passage which Augustine quotes (*de Civit. Dei*, vii. 1) as "too facetious."

926 Adventicii, "coming from abroad."

927 Touching these gods of the vanquished nations, compare *The Apology*, xxv.; below, c. xvii.; Minucius Felix, *Octav.* xxv.

is advanced the same colourable pretext for the deification of the dead, that their lives were meritorious, we are compelled to urge the same reply against them, that no one of them was worth so much pains. Their fond⁹²⁸ father Æneas, in whom they believed, was never glorious, and was felled with a stone⁹²⁹—a vulgar weapon, to pelt a dog withal, inflicting a wound no less ignoble! But this Æneas turns out⁹³⁰ a traitor to his country; yes, quite as much as Antenor. And if they will not believe this to be true of him, he at any rate deserted his companions when his country was in flames, and must be held inferior to that woman of Carthage,⁹³¹ who, when her husband Hasdrubal supplicated the enemy with the mild pusillanimity of our Æneas, refused to accompany him, but hurrying her children along with her, disdained to take her beautiful self and father's noble heart⁹³² into exile, but plunged into the flames of the burning Carthage, as if rushing into the embraces of her (dear but) ruined country. Is he "pious Æneas" for (rescuing) his young only son and decrepit old father, but deserting Priam and Astyanax? But the Romans ought rather to detest him; for in defence of their princes and their royal⁹³³ house, they surrender⁹³⁴ even children and wives, and every dearest pledge.⁹³⁵ They deify the son of Venus, and this with the full knowledge and consent of *her husband* Vulcan, and without opposition from even Juno. Now, if sons have seats in heaven owing to their piety to their parents, why are not those noble youths⁹³⁶ of Argos rather accounted gods, because they, to save their mother from guilt in the performance of some sacred rites, with a devotion more than human, yoked themselves to her car and dragged her to the temple? Why not make a goddess, for her exceeding piety, of that daughter⁹³⁷ who from her own breasts nourished her father who was famishing in prison? What other glorious achievement can be related of Æneas, but that he was nowhere seen in the fight on the field of Laurentum? Following his bent, perhaps he fled a second time as a fugitive from the battle.⁹³⁸ In like manner, Romulus posthumously becomes a god. Was it because he founded the city? Then why not others also, who have

928 Diligentem.

929 See Homer, *Il.* v. 300.

930 Invenitur.

931 Referred to also above, i. 18.

932 The obscure "formam et patrem" is by Oehler rendered "pulchritudinem et generis nobilitatem."

933 The word is "eorum" (possessive of "principum"), not "suæ."

934 Dejerant adversus.

935 What Tertullian himself thinks on this point, see his *de Corona*, xi.

936 Cleobis and Biton; see Herodotus i. 31.

937 See Valerius Maximus, v. 4, 1.

938 We need not stay to point out the unfairness of this statement, in contrast with the exploits of Æneas against Turnus, as detailed in the last books of the *Æneid*.

built cities, counting even⁹³⁹ women? To be sure, Romulus slew his brother in the bargain, and trickishly ravished some foreign virgins. Therefore of course he becomes a god, and therefore a Quirinus (“god of the spear”), because then their fathers had to use the spear⁹⁴⁰ on his account. What did Sterculus do to merit deification? If he worked hard to enrich the fields *stercoribus*,⁹⁴¹ (with manure,) Augias had more dung than he to bestow on them. If Faunus, the son of Picus, used to do violence to law and right, because struck with madness, it was more fit that he should be doctored than deified.⁹⁴² If the daughter of Faunus so excelled in chastity, that she would hold no conversation with men, it was perhaps from rudeness, or a consciousness of deformity, or shame for her father’s insanity. How much worthier of divine honour than this “good goddess”⁹⁴³ was Penelope, who, although dwelling among so many suitors of the vilest character, preserved with delicate tact the purity which they assailed! There is Sanctus, too,⁹⁴⁴ who for his hospitality had a temple consecrated to him by king Plotius; and even Ulysses had it in his power to have bestowed one more god upon you in the person of the most refined Alcinous.

939 Usque in.

940 We have thus rendered “*quiritatem est*,” to preserve as far as one could the pun on the deified hero of the *Quirites*.

941 We insert the Latin, to show the pun on *Sterculus*; see *The Apology*, c. xxv. [See p. 40, *supra*.]

942 *Curaria quam consecrari*.

943 Bona Dea, i.e., the daughter of Faunus just mentioned.

944 See Livy, viii. 20, xxxii. 1; Ovid, *Fasti*, vi. 213, etc. Compare also Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, xviii. 19. [Tom, vii. p. 576.]

Chapter X.—A Disgraceful Feature of the Roman Mythology. It Honours Such Infamous Characters as Larentina.

I hasten to even more abominable cases. Your writers have not been ashamed to publish that of Larentina. She was a hired prostitute, whether as the nurse of Romulus, and therefore called *Lupa*, because she was a prostitute, or as the mistress of Hercules, now deceased, that is to say, now deified. They⁹⁴⁵ relate that his temple-warder⁹⁴⁶ happened to be playing at dice in the temple alone; and in order to represent a partner for himself in the game, in the absence of an actual one, he began to play with one hand for Hercules and the other for himself. (The condition was,) that if he won the stakes from Hercules, he should with them procure a supper and a prostitute; if Hercules, however, proved the winner, I mean his other hand, then he should provide the same for Hercules. The hand of Hercules won. That achievement might well have been added to his twelve labours! The temple-warden buys a supper for the hero, and hires Larentina to play the whore. The fire which dissolved the body of even a Hercules⁹⁴⁷ enjoyed the supper, and the altar consumed everything. Larentina sleeps alone in the temple; and *she* a woman from the brothel, boasts that in her dreams she had submitted herself to the pleasure of Hercules;⁹⁴⁸ and she might possibly have experienced this, as it passed through her mind, in her sleep. In the morning, on going out of the temple very early, she is solicited by a young man—“a third Hercules,” so to speak.⁹⁴⁹ He invites her home. She complies, remembering that Hercules had told her that it would be for her advantage. He then, to be sure, obtains permission that they should be united in lawful wedlock (for none was allowed to have intercourse with the concubine of a god without being punished for it); the husband makes her his heir. By and by, just before her death, she bequeathed to the Roman people the rather large estate which she had obtained through Hercules. After this she sought deification for her daughters too, whom indeed the divine Larentina ought to have appointed her heirs also. The gods of the Romans received an accession in her dignity. For she alone of all the wives of Hercules was dear to him, because she alone was rich; and she was even far more fortunate than Ceres, who contributed to the pleasure of the (king of the) dead.⁹⁵⁰ After so many examples and *eminent* names among you, who might not have been declared divine? Who, in fact, ever raised a question as to his divinity against Antinous?⁹⁵¹ Was even Ganymede more grateful and dear than he to



945 Compare Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 7. [Tom. vii. p. 184.]

946 Æditum ejus.

947 That is, when he mounted the pyre.

948 Herculi functam. “Fungi alicui” means to satisfy, or yield to.

949 The well-known Greek saying, ἄλλος οὗτος Ἡρακλῆς.

950 Pluto; Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, is meant. Oehler once preferred to read, “Hebe, quæ mortuo placuit,” i.e., “than Hebe, who gratified Hercules after death.”

951 Tertullian often refers indignantly to this atrocious case.

(the supreme god) who loved him? According to you, heaven is open to the dead. You prepare⁹⁵² a way from Hades to the stars. Prostitutes mount it in all directions, so that you must not suppose that you are conferring a great distinction upon your kings.

Chapter XI.—The Romans Provided Gods for Birth, Nay, Even Before Birth, to Death. Much Indelicacy in This System.

And you are not content to assert the divinity of such as were once known to you, whom you heard and handled, and whose portraits have been painted, and actions recounted, and memory retained amongst you; but men insist upon consecrating with a heavenly life⁹⁵³ I know not what incorporeal, inanimate shadows, and the *mere* names of things—dividing man's entire existence amongst separate powers even from his conception in the womb: so that there is a god Consevius,⁹⁵⁴ to preside over concubital generation; and Fluviona,⁹⁵⁵ to preserve the (growth of the) infant in the womb; after these come Vitumnus and Sentinus,⁹⁵⁶ through whom the babe begins to have life and its earliest sensation; then Diespiter,⁹⁵⁷ by whose office the child accomplishes its birth. But when women begin their parturition, Candelifera also *comes in aid*, since childbearing requires the light of the candle; and other goddesses there are⁹⁵⁸ who get their names from the parts they bear in the stages of travail. There were two Carmentas likewise, according to the general view: to one of them, called Postverta, belonged the function of assisting the birth of the introverted child; while the other, Prosa,⁹⁵⁹ executed the like office for the rightly born. The god Farinus was so called from (his inspiring) the first utterance; while others believed in Locutius from his gift of speech. Cunina⁹⁶⁰ is present as the protector of the child's deep slumber, and supplies to it refreshing rest. To lift them (when fallen)⁹⁶¹ there is Levana, and along with her Rumina.⁹⁶² It is a wonderful oversight that no gods were appointed for cleaning up the filth of children. Then, to preside over their first pap and earliest drink you have Potina and Edula,⁹⁶³ to teach the child to stand erect is the work of Statina,⁹⁶⁴ whilst Adeona helps him to come *to dear Mamma*, and Abeona to toddle off again; then there is Domiduca,⁹⁶⁵ (to bring home

953 Efflagitant cœlo et sanciant, (i.e., "they insist on deifying.")

954 Comp. Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 9.

955 A name of Juno, in reference to her office to mothers, "quia eam sanguinis fluorem in conceptu retinere putabant." Comp. August. *de Civ. Dei*, iii. 2.

956 Comp. August. *de Civ. Dei*, vii. 2, 3.

957 Comp. August. *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 11.

958 Such as Lucina, Partula, Nona, Decima, Alemona.

959 Or, Prosa.

960 "Quæ infantes *in cunis* (in their cradle) tuetur." Comp. August. *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 11.

961 Educatrix; Augustine says: "Ipse levet de terra et vocetur dea *Levana*" (*de Civ. Dei*, iv. 11).

962 From the old word *ruma*, a teat.

963 Comp. August. *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 9, 11, 36.

964 See also Tertullian's *de Anima*, xxxix.; and Augustine's *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 21, where the god has the masculine name of *Statilinus*.

965 See Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 9 and vii. 3.

the bride;) and the goddess Mens, to influence the mind to either good or evil.⁹⁶⁶ They have likewise Volumnus and Voleta,⁹⁶⁷ to control the will; Paventina, (the goddess) of fear; Venilia, of hope;⁹⁶⁸ Volupia, of pleasure;⁹⁶⁹ Præstitia, of beauty.⁹⁷⁰ Then, again, they give his name to Peragenor,⁹⁷¹ from his teaching men to go through their work; to Consus, from his suggesting to them counsel. Juventa is their guide on assuming the manly gown, and “bearded Fortune” when they come to full manhood.⁹⁷² If I must touch on their nuptial duties, there is Afferenda whose appointed function is to see to the offering of the dower; but fie on you! you have your Mutunus⁹⁷³ and Tutunus and Pertunda⁹⁷⁴ and Subigus and the goddess Prema and likewise Perfica.⁹⁷⁵ O spare yourselves, ye impudent gods! No one is present at the secret struggles of married life. Those very few persons who have a wish that way, go away and blush for very shame in the midst of their joy.



966 *Ibid.* iv. 21, vii. 3.

967 *Ibid.* iv. 21.

968 *Ibid.* iv. 11, vii. 22.

969 *Ibid.* iv. 11. [N.B.—Augustine’s borrowing from our author.]

970 Arnobius, *adv. Nationes*, iv. 3.

971 Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*. [iv. 11 and 16] mentions *Agenoria*.

972 On *Fortuna Barbata*, see Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 11, where he also names *Consus* and *Juventa*.

973 Tertullian, in *Apol.* xxv. sarcastically says, “Sterculus, and Mutunus, and Larentina, have raised the empire to its present height.”

974 Arnobius, *adv. Nationes*, iv. 7, 11; August. *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 9.

975 For these three gods, see Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 9; and Arnobius, *adv. Nationes*, iv. 7.

Chapter XII.⁹⁷⁶—The Original Deities Were Human—With Some Very Questionable Characteristics. Saturn or Time Was Human. Inconsistencies of Opinion About Him.

Now, how much further need I go in recounting your gods—because I want to descant on the character of such as you have adopted? It is quite uncertain whether I shall laugh at your absurdity, or upbraid you for your blindness. For how many, and indeed what, gods shall I bring forward? Shall it be the greater ones, or the lesser? The old ones, or the novel? The male, or the female? The unmarried, or such as are joined in wedlock? The clever, or the unskilful? The rustic or the town ones? The national or the foreign? For the truth is,⁹⁷⁷ there are so many families, so many nations, which require a catalogue⁹⁷⁸ (of gods), that they cannot possibly be examined, or distinguished, or described. But the more diffuse the subject is, the more restriction must we impose on it. As, therefore, in this review we keep before us but one object—that of proving that all these gods were once human beings (not, indeed, to instruct you in the fact,⁹⁷⁹ for your conduct shows that you have forgotten it)—let us adopt our compendious summary from the most natural method⁹⁸⁰ of conducting the examination, even by considering the origin of their race. For the origin characterizes all that comes after it. Now this origin of your gods dates,⁹⁸¹ I suppose, from Saturn. And when Varro mentions Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, as the most ancient of the gods, it ought not to have escaped our notice, that every father is more ancient than his sons, and that Saturn therefore must precede Jupiter, even as *Cœlus* does Saturn, for Saturn was sprung from *Cœlus* and *Terra*. I pass by, however, the origin of *Cœlus* and *Terra*. They led in some unaccountable way⁹⁸² single lives, and had no children. Of course they required a long time for vigorous growth to attain to such a stature.⁹⁸³ By and by, as soon as the voice of *Cœlus* began to break,⁹⁸⁴ and the breasts of *Terra* to become firm,⁹⁸⁵ they contract marriage with one another. I suppose either Heaven⁹⁸⁶ came down to his spouse, or Earth went up to meet her lord. Be that as it may, Earth conceived seed of Heaven, and when her year was fulfilled brought forth Saturn in a wonderful manner. Which of his parents did he resemble?

976 Agrees with *The Apology*, c. x.

977 Bona fide.

978 Censum.

979 There is here an omitted clause, supplied in *The Apology*, “but rather to recall it to your memory.”

980 Ab ipsa ratione.

981 Signatur.

982 Undeunde.

983 Tantam proceritatem.

984 Insolescere, i.e., at the commencement of puberty.

985 Lapilliscere, i.e., to indicate maturity.

986 The nominative “*cœlum*” is used.

Well, then, even after parentage began,⁹⁸⁷ it is certain⁹⁸⁸ that they had no child previous to Saturn, and only one daughter afterwards—Ops; thenceforth they ceased to procreate. The truth is, Saturn castrated Coelus as he was sleeping. We read this name Coelus as of the masculine gender. And for the matter of that, how could he be a father unless he were a male? But with what instrument was the castration effected? He had a scythe. What, so early as that? For Vulcan was not yet an artificer in iron. The widowed Terra, however, although still quite young, was in no hurry⁹⁸⁹ to marry another. Indeed, there was no second Coelus for her. What but Ocean offers her an embrace? But he savours of brackishness, and she has been accustomed to fresh water.⁹⁹⁰ And so Saturn is the sole male child of Coelus and Terra. When grown to puberty, he marries his own sister. No laws as yet prohibited incest, nor punished parricide. Then, when male children were born to him, he would devour them; better himself (should take them) than the wolves, (for to these would they become a prey) if he exposed them. He was, no doubt, afraid that one of them might learn the lesson of his father's scythe. When Jupiter was born in course of time, he was removed out of the way:⁹⁹¹ (the father) swallowed a stone instead of the son, as was pretended. This artifice secured his safety for a time; but at length the son, whom he had not devoured, and who had grown up in secret, fell upon him, and deprived him of his kingdom. Such, then, is the patriarch of the gods whom Heaven⁹⁹² and Earth produced for you, with the poets officiating as midwives. Now some persons with a refined⁹⁹³ imagination are of opinion that, by this allegorical fable of Saturn, there is a physiological representation of *Time*: (they think) that it is because all things are destroyed by Time, that Coelus and Terra were themselves parents without having any of their own, and that the (fatal) scythe was used, and that (Saturn) devoured his own offspring, because he,⁹⁹⁴ in fact, absorbs within himself all things which have issued from him. They call in also the witness of his name; for they say that he is called Κρόνος in Greek, meaning the same thing as χρόνος.⁹⁹⁵ His Latin name also they derive from *seed-sowing*,⁹⁹⁶ for they suppose him to have been the actual procreator—that the seed, in fact,



987 It is not very clear what is the force of “sed et pepererit,” as read by Oehler; we have given the clause an impersonal turn.

988 “Certe” is sometime “certo” in our author.

989 Distulit.

990 That is, to rain and cloud.

991 Abalienato.

992 The word is “coelum” here.

993 Eleganter.

994 i.e., as representing *Time*.

995 So Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 10; Arnobius, *adv. Nationes*, iii. 29; Cicero, *de Nat. Deor.* ii. 25.

996 As if from “sero,” *satum*.

was dropt down from heaven to earth by his means. They unite him with *Ops*, because seeds produce the affluent treasure (*Opem*) of actual life, and because they develop with labour (*Opus*). Now I wish that you would explain this metaphorical⁹⁹⁷ statement. It was either Saturn or Time. If it was Time, how could it be Saturn? If he, how could it be Time? For you cannot possibly reckon both these corporeal subjects⁹⁹⁸ as co-existing in one person. What, however, was there to prevent your worshipping Time under its proper quality? Why not make a human person, or even a mythic man, an object of your adoration, but each in its proper nature not in the character of Time? What is the meaning of that conceit of your mental ingenuity, if it be not to colour the foulest matters with the feigned appearance of reasonable proofs?⁹⁹⁹ Neither, on the one hand, do you mean Saturn to be Time, because you say he is a human being; nor, on the other hand, whilst portraying him as Time, do you on that account mean that he was ever human. No doubt, in the accounts of remote antiquity your god Saturn is plainly described as living on earth in human guise. Anything whatever may obviously be pictured as incorporeal which never had an existence; there is simply no room for such fiction, where there is reality. Since, therefore, there is clear evidence that Saturn once existed, it is in vain that you change his character. He whom you will not deny to have once been man, is not at your disposal to be treated anyhow, nor can it be maintained that he is either divine or Time. In every page of your literature the origin¹⁰⁰⁰ of Saturn is conspicuous. We read of him in Cassius Severus and in the Corneliuses, Nepos and Tacitus,¹⁰⁰¹ and, amongst the Greeks also, in Diodorus, and all other compilers of ancient annals.¹⁰⁰² No more faithful records of him are to be traced than in Italy itself. For, after (traversing) many countries, and (enjoying) the hospitality of Athens, he settled in Italy, or, as it was called, Cenotria, having met with a kind welcome from Janus, or Janes,¹⁰⁰³ as the *Salii* call him. The hill on which he settled had the name Saturnius, whilst the city which he founded¹⁰⁰⁴ still bears the name Saturnia; in short, the whole of Italy once had the same designation. Such is the testimony derived from that country which is now the mistress of the world: whatever doubt prevails about the origin of Saturn, his actions tell us plainly that he was a human being. Since, therefore, Saturn was human, he came undoubtedly from a human stock; and more, because he was a man, he, of course, came not of *Cœlus* and *Terra*.

997 Translatio.

998 Utrumque corporale.

999 Mentitis argumentationibus.

1000 Census.

1001 See his *Histories*, v. 2, 4.

1002 Antiquitatem canos, "hoary antiquity."

1003 Jano sive Jane.

1004 Depalaverat, "marked out with stakes."

Some people, however, found it easy enough to call him, whose parents were unknown, the son of those gods from whom all may in a sense seem to be derived. For who is there that does not speak under a feeling of reverence of the heaven and the earth as his own father and mother? Or, in accordance with a custom amongst men, which induces them to say of any who are unknown or suddenly apparent, that “they came from the sky?” Hence it happened that, because a stranger appeared suddenly everywhere, it became the custom to call him a heaven-born man,¹⁰⁰⁵—just as we also commonly call earth-born all those whose descent is unknown. I say nothing of the fact that such was the state of antiquity, when men’s eyes and minds were so habitually rude, that they were excited by the appearance of every newcomer as if it were that of a god: much more would this be the case with a king, and that the primeval one. I will linger some time longer over the case of Saturn, because by fully discussing his primordial history I shall beforehand furnish a compendious answer for all other cases; and I do not wish to omit the more convincing testimony of your sacred literature, the credit of which ought to be the greater in proportion to its antiquity. Now earlier than all literature was the Sibyl; that Sibyl, I mean, who was the true prophetess of truth, from whom you borrow their title for the priests of your demons. She in senarian verse expounds the descent of Saturn and his exploits in words to this effect: “In the tenth generation of men, after the flood had overwhelmed the former race, reigned Saturn, and Titan, and Japetus, the bravest of the sons of Terra and Coelus.” Whatever credit, therefore, is attached to your older writers and literature, and much more to those who were the simplest as belonging to that age,¹⁰⁰⁶ it becomes sufficiently certain that Saturn and his family¹⁰⁰⁷ were human beings. We have in our possession, then, a brief principle which amounts to a prescriptive rule about their origin serving for all other cases, to prevent our going wrong in individual instances. The particular character¹⁰⁰⁸ of a posterity is shown by the original founders of the race—mortal beings (come) from mortals, earthly ones from earthly; step after step comes in due relation¹⁰⁰⁹—marriage, conception, birth—country, settlements, kingdoms, all give the clearest proofs.¹⁰¹⁰ They, therefore who cannot deny the birth of men, must also admit their death; they who allow their mortality must not suppose them to be gods.

142

1005 Coelitem.

1006 Magis proximis quoniam illius ætatis.

1007 Prosapia.

1008 Qualitas. [n.b. Our author’s use of *Præscriptio*.]

1009 Comparantur.

1010 Monumenta liquent.

Chapter XIII.¹⁰¹¹—The Gods Human at First. Who Had the Authority to Make Them Divine? Jupiter Not Only Human, But Immoral.

Manifest cases, indeed, like these have a force peculiarly their own. Men like Varro and his fellow-dreamers admit into the ranks of the divinity those whom they cannot assert to have been in their primitive condition anything but men; (and this they do) by affirming that they became gods after their death. Here, then, I take my stand. If your gods were elected¹⁰¹² to this dignity and deity,¹⁰¹³ just as you recruit the ranks of your senate, you cannot help conceding, in your wisdom, that there must be some one supreme sovereign who has the power of selecting, and is a kind of Cæsar; and nobody is able to confer¹⁰¹⁴ on others a thing over which he has not absolute control. Besides, if they were able to make gods of themselves after their death, pray tell me why they chose to be in an inferior condition at first? Or, again, if there is no one who made them gods, how can they be said to have been made such, if they could only have been made by some one else? There is therefore no ground afforded you for denying that there is a certain wholesale distributor¹⁰¹⁵ of divinity. Let us accordingly examine the reasons for despatching mortal beings to heaven. I suppose you will produce a pair of them. Whoever, then, is the awarder (of the divine honours), exercises his function, either that he may have some supports, or defences, or it may be even ornaments to his own dignity; or from the pressing claims of the meritorious, that he may reward all the deserving. No other cause is it permitted us to conjecture. Now there is no one who, when bestowing a gift on another, does not act with a view to his own interest or the other's. This conduct, however, cannot be worthy of the Divine Being, inasmuch as His power is so great that He can make gods outright; whilst His bringing man into such request, on the pretence that he requires the aid and support of certain, even dead persons, is a strange conceit, since He was able from the very first to create for Himself immortal beings. He who has compared human things with divine will require no further arguments on these points. And yet the latter opinion ought to be discussed, that God conferred divine honours in consideration of meritorious claims. Well, then, if the award was made on such grounds, if heaven was opened to men of the primitive age because of their deserts, we must reflect that after that time no one was worthy of such honour; except it be, that there is now no longer such a place for any one to attain to. Let us grant that anciently men may have deserved heaven by reason of their great merits. Then let us consider whether there really was such merit. Let the man who alleges that it did exist declare his own view of merit. Since the ac-

1011 Comp. *The Apology*, c. xi. [p. 27. *Supra*.]

1012 Allecti.

1013 This is not so terse as Tertullian's "nomen et numen."

1014 Præstare.

1015 Mancipem.

tions of men done in the very infancy of time¹⁰¹⁶ are a valid claim for their deification, you consistently admitted to the honour the brother and sister who were stained with the sin of incest—Ops and Saturn. Your Jupiter too, stolen in his infancy, was unworthy of both the home and the nutriment accorded to human beings; and, as he deserved for so bad a child, he had to live in Crete.¹⁰¹⁷ Afterwards, when full-grown, he dethrones his own father, who, whatever his parental character may have been, was most prosperous in his reign, king as he was of the golden age. Under him, a stranger to toil and want, peace maintained its joyous and gentle sway; under him—

“Nulli subigebant arva coloni;”¹⁰¹⁸

“No swains would bring the fields beneath their sway;”¹⁰¹⁹

and without the importunity of any one the earth would bear all crops spontaneously.¹⁰²⁰ But he hated a father who had been guilty of incest, and had once mutilated his¹⁰²¹ grandfather. And yet, behold, he himself marries his own sister; so that I should suppose the old adage was made for him: Τοῦ πατρὸς τὸ παιδίον—“Father’s own child.” There was “not a pin to choose” between the father’s piety and the son’s. If the laws had been just even at that early time,¹⁰²² Jupiter ought to have been “sewed up in both sacks.”¹⁰²³ After this corroboration of his lust with incestuous gratification, why should he hesitate to indulge himself lavishly in the lighter excesses of adultery and debauchery? Ever since¹⁰²⁴ poetry sported thus with his character, in some such way as is usual when a runaway slave¹⁰²⁵ is posted up in public, we have been in the habit of gossiping without restraint¹⁰²⁶ of his tricks¹⁰²⁷ in our chat with passers-by;¹⁰²⁸ sometimes sketching him out in the form of the very money which was the fee of his debauchery—as when (he personated) a bull, or rather paid the money’s worth of one,¹⁰²⁹ and showered (gold) into the maiden’s chamber, or rather forced

1016 In cunabulis temporalitatis.

1017 The ill-fame of the Cretans is noted by St. Paul, [Tit. i. 12](#).

1018 Virgil, *Georg.* i. 125.

1019 Sewell.

1020 Ipsa.

1021 Jupiter’s, of course.

1022 The law which prescribed the penalty of the paracide, that he be *sewed up in a sack* with an ape, a serpent, and a cock, and be thrown into the sea.

1023 In duos culleos dividi.

1024 De quo.

1025 De fugitivo.

1026 Abusui nundinare.

1027 The “operam ejus”=*ingenia et artificia* (Oehler).

1028 Percontationi alienæ.

1029 In the case of Europa.

his way in with a bribe;¹⁰³⁰ sometimes (figuring him) in the very likenesses of the parts which were acted¹⁰³¹—as the eagle which ravished (the beautiful youth),¹⁰³² and the swan which sang (the enchanting song).¹⁰³³ Well now, are not such fables as these made up of the most disgusting intrigues and the worst of scandals? or would not the morals and tempers of men be likely to become wanton from such examples? In what manner demons, the offspring of evil angels who have been long engaged in their mission, have laboured to turn men¹⁰³⁴ aside from the faith to unbelief and to such fables, we must not in this place speak of to any extent. As indeed the general body¹⁰³⁵ (of your gods), which took their cue¹⁰³⁶ from their kings, and princes, and instructors,¹⁰³⁷ was not of the self-same nature, it was in some other way¹⁰³⁸ that similarity of character was exacted by their authority. But how much the worst of them was he who (ought to have been, but) was not, the best of them? By a title peculiar to him, you are indeed in the habit of calling Jupiter “the Best,”¹⁰³⁹ whilst in Virgil he is “Æquus Jupiter.”¹⁰⁴⁰ All therefore were *like* him—incestuous towards their own kith and kin, unchaste to strangers, impious, unjust! Now he whom mythic story left untainted with no conspicuous infamy, was not worthy to be made a god.

1030 In the case of Danæ.

1031 Similitudines actuum ipsas.

1032 In the case of Ganymede.

1033 In the case of Leda.

1034 Quos.

1035 Plebs.

1036 Morata.

1037 Proseminatoribus.

1038 Alibi.

1039 Optimum.

1040 There would seem to be a jest here; “æquus” is not only *just* but *equal*, i.e., “on a par with” others—in *evil*, of course, as well as *good*.

Chapter XIV.—Gods, Those Which Were Confessedly Elevated to the Divine Condition, What Pre-Eminent Right Had They to Such Honour? Hercules an Inferior Character.

But since they will have it that those who have been admitted from the human state to the honours of deification should be kept separate from others, and that the distinction which Dionysius the Stoic drew should be made between the native and the factitious¹⁰⁴¹ gods, I will add a few words concerning this last class also. I will take Hercules himself for raising the gist of a reply¹⁰⁴² (to the question) whether he deserved heaven and divine honours? For, as men choose to have it, these honours are awarded to him for his merits. If it was for his valour in destroying wild beasts with intrepidity, what was there in that so very memorable? Do not criminals condemned to the games, though they are even consigned to the contest of the vile arena, despatch several of these animals at one time, and that with more earnest zeal? If it was for his world-wide travels, how often has the same thing been accomplished by the rich at their pleasant leisure, or by philosophers in their slave-like poverty?¹⁰⁴³ Is it forgotten that the cynic Asclepiades on a single sorry cow,¹⁰⁴⁴ riding on her back, and sometimes nourished at her udder, surveyed¹⁰⁴⁵ the whole world with a personal inspection? Even if Hercules visited the infernal regions, who does not know that the way to Hades is open to all? If you have deified him on account of his much carnage and many battles, a much greater number of victories was gained by the illustrious Pompey, the conqueror of the pirates who had not spared Ostia itself in their ravages; and (as to carnage), how many thousands, let me ask, were cooped up in one corner of the citadel¹⁰⁴⁶ of Carthage, and slain by Scipio? Wherefore Scipio has a better claim to be considered a fit candidate for deification¹⁰⁴⁷ than Hercules. You must be still more careful to add to the claims of (our) Hercules his debaucheries with concubines *and* wives, and the swathes¹⁰⁴⁸ of Omphale, and his base desertion of the Argonauts because he had lost his beautiful boy.¹⁰⁴⁹ To this mark of baseness add for his glorification likewise his attacks of madness, adore the arrows which slew his sons and wife. This was the man who, after deeming himself worthy of a funeral pile in the anguish of his remorse for his parricides,¹⁰⁵⁰ deserved rather to die the



1041 Inter natos et factos. See above, c. ii., p. 131.

1042 Summa responsionis.

1043 Famulatoria mendicitas.

1044 Vaccula.

1045 Subegisse oculis, "reduced to his own eyesight."

1046 Byrsæ.

1047 Magis obtinendus divinitati deputatur.

1048 Fascias.

1049 Hylas.

1050 Rather murders of children and other kindred.

unhonoured death which awaited him, arrayed in the poisoned robe which his wife sent him on account of his lascivious attachment (to another). You, however, raised him from the pyre to the sky, with the same facility with which (you have distinguished in like manner) another hero¹⁰⁵¹ also, who was destroyed by the violence of a fire from the gods. He having devised some few experiments, was said to have restored the dead to life by his cures. He was the son of Apollo, half human, although the grandson of Jupiter, and great-grandson of Saturn (or rather of spurious origin, because his parentage was uncertain, as Socrates of Argon has related; he was exposed also, and found in a worse tutelage than even Jove's, suckled even at the dugs of a dog); nobody can deny that he deserved the end which befell him when he perished by a stroke of lightning. In this transaction, however, your most excellent Jupiter is once more found in the wrong—impious to his grandson, envious of his artistic skill. Pindar, indeed, has not concealed his true desert; according to him, he was punished for his avarice and love of gain, influenced by which he would bring the living to their death, rather than the dead to life, by the perverted use of his medical art which he put up for sale.¹⁰⁵² It is said that his mother was killed by the same stroke, and it was only right that she, who had bestowed so dangerous a beast on the world,¹⁰⁵³ should escape to heaven by the same ladder. And yet the Athenians will not be at a loss how to sacrifice to gods of such a fashion, for they pay divine honours to Æsculapius and his mother amongst their dead (worthies). As if, too, they had not ready to hand¹⁰⁵⁴ their own Theseus to worship, so highly deserving a god's distinction! Well, why not? Did he not on a foreign shore abandon the preserver of his life,¹⁰⁵⁵ with the same indifference, nay heartlessness,¹⁰⁵⁶ with which he became the cause of his father's death?

1051 Æsculapius.

1052 Tertullian does not correctly quote Pindar (*Pyth.* iii. 54–59), who notices the skilful hero's love of reward, but certainly ascribes to him the merit of curing rather than killing: Ἀλλὰ κέρδει καὶ σοφία δέδεται ἔτραπεν καὶ κἀκεῖνον ἀγάνορι μισθῷ χρυσὸς ἐν χερσὶν φανεῖς ἀνδρὶ ἐκ θανάτου κομίσει ἤδη ἀλωκότα· χερσὶ δ' ἄρα Κρονίων ῥίψαις δι' ἄμφοῖν ἀμπνοῶν στέρνων καθέλεν ὠκέως, αἴθων δὲ κεραυνὸς ἐνέσκιμψεν μόρον—“Even wisdom has been bound by love of gain, and gold shining in the hand by a magnificent reward induced even him to restore from death a man already seized by it; and then the son of Saturn, hurling with his hands a bolt through both, speedily took away the breath of their breasts, and the flashing bolt inflicted death” (Dawson Turner).

1053 Tertullian does not follow the legend which is usually received. He wishes to see no good in the object of his hatred, and so takes the worst view, and certainly *improves* upon it. The “bestia” is out of reason. [He doubtless followed some copy now lost.]

1054 Quasi non et ipsi.

1055 Ariadne.

1056 Amentia.

Chapter XV.—The Constellations and the Genii Very Indifferent Gods. The Roman Monopoly of Gods Unsatisfactory. Other Nations Require Deities Quite as Much.

It would be tedious to take a survey of all those, too, whom you have buried amongst the constellations, and audaciously minister to as gods.¹⁰⁵⁷ I suppose your Castors, and Perseus, and Erigona,¹⁰⁵⁸ have just the same claims for the honours of the sky as Jupiter's own big boy¹⁰⁵⁹ had. But why should we wonder? You have transferred to heaven even dogs, and scorpions, and crabs. I postpone all remarks¹⁰⁶⁰ concerning those whom you worship in your oracles. That this worship exists, is attested by him who pronounces the oracle.¹⁰⁶¹ Why; you will have your gods to be spectators even of sadness,¹⁰⁶² as is Viduus, who makes a *widow* of the soul, by parting it from the body, and whom you have condemned, by not permitting him to be enclosed within your city-walls; there is Cæculus also, to deprive the eyes of their perception; and Orbana, to bereave seed of its vital power; moreover, there is the goddess of death herself. To pass hastily by all others,¹⁰⁶³ you account as gods the sites of places or of the city; such are Father Janus (there being, moreover, the archer-goddess¹⁰⁶⁴ Jana¹⁰⁶⁵), and Septimontius of the seven hills.

Men sacrifice¹⁰⁶⁶ to the same *Genii*, whilst they have altars or temples in the same places; but to others besides, when they dwell in a strange place, or live in rented houses.¹⁰⁶⁷ I say nothing about Ascensus, who gets his name for his *climbing* propensity, and Clivicola, from her sloping (haunts); I pass silently by the deities called Forculus from doors, and Cardea from hinges, and Limentinus the god of thresholds, and whatever others are worshipped by your neighbours as tutelar deities of their street doors.¹⁰⁶⁸ There is nothing strange in this, since men have their respective gods in their brothels, their kitchens, and even in their prison. Heaven, therefore, is crowded with innumerable gods of its own, both these and

1057 Deis ministratis.

1058 The constellation Virgo.

1059 Jovis exoletus, Ganymede, or *Aquarius*.

1060 He makes a similar postponement above, in c. vii., to *The Apology*, cc. xxii. xxiii.

1061 Divini.

1062 Et tristitiæ arbitros.

1063 Transvolem.

1064 Diva arquus.

1065 Perhaps another form of Diana.

1066 Faciunt = ῥίζουσι.

1067 This seems to be the meaning of an almost unintelligible sentence, which we subjoin: "Geniis eisdem illi faciunt qui in isdem locis aras vel ædes habent; præterea aliis qui in alieno loco aut mercedibus habitant." Oehler, who makes this text, supposes that in each clause the name of some god has dropped out.

1068 Numinum janitorum.

others belonging to the Romans, which have distributed amongst them the functions of one's whole life, in such a way that there is no want of the other¹⁰⁶⁹ gods. Although, it is true,¹⁰⁷⁰ the gods which we have enumerated are reckoned as Roman peculiarly, and as not easily recognised abroad; yet how do all those functions and circumstances, over which men have willed their gods to preside, come about,¹⁰⁷¹ in every part of the human race, and in every nation, where their guarantees¹⁰⁷² are not only without an official recognition, but even any recognition at all?

1069 Ceteris.

1070 Immo cum.

1071 Proveniunt.

1072 Prædes.

Chapter XVI.—Inventors of Useful Arts Unworthy of Deification. They Would Be the First to Acknowledge a Creator. The Arts Changeable from Time to Time, and Some Become Obsolete.

Well, but¹⁰⁷³ certain men have discovered fruits and sundry necessities of life, (and hence are worthy of deification).¹⁰⁷⁴ Now let me ask, when you call these persons “discoverers,” do you not confess that what they discovered was already in existence? Why then do you not prefer to honour the Author, from whom the gifts really come, instead of converting the Author into *mere* discoverers? Previously he who made the discover, the inventor himself no doubt expressed his gratitude to the Author; no doubt, too, he felt that He was God, to whom really belonged the religious service,¹⁰⁷⁵ as the Creator (of the gift), by whom also both he who discovered and that which was discovered were alike created. The green fig of Africa nobody at Rome had heard of when Cato introduced it to the Senate, in order that he might show how near was that province of the enemy¹⁰⁷⁶ whose subjugation he was constantly urging. The cherry was first made common in Italy by Cn. Pompey, who imported it from Pontus. I might possibly have thought the earliest introducers of apples amongst the Romans deserving of the public honour¹⁰⁷⁷ of deification. This, however, would be as foolish a ground for making gods as even the invention of the useful arts. And yet if the skilful men¹⁰⁷⁸ of our own time be compared with these, how much more suitable would deification be to the later generation than to the former! For, tell me, have not all the extant inventions superseded antiquity,¹⁰⁷⁹ whilst daily experience goes on adding to the new stock? Those, therefore, whom you regard as divine because of their arts, you are really injuring by your very arts, and challenging (their divinity) by means of rival attainments, which cannot be surpassed.¹⁰⁸⁰

1073 Sedenim.

1074 We insert this clause at Oehler’s suggestion.

1075 Ministerium.

1076 The incident, which was closely connected with the third Punic war, is described pleasantly by Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xv. 20.

1077 Præconium.

1078 Artifices.

1079 “Antiquitas” is here opposed to “novitas,” and therefore means “the arts of old times.”

1080 In æmulis. “In,” in our author, often marks the instrument.

Chapter XVII.¹⁰⁸¹—Conclusion, the Romans Owe Not Their Imperial Power to Their Gods. The Great God Alone Dispenses Kingdoms, He is the God of the Christians.

In conclusion, without denying all those whom antiquity willed *and* posterity has believed to be gods, to be the guardians of your religion, there yet remains for our consideration that very large assumption of the Roman superstitions which we have to meet in opposition to you, O heathen, viz. that the Romans have become the lords and masters of the whole world, because by their religious offices they have merited this dominion to such an extent that they are within a very little of excelling even their own gods in power. One cannot wonder that Sterculus, and Mutunus, and Larentina, have severally¹⁰⁸² advanced this empire to its height! The Roman people has been by its gods alone ordained to such dominion. For I could not imagine that any foreign *gods* would have preferred doing more for a strange nation than for their own people, and so by such conduct become the deserters and neglecters, nay, the betrayers of the native land wherein they were born and bred, and ennobled and buried. Thus not even Jupiter could suffer his own Crete to be subdued by the Roman fasces, forgetting that cave of Ida, and the brazen cymbals of the Corybantes, and the most pleasant odour of *the goat* which nursed him on that *dear* spot. Would he not have made that tomb of his superior to the whole Capitol, so that that land should most widely rule which covered the ashes of Jupiter? Would Juno, *too*, be willing that the Punic city, for the love of which she even neglected Samos, should be destroyed, and that, too, by the fires of the sons of Æneas? Although I am well aware that

“Hic illius arma,
Hic currus fuit, hoc regnum des gentibus esse,
Si qua fata sinant, jam tunc tenditque fovetque.”¹⁰⁸³

“Here were her arms, her chariot here,
Here goddess-like, to fix one day
The seat of universal sway,
Might fate be wrung to yield assent,
E’en then her schemes, her cares were bent.”¹⁰⁸⁴

Still the unhappy (queen of gods) had no power against the fates! And yet the Romans did not accord as much honour to the fates, although they gave them Carthage, as they did to Larentina. But surely those gods of yours have not the power of conferring empire. For when Jupiter reigned in Crete, and Saturn in Italy, and Isis in Egypt, it was even as men that they reigned, to whom also were assigned many to assist them.¹⁰⁸⁵ Thus he who serves also

1081 Compare *The Apology*, xxv. xxvi., pp. 39, 40.

1082 The verb is in the *singular* number.

1083 *Æneid*, i. 16–20.

1084 Conington.

1085 Operati plerique.

makes masters, and the bond-slave¹⁰⁸⁶ of Admetus¹⁰⁸⁷ aggrandizes with empire the citizens of Rome, although he destroyed his own liberal votary Cræsus by deceiving him with ambiguous oracles.¹⁰⁸⁸ Being a god, why was he afraid boldly to foretell to him the truth that he must lose his kingdom. Surely those who were aggrandized with the power of wielding empire might always have been able to keep an eye, as it were,¹⁰⁸⁹ on their own cities. If they were strong enough to confer empire on the Romans, why did not Minerva defend Athens from Xerxes? Or why did not Apollo rescue Delphi out of the hand of Pyrrhus? They who lost their own cities preserve the city of Rome, since (forsooth) the religiousness¹⁰⁹⁰ of Rome has merited the protection! But is it not rather the fact that this excessive devotion¹⁰⁹¹ has been devised since the empire has attained its glory by the increase of its power? No doubt sacred rites were introduced by Numa, but then your proceedings were not marred by a religion of idols and temples. Piety was simple,¹⁰⁹² and worship humble; altars were artlessly reared,¹⁰⁹³ and the vessels (thereof) plain, and the incense from them scant, and the god himself nowhere. Men therefore were not religious before they achieved greatness, (nor great) because they were religious. But how can the Romans possibly seem to have acquired their empire by an excessive religiousness and very profound respect for the gods, when that empire was rather increased after the gods had been slighted?¹⁰⁹⁴ Now, if I am not mistaken, every kingdom or empire is acquired and enlarged by wars, whilst they and their gods also are injured by conquerors. For the same ruin affects both city-walls and temples; similar is the carnage both of civilians and of priests; identical the plunder of profane things and of sacred. To the Romans belong as many sacrileges as trophies; and then as many triumphs over gods as over nations. Still remaining are their captive idols amongst them; and certainly, if they can only see their conquerors, they do not give them their love. Since, however, they have no perception, they are injured with impunity; and since they are injured with impunity, they are worshipped to no purpose. The nation, therefore, which has grown to its powerful height by victory after victory, cannot seem to have developed owing to the merits of its religion—whether they have injured the religion by augmenting their power, or augmented their power by injuring the religion. All nations have possessed

1086 Dediticius.

1087 Apollo; comp. *The Apology*, c. xiv., p. 30.

1088 See Herodot. i. 50.

1089 Veluti tueri.

1090 Religiositas.

1091 Superstitio.

1092 Frugi.

1093 Temeraria.

1094 Læsis.

empire, each in its proper time, as the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Egyptians; empire is even now also in the possession of some, and yet they that have lost their power used not to behave¹⁰⁹⁵ without attention to religious services and the worship of the gods, even after these had become unpropitious to them,¹⁰⁹⁶ until at last almost universal dominion has accrued to the Romans. It is the fortune of the times that has thus constantly shaken kingdoms with revolution.¹⁰⁹⁷ Inquire who has ordained these changes in the times. It is the same (great Being) who dispenses kingdoms,¹⁰⁹⁸ and has now put the supremacy of them into the hands of the Romans, very much as if¹⁰⁹⁹ the tribute of many nations were after its exaction amassed in one (vast) coffer. What He has determined concerning it, they know who are the nearest to Him.¹¹⁰⁰



1095 Morabantur. We have taken this word as if from “mores” (character). Tertullian often uses the participle “moratus” in this sense.

1096 Et depropitiorum.

1097 Volutavit.

1098 Compare *The Apology*, c. xxvi.

1099 We have treated this “tanquam” and its clause as something more than a mere simile. It is, in fact, an integral element of the supremacy which the entire sentence describes as conferred on the Romans by the Almighty.

1100 That is, *the Christians*, who are well aware of God’s purposes as declared in prophecy. St. Paul tells the Thessalonians what the order of the great events subsequent to the Roman power was to be: the destruction of that power was to be followed by the development and reign of Antichrist; and then the end of the world would come.

Apology (Excerpt)

Chapter XXIX.

Let it be made clear, then, first of all, if those to whom sacrifice is offered are really able to protect either emperor or anybody else, and so adjudge us guilty of treason, if angels and demons, spirits of most wicked nature, do any good, if the lost save, if the condemned give liberty, if the dead (I refer to what you know well enough) defend the living. For surely the first thing they would look to would be the protection of their statues, and images, and temples, which rather owe their safety, I think, to the watch kept by Cæsar's guards. Nay, I think the very materials of which these are made come from Cæsar's mines, and there is not a temple but depends on Cæsar's will. Yes, and many gods have felt the displeasure of the Cæsar. It makes for my argument if they are also partakers of his favour, when he bestows on them some gift or privilege. How shall they who are thus in Cæsar's power, who belong entirely to him, have Cæsar's protection in their hands, so that you can imagine them able to give to Cæsar what they more readily get from him? This, then, is the ground on which we are charged with treason against the imperial majesty, to wit, that we do not put the emperors under their own possessions; that we do not offer a mere mock service on their behalf, as not believing their safety rests in leaden hands. But you are impious in a high degree who look for it where it is not, who seek it from those who have it not to give, passing by Him who has it entirely in His power. Besides this, you persecute those who know where to seek for it, and who, knowing where to seek for it, are able as well to secure it.



Chapter XXX.

For we offer prayer for the safety of our princes to the eternal, the true, the living God, whose favour, beyond all others, they must themselves desire. They know from whom they have obtained their power; they know, as they are men, from whom they have received life itself; they are convinced that He is God alone, on whose power alone they are entirely dependent, to whom they are second, after whom they occupy the highest places, before and above all the gods. Why not, since they are above all living men, and the living, as living, are superior to the dead? They reflect upon the extent of their power, and so they come to understand the highest; they acknowledge that they have all their might from Him against whom their might is nought. Let the emperor make war on heaven; let him lead heaven captive in his triumph; let him put guards on heaven; let him impose taxes on heaven! He cannot. Just because he is less than heaven, he is great. For he himself is His to whom heaven and every creature appertains. He gets his sceptre where he first got his humanity; his power where he got the breath of life. Thither we lift our eyes, with hands outstretched, because free from sin; with head uncovered, for we have nothing whereof to be ashamed; finally, without a monitor, because it is from the heart we supplicate. Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Cæsar, an emperor would wish. These things I cannot ask from any but the God from whom I know I shall obtain them, both because He alone bestows them and because I have claims upon Him for their gift, as being a servant of His, rendering homage to Him alone, persecuted for His doctrine, offering to Him, at His own requirement, that costly and noble sacrifice of prayer¹¹⁷ despatched from the chaste body, an unstained soul, a sanctified spirit, not the few grains of incense a farthing buys¹¹⁸—tears of an Arabian tree,—not a few drops of wine,—not the blood of some worthless ox to which death is a relief, and, in addition to other offensive things, a polluted conscience, so that one wonders, when your victims are examined by these vile priests, why the examination is not rather of the sacrificers than the sacrifices. With our hands thus stretched out and up to God, rend us with your iron claws, hang us up on crosses, wrap us in flames, take our heads from us with the sword, let loose the wild beasts on us,—the very attitude of a Christian praying is one of preparation for all punishment.¹¹⁹ Let this, good rulers, be your work:

117 [Heb. x. 22.](#) [See cap. xlii. *infra*. p. 49.]

118 [Once more this reflection on the use of material incense, which is common to early Christians, as in former volumes noted.]

119 [A reference to kneeling, which see the *de Corona* cap. 3, *infra*. Christians are represented as standing at prayer, in the delineations of the Catacombs. But, see Nicene Canon, xx.]

wring from us the soul, beseeching God on the emperor's behalf. Upon the truth of God, and devotion to His name, put the brand of crime.

Chapter XXXI.

But we merely, you say, flatter the emperor, and feign these prayers of ours to escape persecution. Thank you for your mistake, for you give us the opportunity of proving our allegations. Do you, then, who think that we care nothing for the welfare of Cæsar, look into God's revelations, examine our sacred books, which we do not keep in hiding, and which many accidents put into the hands of those who are not of us. Learn from them that a large benevolence is enjoined upon us, even so far as to supplicate God for our enemies, and to beseech blessings on our persecutors.¹²⁰ Who, then, are greater enemies and persecutors of Christians, than the very parties with treason against whom we are charged? Nay, even in terms, and most clearly, the Scripture says, "Pray for kings, and rulers, and powers, that all may be peace with you."¹²¹ For when there is disturbance in the empire, if the commotion is felt by its other members, surely we too, though we are not thought to be given to disorder, are to be found in some place or other which the calamity affects.

120 [Matt. v. 44.](#)

121 [1 Tim. ii. 2.](#)

Chapter XXXII.

There is also another and a greater necessity for our offering prayer in behalf of the emperors, nay, for the complete stability of the empire, and for Roman interests in general. For we know that a mighty shock impending over the whole earth—in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes—is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman empire.¹²² We have no desire, then, to be overtaken by these dire events; and in praying that their coming may be delayed, we are lending our aid to Rome's duration. More than this, though we decline to swear by the genii of the Cæsars, we swear by their safety, which is worth far more than all your genii. Are you ignorant that these genii are called "Dæmones," and thence the diminutive name "Dæmonia" is applied to them? We respect in the emperors the ordinance of God, who has set them over the nations. We know that there is that in them which God has willed; and to what God has willed we desire all safety, and we count an oath by it a great oath. But as for demons, that is, your genii, we have been in the habit of exorcising them, not of swearing by them, and thereby conferring on them divine honour.



122 [Cap. xxxix. *infra*. And see Kaye, pp. 20, 348. A subject of which more hereafter.]

Chapter XXXIII.

But why dwell longer on the reverence and sacred respect of Christians to the emperor, whom we cannot but look up to as called by our Lord to his office? So that on valid grounds I might say Cæsar is more ours than yours, for our God has appointed him. Therefore, as having this propriety in him, I do more than you for his welfare, not merely because I ask it of Him who can give it, or because I ask it as one who deserves to get it, but also because, in keeping the majesty of Cæsar within due limits, and putting it under the Most High, and making it less than divine, I commend him the more to the favour of Deity, to whom I make him alone inferior. But I place him in subjection to one I regard as more glorious than himself. Never will I call the emperor God, and that either because it is not in me to be guilty of falsehood; or that I dare not turn him into ridicule; or that not even himself will desire to have that high name applied to him. If he is but a man, it is his interest as man to give God His higher place. Let him think it enough to bear the name of emperor. That, too, is a great name of God's giving. To call him God, is to rob him of his title. If he is not a man, emperor he cannot be. Even when, amid the honours of a triumph, he sits on that lofty chariot, he is reminded that he is only human. A voice at his back keeps whispering in his ear, "Look behind thee; remember thou art but a man." And it only adds to his exultation, that he shines with a glory so surpassing as to require an admonitory reference to his condition.¹²³ It adds to his greatness that he needs such a reminiscence, lest he should think himself divine.

123 [A familiar story of Alexander is alluded to.]

Chapter XXXIV.

Augustus, the founder of the empire, would not even have the title Lord; for that, too, is a name of Deity. For my part, I am willing to give the emperor this designation, but in the common acceptation of the word, and when I am not forced to call him Lord as in God's place. But my relation to him is one of freedom; for I have but one true Lord, the God omnipotent and eternal, who is Lord of the emperor as well. How can he, who is truly father of his country, be its lord? The name of piety is more grateful than the name of power; so the heads of families are called fathers rather than lords. Far less should the emperor have the name of God. We can only profess our belief that he is that by the most unworthy, nay, a fatal flattery; it is just as if, having an emperor, you call another by the name, in which case will you not give great and unappeasable offence to him who actually reigns?—an offence he, too, needs to fear on whom you have bestowed the title. Give all reverence to God, if you wish Him to be propitious to the emperor. Give up all worship of, and belief in, any other being as divine. Cease also to give the sacred name to him who has need of God himself. If such adulation is not ashamed of its lie, in addressing a man as divine, let it have some dread at least of the evil omen which it bears. It is the invocation of a curse, to give Cæsar the name of god before his apotheosis.

Chapter XXXV.

This is the reason, then, why Christians are counted public enemies: that they pay no vain, nor false, nor foolish honours to the emperor; that, as men believing in the true religion, they prefer to celebrate their festal days with a good conscience, instead of with the common wantonness. It is, forsooth, a notable homage to bring fires and couches out before the public, to have feasting from street to street, to turn the city into one great tavern, to make mud with wine, to run in troops to acts of violence, to deeds of shamelessness to lust allurements! What! is public joy manifested by public disgrace? Do things unseemly at other times beseem the festal days of princes? Do they who observe the rules of virtue out of reverence for Cæsar, for his sake turn aside from them? Shall piety be a license to immoral deeds, and shall religion be regarded as affording the occasion for all riotous extravagance? Poor we, worthy of all condemnation! For why do we keep the votive days and high rejoicings in honour of the Cæsars with chastity, sobriety, and virtue? Why, on the day of gladness, do we neither cover our door-posts with laurels, nor intrude upon the day with lamps? It is a proper thing, at the call of a public festivity, to dress your house up like some new brothel.¹²⁴ However, in the matter of this homage to a lesser majesty, in reference to which we are accused of a lower sacrilege, because we do not celebrate along with you the holidays of the Cæsars in a manner forbidden alike by modesty, decency, and purity,—in truth they have been established rather as affording opportunities for licentiousness than from any worthy motive;—in this matter I am anxious to point out how faithful and true *you* are, lest perchance here also those who will not have us counted Romans, but enemies of Rome's chief rulers, be found themselves worse than we wicked Christians! I appeal to the inhabitants of Rome themselves, to the native population of the seven hills: does that Roman vernacular of theirs ever spare a Cæsar? The Tiber and the wild beasts' schools bear witness. Say now if nature had covered our hearts with a transparent substance through which the light could pass, whose hearts, all graven over, would not betray the scene of another and another Cæsar presiding at the distribution of a largess? And this at the very time they are shouting, "May Jupiter take years from us, and with them lengthen like to you,"—words as foreign to the lips of a Christian as it is out of keeping with his character to desire a change of emperor. But this is the rabble, you say; yet, as the rabble, they still are Romans, and none more frequently than they demand the death of Christians.¹²⁵ Of course, then, the other classes, as befits their higher rank, are religiously faithful. No breath of treason is there ever in the senate, in the equestrian order, in the camp, in the palace. Whence, then, came a Cassius, a Niger, an Albinus? Whence they who beset the Cæsar¹²⁶ between the two laurel groves?



124 [Note this reference to a shameless custom of the heathen in Rome and elsewhere.]

125 [See cap. l. and Note on cap. xl. *infra*.]

126 Commodus.

Whence they who practised wrestling, that they might acquire skill to strangle him? Whence they who in full armour broke into the palace,¹²⁷ more audacious than all your Tigerii and Parthenii.¹²⁸ If I mistake not, they were Romans; that is, they were not Christians. Yet all of them, on the very eve of their traitorous outbreak, offered sacrifices for the safety of the emperor, and swore by his genius, one thing in profession, and another in the heart; and no doubt they were in the habit of calling Christians enemies of the state. Yes, and persons who are now daily brought to light as confederates or approvers of these crimes and treasons, the still remnant gleanings after a vintage of traitors, with what verdant and branching laurels they clad their door-posts, with what lofty and brilliant lamps they smoked their porches, with what most exquisite and gaudy couches they divided the Forum among themselves; not that they might celebrate public rejoicings, but that they might get a foretaste of their own votive seasons in partaking of the festivities of another, and inaugurate the model and image of their hope, changing in their minds the emperor's name. The same homage is paid, dutifully too, by those who consult astrologers, and soothsayers, and augurs, and magicians, about the life of the Cæsars,—arts which, as made known by the angels who sinned, and forbidden by God, Christians do not even make use of in their own affairs. But who has any occasion to inquire about the life of the emperor, if he have not some wish or thought against it, or some hopes and expectations after it? For consultations of this sort have not the same motive in the case of friends as in the case of sovereigns. The anxiety of a kinsman is something very different from that of a subject.

127 To murder Pertinax.

128 Tigerius and Parthenius were among the murderers of Commodus.

Chapter XXXVI.

If it is the fact that men bearing the name of Romans are found to be enemies of Rome, why are we, on the ground that we are regarded as enemies, denied the name of Romans? We may be at once Romans and foes of Rome, when men passing for Romans are discovered to be enemies of their country. So the affection, and fealty, and reverence, due to the emperors do not consist in such tokens of homage as these, which even hostility may be zealous in performing, chiefly as a cloak to its purposes; but in those ways which Deity as certainly enjoins on us, as they are held to be necessary in the case of all men as well as emperors. Deeds of true heart-goodness are not due by us to emperors alone. We never do good with respect of persons; for in our own interest we conduct ourselves as those who take no payment either of praise or premium from man, but from God, who both requires and remunerates an impartial benevolence.¹²⁹ We are the same to emperors as to our ordinary neighbors. For we are equally forbidden to wish ill, to do ill, to speak ill, to think ill of all men. The thing we must not do to an emperor, we must not do to any one else: what we would not do to anybody, a *fortiori*, perhaps we should not do to him whom God has been pleased so highly to exalt.



129 [Cap. ix. p. 25, note 1 *supra*. Again, Christian democracy, “honouring all men.”]

Chapter XXXVII.

If we are enjoined, then, to love our enemies, as I have remarked above, whom have we to hate? If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate, lest we become as bad ourselves: who can suffer injury at our hands? In regard to this, recall your own experiences. How often you inflict gross cruelties on Christians, partly because it is your own inclination, and partly in obedience to the laws! How often, too, the hostile mob, paying no regard to you, takes the law into its own hand, and assails us with stones and flames! With the very frenzy of the Bacchanals, they do not even spare the Christian dead, but tear them, now sadly changed, no longer entire, from the rest of the tomb, from the asylum we might say of death, cutting them in pieces, rending them asunder. Yet, banded together as we are, ever so ready to sacrifice our lives, what single case of revenge for injury are you able to point to, though, if it were held right among us to repay evil by evil, a single night with a torch or two could achieve an ample vengeance? But away with the idea of a sect divine avenging itself by human fires, or shrinking from the sufferings in which it is tried. If we desired, indeed, to act the part of open enemies, not merely of secret avengers, would there be any lacking in strength, whether of numbers or resources? The Moors, the Marcomanni, the Parthians themselves, or any single people, however great, inhabiting a distinct territory, and confined within its own boundaries, surpasses, forsooth, in numbers, one spread over all the world! We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum,—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods. For what wars should we not be fit, not eager, even with unequal forces, we who so willingly yield ourselves to the sword, if in our religion it were not counted better to be slain than to slay? Without arms even, and raising no insurrectionary banner, but simply in enmity to you, we could carry on the contest with you by an ill-willed severance alone. For if such multitudes of men were to break away from you, and betake themselves to some remote corner of the world, why, the very loss of so many citizens, whatever sort they were, would cover the empire with shame; nay, in the very forsaking, vengeance would be inflicted. Why, you would be horror-struck at the solitude in which you would find yourselves, at such an all-prevailing silence, and that stupor as of a dead world. You would have to seek subjects to govern. You would have more enemies than citizens remaining. For now it is the immense number of Christians which makes your enemies so few,—almost all the inhabitants of your various cities being followers of Christ.¹³⁰ Yet you choose to call us enemies of the human race, rather than of human error. Nay, who would deliver you from those secret foes, ever busy both destroying your souls and ruining your health? Who would save you, I mean, from the attacks of those spirits of evil, which without reward or hire we exorcise? This alone would be revenge enough for us, that you

were henceforth left free to the possession of unclean spirits. But instead of taking into account what is due to us for the important protection we afford you, and though we are not merely no trouble to you, but in fact necessary to your well-being, you prefer to hold us enemies, as indeed we are, yet not of man, but rather of his error.

Chapter XXXVIII.

Ought not Christians, therefore, to receive not merely a somewhat milder treatment, but to have a place among the law-tolerated societies, seeing they are not chargeable with any such crimes as are commonly dreaded from societies of the illicit class? For, unless I mistake the matter, the prevention of such associations is based on a prudential regard to public order, that the state may not be divided into parties, which would naturally lead to disturbance in the electoral assemblies, the councils, the curiæ, the special conventions, even in the public shows by the hostile collisions of rival parties; especially when now, in pursuit of gain, men have begun to consider their violence an article to be bought and sold. But as those in whom all ardour in the pursuit of glory and honour is dead, we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings; nor is there aught more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state. We acknowledge one all-embracing commonwealth—the world. We renounce all your spectacles, as strongly as we renounce the matters originating them, which we know were conceived of superstition, when we give up the very things which are the basis of their representations. Among us nothing is ever said, or seen, or heard, which has anything in common with the madness of the circus, the immodesty of the theatre, the atrocities of the arena, the useless exercises of the wrestling-ground. Why do you take offence at us because we differ from you in regard to your pleasures? If we will not partake of your enjoyments, the loss is ours, if there be loss in the case, not yours. We reject what pleases you. You, on the other hand, have no taste for what is our delight. The Epicureans were allowed by you to decide for themselves one true source of pleasure—I mean equanimity; the Christian, on his part, has many such enjoyments—what harm in that?



Chapter XXXIX.

I shall at once go on, then, to exhibit the peculiarities of the Christian society, that, as I have refuted the evil charged against it, I may point out its positive good.¹³¹ We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation.¹³² We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful.¹³³ However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more stedfast; and no less by inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits. In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. For with a great gravity is the work of judging carried on among us, as befits those who feel assured that they are in the sight of God; and you have the most notable example of judgment to come when any one has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation and in all sacred intercourse. The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honour not by purchase, but by established character. There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day,¹³⁴ if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, piety's deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. *See, they say, how they love one*¹³⁵ *another*, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death. And they are wroth with us, too, because we call each other brethren;

131 [Elucidation VII.]

132 [Chap. xxxii. *supra* p. 43.]

133 [An argument for Days of Public Thanksgiving, Fasting and the like.]

134 [On ordinary Sundays, "they laid by in store," apparently: once a month they offered.]

135 [A precious testimony, though the caviller asserts that afterwards the heathen used this expression derisively.]

for no other reason, as I think, than because among themselves names of consanguinity are assumed in mere pretence of affection. But we are your brethren as well, by the law of our common mother nature, though you are hardly men, because brothers so unkind. At the same time, how much more fittingly they are called and counted brothers who have been led to the knowledge of God as their common Father, who have drunk in one spirit of holiness, who from the same womb of a common ignorance have agonized into the same light of truth! But on this very account, perhaps, we are regarded as having less claim to be held true brothers, that no tragedy makes a noise about our brotherhood, or that the family possessions, which generally destroy brotherhood among you, create fraternal bonds among us. One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives. We give up our community where it is practised alone by others, who not only take possession of the wives of their friends, but most tolerantly also accommodate their friends with theirs, following the example, I believe, of those wise men of ancient times, the Greek Socrates and the Roman Cato, who shared with their friends the wives whom they had married, it seems for the sake of progeny both to themselves and to others; whether in this acting against their partners' wishes, I am not able to say. Why should they have any care over their chastity, when their husbands so readily bestowed it away? O noble example of Attic wisdom, of Roman gravity—the philosopher and the censor playing pimps! What wonder if that great love of Christians towards one another is desecrated by you! For you abuse also our humble feasts, on the ground that they are extravagant as well as infamously wicked. To us, it seems, applies the saying of Diogenes: “The people of Megara feast as though they were going to die on the morrow; they build as though they were never to die!” But one sees more readily the mote in another's eye than the beam in his own. Why, the very air is soured with the eructations of so many tribes, and *curiæ*, and *decuriæ*. The Salii cannot have their feast without going into debt; you must get the accountants to tell you what the tenths of Hercules and the sacrificial banquets cost; the choicest cook is appointed for the Apaturia, the Dionysia, the Attic mysteries; the smoke from the banquet of Serapis will call out the firemen. Yet about the modest supper-room of the Christians alone a great ado is made. Our feast explains itself by its name. The Greeks call it *agapè*, i.e., affection. Whatever it costs, our outlay in the name of piety is gain, since with the good things of the feast we benefit the needy; not as it is with you, do parasites aspire to the glory of satisfying their licentious propensities, selling themselves for a belly-feast to all disgraceful treatment,—but as it is with God himself, a peculiar respect is shown to the lowly. If the object of our feast be good, in the light of that consider its further regulations. As it is an act of religious service, it permits no vileness or immodesty. The participants, before reclining, taste first of prayer to God. As much is eaten as satisfies the cravings of hunger; as much is drunk as befits the chaste. They say it is enough, as those who remember that even during the night they have to worship God; they



talk as those who know that the Lord is one of their auditors. After manual ablution, and the bringing in of lights, each¹³⁶ is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy Scriptures or one of his own composing,—a proof of the measure of our drinking. As the feast commenced with prayer, so with prayer it is closed. We go from it, not like troops of mischief-doers, nor bands of vagabonds, nor to break out into licentious acts, but to have as much care of our modesty and chastity as if we had been at a school of virtue rather than a banquet. Give the congregation of the Christians its due, and hold it unlawful, if it is like assemblies of the illicit sort: by all means let it be condemned, if any complaint can be validly laid against it, such as lies against secret factions. But who has ever suffered harm from our assemblies? We are in our congregations just what we are when separated from each other; we are as a community what we are individuals; we injure nobody, we trouble nobody. When the upright, when the virtuous meet together, when the pious, when the pure assemble in congregation, you ought not to call that a faction, but a *curia*—[i.e., the court of God.] _____

136 [Or, perhaps—“One is prompted to stand forth and bring to God, as every one can, whether from the Holy Scriptures, or of his own mind”—i.e. according to his taste.]

Chapter XL.

On the contrary, *they* deserve the name of faction who conspire to bring odium on good men and virtuous, who cry out against innocent blood, offering as the justification of their enmity the baseless plea, that they think the Christians the cause of every public disaster, of every affliction with which the people are visited. If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is famine or pestilence, straightway the cry¹³⁷ is, “Away with the Christians to the lion!” What! shall you give such multitudes to a single beast? Pray, tell me how many calamities befell the world and particular cities before Tiberius reigned—before the coming, that is, of Christ? We read of the islands of Hiera, and Anaphe, and Delos, and Rhodes, and Cos, with many thousands of human beings, having been swallowed up. Plato informs us that a region larger than Asia or Africa was seized by the Atlantic Ocean. An earthquake, too, drank up the Corinthian sea; and the force of the waves cut off a part of Lucania, whence it obtained the name of Sicily. These things surely could not have taken place without the inhabitants suffering by them. But where—I do not say were Christians, those despisers of your gods—but where were your gods themselves in those days, when the flood poured its destroying waters over all the world, or, as Plato thought, merely the level portion of it? For that they are of later date than that calamity, the very cities in which they were born and died, nay, which they founded, bear ample testimony; for the cities could have no existence at this day unless as belonging to postdiluvian times. Palestine had not yet received from Egypt its Jewish swarm (of emigrants), nor had the race from which Christians sprung yet settled down there, when its neighbors Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire from heaven. The country yet smells of that conflagration; and if there are apples there upon the trees, it is only a promise to the eye they give—you but touch them, and they turn to ashes. Nor had Tuscia and Campania to complain of Christians in the days when fire from heaven overwhelmed Vulsinii, and Pompeii was destroyed by fire from its own mountain. No one yet worshipped the true God at Rome, when Hannibal at Cannæ counted the Roman slain by the pecks of Roman rings. Your gods were all objects of adoration, universally acknowledged, when the Senones closely besieged the very Capitol. And it is in keeping with all this, that if adversity has at any time befallen cities, the temples and the walls have equally shared in the disaster, so that it is clear to demonstration the thing was not the doing of the gods, seeing it also overtook themselves. The truth is, the human race has always deserved ill at God’s hand. First of all, as undutiful to Him, because when it knew Him in part, it not only did not seek after Him, but even invented other gods of its own to worship; and further, because, as the result of their willing ignorance of the Teacher of righteousness, the Judge and Avenger of sin, all vices and crimes grew and



137 [Christianos ad leonem. From what class, chiefly, see cap. xxxv. *supra*. Elucidation VIII.]

flourished. But had men sought, they would have come to know the glorious object of their seeking; and knowledge would have produced obedience, and obedience would have found a gracious instead of an angry God. They ought then to see that the very same God is angry with them now as in ancient times, before Christians were so much as spoken of. It was *His* blessings they enjoyed—created before they made any of their deities: and why can they not take it in, that their evils come from the Being whose goodness they have failed to recognize? They suffer at the hands of Him to whom they have been ungrateful. And, for all that is said, if we compare the calamities of former times, they fall on us more lightly now, since God gave Christians to the world; for from that time virtue put some restraint on the world's wickedness, and men began to pray for the averting of God's wrath. In a word, when the summer clouds give no rain, and the season is matter of anxiety, you indeed—full of feasting day by day, and ever eager for the banquet, baths and taverns and brothels always busy—offer up to Jupiter your rain-sacrifices; you enjoin on the people barefoot processions; you seek heaven at the Capitol; you look up to the temple-ceilings for the longed-for clouds—God and heaven not in all your thoughts. We, dried up with fastings, and our passions bound tightly up, holding back as long as possible from all the ordinary enjoyments of life, rolling in sackcloth and ashes, assail heaven with our importunities—touch God's heart—and when we have extorted divine compassion, why, Jupiter gets all the honour!