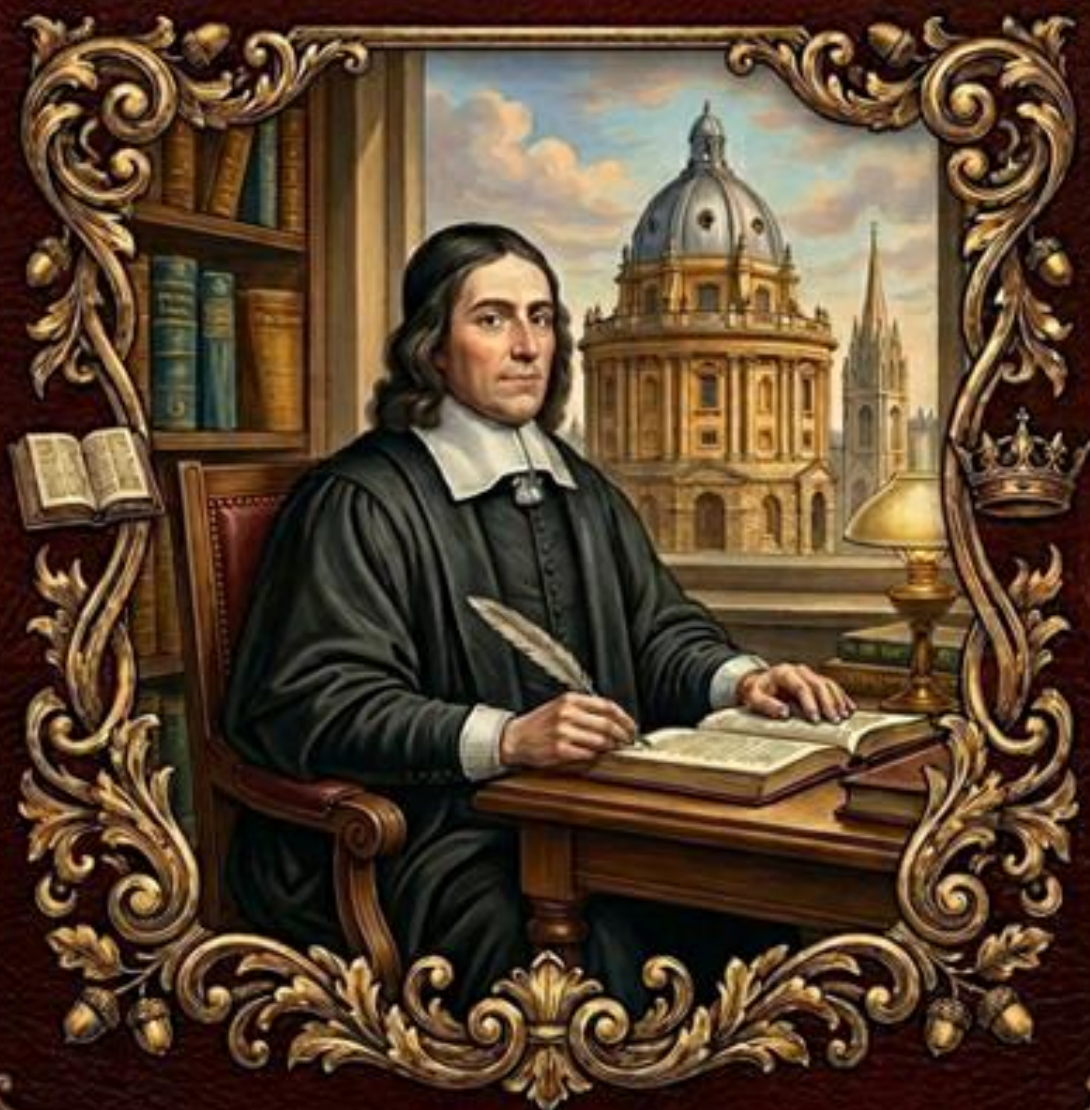


THE NATURE OF TRUE THEOLOGY

Volume 3: The Corruption of Natural Theology



JOHN OWEN



MONERGISM

THE NATURE OF TRUE THEOLOGY

VOLUME 3: THE CORRUPTION OF NATURAL THEOLOGY

JOHN OWEN

Monergism Books

The following work was fully transcribed verbatim by Claude. It was then thoroughly checked during the editing process to ensure accurate transcription throughout. Even so, please notify us if anything is found to be amiss, and we will work to remedy it as soon as possible.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

W elcome to the third volume of *The Nature of True Theology*, which completes Book 1. The subtitle is *The Corruption of Natural Theology*, as it offers an analysis of the apostate nature of pagan and popish theology. For this volume, we used Claude to generate the initial translation, and we also employed Copilot to double-check some things. This volume is longer than the previous two, being *c.* 32,000 words long. Most Hebrew and Greek words are translated in square brackets, except in cases where John Owen provided his own translation. In some cases, we included both Claude's translation (in square brackets) and Owen's translation of the original languages.

PART THREE: ON THE TOTAL
CORRUPTION OF NATURAL THEOLOGY,
WHEREBY IT BECAME APOSTATE

CHAPTER VII

The ἀνωφελεια [unprofitableness] of natural theology in the state of sin — The media of its total corruption — The fatal superstition substituted in its place — What kind of knowledge of God survived among the nations destitute of the word — The corruption of theology by philosophy — The origin of philosophy — The two parts of natural theology — The first corrupted utterly through metaphysics and ethics — The origin, abuse, use, and restoration of ethics; and likewise of metaphysics — Then of astronomy and natural philosophy — Natural theology corrupted through them.

I. Since such has been the condition of natural theology vitiated by sin, considered in itself, that no spiritual good could ever have been expected from it, let us see further in what manner it was further corrupted by the cunning of the devil and the vanity of the human mind — intending to treat next of the *new theology*, and of those whom God by its force enrolled as his peculiar people. And here indeed we have resolved to dispatch only the main heads of things, consigning the investigation of the origin and

progress of idolatry elsewhere. That corrupt natural theology — lost for the most part among the majority of mortals — and in its place a pernicious superstition substituted from the most ancient records of things and the memory of men, all know. By what road and by what media that fatal and catholic metamorphosis was introduced into the world of nations, we shall now briefly narrate.

II. That some knowledge of God prevailed among the nations destitute of the light of the divine word, flowing from that twofold fountain of which we have spoken — namely, the internal natural light and that revelation of him made through the works of God — we have shown and proved. That the event corresponded to these principles, from the testimonies of learned men among them gathered from every quarter of their writings, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Theophilus of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Theodoret, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, Augustine, and among the ancients others, have long since been made publicly known. Thomas, Eugubinus, Raymond of Sebonde, Lodovicus Vives, Mornaeus, Charonius, Fotherby, Vossius, Stuckius, Giraldus Ferrariensis, Grotius, and writers of every kind in later ages, have done the same. The works of Orpheus, Homer, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Hesiod, Plutarch, Epictetus, Arrian, Cicero, Seneca, Photinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Philostratus, and others, which still survive, prove the same thing with great clarity. The monuments and histories of all ages, of all nations and peoples, agree. For let us grant that τοὺς πολλοὺς [the many] were always so hemmed in by the veil of ignorance and darkness that they never so much as thought of the supreme divine power, or of the obedience owed to it according to right reason; and let it be granted that οἱ χαρίεντες [the refined] were so empty of divine

things as to hold them in contempt — yet σοφῶν [the wise] and θεωρητικῶν [contemplative thinkers], in whom somewhat greater care for investigating the natures of things and promoting κοινὰς ἐννοίας [common notions] had taken root, stand on a different footing. That they set forth many things concerning God and his worship, the obedience owed to him, and the ultimate end and happiness of men, and did so admirably and with eloquence, while the first effort of labouring nature still endured — is well known. How, therefore, we may see, and by what media, this theology was utterly corrupted, until it ended in that dreadful and total apostasy from God which is the Lernaean swamp of monstrous idolatry and most impure vanities — this appears to have flowed from a twofold source. For men abandoned to themselves and their own ways either endeavoured to advance the relics of natural theology, and by that endeavour, from native blindness, corrupted them the more; or they deliberately undertook to corrupt them further. That both endeavours succeeded perniciously enough is evident from the outcome. The first, however, was the more noble and worthier of creatures endowed with reason. Of it, therefore, we shall treat in the first place.

III. We have proved that sinful men destitute of all supernatural revelation still retain the natural power of knowing God, which asserts itself spontaneously in adults. We have also before ascribed to them a general knowledge distinguishing the honourable from the base in relation to God and his governance and decreeing judgment, of which, without the destruction of the practical intellect, they could not be wholly deprived. But from the perpetual restlessness and fluctuation of conscience, by which they were burdened and which those κοινὰς ἐννοίας [common notions] produced, they easily perceived that this knowledge or theology was not

sufficient for them to attain their ultimate end. And so, furnished with the benefit of the revelation of the eternal power and divinity of God through the works of creation and providence — which we have shown was also left to them — they strove with the greatest force to advance those innate principles. That they, for the most part, did so without knowing what they were doing is evident from the outcome. Furnished with the means of the operations of the intellect, they set about, as it were, by groping, to try what could be produced from them. And this is the origin of philosophy. Philosophy, I say, is the offspring and, as it were, the shoot of those relics of that theology which the first man had as innate in the state of integral nature, amplified by the aforesaid revelation through the works of God. To seek God by groping — “who is not far from every one of us” — to scrutinize those testimonies to which in his works “he did not leave himself without witness,” and to ponder with the mind the natures of all things through which “the invisible things” of God are perceived — a knowledge of all which the first man possessed in full as necessary to the worship of God the Creator — this at last is to philosophise. It was the σοφοί [wise men] of the earlier ages who attempted in this manner to elucidate and advance those principles mentioned above, so that the minds of men might rise thereby to the origin and primaeval state of those principles.

IV. It is certain that philosophy had no other origin and no other end. The Greeks, as if they had been the first to cultivate it, have always boasted most magnificently of themselves — and quite absurdly without doubt. Diogenes Laërtius in the preface to his work, chiding those who dared to say τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἔργον ἀπὸ βαρβάρων ἄρξαι “that the work of philosophy took its beginning from the barbarians”: Λανθάνουσι, he says, αὐτοὺς τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων κατορθώματα, ἀφ' ὧν μὴ ὅτιγε φιλοσοφία, ἀλλὰ

καὶ γένος ἀνθρώπων ἤρξε, βαρβάροις προσάπτοντες — that is, “These men by their imprudence apply the right achievements of the Greeks to the barbarians; for from the Greeks not only philosophy but the very human race itself first flowed forth.” Equally without doubt.

V. Tatian, Clement, Theophilus, Eusebius, and others prove the contrary more clearly than light. Indeed, the manifest traces of theft are still extant. For from the Chaldaeans, Egyptians, Indians, Magi, Syrians, and Jews, they borrowed everything they had. But it cannot be denied that the ancient Greeks greatly advanced the study of a philosophy devised by others. What they had received by report, what they had pilfered from the records of the Orientals, what they had learned from living teachers on long journeys undertaken to that end, and what they had themselves observed — with nature as their guide and companion — concerning the κοινὰς ἐννοίας [common notions] about God and his works, and concerning the honourable and the base: all of these very many among them, first by the living voice under the title of wisdom, and then in writings bearing the name of philosophy, laboured to put to work among them. But I know not what Iliad of evils attended the endeavour of these men from its very cradle. For the philosophers themselves, who wished to be so called, were for the most part scoundrels of notorious lewdness — especially so servilely and openly greedy for vainglory and so ostentatious that they were themselves a byword and a mockery to the common people.

VI. “They ceased to be upright as soon as they turned out to be learned,” says Seneca. And by Timon they are all said, to a man:

Κενεῖς οἰήσεως ἔμπλεοι ἄσκοί [Wineskins full of empty conceit].

And Euripides:

Μισῶ σοφιστὴν ὅστις οὐδ' αὐτῷ σοφός [I hate a sophist who is not wise even for himself].

— *Frag. inc. exi.*

For scarcely one out of many ever gave any single specimen of true wisdom in human life. With these agrees that line of the comic poet Anaxippus in *Athenaeus*:

Οἷμοι φιλοσοφεῖς; ἀλλὰ τοὺς τε φιλοσόφους
Ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φρονοῦντας εὐρίσκω μόνον·
Ἐν τοῖς δ' ἔργοις ὄντας ἀνοήτους ὁρῶ.

[Alas, do you philosophise?

But I find that philosophers are wise only in words;
in deeds, I see them to be men of no understanding.]

VII. Absurdly, therefore, and arrogantly and contemptuously toward God, does Epictetus boast about these slaves of κενοδοξίας [vainglory], ch. 15: καφ' οὗ Φιλοσόφου, he says, στάσις καὶ χαρακτήρ πάντων ὠφέλειαν καὶ βλάβην ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ προσδοκᾶν — that is, “The station and expressed character of a philosopher is to expect all benefit and damage from himself.” He would evidently have every philosopher be a god. Even the Brahmins among the Indians openly boasted that they were gods. For when Apollonius asked what opinion they had of themselves, their chief, Iarchas, replied “that they considered themselves to be gods.” But in vain. For in what place and esteem they ought to be and to be held, the Indian king Amithocrates judged more rightly, who, as Athenaeus testifies, *Deipnosophistae*, Bk. XIV, requested by letter from King Antiochus to send him sweet wine, dried figs, and a sophist, all purchased with his own money.

VIII. It is a shame to relate what the same Athenaeus records concerning Plato himself, Bk. XI — let them expect everything from themselves, if they wish, while others expect nothing from them. But whatever they were, it is evident from the outcome that they either lost or corrupted the true use and end of the common notions concerning God, the true and the honourable. That it ever entered their minds to use these as a rule and guide for human life with respect to the obedience owed to God and his natural worship, or as media for obtaining the blessed condition in the very enjoyment of God, does not appear. Hence, from that obscure and thin knowledge or reputation of the immortal state which they retained, no efficacy, or only the slightest, flowed into the ordering of life according to right reason. These, therefore, were those through whom all the relics of natural wisdom were converted into an empty sophistical learning. The attempt of certain Platonists, after the preaching of the Christian religion, to restore philosophy to its former place, is another matter, as we shall see later.

IX. Philosophy, therefore, had ἀπ' ἀρχῆς [from the beginning] no other aim than the restoration of primordial theology which had collapsed and been lost through the entrance of sin, and no other end. And the human race undertook by this road to repair theology.

X. Now that primordial theology had two parts, as was shown above. The natural knowledge of God and of his will concerning the obedience and worship owed to him in that state of things, and the knowledge of the works of God directing and stimulating theologians to rightly worship the supreme Creator of all — these two completed it.

XI. Since, therefore, philosophy, in the ruins of theology, erected itself toward the same ends which that theology had proposed to itself, it was

either striving to render a vicarious service to sinful men, or it accomplished nothing at all. For the θεωρητικοί [speculative thinkers] who first sweated in its erection and refinement thought it their business first of all to foster, elicit, and arouse the common notions and προλήψεις [preconceptions] concerning God and his will, together with the innate dictate concerning the discrepant reasons of good and evil, so that, guided by these, they might, if possible, enjoy God.

XII. That the first endeavour of those who philosophised among the nations destitute of divine revelations was of this kind, and was destined for that end of which we have spoken, appears not only from the nature of the thing itself but from all the traces of their institution and purpose that meet us everywhere. That whole ancient wisdom which Pythagoras and others investigated through Egypt and the Eastern parts of the world consisted in the account of religions to be instituted and in the ceremonies of divine worship. Hence, they were held forth as the promoters of the priesthood. Thus, when Telesinus asked what his wisdom or philosophy was, Apollonius, the follower of ancient wisdom, answered in Philostratus, Bk. IV, ch. 13: Θειασμός, καὶ ὡς ἂν τις εὐχόιτο καὶ θύοι — “That which comes from divine inspiration and teaches in what manner it is fitting to pray to the gods and to sacrifice to them.” It was after the new corruption of philosophy — of which we shall speak presently — that Greece first brought forth philosophers who were not priests. I confess that all this philosophy savoured of idolatrous superstition; yet it retained certain obscure images and traces of truth.

XIII. The event, therefore, did not correspond to this excellent endeavour. Natural theology was not restored by its force and auspices — indeed, it was more corrupted. Whatever philosophy survives anywhere, drawn from

the most ancient records, testifies to this. For the native vanity of the human mind variously led the natural light — or what remained of it — astray in the investigation of truth; until, plunged into the Syrtes and swamps of empty curiosities, infinite wranglings, and useless speculations, it was almost extinguished.

XIV. For after it pleased certain men of acute intellect and subtle genius, setting aside all consideration of the primary end of this whole philosophy, to bind universal knowledge of things — and the account of the obedience owed to the divine power — artificially to certain methods of teaching, and to compress them into the fetters, shackles, and manacles of certain sciences or rather τεχνῶν [technical arts], and to burden them with the chains of empty notions, subtle terms, and arbitrary meanings — the art in short diverting nature away from its primitive institution — this knowledge gradually degenerated into a certain ethics, or systematic doctrine of virtues and vices, and into metaphysics; of which a brief treatment is necessary.

XV. Since moreover both these doctrines — both ethics, which Cicero calls the part of philosophy pertaining to manners, and metaphysics, which by some is called natural theology (though it presents a far more shadowy image of it than ethics) — formed according to the norm of Aristotle's doctrine, have so far obtained dominion over the judgments of learned men everywhere that they have not only occupied a conspicuous place in Christian schools for several ages now, but have also thoroughly intermixed themselves with that theology which is publicly taught in them — they must be received by me not otherwise than courteously and almost with ῥήμασι βυσσίνοις [silken words]. For I would not wish to irritate the bees of learned men, or to rouse against myself fiery and endless disputants — long since have I been weary of all controversies, and I greatly fear lest I should

fall in with those who have their intellect so ready to hand that they can at any hour, on any subject whatever, bring out fifty or a hundred arguments (most of them frivolous), and are almost entirely transformed into syllogisms. And it is an irritable race. But nothing, as far as I know, prevents me from thinking it free to me to set out briefly what I myself think about those arts and the place they occupy in the schools. First, therefore, I shall subject ethics to examination, then metaphysics.

XVI. Ethics is the science of morals. It was once a part of natural theology — namely, that part which prescribed the account of living to God according to the norm of the law of creation, and the manner and rule of discharging duties toward oneself and others. That the relics of this knowledge clung to the human mind after the entrance of sin has been shown. To rouse, bring forward, and elucidate by reasoning, and to distribute into various classes, those relics — this was the labour and work of the philosophers in ethics. Aristotle — the supreme and admirable craftsman in compressing general notions into a systematic body — having brought them forward, collected, and (such was his dexterity of intellect) enlarged them on his own account, reduced them into a disciplinary science. But since both he himself and others who preceded him in that work were utterly ignorant of the true God and of the observance owed to him, they displaced the whole account of the discriminating faculty between the honourable and the base — which consisted in the relics of natural theology — and twisted it toward a completely different end from that for which it was originally instituted by God. For which of the philosophers ever undertook to treat or teach the doctrine of virtue and vice, the base and the honourable, to that end, that it should be the norm of living to God, or the medium by which men might at last enjoy him in blessed condition forever?

Indeed, that the knowledge of virtue and moral duties should be in the same place, esteem, and degree — having the same end in theology as it held in the state of integral nature — was both impossible, and God himself denied it by the pact of the new covenant. Since, therefore, this doctrine of morals, or ethics, which Aristotle cultivated, appears at last to have been received into the church as it were by right of return, let us see briefly in what place it is to be held, or what use or end we can assign to it.

XVII. First: that the end for which this doctrine — which in the state of integral nature was ἐνδιάθετος [internal] — was appointed was none other than to be the directing principle of the minds of men in the worship and obedience owed to God, so that, walking before him according to the law of creation, they might at last live with him in blessedness — this we have proved above. If anyone is willing to acknowledge that man was made for the glory of God and is capable of moral dependence upon him, he will not, I think, deny that this was the end of the knowledge of right and wrong. But which of the philosophers can we suspect ever to have had this in mind? Nay, which Christian either ought or has dared to teach ethics to this end? For would not this be to bring miserable sinners again under the dominion of the covenant of nature, where it is necessary for them to perish eternally? And therefore:

XVIII. Second: let us grant that those who either learn or teach Aristotelian ethics do not aim at that end; tell me then what is that other end at which they have their eyes fixed? The end of moral science can be nothing other than practice. But the end of the practice of moral duties is nothing other than the glory of God and our own enjoyment of him. Let that therefore be the end of ethics — what then follows? Nothing other than that we wretched little men are by its help and benefit brought again under the

law of creation, as was said above. But we are far mistaken; another end will be given — namely, that furnished with this doctrine, we may rightly and profitably spend our political life here in the midst of the human race. Is that so? But who has that authority to pervert, at his own command, a doctrine which God instituted for one end, to another end? Furthermore, this is not another end either; for one ought not to live piously, soberly, and profitably among men except in order to obey God thereby and live to him. As, therefore, it has departed from theology and is preparing its return into the church, this ethics pertains to the covenant of works.

XIX. Third: but then what need is there at last for this, whether theology or philosophy? No Christian will deny that true, solid, sincere knowledge of virtue, vices, the base and the honourable, and all moral duties is revealed and transmitted more plainly and fully in the holy Scriptures than is contained in all the writings of all the philosophers, or in their archetype — namely, the relics of the ἐνδιάθετου [internal] theology. I mean the things themselves; for the ἀκρίθεια [precision] of notions and the comprehension of the harmonies of terms by which knowledge of things is transmitted τεχνικῶς [technically] hold no place with me — unless the place of the greatest impediments to true wisdom. It is possible to see almost daily innumerable persons who, though they know by heart, as it were, all the definitions, divisions, distinctions, terms, and notions by which some science is transmitted, and indeed the whole system of the doctrine, so that they never triumph more earnestly than when it comes to disputations — are yet truly ignorant of the things themselves and most learnedly stupid. Learned indeed in the manner in which Philostratus narrates that Euxenus, the teacher of Apollonius, was instructed in Pythagorean philosophy: Τὰς, he says, Πυθαγόρου δόξας ἐγίνωσκεν, ὥσπερ οἱ ὄρνιθες μανθάνουσι παρὰ

τῶν ἀνθρώπων· τὸ γὰρ χαῖρε, καὶ τὸ εὖ πράττε, καὶ Ζεὺς ἴλεως, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα οἱ ὄρνια εὔχονται οὔτε εἰδότες ὃ τι λέγουσιν, οὔτε διακεείμενοι πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ ἐρῥυθμισμένοι τὴν γλῶτταν — “He knew the opinions of Pythagoras as birds sometimes learn to speak human words from men; for birds utter ‘hail,’ and ‘fare well,’ and ‘Jupiter be propitious,’ and such things — neither knowing what they say, nor speaking with any proper bearing toward men, but merely having their tongue trained to a measured rhythm.” Nor do the majority of men appear to know differently from the discipline of the sciences. Nowhere does this vanity of the human mind appear more than when it is engaged in this moral science. The unjust, the rapacious, the drunken, the angry, the cowardly — all are or can be imbued with this science; for it is not virtue but the shadow of virtue; not duties but the mask of moral duties that fills both its pages. I dare to say that not one true virtue is truly and certainly taught in all the Aristotelian books addressed to Nicomachus; nor will anyone ever turn out just, good, or truly σπουδαῖος [serious] from their teaching — only a masked hypocrite.

XX. Fourth: I will therefore say what the matter is. The whole doctrine of duties, of virtue, of the observance of right reason, God has placed in another place and in another order under the covenant of grace than that in which it was disposed under the law of nature. But those natural notions from which ethics was born and emerged have regard only to that first order — now abolished — which was narrated above. There is now no virtue except that which is graciously granted to believers by the force of the new covenant. No moral act is good and profitable to the agent unless it proceeds from a new principle, or spiritual habit, graciously infused into the heart. And the reason is that God has constituted all moral duties — of whatever kind — and all abstinence from vices, as a part of the obedience

which he exacts under the new covenant. Nor are the virtues to be seriously taught otherwise (schooling is a game) if we wish to be Christians. That anyone should be instructed in the knowledge of virtue in general without simultaneously being instructed in the knowledge of supernatural grace and of its respect toward Christ the mediator; or that anyone should be urged toward the eliciting of acts of virtue without simultaneously being taught whence the strength for performing them is to be expected — this I judge to be plainly impious. Moral duties are to be performed; the acts of virtue are to be exercised; it is necessary that we be just, sober, temperate, and courageous — but not otherwise than under the aspect of the obedience which God demands of us in the covenant of grace. The nature of virtue is to be taught, all moral duties are to be explained, their practice is to be steadily urged, the knowledge of sin and the hatred of vices is to be earnestly inculcated — but that all these things should have regard to Christ the mediator, the Holy Spirit, the covenant of grace, and should be the obedience owed to God, is in no way to be omitted. But it would be absurd for anyone to introduce the mention of these or similar things in expounding that moral doctrine which now prevails in the schools. What darkness, what fluctuation, what uncertainty, what confusion of things and notions, doctrine so different concerning the same subject and the same things can and is accustomed to generate in the minds of men — anyone is at liberty to conjecture.

XXI. Fifth: furthermore, the doctrine of this moral philosophy — especially that which by the genius and method of its author now most widely prevails everywhere — is in many things false and corrupt, uncertain, entirely useless, and indeed pernicious. For:

(1) It encloses the end of virtue within the limits of this earthly life, which is nothing other than to destroy the whole nature of virtue and to uproot virtue itself, and to bind all its students with the horror and despair of that great Brutus who cried out: ὦ τλήμων ἀρετή, ὥς σὺ μηδὲν ἄλλο εἶ πλὴν ὄνομα! [O wretched virtue, thou art nothing but a name!]

(2) It teaches that the sufficiency of moral powers for all that exercise of virtue which is necessary for obtaining its proper end resides with all men — an opinion which contains an open denial of the whole gospel.

(3) It teaches man to trust in himself and to expect all blessedness from himself, which is also the sum of Epictetan wisdom, and the highest contempt of God.

(4) It asserts that virtue is a certain mean between extremes, than which nothing more absurd can be devised.

(5) It proposes or acknowledges no certain, stable, universal rule of virtue: what pleases the majority, what pleases the wise, what most appeals to those who divine at random — that is virtue.

(6) It discharges moral duties without any respect to grace, the justice, and the providence of God.

(7) It denies that friendship between God and man is possible.

(8) It knows nothing of eternal reward and punishment.

XXII. But I am unwilling to plunge myself into the middle of the controversies of learned men; I will only add: if this moral philosophy seems to learned and good men still to be retained in its place — which for my own part I cannot but wish to see expelled beyond the bounds of the church — I most earnestly desire that two evils in particular be diligently met: one, lest the minds of youth be pre-occupied with prejudices against the purity and simplicity, and indeed against all the mystery of the gospel

— how this can be the case when they are delivered over into the form of this doctrine, I plainly do not know; the other, lest the principles on which it rests should gradually creep into the theology of the schools — unless these things are judged to have been said too late.

XXIII. And I indeed favour the endeavours of those who have tried to forge new hypotheses in this moral science. For it must be acknowledged that they gave those enslaved to peripatetic philosophy an occasion of inquiring further into the natures of these matters. Whether they attained truth itself, let the judgment be with others. Nor, because of the obscure use of one or two little words in Aristotle, are those immediately to be said to embrace an opinion more accessible to human understanding, who repudiate it. A certain learned man, in a book which he published on duties, contended that the end of moral philosophy is for a man to occupy himself in tranquillity and joy of soul, without the stings of conscience. But we know — and that learned man knows — that a state of mind of this kind cannot in any way be obtained by the performance of whatever duties. For we are sinners, and cannot become partakers of any true tranquillity or joy except through the blood of Christ. Since the entrance of sin, no other road to peace or tranquillity has been laid out. Furthermore, in order to obtain this end, the same learned man commands each person diligently to observe the laws and principles of his own nature. But that this medium is by no means sufficient for attaining that end, all Christians know; we contend with the learned man that there is some law of nature. But since human nature itself has been so corrupted and vitiated by sin that it is capable neither of understanding its own vice nor of correcting it, we are under the necessity of denying that the law which prevails only in that nature is suited to the use that is pretended.

XXIV. There are very few things which it pleases me to add separately concerning metaphysics. Everything we said about the origin and corruption of ethics is common to it also; there is no need to repeat those things. But I judge this science to be plainly useless — indeed harmful — in human life. For remove first those things which properly and necessarily pertain on the one hand to logic, and those which pertain to theology on the other, what remains will be nothing but a laborious and useless heap of terms, notions, words, and abstractions which will never render any man better, more learned, wiser, or more fitted for his duty toward God and others. Let those who appear most exercised in it consult the archives of their own breasts, and say sincerely whether by its help and benefit anything of piety, probity, wisdom, prudence, or any true doctrine ever accrued to them. What need is there any longer to fix a cross upon those wretched little men who daily cry out that life is short and art is long — by this thorny collection of useless and perplexed notions, which they should commit to oblivion as quickly as possible if they wish to be wise?

XXV. Furthermore, the mixture of this science with supernatural theology — the contemplation of which once led Scotus to exclaim that at last “the theologians had mixed philosophy with theology to the greatest advantage” — nearly brought ruin to evangelical truth. The things of the Spirit would not bear the fetters and chains of metaphysical notions and terms; the freedom and breadth of that spiritual understanding which God freely gives us for rightly understanding the mystery of the gospel also perishes, when it is ensnared in the toils of this worldly wisdom (for such it is, if indeed it ought to be called wisdom). The noble, sublime, spiritual, heavenly, and divinely-flavoured evangelical truth — constrained by the rules of this science and transmitted in the words it teaches — is rendered sterile, dry,

thorny, jejune, meagre, and philosophical, and is cast down from its heavenly beauty and spiritual sweetness. The mystery of the gospel and that doctrine which is according to godliness has within itself something higher, greater, more divine than ought to be confined within the barriers of human wisdom. If, therefore, I wished to keep theological controversies alive and perpetual, and to draw the souls of men away from the simplicity of the gospel, I would not hesitate to commend this cause of wranglings, its material and instrument, to students. What Prudentius once sang in his *Apotheosis* about certain ancient philosophers, fits no less well the innumerable theologians puffed up with this vain wisdom:

“They assail the estate of almighty God with
calumnious strifes.

They divide faith with minute circumlocutions,
each one as he is more wicked in tongue:

They loose and bind the bonds of questions
through pliant syllogisms.”

XXVI. But we must return to our road. We have the origin, progress, and abuse of ethics and metaphysics. Contemplative men among the nations did indeed set themselves to use the relics of that ἐνδιαθέτου [internal] theology for its primordial end, and accordingly to rouse, ventilate, and advance them. From this flowed all the doctrine of the nations concerning vices and virtues, and the contemplations concerning the nature and perfections of God. Men learned sophistical acuity — forgetful of the origin, end, and scope of those contemplations — produced those arts which we cultivate under those names; and these are in themselves certain masks of wisdom, but mixed with supernatural theology, they are pernicious.

XXVII. Furthermore: since the works of God make manifest his τὸ γνωστόν [what can be known of him], sinners — carefully and accurately scrutinising their natures — sought, by groping, to find the Lord and Creator of all. And this was the second part of natural theology. Human ingenuity, labouring under its native vice, attempted to cultivate this also. To seek God himself from the works of God — both of creation and of providence — that was the inner impulse which continually pressed upon them. But the matter came to the same result. For the vanity of mind from which they universally suffered became stronger in natural philosophy and astronomy, that endeavour also gradually evaporated learnedly.

XXVIII. This, I say, was the origin of astronomy, and of that vanity which is called astrology. The contemplation and knowledge of the beauty, order, and courses of the heavens, of the stars, and of all celestial bodies was a part of natural theology. From it, all men ought to have learned the greatness, infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator, and so have been stirred to his natural worship. After the entrance of sin and the catholic apostasy of the human race from the true God, that contemplation gradually fell everywhere into disuse, and the knowledge arising from it vanished. For the majority, being wise only in earthly things, had cast off all care for those things which were above them. Others were allured by the cunning of Satan into the worship of the stars; indeed, the stolid and gross contemplation of the order, course, and beauty of the heavens which strike the external senses was, to those who had cast off the knowledge and discipline of the living God, an incitement to idolatry — as we shall prove at length later. Thus, at last, among many, heaven itself was the first, if not the only, God. And the very name Θεός [God] seems to have been derived from no other source than ἀπὸ τοῦ θεῖν [from running], taken from the course of the stars.

Among those pursuing these extremes, there arose at last certain speculative men who gave themselves to the contemplation of the celestial bodies for wholly different ends. For they had no mind either to follow them with religious worship or to seek the living God from the knowledge of them and to obey him; they appear to have taken upon themselves the care of satisfying the innate desire of knowing the causes and natures of things. For when they observed that celestial bodies presented themselves to the eyes with a certain incredible variety and change of appearing things, they investigated what order they observed among themselves and what were the hidden causes and reasons of those τῶν φαινομένων [of the phenomena/appearances]. From the observations and conjectures of such men, with the application of certain invented terms of arbitrary meaning to explain them (for most of what it rests upon are inventions), which they attempted to apply to the things themselves in some fashion, arose that art which we call astronomy — “gold,” as it were, “was cast into the fire, and this calf came forth.” In the contemplation of the heavens, of the stars, of all celestial bodies, in the investigation of their nature, order, course, influence, and the law implanted in them by the Creator of all — I judge the effort to be most well employed. For the bare and common sight of those things which immediately strike the eyes of all strikes the minds of men immediately with a certain silent admiration of the infinite wisdom and power of God. Far more efficacious is that contemplation which is joined with serious meditation and careful investigation. And it were to be wished that the knowledge of the celestial bodies and of the perennial law by which they are set in motion — insofar as anything certain can be known from it — were more widely communicated than is now the case. Nevertheless, adhering to our proposed undertaking, there are some things which I must

add, without, as I hope, giving offence to anyone — I will say them briefly. As it is now taught, and has for several ages now obtained the right of a science among the learned, astronomy has lost its place, its order, and almost all its utility. With natural theology removed with respect to the end of true theology, how, I ask, could astronomy maintain its place? Which was a part of that theology, if we are men created for the glory of God? Either, therefore, it is restored through Christ (in whom all things are to be renewed) to another place under the new covenant, or it is to be utterly discarded. Nay, that the whole ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία [encyclopedia] of sciences, directed to a new end by new media, ought to be subordinated to the glory of God in Christ — he does not deserve to be called a Christian who will gainsay this. But what that restoration of the science or knowledge of natural things, or of the works of creation, for the use of men sincerely worshipping God in Christ, is and ought to be; and what place all knowledge holds in supernatural or revelational theology — especially this expertise in the stars and their courses — is a longer story than I have the leisure to narrate, or perhaps the adequacy to expound.

XXIX. In this manner, therefore, the human race — in a vain endeavour certainly — strove to restore that primordial theology of which we treated above, and in the very act of restoring it, destroyed it. This was the rational creature's effort to extricate itself from the curse of ignorance and blindness hanging over it on account of sin, by which it accomplished nothing other than to entangle itself more miserably. For since we are renewed in the image of God only in Christ, and that theology was an illustrious part of that image, it is evident that without that renewal all endeavour to restore it is altogether vain. Hence it came about that those who, being strangers to that renewal, or ignorant of the place which philosophy ought to occupy

within it, yet undertook to refine and teach it — twisting it from its proper end and use — scarcely advanced further than to fix a cross upon themselves and others with a collection of thorny and useless questions and disputations. And so from this first endeavour, natural theology appears not so much to have been further corrupted as to have been lost. Its total corruption, therefore, and how it ended in paganism, is to be further investigated. But here, let us see what sinners have done in deliberate wrongdoing.

CHAPTER VIII

*O*n traditions: their origin, use, and corruption — The attempt and success of the poets in corrupting natural theology — The dreadful ruin of the human race through ignorance of the true God — Κρόνος [Kronos], Χρόνος [Chronos], and Noah — The origin of Ἀνθρωποθυσίας [of human sacrifice] — On lawgivers — The πολιτική [civil] theology — Philosophers — The φυσική [natural] theology — On superstition — The contempt of all religions among the wise — The total destruction of the Gentiles' theology.

I. I have set out in what manner philosophy played its part in corrupting natural theology, or rather was itself corrupted. There were also other causes of the total ἀποστασίας [apostasy] from all true knowledge of God. It has seemed worthwhile to narrate them briefly here, though they properly pertain to the corruption of religious worship — of which more is to be said in the investigation of the origin of idolatry. And here the human race defected deliberately from natural theology. For whatever help God indulged to sinners for obtaining the knowledge of himself, of the right and

the true, all of it, the blindness of the human heart twisted to its own destruction.

II. It is established that the knowledge which the most ancient mortals had of God was augmented and increased by traditions of those revelations which some had received from God through their parents. For since the age which ended in the flood was one during whose first half the common parent and teacher of all was present, no one can doubt that from Noah and his sons no small familiarity with divine things, and knowledge of God, flowed down to their grandchildren and those born from them. How far the efficacy of that knowledge extended while the traditions flowed uncontaminated from their source is not the place here to inquire.

III. It is certain that knowledge of many things pertaining to religion flowed into the human race from ancient times through traditions. But that the knowledge of ancient things pertaining to sacred matters was exceedingly obscure and uncertain among the nations, the wise men themselves have confessed. So Virgil:

“Unfold now, O goddesses of Helicon, and begin the song.
For ye remember, O divine ones, and ye have power to recall;
To us scarcely the thin breath of report glides across.”

— *Aeneid*, Bk. VII, 641, 645, 646.

IV. Yet we shall see that they had some. Whether all those things excellently said among the ancient philosophers about divine matters were entirely drawn from the writings of the Jews, I for my part greatly doubt, as Scaliger did. Eusebius indeed contends that all knowledge of divine things among the Greeks flowed from the Hebrews. Julius Scaliger writes in his *Exercitationes*, lxi, that Plato also scraped together many things from Phoenician theology which he himself did not understand — correctly or

not I do not know. That they retained certain things by the force of catholic tradition — things whose fame had invaded the world from the very first beginnings of things — cannot be unknown to anyone who has so much as greeted their writings at the threshold. Let us briefly review a few by way of specimen. Very many acknowledged the creator of all things, without adducing any reasons to confirm this as credible.

Ἦν ποτέ τοι χρόνος οὗτος ἐν ᾧ ἅμα πάντ' ἐπεφύκει [There was once a time when all things grew together at once]

— ascribed to Linus, the most ancient composer of poems among the Greeks. The same origin of things is celebrated by all the poets without exception. What Ovid wrote at the beginning of his work, boys know. Horace concurs, *Satires*, III, Bk. I, 99-104:

“When animals first crept forth upon the primal earth,
A mute and ugly herd, they fought for acorns and their lairs
With nails and fists, then clubs, and so in time
With weapons which their use had fashioned;
Until they found the words by which to mark
Their voices and their meanings and their names.”

(With which Diodorus Siculus, *History*, Bk. I, has genuine parallels), describing in his own manner the origin of the human race. And Juvenal, *Satire* VI, 11-13:

“For then, when the world was new and heaven still young,
Men lived who were born from broken oak,
Or fashioned from the clay, and had no parents.”

And his σύγχρονος [contemporary] Papinius, *Thebaid*, Bk. IV, 275-281:

“Arcadians of old, older than stars and moon,
Ye give your faithful bands; fame says ye were sprung

From the stiff stock of the groves, when earth first marvelled
To bear the first footprints; not yet were fields or homes or cities,
Nor limit set to marriage. Oaks and laurels
Bore crude births, and shadowy ash created peoples,
And the green boy dropped from the teeming mountain-ash.”

V. Concerning the Brahmins, Strabo, *Geography*, Bk. XV: Περὶ πολλῶν δὲ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὁμοδοξεῖν· ὅτι γὰρ γενητὸς ὁ κόσμος, καὶ φθαρτός, λέγειν κάκείνους· ὅτι διοικῶν αὐτὸν, καὶ ποιῶν θεὸς δι' ὅλου διαπεφοίτηκεν αὐτοῦ — “That they agree with the Greeks on many things, as that the world had a beginning and will perish, and that God, its maker and governor, pervades the whole of it.” That author is the authority that both Greeks and barbarians agree in this — that the world was created by God — from the most ancient tradition. Aristotle doubts, *Topics* 19, *On the Heavens* I, 10 — but almost alone. That Hesiod, Orpheus, Apollonius, Aristophanes, Pliny, Diodorus Siculus, Numenius, Anaxagoras, and Megasthenes gave credence to the same tradition would be easy to show. There is no question about Plato. That Thales, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Democritus, Empedocles, Metrodorus, and Anaximander held that the world had some beginning is shown by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Bk. I, ch. 7. I pass over the traditions concerning particular things — Noah, the flood, Abraham — of which Philo Byblius, Lucian, Strabo, and others make mention. Together with the creation of the world, the report of a judgment to be exercised upon men after this life obtained universal currency. The presumption of the immortality of souls also accompanied this persuasion, which, although it also rests on reason, yet since it always prevailed most of all among the common people rather than σοφοῦς [the wise], is to be ascribed only to tradition. Thales of Miletus

defined the soul as φύσιν ἀεὶ κίνητον ἢ αὐτοκίνητον [a nature always in motion or self-moving]. And concerning him Diogenes says: “Ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν πρῶτον εἶπεῖν ἀθανάτους τὰς ψυχὰς [Some say that he was the first to speak of the immortality of souls] — that is, he was the first to treat philosophically of the ἀθανασία [immortality] of the soul. The consensus of most attributes that honour to Pherecydes. “One,” says Metrodorus, Bk., ch. 2, “of those things which the Druids teach leaks out to the common people — namely, that souls are eternal.” And concerning the same people, Caesar, *Gallic War*, Bk. VI, 14: “They wish above all to persuade men that souls do not perish.” And Valerius, Bk. II, ch. 6, 10: “There comes to mind that ancient custom of the Gauls — who, it has been handed down by memory, were accustomed to lend money to be repaid to them in the underworld, because they were persuaded that the souls of men are immortal.” Concerning Plato, no house is better known than his own — the *Phaedo* is witness.

VI. The same persuasion holds even the most barbarous nations. Throughout all America, there was scarcely anyone before the arrival of Europeans on those shores who doubted it. Some also received the report of ἀναστάσεως [resurrection]. Θεόπομπος καὶ ἀναβιώσεσθαι κατὰ τοὺς μάγους φησὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἔσεσθαι ἀθανάτους, says Diogenes Laërtius in his preface “Theopompus also says that according to the Magi men will revive and be immortal.” The great Plato agrees in the *Phaedo*, ch. 17: Ἄλλ' ἔστι καὶ τῷ ὄντι καὶ τὸ ἀναβιώσκεσθαι, καὶ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων τοὺς ζῶντας γίγνεσθαι, καὶ τὰς τῶν τεθνεώτων ψυχὰς εἶναι· καὶ ταῖς μὲν ἀγαθαῖς ἄμεινον εἶναι, ταῖς κακαῖς κάκιον — that is, “And that men do revive, and that the living come from the dead, and that the souls of the dead survive, and that it is better for the good and worse for the wicked.”

VII. And these things, as we said, they believed, expecting that some judgment would be exercised upon men according to what they had done in this mortal life, whether worthy or unworthy of right reason. Hence the same Plato, *Epistle VII*: Πείθεσθαι δὲ ὄντως ἀεὶ χρή τοῖς παλαιοῖς τε καὶ ἱεροῖς λόγοις, οἱ δὲ μηνύουσιν ἡμῖν ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν εἶναι, δικαστάς τε ἴσχειν καὶ τινῶν [τίνειν] τὰς μεγίστας τιμωρίας, ὅταν τις ἀπαλλαχθῇ τοῦ σώματος — that is, “But faith must always be given to ancient and sacred traditions, which declare that our soul is immortal and has judges by whose decrees the greatest rewards and punishments are assigned, as soon as anyone has departed from the body.”

VIII. Moreover this opinion prevailed among most people so widely and was esteemed of such moment for restraining the minds of the wicked, that the wisest of the pagans, Cato himself, did not hesitate in the very senate to attribute the contrary opinion to Caesar in order to bring him into odium; for in Sallust, *Catilinarian War*, LII, he speaks thus: “Gaius Caesar discoursed on this matter, holding to be false, I believe, what is related about the underworld — that the wicked occupy dreadful, uncultivated, foul, and fearful places, by a different road from the good.” This opinion was depicted by the most learned of the poets in *Aeneid VI*, imitating Homer's *Odyssey*, Bk. XI — whence what the papists have drawn is well known. Even the common people were thoroughly imbued with this persuasion. Hence, what is done in the underworld was committed to painters to describe, just as is still done in those places where men adore the Roman pontiff and elsewhere. Plautus, *Captivi*, V, 4, 1:

“I have often seen many painted pictures of what torments happen beneath Acheron.”

They supposed that men could be kept in their duty and restrained from crimes, by these things. “They believe that men are most powerfully stirred to virtue by disregard of the fear of death,” Caesar says of the Gauls. And Lucan, Bk. I, 469:

“Happy in their error, upon whom presses not
That greatest of fears — the dread of death; whence bold
To rush upon the sword are those brave souls,
And capable of death, and basely grudging
To spare a life that will return again.”

And concerning the Germans, Appian in his *Celtic History*: “The Germans have the most ferocious customs, outstanding courage in attack, and the greatest contempt of death, on account of the hope of reviving.” The same mind prevailed among the Britons, since Caesar testifies that the discipline of the Druids arose from them. The English report that the inhabitants of New England and all Americans are persuaded that industrious, active, and temperate men, when they die, go to the southern regions of the world — where they believe the best God dwells, since they observe the winds that drive away the cold, and thus all want, blowing from there in spring-time — while all the slothful and idle go to the northern regions, which are dreadful and frightful. Seneca speaks admirably: “Then our soul will have cause to congratulate itself, when, sent forth from these shadows in which it is wallowed, it looks upon clear things not with dim sight, but admits the whole day and is given back to heaven, when it has received the place which it occupied by the lot of birth.” This, he says, after his manner, splendidly, eloquently, magnificently.

IX. For the rest, since they were utterly ignorant of the one road to true happiness, although they greatly preferred the good to the wicked, they yet

established the condition of even the best in the underworld as uncertain and almost wretched — and so φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας [were all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death], as the apostle says, Heb. 2:15. Thus Achilles, though reigning widely over the dead, laments his condition before Ulysses:

Μὴ δὴ μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ·

Βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ

Ἄνδρ' παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ὃ μὴ βίητος πολὺς εἴη,

Ἦ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.

[Speak not to me of death, renowned Ulysses;

I would rather be a serf above ground, serving another man,

one with no portion and scant livelihood,

than reign over all the dead who have perished.]

— Homer, *Odyssey*, Bk. XI, 487-490.

X. Now all these things — some, many, very many — are established to have flowed into the whole human race from the most ancient tradition. I know indeed that among the wise very many are found to whom all things concerning the future judgment and the diverse — that is, eternal — fate of men were a matter of ridicule; and not only Lucretius the Epicurean cries out:

“And that fear of Acheron is to be driven headlong forth, Which from its depths troubles all human life.”

— Bk. III, 37, 38.

XI. But Cicero himself derides these things: “Tell me, pray,” he says, “do those things frighten you — the three-headed Cerberus in the underworld, the roaring of Cocytus, the crossing of Acheron, Tantalus dying of thirst, his chin just touching the topmost water? Is it not that which

“Sisyphus, sweating with his effort, rolls the stone — and makes no progress at all.”

And perhaps the inexorable judges Minos and Rhadamanthus, before whom neither Lucius Crassus could defend you, nor Marcus Antonius, nor — since the case would be conducted before Greek judges — could you engage Demosthenes: you yourself would have to plead your own case before the greatest assembly. Perhaps you fear these things, and therefore think death an everlasting evil. A: Do you think me so delirious as to believe such things are real? M: You do not believe them? A: Not at all. M: That is a pity, by Hercules. A: Why, pray? M: Because I could have been eloquent in arguing against them.” — *Tusculan Disputations*, Bk. I, ch. 5. If indeed he had only attacked the most vain fictions of the poets, he would have acted according to the norm of right reason; but as is plainly evident from the ensuing disputation, he set himself against the whole tradition, and therefore against the truth of the matter itself. And in the mind of others, Seneca in the *Troades*, Act I:

“After death, there is nothing, and death itself is nothing.

The final boundary of a swift course.

You ask in what place you will lie after death:

Where those unborn lie.

And Greedy time and Chaos devour us.

Death is indivisible, harmful to the body

And not sparing the soul.”

XII. But let us grant that Cicero wished to discourse plausibly on both sides, settling nothing; and that Seneca wrote whatever he pleased in the manner of a poet. But Pliny not only rejects that common persuasion, but attempts to refute it with arguments, Bk. VII, ch. 56: “For all,” he says,

“from the last day, the same things exist as before the first; nor after death is there any more sensation for body or soul than there was before birth. For the same vanity propagates itself even into the future, and in the very times of death itself fabricates for itself a life, sometimes granting immortality to the soul, sometimes transformation, sometimes sensation to the shades below, and the worship of ghosts, and making a god of one who has already ceased even to be a man. Or truly, does the principle of breathing in any way distinguish man from the rest of the animals? And are not many things found in life of far greater duration, to which no one divines a similar immortality? But what body does the soul have of itself? What is its matter? Where is thought in it? How does it see, hear, or what does it do? What is its use without these things? What then is the abode, and how great is the multitude of souls through so many ages, as it were of shadows? These are the fabrications of childish delirium, and the inventions of a mortality that can never cease to be greedy.” And whatever of this kind has been received among men, Strabo most openly calls fables, Bk. XV: Παραπλέκουσι δὲ καὶ μύθους ὥσπερ καὶ Πλάτων περί τε ἀφθαρσίας ψυχῆς, καὶ τῶν καθ' ἅδου κρίσεων. He is speaking of the Brahmins. “They interweave,” he says, “fables also, as Plato did, about the immortality of the soul and about the judgments that take place in Hades.” Without doubt, most of the wise agreed with Pliny and Strabo.

XIII. But relying on this persuasion, they mutually exhorted one another to commit every crime. Hence, the saying passed into a proverb — φάγωμεν καὶ πίνωμεν· αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν [let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die] — which the apostle mentions, 1 Cor. 15:32. In the poets, nothing occurs more frequently. Catullus, *Poem V*:

“Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love,

And all the rumours of stern old men
Let us value at a single farthing.
Suns can set and rise again:
But for us, once our brief light has set,
One unbroken night must be slept through.”

And Horace, *Odes* I, 4, 15:

“The brief sum of life forbids us to open
Any long hope. Soon night will press on you,
And the fabled Shades, and the thin Plutonian house;
Where once you arrive, you will no longer cast
The lots for the rule of wine,
Nor marvel at tender Lycidas.”

And Persius himself, though laughing, *Satire* V, 151:

“Indulge your genius; let us pluck sweet things; ours is
What you live by: you will become ashes, shades, and a tale.”

The Greeks come still closer to the words recalled by the apostle. Thus
Strato:

Καὶ πίνε καὶ τέρπου Δημόκρατες· οὐ γὰρ ἔς αἰεὶ
Πιόμεθ' οὐδ' αἰεὶ τέρψιος ἐξόμεθα.

[Drink and be merry, Democrates; for we shall not always drink, nor
always have delight.]

And:

Πίνε καὶ εὐφραίνου, τί γὰρ αὔριον, ἢ τί τὸ μέλλον
Οὐδεὶς γινώσκει.

[Drink and be glad; for what tomorrow or the future holds, no one
knows.]

Yet from that persuasion which the common people had drawn from the most ancient tradition, the common people never suffered itself to be removed.

XIV. It would be easy to review what other fragments of divine truth other traditions also hinted at. I say the duty of all men was to use the benefit of them to advance the relics of natural light. But it is evident that those very traditions were corrupted almost in the first place; and so the very remedy of the disease — and the antidote against eternal death — was converted into a deadly poison. For we have shown that this πατροπαράδοτον [ancestral] doctrine afforded not contemptible aids to the natural light in seeking God; but once it was itself corrupted, it gradually also corrupted that residual light and all the προλήψεις [preconceptions] of the human mind concerning God and overturned them. How this came about, we shall briefly set out.

XV. It is natural to traditions to fly abroad upon the lips of men. In that state of things which we have described, each person used them according to the extent of which he had become a partaker. Those who first dared to collect, systematise, and set out what was scattered and wandering here and there were the poets. These first approached their task by hymns and little songs set to melody to capture the ears of men; then they gave it ornamented form by writings, crammed beyond telling with fables of every kind. The foundation of the whole mass was traditions. But gradually they corrupted most thoroughly all that knowledge of God which the mortal race had drawn from ancient traditions. We speak chiefly of Hellenism; for that mode ἀποστασίας [of apostasy] eventually reached catholicity. While therefore they either twisted what they had heard into foreign and fabulous senses, or enlarged it with clever fictions, or devised other things twinned

with what they had heard, or used ingeniously contrived allegories to read into those things which they themselves had received from their forefathers by obscure report and understood not at all — they left nothing sound, solid, true, nothing that was not vain, fictitious, idolatrous, and ruinous, in the whole of natural religion.

XVI. Indeed, those men confounded everything to such a degree that to ascertain by conjecture what they received, from whom, by what report, by what tradition, on what occasions, and led by what reasonings, they embraced very many of the things they did, is altogether impossible. It is evident that they mixed traditions, interpolated with fables, natural and moral theology, and the worship of demons and of dead men. What each person drew from corrupt natural theology, what from perverse traditions, what from diabolical oracles, what from common use, what from his own brain — to investigate this accurately is utterly impossible. Indeed, very often they exhibited the same obscure divine tradition, some notable part of natural theology, the most inept fables, and Satanic worship, in the same words and under the same baggage of fictions. The Sun, Noah, Saturn — indeed Jupiter, the Planet, the Hero, Heaven, Ether, and Satan himself were one and the same thing, as we shall see more fully later.

XVII. But the human mind, labouring under native blindness, is greedy for fables and errors, and tenacious of them. After, therefore, it was imbued with δεισιδαιμονία [superstition] and polytheism, the natural light itself, unequal to removing the prejudices, utterly succumbed; nor was it ever able to extricate itself from the Lernaean swamp of fables. This confusion may perhaps be placed before the eyes by a single example. Bacchus is the same as Adonis, Evius, and Sabus — so Plutarch, *Symposiaca*, IV, question 5, where he most absurdly undertakes, with all care for truth and candour

abandoned, to investigate the origins of Jewish ceremonies. Sanford, in his first book *On the Descent of Christ to the Underworld*, almost proves that the names Iacchus and Bacchus flowed from יהוה [Jehovah] — a learned conjecture, to be sure. That most excellent and most learned man, I know, has many who owe him much in the investigation of the origins of πολυθεότητος [polytheism], idolatry, and Hellenism — some who owe him everything — yet I find him rarely mentioned by anyone and praised by no one. That Adon comes from אֲדֹנָי [Adonai], I think no one will deny; Sabus from סַבְאוֹת [Sabaoth]; and Evius appears to express אֶהְיֶה [Ehyeh] — from which Plutarch dreams that the Levites among the Jews took their name. But these are names or epithets of the living God. The ancients, therefore, understood through those names — which reached them, though by thin report — the true divine power. Having received them in this manner, they assigned other divine attributes to them. Among these, some were true, but others were ψευδεπίγραφα [falsely ascribed], false, and diabolical. First, they referred to Noah what they had heard of him; and the name of Bacchus seems to some to be derived from נֹחַ [Noah], or from Noachus. That Liber pilfered Noah's vines and vineyard is not to be doubted. Hence, Lactantius: “The lie of the poets is not in the deed but in the name.” See Vossius, *On Idolatry*, Bk. I, ch. 19 and 25. Thus, the true God and אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה [the man of the ground], Gen. 9:20, have been confused. Bacchus is also perhaps בַּר כּוּשׁ [bar Kush] “son of Cush” — so Bochart thinks, *Sacred Geography*, Bk. I, ch. 2 — that is, Nimrod. Hence, he was called Ζαγρεύς [Zagreus], or “the mighty hunter,” Gen. 10:9; and Νεβρώδης [Nebrodes], as all the Greeks call Nimrod. But Sanford, Bk. I, ch. 1, sect. 18, 19, shows with very many examples that almost the whole history of Moses was ascribed to Bacchus; after him, and with the same instances, Vossius, Bk. I, ch. 30; nor does

Bochart think otherwise, Bk. I, ch. 18. Moreover, whatever is said about Bacchus is said in all respects about Osiris in Egypt, who, having been great among his people, after death received all the honours of the sun. Finally, there appeared Bacchus of Thebes, or Διόνυσος [Dionysus], so named from Mount Nysa; and some learned men suspect that Nysa is none other than Sinai, by μετόθεσιν [transposition] of letters. That Arabia is called India by the Greeks, it would be easy to demonstrate from many testimonies. But there is also Mount Nysa in India beyond Caucasus, not far from the river Cophen, as Philostratus shows in the *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. II, ch. 4 — which he narrates that men planted with vines in honour of Bacchus, who there performed marvellous deeds. And the inhabitants of that region declared that this Bacchus was Assyrian, and that the Theban Bacchus came to him. Others say that indeed the city placed at the foot of the mountain is called Nysa, but the mountain itself Meron, so Curtius, Bk. VIII, ch. 10. Μηρός, however, is “thigh.” Hence the fable about Bacchus sewn into the thigh of Jupiter — unless you suspect a Hebraism, and that “born from the thigh of Jupiter” signifies nothing other than being the Son of God, as Heinsius thinks in his *Aristarchus*. And these things are not unworthy of the sneers with which Lucian greets them in *Dialogues*, IX.

XVIII. Furthermore, Eusebius relates the birth and deeds of Dionysus of Thebes from Diodorus, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Bk. XX, ch. 20. He, having perhaps been the first of Europeans to make certain excursions into the regions of Asia, in the eyes of the fabulists of the next age drained all the ancient traditions about the Bacchi mentioned above; and he alone was all that in reality no single one of them was — for upon him the μυθιστοιοί [mythmakers] heaped together nearly all the πατροπαράδοτα [ancestral traditions]. Nor did this marvellous frustration stop here. Because the

ancients ascribed the invention of wine and of the vine to Bacchus, those who cobbled together natural theology contended that by Bacchus only wine or autumn — or that season of the year when the vines ripen — was signified. So Lucretius teaches us, Bk. II, 654-658:

“Here, if anyone resolves to call the sea Neptune,
And grain Ceres, and prefers to abuse the name of Bacchus
Rather than utter the proper term for the liquid,
Let us grant that he asserts the circle of the earth
To be the Mother of the Gods — yet let him not thereby
Be affected by that fiction himself.”

And Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, Bk. I: “Ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ τὴν Διονύσου φυγὴν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν οἴνοποιῖαν σημαίνειν φασὶ, παλαιὰ ἐγνωρίζομένην· ἡδὺν γὰρ εἶναι τὸν οἶνον παρεγχομένης θαλάσσης [Some say that the flight of Dionysus to the sea signifies the making of wine, a thing known from old; for wine is sweet when seawater is mixed in with it] — that is, “The fable of Bacchus fleeing to the sea, some think signifies the making of wine, known from of old; since wine is sweeter when seawater is added.” But it is too well established that the fable was taken from the history of Moses.

XIX. That these men composed these things absurdly and incompetently, Philo Byblius testifies in the preface to his history of Sanchuniathon: Ἄλλ', he says, οἱ μὲν νεώτατοι τῶν ἱερολόγων, τὰ μὲν γεγονότα πράγματα ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀποπέμψαντες ἀλληγορίας καὶ μύθους ἐπενόησαν, καὶ, τοῖς κοσμικοῖς παθήμασι συγγένειαν πλασάμενοι μυστήρια κατέστησαν — that is, “But the more recent theologians, having dismissed from the beginning the things which were truly done, devised allegories and myths, and having fabricated a connection with worldly phenomena, established mysteries.” And indeed he, having determined that all things said about the gods were

to be referred to true histories, rejects both that whole natural theology on the one hand and the μυθικήν [mythical treatment] of the poets on the other. But innumerable other examples of this confusion occur everywhere. The history of the origin of the world in Diodorus Siculus — especially in Sanchuniathon and Philo Byblius — shows the same thing. The first chapter of Genesis is transferred into the history of many centuries, concerning I know not what kings: Heaven, Earth, Sun, Moon, מֹת [Mot], who is said to be Pluto, all have a place in it. אֱלֹהִים [Elohim] himself is also introduced. Amid these rough places, anyone can conjecture how easy it was for the ancient serpent to impose nefarious opinions about God, and impious worship of himself, upon the human race.

XX. Pausanias speaks admirably in his *Arcadica*: Ἐν τῷ παντὶ αἰῶνι πολλὰ μὲν πάλαι συμβάντα μηκέτι δὲ γινόμενα, ἄπιστα εἶναι πεποιήκασιν εἰς τοὺς, οἱ τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἔψευσμένα — that is, “In all ages, the credibility of many ancient events, no longer occurring, has been taken away among the common people through the fault of those who have smothered the foundations of truth by erecting fables upon them.” They rendered truth itself, so corrupted and burdened with lies, incredible. How this came about, he shows a little afterward: Ὅτι ὅσοι δέ, he says, μυθολογήμασιν ἀκούοντες ἡδόνται πεφύκασι καὶ αὐτοὶ τι ἐπιτηδεύεσθαι καὶ οὕτω τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἐλυμήναντο συγκεραννύντες αὐτὰ ἔψευσμένοις [Those who by nature take pleasure in hearing tales are disposed to add something of their own, and in this way they corrupted the truth by mixing it with falsehoods]. So it came about that “those who by nature delight in hearing fictions of this kind themselves add something to them, and thus, as it were by a flood of lies, truth is corrupted and wholly loses its authority.”

XXI. From the just judgment of God, therefore, delivering over to a reprobate mind those who held the truth in unrighteousness — those who did not see fit to retain God in their knowledge — being vain in their reasonings, a certain flood of spiritual abominations immediately, accompanied by all unrighteousness, violence, and impurity, settled upon the world. This came about from the cunning of Satan and the κακοζηλία [evil emulation] of the many. For as polytheism grew strong, there was nothing so vain or so worthless that it was not enrolled in the number of the gods. No stone, no piece of wood, no virtue, no vice, nothing good, nothing evil, was without its worship. All creatures, from the grass of the field to the topmost stars of heaven, were subjected to the same ἀτιμία [dishonour]. The apostle teaches us this: Ἠλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου Θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ πετεινῶν, καὶ τετραπόδων, καὶ ἑρπετῶν [They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things], Rom. 1:23. It is established that Paul by these words strikes at idolaters of every kind. Maddened by Hellenism, thinking the gods had ἀνθρωποφυίας [human nature], they fashioned the images of the divine power in the likeness of corruptible man. The worship of πετεινῶν, τετραπόδων, καὶ ἑρπετῶν [birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things] had its origin among the Egyptians. Philo: Κύνas, λύκους, καὶλέοντας, καὶ κροκοδείλους, καὶ ἄλλα πλείονα θηρία, καὶ ἔνυδρα, καὶ πτηνὰ θεοπλαστοῦντες — “Dogs, wolves, lions, crocodiles, and very many other things — aquatic, terrestrial, and winged — they fashion and adore in the place of gods.” And Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, Bk. I: Τό μοι λοιπὸν καταλέγειν τὸ πλῆθος ὧν σέβονται ζώων Αἰγύπτιοι ἑρπετῶν τε καὶ πτηνῶν καὶ θηρίων καὶ ἐνύδρων νηκτῶν [It remains for me to enumerate

the multitude of animals the Egyptians worship — creeping things, birds, beasts, and swimming creatures of the water]. Indeed, God willed that the greatest example of Satanic dominion and tyranny should appear in those who are thought to have been the first to defect from the true God. Of their σεβάσματα [objects of worship], therefore, it is permissible to take a passing contemplation, as Paul did at Athens — especially since Egyptian superstition by no means contained itself within the borders of Egypt.

“We received into our Roman temples your Isis, and your half-divine dogs,”

says Lucan, Bk. VIII, 831.

XXII. I know not what mysteries Athanasius Kircher recently attempted to elicit from their sacred rites, labouring with great effort and expense — but without result, not to say ridiculously — to teach that those alone were wise whom the rest of the world had believed destitute of wisdom beyond what is human folly. He saw in their hieroglyphics what beyond all doubt they themselves never saw, and what no one who judged Christian modesty or truth to be more important than worldly vanity would ever see. But:

Οὐκ ᾔδεν ἀλλ' ἐδόκησεν ἰδεῖν διὰ νύκτα σελήνην [He did not see, but thought he saw the moon by night].

XXIII. What Paul determined about the account of their religious observances we have shown; we have also produced the concurrence of Philo the Jew, spending his days in the Egyptian metropolis. Josephus is at length in reproaching them for the same crime, Bk. I *Against Apion*. Exod. 12:12, God threatens “to execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt.” Whatever that threatening amounted to, Moses narrates that it had its effect, Num. 33:4. That God slew among other cattle Apis himself, and the other animals sacred to the Egyptians, is not to be doubted. What those among the

pagans who seem to themselves to be wiser than us — and to us less mad than the Egyptians — thought of the religious worship of the Egyptians, is well known. The Satirist, *Satire* XV, 1-6:

“Who does not know, Volusius of Bithynia, what monstrous things
Mad Egypt worships? One part adores the crocodile,
Another fears the Ibis, gorged on serpents.
The golden image of the sacred long-tailed ape shines bright ...
Here they venerate the pale-blue fish of the river, there the dog —
Whole cities worship it.”

Anaxandrides in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, Bk. VII, addresses the Egyptians thus:

Οὐκ ἄν δυναίμην συμμαχεῖν ὑμῖν ἐγώ,
Οὐθ' οἱ τρόποι γὰρ ὁμονοοῦσ' οὐθ' οἱ νόμοι
Ἑμῶν, ἀπ' ἀλλήλων δὲ διέχουσιν πολὺ.
Βοῦν προσκυνεῖς; ἐγὼ δὲ θύω τοῖς θεοῖς,
Τὴν ἔγχελυν μέγιστον ἡγῆ δαίμονα.
Ἑμεῖς δὲ τῶν ὀψῶν μέγιστον παραπολύ.
... Κύνα σέβεις, τύπτω δ' ἐγώ·

[I could not be your ally;
for our customs and laws are not in agreement,
but differ greatly from one another.
You worship the ox; I sacrifice it to the gods.
You hold the eel to be the greatest divinity;
we regard it as by far the most excellent of relishes.
You revere the dog; I beat it.]

And Antiphanes in *Lycon*:

Καὶ τ' ἄλλα δεινούς φασι τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους

Εἶναι, τὸ νομίσαι τ' ἰσόθεον τὴν ἔγχελυν·
Πολὺ τῶν θεῶν γάρ ἐστι τιμιώτερα.
Τῶν μὲν γὰρ εὐξαμένοισιν ἐσθ' ἡμῖν τυχεῖν·
Τούτων δὲ δραχμὰς τουλάχιστον δώδεκα,
Ἦ πλέον, ἀναλώσασιν ὅσφρασθαι μόνον·
Οὕτως ἐσθ' ἅγιον τελῶς τὸ θηρίον

[They say the Egyptians are clever in other respects,
but in counting the eel equal to the gods,
for it is far more honoured than the gods.
The gods we can obtain by prayer alone,
but to get even a smell of an eel costs at least twelve drachmas, or more.
So utterly sacred is the creature.]

XXIV. Apollonius upbraids this infamy upon Thespion, the chief of the Gymnosophists, in Philostratus, speaking of statues and images, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. VI, ch. 19: Περὶ θεῶν, he says, ὑμᾶς ἐρωτήσομαι πρῶτον· τί μάθοντες, ἄτοπα καὶ γελοῖα θεῶν εἶδη παραδεδώκατε τοῖς δεῦρο ἀνθρώποις πλὴν ὀλίγων· ὀλίγων γὰρ, πάνυ μέντοι ὀλίγων, ἃ σοφῶς, καὶ θεοειδῶς ἱδρύται. Τὰ λοιπὰ δ' ὑμῶν ἱερὰ, ζώων ἀλόγων, καὶ ἀδόξων τιμαί, μᾶλλον ἢ θεῶν, φαίνονται — “Concerning the gods I will question you first: having learned what, did you hand down to the people here absurd and ridiculous forms of the gods — save a few; for few, very few indeed, are set up with wisdom and divine dignity? The rest of your temples appear to be honours of irrational and ignoble animals rather than of gods.” What Thespion replies in return will not be unwelcome to the reader if he will consult the cited passage of the author. It appears moreover from the same Philostratus that the Egyptians were utterly unable to give any account of their mad worship; however much Kircher, after the lapse of so many

centuries, pretends to have discovered in those monstrous gods all the mysteries of Christianity. Cicero thought they had one purpose in view: “Those Egyptians who are mocked,” he says, “consecrated no animal unless on account of some benefit they derived from it,” Bk. I, *On the Nature of the Gods*. And to the Egyptians, in his own manner adding tragic colour, Gildas joins the Britons, *On the Ruin of Britain*: “The portentous things of Britain,” he says, “were almost the equals of the Egyptian in number, some of which we still see, with deformed features, stiffening in the usual fashion within and without the deserted walls, with stern countenances.” Liberated by the grace of Christ, we all look upon these monsters of wickedness and this tyranny of the ancient serpent with astonishment and abomination; and therefore the impiety of those is most justly to be abominated who, while they wish to be called Christians, and to be thought alone worthy of that most holy name, are yet — as we hold them convicted by their own confessions — seized by the same, if not greater, madness. “More tolerable is the error of those who worship a golden, silver, or other material image in the manner of the Gentiles worshipping their gods, or a red cloth elevated on a spear — as is told of the Lapps — or living animals, as the Egyptians once did, than of those who worship a morsel of bread.” These are the words of the Jesuit Coster, *Enchiridion*, ch. 8. Here, if we are men, if we are possessed of sense and reason, if any faith is to be given to the words of holy Scripture, we have confessed perpetrators, that such idolatry is found among the sons of the most holy father the pope as was never seen or heard of, even in the darkest depths of paganism.

XXV. When, moreover, the world of nations was burdened with the number of its gods, and men knew not what or whom they worshipped, the

expression “whoever you are” was customarily used in invocations. “Now I worship whatever God there is,” Plautus, *Rudens*, I, 3. And:

“We follow thee, holy one among the gods, Whoever thou art.”

— Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV, 576.

And in the Capitol, a shield was consecrated with the inscription, “To the Genius of the city of Rome, whether male or female.”

XXVI. And hence that ancient formula of evoking gods from places besieged in war, which Macrobius recalls from the fragments of Sammonicus: “If there is a god or goddess in whose protection this people and city stands — and you especially, who have taken the protection of this city and people under your charge — I pray and beseech you, and ask pardon from you, that you abandon this people and city, leave their places, temples, sacred rites, and city; depart from them and cast upon that people and city fear, terror, and forgetfulness; and having been betrayed, come to Rome to me and mine; let our city's places, temples, sacred rites, and city be more acceptable to you; and be set over me, the Roman people, and my soldiers, so that we may know and understand. If you shall do so, I vow to build temples and games for you.”

XXVII. Hence, it was believed that the gods had deserted any city before it was overthrown. So, Virgil on the destruction of Troy:

“All the gods have departed, the shrines and altars abandoned, By whom this empire had stood.”

— *Aeneid*, II, 351.

XXVIII. And the most ancient poets handed down that the gods were seen carrying their images out of the temples when destruction was already approaching. And in general, Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, 219:

Ἄλλ' οὖν θεοὺς Τοὺς τῆς ἀλούσης πόλεως ἐκλείπειν λόγος.

[But, nonetheless, the report is that the gods abandon the city that is being taken.]

XXIX. Hence the Romans wished it to remain concealed, in whose divine protection the city of Rome stood, lest gods called by their proper names should be able to be exaugurated [made profane/stripped of divinity] by the enemy. This was provided for by pontifical law. And the pontiffs themselves prayed thus: “Jupiter, best and greatest — or by whatever other name you would be called.”

XXX. That these empty fictions ever pleased wise men and those desiring to live according to reason, I should wonder at beyond measure, were it not permitted to perceive daily by what tyranny over human minds vain superstition exercises itself. So after a fashion not unlike that which we cited from Sammonicus, when the Spanish forces at the battle of Saint Quentin were compelled to demolish and destroy a temple dedicated to Saint Lawrence into which the enemy had retreated, King Philip bound himself by a vow to the saint that he would make good the loss by erecting another, and a much greater, temple. This was the occasion for the building of the Escorial, dedicated to Lawrence, which an anonymous poet has elegantly set out:

“This most splendid temple he built for you, O Lawrence,
After Philip demolished at Saint Quentin's in war
Those that existed — since the enclosed enemy
Had hid there beneath the trembling altars, and the divinity in vain.
To whom the king said: here too, let it be permitted me to take
My vengeance and bury the hostile nation in the sacred ruins,
And to stain the altars with blood — I who am to give greater things.”

XXXI. And plainly the form of ancient vows which Papinius celebrates in his Tydeus, *Thebaid*, Bk. II, 726-734:

“If I am borne against Parthaon's arms
And on return the Martian Pleuron opens to me:
Then I will dedicate to you golden temples in the mid-hills of the city
Where it is sweet to look down upon the Ionian storms,
And where turbid Achelous, raising the sea with his golden crest,
Goes forth past the Echinades that lie before him.
Here I will fashion the battles of my ancestors and the formidable faces
Of the great-souled kings, and hang their arms
On the proud domes.”

XXXII. The ignorance of the true God is the fountain and origin of all evils. From it, those very ones whom impious and wicked little men had proposed to themselves to worship — foolish, idiotic, filthy, polluted with robberies, quarrels, wars, adulteries, and unspeakable sins — were served up to be ridiculed and imitated. And so the relics of natural light were extinguished; nor any greater care for the works of God manifesting his eternal power and divinity. Thus Hellenism — or the μυθική [mythical] theology of the Gentiles — prevailed at last. Hence, all the gods, the greater, the middle, and the lowest, came forth.

XXXIII. With what ruin those portentous fictions of the poets afflicted the human race with respect to honest morals, tranquil and rational life, the civil state, and the πρόληψιν [preconception] of eternal punishment — this is well known. One or two detestable examples will suffice to set out. Saturn, who is Κρόνος [Kronos], was for them Χρόνος [Chronos], that is, Time. Thus, they made mythology out of natural theology. Also, Noah, from the most corrupt tradition. Time, that is, the space completed by the

motion of heaven. Hence, Saturn was the son of Uranus, or Heaven. In the same way, Noah is esteemed, since all others were destroyed in the πανωλεθρία [universal ruin] of the flood. Now they imagined that Saturn devoured his children and then vomited them up again — whether because, by turns, time produces all things, consumes, reabsorbs, and expels them; or because Noah enclosed his children with him in the ark and then, as it were, gave them back alive again to the world of nations — is uncertain. That the fable was composed from a very obscure tradition and an ingenious allegory is apparent. And so at last, by the help of Satan, there issued from this the horrible idol-madness. And monstrous cruelty was mixed with nefarious superstition. For foolish little men, applying I know not what unspeakable ceremonies in consolation for their wretchedness, sacrificed their own children to Saturn. Hence, it was called “the burial-place of boys.”

XXXIV. But this wickedness appears to be older than all the Greek portentous fables also; that it received increase from them is beyond doubt. And at last, it became catholic. Nor will any part of Satanic worship be found in which the human race conspired more harmoniously. Whether the ancient serpent — himself to be triumphed over on the cross of Christ — had it in mind to exalt himself magnificently here and to triumph over conquered sinners; or whether he meant to make prejudice and insult against the sacrifice in the minds of men — it is established that he poured forth all his venom far and wide in promoting this wickedness. Let us review a few examples. Concerning the Africans, the matter is well known: “Infants among Africans were sacrificed openly to Saturn down to the proconsulship of Tiberius,” Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. 8. Arnobius has the same. When the Carthaginians were defeated by Agathocles, king of the

Sicilians, thinking God to be angry with them — in order the more carefully to pay their expiation — they sacrificed two hundred sons of nobles to Saturn. Pescennius Festus in Lactantius is witness. Pressed by the Roman war, they performed the same sacred rites, and the son of Hannibal himself, Aspar, was slain. Hence, Silius Italicus depicts his wife Imilce lamenting this crime, *Punica*, Bk. IV:

“But what is this piety — to sprinkle the shrines with blood?
Alas, the first causes of wickedness for suffering mortals
Is not to know the nature of the gods; go, offer just prayers
With pious incense, and turn away the savage rites of slaughter.
God is gentle and akin to man: I pray only this —
Let it suffice to have seen bullocks slain before the altars;
Or if so great a sin stands fixed and firm in the will,
Take me, take me — who bore him — to your vows,
Why does it please you to strip the Libyan lands of this spirit?”

XXXV. Among the Romans, it was customary for living men to devote themselves to the gods of the underworld. The history of the Decii is well known: the father in the Gallic war, the son in the Samnite war, devoted themselves in the same manner. Juvenal celebrates them, *Satire* VIII, 254:

“The souls of the Decii were plebeian, plebeian their names:
Yet for entire legions, and for all the allies
And all the Latin youth,
They sufficed as offerings to the gods of the underworld and the parent earth;
For the Decii were worth more than those they saved.”

XXXVI. Arnobius affirms that it was once the custom to worship Jupiter Latiaris with murder. A senatorial decree was made in the consulship of

Cornelius Lentulus and Publius Licinius Crassus that no man should be sacrificed. And that the monstrous rites had been practised openly until that time, Pliny narrates, *Natural History*, Bk. XXX, ch. 1. And so, when the Gauls were advancing: “The elder men, adorned with the most distinguished honours, assembled in the forum, and there, the pontiff officiating, devoted themselves to the gods of the shades,” in Florus, Bk. I, 13.

XXXVII. That the Gauls also were accustomed to propitiate the gods with these nefarious victims, Cicero narrates, *Speech for Fonteius*, X: “Who does not know,” he says, “that they retain down to this day that savage and barbarous custom of the sacrifice of men?” Plutarch also reminds us that a Gaul and a Gaulish woman were customarily sacrificed at Rome every year. The Roman emperor Hadrian sacrificed the catamite Antinous to the gods in Egypt. Ἀντίνοος ἐν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ ἐτελεύτησεν, εἴτ' οὖν εἰς τὴν Νεῖλον ἐκπεσὼν, ὡς Ἀδριανὸς γράφει, εἴτε καὶ ἱερουργηθεὶς, ὡς ἡ ἀλήθεια ἔχει, says Dio in Xiphilinus, Bk. LXIX;— “Antinous died in Egypt, whether from falling into the Nile, as Hadrian writes, or from being sacrificed, as is the truth.” And he made the one who was sacrificed into a god. Procopius records that the inhabitants of Thule maintained this custom of sacrificing men down to his own time. The same custom among the Britons: when the island of Mona was conquered by Paulinus, “a garrison was placed over the conquered, and the groves sacred to savage superstitions were destroyed; for they held it lawful to drench the altars with captive blood and to consult the gods by human entrails,” says Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk. XIV, ch. 30. And on that passage Horace:

“I shall visit the Britons, fierce to strangers.”

Acro: "The Britons sacrificed their guests as victims." Lucan mentions the gods to whom the Gauls made offerings with human blood, I, 444:

"And those to whom, with dire blood, is appeased
Teutates the pitiless, and Hesus dreadful with his savage altars,
And Taranis, no gentler than Scythian Diana."

XXXVIII. That all these were gods of the Britons, the most diligent Camden demonstrates in his *Britannia*; and Caesar himself records that the Gauls received the whole discipline of the Druids from the Britons, *Gallic War*, Bk. VI. The same madness among the Germans: "Having slaughtered a man publicly, they perform the rites as dreadful first-fruits," says Tacitus. And again: "Of the gods they worship Mercury above all, to whom on certain days they consider it lawful to propitiate even with human victims," *On the Customs of Germany*, IX. Camerarius records that marble monuments of this impiety among the Etruscans still survive, and that he himself saw one of them at Perugia, *Historical Meditations*, Bk. II. Concerning the Goths, Jornandes: "They always appeased Mars with the most ferocious worship; for their victims were the deaths of captives." The Greeks were bound by the same wickedness. Erechthonius, the most ancient king of Attica, is said to have sacrificed his own two daughters. And Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, Bk. XIII, shows that Neanthe of Cyzicus devoted himself; and Epimenides expiated the whole land of Attica for certain ancient crimes with human blood — he who stood forth as the proposer to the Athenians of erecting an altar to the unknown God. Among the Thebans of Tyrian origin — from whom this superstition flowed — celebrated is Menoeceus, who devoted himself for the city, slew himself, and made offering with his own blood to the gods of the underworld. Papinius Statius admirably celebrates his death, *Thebaid*, Bk. X, 756-769:

“But righteous Menoeceus, in a chosen part of the walls,
Now sacred in aspect and more majestic than his wonted mien,
As if suddenly sent down to earth from the heavenly axle,
Stood there, manifestly recognised with his helmet removed,
And looked down upon the ranks of men, and with a deep shout
Turned the field, and commanded silence from the war. O gods of arms,
and you,

O Phoebus, who in so great a death Grant me to die — give joys to
Thebes

That I have pledged, and that I have bought with all my blood; ...
Restore with my death to the Tyrians their temples, fields, homes,
Marriages, and children, if as a gentle victim I have pleased you.”

With these words, the poet marvellously painted the common sentiment of
the nations concerning expiatory sacrifices, as also afterwards in the
mother's lament:

“Did I rear you, illustrious boy, as a lustral offering
For savage Thebes, and cherish your devoted head
As a cheap mother?” — 793, 794.

XXXIX. That the Tyrians sacrificed a free-born boy to Saturn, Curtius
shows, Bk. IV, ch. 3. That the Egyptians sacrificed living men to their brute
gods is testified by Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. The priests in his *Clio*,
p. 158, narrated to Herodotus that Menelaus sacrificed two boys in Egypt.
“The Thracians make offerings of human blood to the gods,” says Florus,
History, Bk. III, ch. 4. The Celts, when sacrificing a man, strike him above
the diaphragm with a sword, according to Diodorus, Bk. V. The Normans
and Danes sacrificed ninety-nine men and as many horses together with

dogs to their gods every year in the month of January, according to Ditmar, Bk. X. Concerning the Massilians, Lucan, III, 303-305:

“Here, barbarous sacred rites of the gods,
Altars built with mournful sacrifices,
And every tree lustrated with human blood.”

XL. Ἐθύετο καὶ ἐν Ῥόδῳ Μεταγειτινῶνος ἕκτη ἰσταμένου ἄνθρωπος τῷ Κρόνῳ — “A man was sacrificed to Saturn in Rhodes on the sixth day of the month Metageitnion”, says Theodoret, Bk. VII, *On the Diseases of the Greeks*. And, Φοίνικες ἐν ταῖς μεγάλαις συμφοραῖς ἢ πολέμων, ἢ αὐχμῶν, ἢ λοιμῶν, ἐθύοντο τῶν φιλτάτων τινὰ ἐπιψηφίζοντες Κρόνῳ, says Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food*, Bk. II — “The Phoenicians in great disasters — whether of wars, droughts, or plagues — sacrificed some one of their dearest to Saturn, the victim chosen by common vote.” Even God's own people were invaded by the universal pestilence. “They sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,” Ps. 106:37, 38. Whoever wants more, let him add what we noted in the little book *On Divine Justice*, ch. 8. That certain Christians — at least in name — defiled themselves with this crime, I would show, did not shame prevent me.

XLI. Porphyry, as Eusebius testifies, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Bk. I, ch. 9, traces the origin of these sacrifices to Abraham, calling him Saturn; and his daughter, born of Queen Anobret, is said to have been sacrificed. This kind of disgraceful ἀνιστορησίαν [failure to investigate/lack of inquiry into] the origins of things and nations is well known to be displayed everywhere by profane writers. Varro thinks that the ancients devised this kind of sacrifice because the human race is the best of all seeds. The Druids, as

Caesar testifies, *Gallic War*, Bk. VI, were of the opinion that the majesty of the immortal gods could not be propitiated, except by the life of a man rendered for the life of a man. That the human race drew the use of sacrifices from an ancient and universal tradition for the expiation of sins is clear. That the just and greatest God could be propitiated by the blood of cattle on account of the sins of men, anxious and doubtful minds, agitated by horror and the sense of their sins, could never fully persuade themselves. Satan accosts those who are solicitous and almost in despair, after his manner. He easily persuades men that they have nothing more precious than themselves. Hence, the impulse to sacrifice oneself and others. The prophet shows that a conscience tormented and terrified by the sense of sin and fear of punishment was the bottom of this evil, Mic. 6:7. With Satan as midwife, this monster was brought to light. They often received no other answer from the oracles — whether they feared some great thing or were about to dare it — than that propitiation must be made with human blood. The histories of Menoeceus and Iphigenia are well known. Apollonius narrates in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. VI, ch. 10, that the Lacedaemonian custom of scourging themselves in the worship of the gods had no other origin: Τὸ δέ, he says, τῶν μαστίγων ἔθος τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι τῇ ἀπὸ Σκυθῶν δρᾶται, χρησμῶν φασιν ἐξηγουμένων ταῦτα, θεοῖς δ' ἀντινομοθετεῖν μανία, οἶμαι — that is, “The custom of the scourges is practised in honour of Artemis from Scythia, because, they say, oracles prescribed these things, and to legislate against the gods is madness, I think.” And Pausanias, *Boetica*: Ἀφίκετο ἄμα ἐκ Δελφῶν τῷ Διονύσῳ θύειν παῖδα ὠραῖον — “The oracle from Delphi directed that a beautiful boy should be sacrificed to Dionysus.” Things exactly like this occur everywhere in the historians; until this point of ascent, Satanic malice found no higher to climb.

XLII. But there is no end to this impious heap. The adulteries and lewdness also of the most base gods are well known to have been for very many an incitement and apology for committing all manner of impure villanies. Let me add this as a second example. For after they had devised those gods as like themselves — that is, liars, perjurers, and polluted with every impurity — they immediately also devised those things about them. Remove the quarrels, lies, battles, perjuries, and adulteries of the gods — certain ancient writers, who now stride with gigantic step, will be dwarfed and diminutive; and by them, alas, Christian youth is still being defiled — and to that Moloch, as the learned and pious Johann Comenius complains, it is being offered. I am unwilling to foist upon chaste ears, by repetition, the most foul wickednesses which ought to be forever silent among the holy. A few things may be recalled to show to what end the devil suggested these things to the minds of wicked men — let that suffice which Mercury says of Jupiter in Plautus, Prologue to the *Amphitryon*:

“For I think you know already how my father is:
How free he is in unavenged matters of this kind,
And how great a lover, when something has once pleased him.”

And:

“How often he takes on lesser forms,
Himself who leads the heaven and the clouds.”

— Seneca, *Hippolytus*.

XLIII. Ah, how often does the wet and soft clay drink in blasphemies of this kind, to the applause of a foolish performer. Augustine speaks admirably: “All the worshippers of such gods, as soon as lust has inflamed them, burning — as Persius says — dipped in hot poison, look more at what shameful things they have done than at what Plato has taught or Cato has

censured,” *City of God*, Bk. II, ch. 7. The reader will find more concerning the most impure worship of the Mother of the Gods in that passage. What minds and dispositions, from the examples proposed to them, the human race — of itself already too prone to vices — conceived, Terence sets before the eyes of all in his Chaerea, *Eunuchus*, Act III, Scene 5, 35:

“While things were being prepared, the girl sat in the inner room
Looking at a certain painted picture, in which was this painting:
The story of how Jupiter once sent a shower of gold into the lap of Danae.
I myself also began to look at it; and because he had once played
A similar game long ago, my soul rejoiced the more:
That a god transformed himself into a man, and came secretly
Through another's roof, through the skylight, to trick a woman.
But what a god! He who shakes the highest temples of heaven with his
thunder.

Should I, a little man, not do this? I did indeed do it — and gladly.”

XLIV. Would that from dishonest pictures and the reading of the poets, the same ruin was no longer being inflicted upon the minds of youth. But this impiety advanced so far that they openly exhorted one another to commit the most foul crimes by the example of the gods. So Catullus, LXVIII, 137-140:

“Lest we be troublesome in the manner of fools, Even Juno, greatest of the heaven-dwellers, Often burned at her husband's daily fault, Knowing the many thefts of all-willing Jove.”

XLV. It was also the custom of very many to worship the gods by the worst villanies. That the Babylonians prostituted their own daughters in the temples is narrated by Herodotus, Bk. I, and Strabo, *Geography*, Bk. XVI.

XLVI. Another no less deadly pestilence, arising from this impiety, settled upon the world of nations. For after that nefarious persuasion concerning the gods had prevailed among the common people, the most wicked scoundrels — especially those who were in the service of those gods from the sacred rites — fashioning their names and customs, committed and practised innumerable villanies, robberies, adulteries, thefts, and brigandage. In mountains, caves, woods, temples, on the banks of rivers, and on the seashores, all places were full of such phantoms. Let the most well-known history of the crime perpetrated in the temple of Isis at Rome, which Josephus relates, *Antiquities*, Bk. XVIII, ch. 4, serve as an example. Mundus, a Roman knight, having long tried in vain to storm the chastity of the most honourable matron Paulina, was brought secretly into the temple by the priests under the name of Anubis, with the consent of the woman's husband, and violated her. The ancient heroes were, for the most part, the spurious and illegitimate offspring of robbers, brigands, tyrants, and priests.

XLVII. And the distinguished historian gives this account — and not absurdly — of why Romulus did not institute Vestal virgins: Οὔτε, he says, διὰ παρθένων τὰς θεραπείας κατεστήσατο τῇ θεῷ, μεμνημένος, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, τοῦ περὶ τὴν μητέρα πάθους, ἧ συνέβη θεραπευούσῃ τὴν θεὸν, τὴν παρθενίαν ἀποβαλεῖν, οὐχ' ἱκανὸς ἐσόμενος ἐάν τινα θυηπόλων εὖρη διεφθαρμένην, κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους τιμωρήσασθαι νόμους, διὰ τὴν ἐπὶ ταῖς οἰκείαις συμφοραῖς ἀνάμνησιν — that is, “Nor did he appoint virgin priestesses of the goddess; mindful” (as it seems to me) “of his mother's disgrace, who in the service of that goddess had lost her virginity” (violated, that is, by a priest), “nor would he have been able, if he had found any of the goddess's sacrificing women to have violated their modesty, to punish

her according to ancestral laws, on account of the recollection of the family disgrace,” Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *History*, Bk. II, ch. 65.

XLVIII. In the same manner, the Roman sacrificing priests, throughout all the time that the authority of ignorance prevailed everywhere and the papacy held evangelical truth captive, dared to perpetrate, disguised, all manner of crimes — no one among the papists themselves, unless he is brazenly shameless, dares to deny. For after they had persuaded the blind and stupid crowd that certain genial spirits, not greatly hostile to the human race, frequented houses by night and did what it is shameful to relate, they themselves, disguised in their name, actually carried out all those most foul wickednesses which they wished, falsely, most absurdly, and ridiculously, to ascribe to those harmless genial spirits. So our Chaucer, of a certain friary of his time, most well known:

“For there as wont to walken was an elf,
There walketh now the Limitor himself.
In every bush, and under every tree,
There is none other incubus but he.”

XLIX. That from this, the observance of virtue was rendered almost impossible for the Greeks — upbraiding this impiety upon Apollonius — the Indian philosopher Iarchas affirms in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. III, ch. 7: Οἱ δὲ γε σοφώτατοι ποιηταὶ ἡμῶν, οὐδ' εἰ βούλεσθε δίκαιοί τε καὶ χρηστοὶ εἶναι ξυγχωροῦσιν ὑμῖν γίνεσθαι — “But your most reputed wise men among your poets do not permit you to be just and good even if you should wish.” And he adds the reason: that they held the most wicked men in the place of gods. And Apollonius himself openly acknowledged this, Bk. V, ch. 5: Οἱ μὲν γὰρ, he says, περὶ τοὺς ἥρωας, ὧν ποιητικὴ πᾶσα ἔχεται, καὶ διαφθείρουσι τοὺς ἀκροωμένους, ἐπειδὴ ἔρωτάς τε ἀτόπους οἱ

ποιηταὶ ἐρμηνεύουσι, καὶ ἀδελφῶν γάμους καὶ διαβολὰς ἐς θεοὺς, καὶ βρώσεις παίδων, καὶ πανουργίας ἀνελευθέρους, καὶ δίκας, καὶ τὸ ὡς γεγονὼς αὐτῶν ἄγειν, καὶ τὸν ἐρῶντα, καὶ τὸν ζηλοποιοῦντα, καὶ τὸν ἐπιθυμοῦντα πλουτεῖν, ἢ τυραννεύειν ἐφ' ἅπερ οἱ μῦθοι — that is, “For the things invented about the heroes — of which the whole material of the poets consists — also corrupt the ears of their hearers; for the poets narrate their unlawful and nefarious loves, such as marriages of brothers and sisters, and slanders against the gods, and the eating of children, and illiberal mutual altercations; for since these are set forth by the poets as if they were actual deeds, they lead men to love and envy, and the desire of wealth and of sovereignty.” Nor can anyone think that he is sinning, while he imitates the gods. Marcus Tullius also repeats the same things in the first book *On the Nature of the Gods*, ch. 16: “I have set out,” he says, “the judgments not so much of philosophers as of madmen in their dreams; for the things poured forth in the words of poets were not much more absurd, and harmed by their very sweetness — since they introduced gods inflamed with anger and raging with lust, and made us see their wars, battles, combats, and wounds, their hatreds moreover, quarrels, and discords, their births and deaths, complaints and lamentations, lusts poured forth in every kind of intemperance, adulteries, chains, and concubinage with the human race, and mortals begotten from the immortal.” What Plato discoursed on this matter in the *Timaeus*, let the reader consult — for it is worth reading.

L. The lawgivers and philosophers were enlisted in support of the poets. It pleased them to forge a certain natural theology, which in reality was nothing other than the idolatry of the first apostates in the worship of the works of creation. For the benefit of traditions having been lost — utterly destroyed, that is, by the fables of the poets — and with the prejudices of

the minds of the common people furthermore insuperable, neither lawgivers nor philosophers were ever able, scarcely even attempted, to free natural theology from impure and most pernicious fables and idolatrous worship.

LI. Now, the lawgivers in forging their theology had almost nothing other in mind than to temper religion in such a way that no disturbances or evils might arise from it in the civil state. This is still the opinion of the majority of politicians about religion. They were therefore under the necessity of inscribing all the errors and fables, and the whole idol-madness with which the poets had infected the people, into the tablets of the laws — provided they did not openly, as they say, γυμνῇ τῇ κεφαλῇ [with bare head], contradict the public governance of cities or honest morals.

LII. It is worthwhile to behold Plato himself yielding to the prejudices of the common people. Thus, in the *Timaeus*: Περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων δαιμόνων εἰπεῖν καὶ γινῶναι τὴν γένεσιν μείζον ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς· πιστέον δὲ τοῖς εἰρηκόσιν ἔμπροσθεν, ἐκγόνοις μὲν θεῶν οὖσιν, ὡς ἔφασαν, σαφῶς δὲ που τοὺς γε αὐτῶν προγόνους εἰδόσιν. Ἀδύνατον οὖν θεῶν παισὶν ἀπιστεῖν, καὶ περ ἄνευ τε εἰκότων καὶ ἀναγκαίων ἀποδείξεων λέγουσιν, ἀλλ' ὡς οἴκεῖα φάσκουσιν ἀπαγγέλλειν ἐπομένους τῷ νόμῳ πιστευτέον οὕτως οὖν κατ' ἐκείνους ἡμῖν ἡ γένεσις περὶ τούτων τῶν θεῶν ἐχέτω καὶ λεγέσθω — that is, “Concerning the other daemons, to speak of and know their generation is too great for our powers; but faith must be given concerning them to those who previously explained the nature of the gods to us, since they were indeed the offspring of the gods, as they themselves affirmed, and therefore knew their own ancestors clearly. For faith cannot be withheld from the children of the gods, even though they speak without probable signs or necessary arguments; but since they claim to report matters concerning their own family, following the ancient law and custom,

faith must be given to them. Thus, then, as it has been handed down by them, let the origin of these gods be held.” So he says — mindful, that is, of what had happened to his teacher Socrates, who was condemned to death because he was unwilling to have those as gods whom the city held to be gods. He therefore admits the popular gods, though not without open ridicule of the credulity of the common people. He discourses on similar things in the second book of the *Republic*. Strabo, *Geography*, Bk. I, first teaches that the lawgivers deliberately devised fables in religion for the purpose of restraining the minds of the peoples by a certain terror of invisible evils: Κεραυνός, he says, καὶ αἰγίς, καὶ τρίαινα, καὶ λαμπάδες, καὶ δράκοντες, καὶ θυρσόλεγχω τῶν θεῶν ὄπλα, μύθοι, καὶ πᾶσα θεολογία ἀρχαϊκή· ταῦτα δ' ἀπεδείξαντο οἱ τὰς πολιτείας καταστησάμενοι μορμολύκας τινὰς πρὸς τοὺς νηπιόφρονας [The thunderbolt, aegis, trident, torches, dragons, and thyrsus-spears — the weapons of the gods — are myths, and so is all ancient theology; these were employed by those who founded political constitutions as certain bugbears against the simple-minded]. And thus, it was once done by the sacrificing priests in the papacy. For after they had extirpated all the efficacy of the Christian religion from the minds of the common people by the grossest ignorance and criminal morals, they found it necessary to invent purgatory, and I know not what other terrors, in order to keep the people in their duty in some manner.

LIII. And this was the πολιτική [civil] theology of the Gentiles. Concerning its rites, Seneca says: “All these things the wise man will observe as commanded by the laws, not as pleasing to the gods.” Since, therefore, the common people refused to have their poetic frenzies taken from them, and was willing to be deprived of its city rather than of its criminal opinion about religion — and since the lawgivers were content to

seize all the ancient fables for their own ends — the wise utterly repudiated this whole civil theology as a fable devised for the purpose of maintaining order among men in civil life. The bad merchandise was therefore of little value and was always lightly esteemed.

LIV. The philosophers seemed more clear-sighted. They surveyed all things most shrewdly, investigating the ruined theology. But, to say it in a word, they could not extricate themselves from the corrupt traditions and the portentous fictions of the poets, except by the help of opinions drawn from the pits of atheism. From these arose the φυσική [natural] theology. That this was the εὑρημα [invention] of men hardened in the greatest wickedness and knowing not how to yield to truth, Eusebius shows so clearly in his books on the *Praeparatio Evangelica* that there is nothing to add to what he says. And so “that race of men also was made most vain, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

LV. And by these gradations, all knowledge of God was corrupted. Now, among bad methods of religious practice, not the worst appears to have been retained by the common people — those who knew nothing beyond the obscure traditions and the portentous fictions interpolated with fables. Those who aspired to the praise of the most subtle investigation and acumen in sacred things were made utterly ἐμωράνθησαν [fools]. The old opinion concerning a judgment of some kind to be exercised after this life, and the diverse condition of men surviving in the underworld, prevailed among the common people. It never willingly dissented from this opinion. How great a moment this persuasion brought to the restraint of the wickedness and impiety rampant on earth is plain. Even after all that theology of the former ages was at last entirely blotted out everywhere among the nations, yet those who live outside the knowledge of Christ have

some foreboding — I know not what — of that judgment and future state. But the almost universal senate of philosophers laughed at that whole opinion as an empty bugbear — whether with γέλωτα σαρδάνιον [a Sardonic laugh], I cannot tell.

LVI. And this was the superstition of the nations. It has pleased us to express δεισιδαιμονίαν [superstition] by that word. The account of the ὀνοματολογίας [nomenclature] varies. The father of Roman eloquence affirms that superstition was so named from those who prayed all day long that their sons might survive them. The comic poets testify that parents were daily bent on this vow:

“As you would wish your only son To survive your life, safe and in health.”

— Plautus, *Asinaria*, Act I, Sc. 1, 6.

“By Castor, a fine boy has been born to Pamphilus; I pray the gods that he may survive.”

— Terence, *Andria*, Act III, Sc. 2.

And in the *Heautontimorumenos*, Act V, Sc. 4, 7:

“So may he survive for me and for this man.”

Servius explains it from old women who, having long survived and being addicted to empty things, “while they wish to appear excessively religious, dote.” Donatus agrees: “The superstitious are old men and old women who, having long survived in age, now dote” — hence also “the superstitious are those who fear the gods too much,” which is a sign of dotage. Hence the Satirist:

“Lo, a grandmother or a god-fearing aunt

Has lifted the child from the cradle, and with infamous finger

And lustral saliva applied first,

She expiates his forehead and his wet lips.”

— Persius, *Satire* II, 31-34.

This custom is retained in the baptism of the papists. Lactantius takes the “superstitious” to mean those “who celebrate the memory of the dead who have survived,” *Institutes*, Bk. II, ch. 28. Also, the superstitious man is one who is ἔνθεος [divinely inspired] and θέσφατος [prophetic]. So Plautus: “This man is indeed superstitious — he declares true things,” *Curculio*, Act III, 27. Superstition denotes either a corrupt affection of the soul concerning divine things, or a vain and absurd worship. About the former, Cicero and Plutarch have said very many things, most of them most falsely — the one scattered throughout his works, the other in a special and elegant treatise *On Superstition* [περὶ δεισιδαιμονίας]. In the latter sense, Tacitus impiously calls our religion a deadly superstition, *Annals*, Bk. XV; and Suetonius calls Christians “a race of men of a new and harmful superstition,” in his *Nero*. Some even rejected all religion under the name of superstition:

“Vain superstition; virtue alone is goddess in the heart.”

LVII. Would that no one could be found today who was mad with this madness. But although the religion of the pagans was nothing other than a most pernicious superstition, they themselves acknowledged a distinction and maintained that this was necessary on account of the promiscuous multitude who would not be restrained without it. Strabo speaks admirably: Λαμία μῦθος ἔστι, καὶ ἡ γοργὼ, καὶ ὁ Ἐφιάλτης, καὶ ἡ μορμολύκη, οἳ τε πολλοὶ τῶν τὰς πόλεις οἰκούντων, εἰς μὲν προτροπὴν ἄγονται τοῖς ἡδέσι τῶν μύθων, ὅταν ἀκούωσι τῶν ποιητῶν ἀνδραγαθήματα μυθώδη διηγουμένων, οἷον Ἡρακλέος ἄθλους ἢ Θήσεως, ἢ τιμὰς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν νεμεμημένας, ἢ νῆ Δία ὀρῶσι γραφὰς ἢ ξιάνα ἢ πλάσματα τοιαύτην τινὰ περιπέτειαν ὑποσημαίνοντα μυθώδη. Εἰς ἀποτροπὴν δὲ ὅταν, κολάσεις

παρὰ θεῶν καὶ φόβους, καὶ ἀπειλὰς ἢ διὰ λόγων ἢ διὰ τόπων ἁώρων προσδέχονται, ἢ καὶ πιστεύουσι περιπεσεῖν τινάς· οὐ γὰρ ὄχλον τε γυναικῶν καὶ παντὸς χυδαίου πλήθους ἐπαγαγεῖν λόγῳ δυνατὸν φιλοσόφῳ καὶ προσκαλέσασθαι πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ ὁσιότητα καὶ πίστιν, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ διὰ δεισιδαιμονίας [Lamia is a myth, and so are the Gorgon, Ephialtes, and the Mormolyke; and the common people who inhabit the cities are incited toward virtue by the pleasurable myths, when they hear the poets narrating mythical deeds of valour — such as the labours of Heracles or Theseus, or the honours distributed by the gods, or indeed when they see paintings or wooden images or sculptures indicating some such mythical adventure; and they are turned away from evil when they receive, whether through words or through ominous places, punishments from the gods, and fears and threats, or even believe that certain people have fallen into such misfortune; for it is not possible by a philosophical argument to draw a crowd of women and all the common throng to piety and holiness and faith — superstition is also needed], *Geography*, Bk. I. Who would not think he was hearing the supreme pontiff speaking from his chair! The great Plato also admirably explains this vice everywhere: “Ἔθος τε, he says, γυναιξί τε δὴ διαφερόντως πάσαις καὶ τοῖς ἀσθενοῦσι πάντα καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ ἀποροῦσιν, ὅπη τις ἂν ἀπορῇ, καὶ τούναντίον ὅταν εὐπορίας τινὸς λάβωνται καθιεροῦν τε τὸ παρὸν ἀεὶ, καὶ θυσίας εὐχεσθαι καὶ ἰδρύσεις ὑπισχνεῖσθαι θεοῖς καὶ δαίμοσι, καὶ παισὶ θεῶν, ἔν τε φάσμασιν ἐγρηγορότας διὰ φόβους, καὶ ἐν ὀνείροις ὡς δ' αὖτως ὄψεις πολλὰς ἀπομνημονεύοντας, ἐκάσταισί τε αὐτῶν ἄκη ποιουμένους βωμοὺς καὶ ἱερὰ, πάσας μὲν οἰκίας, πάσας δὲ κόμας, ἔν τε καθαροῖς ἰδρυομένους ἐμπιλάναι, καὶ ὅπη τις ἔτυχεν τῶν τοιούτων, *Laws*, Bk. X, near the end — that is, “But it is the custom especially of all women, and of those who

are held by some notable weakness or live in some danger or suffer under heavy want — or contrarily when the abundance of anything flows in — always to consecrate what seems to be present, and to vow victims, and to promise statues to the gods and daemons and children of the gods; both when spectra appear to the waking from fears, and when recollecting many visions seen in dreams — when they seek to bring remedies to each of them, they fill all their houses and all their villages with altars and shrines, and dedicate these rites to places as if pure.” In what other words one might paint that superstition which flourishes in the papacy ἐμφανικώτερος [more clearly], I for my part know not. So Cicero on religion and superstition, near the end of the second book *On Divination*: “Wherefore, as religion is to be propagated, which is connected with the knowledge of nature, so all the roots of superstition are to be torn out. For it presses and urges, and wherever you turn it pursues you — whether you have heard a soothsayer, or an omen, whether you have offered sacrifice, or seen a bird, whether you have seen a Chaldean or a haruspex, whether it has lightened, thundered, something has been struck by lightning from heaven, or something has been born or done that seems like a portent — of which it is necessary that something usually happens, so that it is never permitted to rest with a quiet mind.” I have cited these things so that we may know that superstition, under every profession of religion of whatever kind, is everywhere like itself.

LVIII. For the rest, what pertains to the religion or superstition of the pagans has been handed down by very many to memory. What the account of religious observances was according to their mind — Varro, Cicero, Ovid, Festus Pompeius, Macrobius, Censorinus, Pliny, and most historians in the life of Numa set out. It is certain that some ἀποσπασμάτια

[fragmentary particles] of truth lay hidden in the πατροπαραδότοις [ancestrally transmitted] rites. Of those things which fell from them either unwillingly, or while engaged in other matters, or while investigating truth itself — testimonies of purer theology — we have an ample enough harvest in Josephus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Theodoret, Lactantius, Augustine, Steuchus Eugubinus, Mornaeus, Grotius, and innumerable others among the more recent. The absurdities, folly, impiety, fury, and madness of the whole worship and religion that prevailed among them — following the apostle in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans — Tertullian, Eusebius, Augustine, Theodoret, and others vigorously attack. Maimonides, Giraldus, Stuckius, Vossius, and Selden — with Hesiod, Cicero, Plutarch, Strabo, Pliny, and Seneca not dissenting — elegantly and clearly set out the origin, practice, and secrets of idolatry.

LIX. After religion had grown among the nations — emerging from that infinite accumulation of fables — into such a mass of superstition and idolatry that nothing more foolish or more repugnant to all natural theology could have been devised, the wisest of all at last began to be so ashamed of all the rites and the whole worship of the gods that beyond the contemplation of nature and the observance of the right and honourable they were willing to have nothing more in common with the gods. So of Socrates, Cicero, *Academic Questions*, Bk. I, 4: “Socrates,” he says, “seems to me ... to have brought philosophy down to common life, and to inquire about virtues and vices and about good and evil things in general; and to think that heavenly things are either remote from our knowledge, or that even if they were fully known, they would contribute nothing to living well.” And Tacitus, *Annals* VI, ch. 22: “As I listen to these and similar things, my judgment is in suspense — whether the affairs of mortals are

rolled about by fate and immutable necessity, or by chance; for you will find the wisest of the ancients, and those who emulate their school, of different opinions; and the opinion is implanted in many that neither our beginnings nor our end, nor finally men, are objects of care to the gods.” And Seneca: “So shall we worship, that we remember that the worship of him pertains rather to custom than to the matter itself.” These correspond to the words with which Marcus Tullius closes his most learned books, *On the Nature of the Gods*: “When these things had been said, we parted, so that Velleius judged the discourse of Cotta to be truer, but to me the discourse of Balbus seemed more inclined to the semblance of truth.” And so he had previously set out the sentiment of his own mind on all divine matters at the beginning of the first book (ch. 5): “We are not,” he says, “those to whom nothing seems true; but those who say that certain false things are mixed with all true things, of such great likeness that there is in them no certain mark for judging and giving assent.”

LX. That they should fluctuate thus pleased Satan, because he had nothing certain to put in place of the truths he had taken away. Hence, when the Athenians consulted the Pythian Apollo as to which religions they should especially maintain, the oracle was given — those which were in the custom of the ancestors, as the same Cicero testifies, *On the Laws*. And so, at last, among all the wisest and best, consent was given to that religion which Lucan ascribes to Cato:

“This was the firm resolve of stern Cato —

To keep the mean, to hold the end,

To follow nature, to spend his life for his country,

And to believe himself born not for himself alone, but for all the world.

To him a feast was to have overcome hunger; a great household,

To have kept off winter with a roof; a precious garment,
To have drawn over his limbs the rough toga in the Roman manner.
And for him the greatest use of Venus was offspring;
He is father and husband to the city;
A devotee of justice, a strict keeper of the honourable;
Good for the common weal.”

— Bk. II, 381-391.

Persius also speaks admirably for that state of things and the uncertainty under which all were agitated:

“What help is it to bring our morals into the temples,
And to deduce good things for the gods from this sinful flesh?
Tell me, O pontiffs, what does gold do in the sacred precinct?
Surely the same as a doll given by a maiden to Venus.
Why do we not give to the gods above what from a great dish
The bleary offspring of great Messalla could not give?
A will composed of right and law, and the sacred recesses
Of the mind, and a breast saturated with noble honesty —
These let me bring near the temples, and I will propitiate with spelt.”

— *Satire II*, 62, etc.

LXI. At last, wearied of fables, they poured themselves out in contempt of the gods on every occasion that presented itself. Let the most religious orator himself serve as an example — in his speech *For His Home* to the pontiffs, against Clodius: “You deny that what I am accustomed to announce about myself is tolerable; and as a clever man you even introduce an urbane and witty discourse: that I am accustomed to say that I am Jupiter, and that I continually declare that Minerva is my sister. I am not so arrogant as to say that I am Jupiter, as I am uneducated in thinking that

Minerva is the sister of Jupiter. But yet, I take to myself a virgin sister; you did not allow your sister to remain a virgin. But see whether you ought to call yourself Jupiter — since you can rightfully call the same woman both sister and wife,” ch. 34.

LXII. Also, when Antony drunk pretended to be Bacchus, the Athenians publicly pledged their Minerva to him with solemn ceremonies, according to Dio, *History*, Bk. XLVIII. Nor was there any expectation of help or assistance from the gods when men were placed in danger. Hence, when King Porus, at the urging of his friends, was advised to sacrifice to the river so that it should not receive the Macedonian rafts and should not make the crossing easy for Alexander, he replied, Οὐκ ἔστι τῶν ὅπλα ἔχόντων τὸ καταρᾶσθαι — “It is not for those who bear arms to supplicate,” as related by the wise Indians in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. II, ch. 10.

LXIII. Those who consider Nero to be numbered among men may see in Suetonius how he treated the gods. And not without reason Seneca, in the *Octavia*, Act 2, ascribed to him that saying which — as the prophet testifies, Isa. 44 — would suit all idolaters well enough:

“How foolishly shall I fear the gods, whom I myself make?”

Nor otherwise in the greatest of poets, Achilles, *Iliad*, X, 15, 20:

”Εβλαψάς μ', Ἐκάεργε, θεῶν ὀλοώτατε πάντων, ...

ἼΗ σ' ἄν τισαίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμὶς γε παρείη.

[You have harmed me, Far-worker, most destructive of all the gods ...

Would that I might take vengeance on you, if I had the power.]

“But you, Titan, most wicked of the gods, have wronged me —

You, impudent one, shall pay me, if I have the strength.”

And Propertius:

“Good mind, if you are a goddess, I dedicate to your shrine:

So many prayers of mine have fallen on deaf Jove.”

LXIV. But Tertullian acutely — that is, after his manner — attacks all this impiety in his *Apology*: “Household gods,” he says, “whom you call lares, you treat with domestic power — pawning, selling, exchanging them — sometimes Saturnus from a saucepan, sometimes Minerva from a ladle, as each is worn and battered; they are worshipped so long as each master has experienced a holier domestic necessity.”

LXV. Having set out the cradle and progress of the Gentiles' theology, its catastrophe must be briefly dispatched. God has indeed determined from the laying of the foundations of the world, at the appointed time, to send φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν [light for the revelation of the nations]. But he was pleased to conceal this mystery in himself for so long while he permitted all nations to walk in their own ways, until — covered in the densest darkness and every wretchedness — that saving light might at last shine out the more graciously upon them. Nevertheless, this counsel of his will, in the archive of infinite wisdom, he did not so immeasurably conceal as not to allow both the promises of this grace and horrible threatenings to proceed from the highest mercy toward the human race, and from the most just and most holy wrath against false, empty, and worthless gods and idols. For “Jehovah is the true God, the living God and the everlasting King: at his anger the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to endure his indignation. Thus,” he says, “shall you say to them: the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth — these shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens,” Jer. 10:10, 11. Similarly, he threatens to make lean all the gods of the earth, Zeph. 2:11. Now it is established that God aimed these threatenings against those fictitious gods and idols — under whose auspices, and doing the bidding of whose instigation (that is, the ancient

serpent in them), the four most famous empires had made continual war upon him and his people. But concerning all of these, it is long since done. They departed from the shrines; their heaven and sun, mountains and islands, have fallen; they themselves, together with all their worship, theatrical apparatus, and worshippers, have been moved from the earth and from the regions beneath heaven. At the first gleam indeed of the sun of righteousness arising, the idolatrous world perceived and mourned that its gods nodded — indeed, shuddered:

“The oracles of Delphi cease,
And darkness condemns the human race to ignorance of the future.”
— Juvenal, *Satire VI*, 554.

And nowhere do the wisest of the Gentiles play the fool more than in assigning the causes of the cessation of the oracles. “It may be,” says Cicero, *On Divination*, Bk. I, 19, “that that force of the earth which aroused the mind of the Pythia with divine inspiration has evaporated with age, just as we see that certain rivers have evaporated and dried up, or have been turned and deflected into another course.” Plutarch agrees. And no one brings anything better.

LXVI. But gradually emitting his saving light, God at last so established the old oracles that there is no mortal anywhere among the nations who makes use of that Gentile theology, or worships those ancient idols with the ancient rites, or venerates them. Thus, all those things by which, through so many centuries and an unspeakable series of time, from the cunning of Satan and the native blindness of the human mind, the world lying in the wicked one had made natural theology vain, absurd, blasphemous, polluted, defiled, and useless — have perished root and branch from the sentence of God the avenger.

CHAPTER IX

The power and efficacy of the gospel in overturning Gentilism — All the Bellarmine marks of the true church apply equally to Gentilism — An examination of the prejudices which they inflict upon men's minds — The final effort of Satan on behalf of his worship.

I. Whoever has considered with some care the dominion of ancient Gentilism over the human race — what roots it drove through a long series of centuries throughout the whole world, what fruits it bore, and its total ἀφανισμόν [abolition] — will perhaps not find the sentiment of his mind far removed from those questions with which Velleius the Epicurean in Cicero attacks the Platonic account of the origin of all things: “What contrivance was there? What tools? What levers? What workmen were employed for so great an undertaking?” (All of which things, Maffeo and Ribadeneira report, God the Father showed to Ignatius, the father of the Jesuits.) The mind, I say, cannot but be struck with the thought: what and what kind was that force, or hidden power, which God employed for removing so great a mass — one that had grown from time immemorial, “like a tree through hidden

ages” — for so great a work to be accomplished, and the ancient and universal foundations of corrupt superstition to be overthrown, plainly required the finger of God.

II. That this may be the more evident, I shall show briefly what pretexts the human race had for retaining its universal and most ancient superstition, and upon what prejudices and reasonings it relied in opposing itself to divine truth. For prejudices give strength and force to error, and mediating through vain reasonings, pretexts arise by which men of δοξαστικοί [opinionated] disposition fortify the access of the mind against the light of truth. Men who already please God in his worship are called the church. For that assembly or community of men which strives to please God in celebrating the worship he himself instituted is the true church, and always has been. That that assembly or community can be distinguished from all others who would wrongly arrogate that name to themselves by certain *marks* — this is the opinion of many learned men. That the chief of these are fifteen in number, and that they possess an incredible force for winning credence for that assembly to which they properly belong — this the most learned Bellarmine shows at length. Those who, from the evidence of those *marks*, think they have found the true church will sooner be driven from life than from communion with it. But in truth all those Bellarmine *marks* — very many of them at least, and those far the most excellent — are better fitted by nature to adorn Gentilism with the title of true religion, than to designate that divine truth and its profession which we have learned from the Son of God himself teaching, or its professors. If moreover that portion of those called Christians which, as they boast, is far the greatest, is persuaded that it ought still to trust those *marks* to such a degree as, rejecting the most certain τεκμηρίους [with evidences] of divine truth, to

trust those alone in matters of religion and commit to them the direction of souls toward truth — by how much more ought pagan men to have clung tenaciously to that profession of divine worship which was fortified by those *marks*, since all the other evidences of heavenly truth were entirely unknown to them.

III. The first *mark* of the true church for Bellarmine is the very name *catholic*; that is, what is called *catholic* is the true church. This *mark*, since it is of almost no weight, the learned man has without doubt sent forward as light-armed infantry to be sacrificed. We know where and when the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians, but the origin of this name *catholic* is most uncertain, as uncertain as the sources of the Nile. It does not occur in holy Scripture. Irenaeus reciting the Creed makes no mention of it, Bk. I, ch. 2; nor does Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics Against Heretics*. And, Ὀνόματος προσωνυμία, οὔτε ἀγαθὸν, οὔτε κακὸν κρίνεται, ἄνευ τῶν ὑποπιπτουσῶν τῷ ὀνόματι πράξεων [The appellation of a name is judged neither good nor bad, apart from the actions that fall under the name] — so rightly Justin, *Apology* II. The Roman church indeed is called *catholic* by itself; it was not so called by holy men of old. For Ignatius, it was the church ἥτις προκάθηται ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου Ῥωμαίων [which holds the chief place in the region of the Romans] — if at least that epistle is Ignatius's. For Clement, it was ἐκκλησία παροικοῦσα Ῥώμην [the church sojourning in Rome]. And the Pope is called Bishop ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ [in Rome] in the first council, can. 6. Where both he himself and the Roman church were once held, the Council of Chalcedon teaches well enough. For very many Christians, scattered throughout the whole world for many ages, it is Pontifical, papistic, apostate, idolatrous, Roman. Concerning the name,

therefore, since it is the invention of men of uncertain standing, let us dismiss the dispute and look at the thing itself.

IV. From the time when someone devised that name — the catholic church — it began to please marvellously all the worshippers of true religion (since there were those who would most absurdly confine the church of Christ within the limits of this or that particular portion or faction of Christians) — and not entirely without some justification; since by that term they wished to express nothing other than what our Saviour himself had foretold — that the gospel was to be preached ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ [in the whole inhabited world], Matt. 24:14, or ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ [in the whole world], ch. 26:13, or εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον [to the whole world], Mark 14:9, and not to the Jews alone. But the fame of this term, now immediately celebrated, grew daily in renown and praise. When, moreover, the Roman Pope had by evil arts ascended to that height of worldly power that it was easy for him to attract flatterers with hope of plunder, he attempted, from their flattery — availing himself also of the carelessness and humility of others — to draw this for himself and his faction. He, meanwhile, with no niggardly hand, measuring out to them in return those things which no sober person would ever have believed to have actually been within his power. So it was done of old, as Horace, Bk. II, *Epistle* II, 99-101:

“I go: by his judgment Alcaeus. He: by whose?

Whose But Callimachus? If he seems to ask for more,

He becomes Mimnermus and grows with his chosen surname.”

V. By the same right, the Muhammedans are Mussulmans; and Simon once was μεγάλη Θεοῦ δύναμις [the great power of God]; and Diana, a great divinity. Everywhere throughout the world, still, those who are the more numerous adorn themselves with honourable titles. The smaller or the

oppressed party gets the appellation of *faction*. Let us see, therefore, even if the pagans themselves did not arrogate to themselves alone those names which at that time were reckoned as marks of the best standing among men, while the worshippers of the true God were marked everywhere with reproachful names. Above all, they constantly gloried in, and most bitterly contended, that they alone had maintained faith and religion, and that all the rest were *superstitious*, ignorant of the ancient gods, and — if I may so speak — heretics and *schismatics*. That until the advent of our Lord, the worship of the true God flourished among the Jews alone is well known. What opinion, however, was held of them, Cornelius Tacitus, a most weighty authority, testifies, *History*, Bk. V, ch. 4: “Moses,” he says, “in order to secure his hold upon the people for the future, introduced new rites contrary to those of the rest of mankind. Among them, everything is profane which among us is sacred; and that is permitted among them which among us is unlawful” — that is, they are heretics and schismatics, because the Lawgiver taught them to observe rites repugnant to the universal custom of the human race. Plutarch says almost the same things. And there is scarcely a historian who has not handed down to memory that they worshipped the head of an ass in their temple. “The image of the animal,” says Tacitus (that is, in his own account, of an ass), “by whose indication they had overcome their wandering and their thirst, they consecrated within their sanctuary,” *History*, Bk. V, ch. 3, 4. And the historian Democritus in Suidas: Χρυσοῦν ὄνου κεφαλὴν προσεκύνουν [They worshipped a golden head of an ass]. Josephus shows that Posidonius and Apollonius Molon had handed down the same thing, the latter of whom indulged in the same madness in his second book *Against Apion*. I pass over the other portentous lies, which would, however, bear comparison not unsuitably with what the papists —

the *Catholics*, forsooth — have invented concerning the Albigenses, Waldenses, and other faithful servants of Christ. With one voice, all of them called that nation *addicted to superstition, hostile to religion*, and repugnant to the universal human consensus on the worship of God.

VI. At last, Christians arose; they also, for a time, were called Jews. Nor did the Gentiles long distinguish between the two peoples. “He expelled the Jews, who were constantly causing disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, from Rome,” says Suetonius in his *Claudius*. And Arrian, *Epictetus*, Bk. II, ch. 9: Οὐχ ὁρᾷς, πῶς ἕκαστος λέγεται Ἰουδαῖος; καὶ ὅταν τινὰ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα εἶδομεν, εἰώθαμεν λέγειν, οὐκ ἔστιν Ἰουδαῖος ἀλλ’ ὑποκρίνεται, ὅταν δὲ ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου, τότε καὶ ἔστι τῷ ὄντι, καὶ καλεῖται Ἰουδαῖος — “Do you not see how each is called a Jew? And if we have seen someone wavering, we are accustomed to say he is not a Jew but is playing the part. But when he has taken on the disposition of one baptised and professing that sect, then he truly is and is called a Jew.” This passage is adduced in vain by some to prove that the Jews were accustomed to use the rite of baptism, since the philosopher is most plainly speaking of Christians. Also at Rev. 3:9, the Holy Spirit himself, by “Jews” understands none other than Christians. Concerning these, moreover, the same Tacitus sets out the judgment of the world, *Annals*, Bk. XV, ch. 44: “Nero inflicted the most exquisite punishments on those who, detested for their crimes, the common people called *Christians*. The author of that name, Christ, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. The deadly superstition, repressed for the moment, broke out again.” And Arnobius teaches that everything opposed to human custom in morals and sacred practice was charged against Christians. Moreover, with respect to the name of their religion and

the worship of the gods, they were so entirely secure that they determined the very name *Christian* to contain sufficient grounds for inflicting the ultimate punishment, or heretic-slaughter. Hence, Tertullian and others found it necessary to compose a defence of the very name. *Verpi, Apella* [the circumcised/Jew], Jews, Christians, heretics — these were names of crimes among those *Catholics*. With equal step, therefore, both idolatrous peoples begin their march. If, therefore, any force or efficacy should attach to honourable names for indicating truth and confirming the mind in the opinion they adorn — as the Cardinal judges — those who practised Gentilism made the most use of it.

VII. The second place with Bellarmine is occupied by *antiquity* — not indeed that absolute antiquity which traces its origin to God alone, on which if this controversy were to rest, it would be wholly done with these Bellarmine *marks*; but that doubtful and merely probable antiquity which must be elicited from histories and other monuments of past events, and adjudicated from them. The whole of Gentilism also once rested on the same argument — or rather prejudice. When Jesus Christ himself first came forth to set out heavenly truth from the bosom of the Father, the Pharisees attacked him above all with that question: Τίς ἡ διδαχὴ ἡ καινὴ αὕτη — “What is this *new* doctrine?” Mark 1:27.

VIII. Similarly, the philosopher attacked the apostle Paul preaching the same truth at Athens: Δυνάμεθα, they say, γνῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἡ ἀπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδαχὴ [Can we know what this new teaching is that you are speaking?] — Acts 17:19. And in the whole contest that lay between the gospel and pagan superstition, there was scarcely anything that more violently roused the rage of unbelievers' minds against truth than that the Christian religion was *new*, destitute of antiquity, and that it endeavoured to

abolish the ancient rites and the ancestral worship of God. But how great a prejudice that persuasion instilled into their minds can easily be conjectured from the papists themselves, hardened in the pleasure — or rather the advantage — of their errors. But very many have shown that the antiquity which the Romanists put forward is doubtful in all respects and plainly false in most. It was moreover evident — setting aside those monuments of things (which they thought they rightly condemned as belonging to Jews, heretics, and schismatics) — that since the beginning of mankind, no memory of things or religions existed which antedated the origin of their worship; so that none of them doubted that the religion they professed was eternal. Symmachus uses that argument in his epistle to Theodosius: “If,” he says, “long age conciliates authority to religions, faith must be kept with so many centuries, and we must follow our forefathers who happily followed theirs. Let us imagine Rome now standing before you and arguing with you in her own words: O best of princes, fathers of the fatherland, respect my years into which the pious rite has led me, so that I may use the ceremonies of my ancestors.” And Caecilius in Minucius Felix: “How much more venerable and better to receive the discipline of your forefathers as the leaders of truth, to cherish the transmitted religions, to fear the gods whom your parents imbued you with before all others, than to know them more intimately, to adore them; and not to form opinions about divine powers, but to yield to your predecessors.” Hence the apt remark of Augustine: “This is the devil's custom — that falsehood is recommended through the succession of antiquity.” Indeed, even the Indian Americans, as the Jesuit Xavier testifies, Bk. IV, *Letter* I, were accustomed to glory in the antiquity of their religion against the novelty of the gospel. My present purpose is not to show that Bellarmine fights against evangelical truth with pagan

weapons, but to show how great an undertaking it was to overcome and abolish Gentilism, when its professors were fortified by those arguments which that most learned man judged to have such great force for retaining men's minds in the opinions which they had once adopted.

IX. Edmund Campion doubtless thought he had done something excellent when, to the arguments by which he attempted to persuade the ignorant of the pontifical religion, he added as a colophon: “Witnesses are the academies, witnesses are the tablets of the laws, witnesses are the native customs of men, witnesses are the election and inauguration of the Caesars, witnesses are the rites and anointing of kings, witnesses are the orders of knights and their very mantles, witnesses are the windows, witnesses are the coins, witnesses are the civic gateways and civic dwellings, witnesses are the fruit and life of our forefathers, witnesses are all things both great and small — that no religion in the world has ever been rooted so deeply as ours.” But however light these things are, they clearly show that that religion has spread itself far and wide over no inconsiderable span of time and has occupied the minds of very many and corrupted morals. But with how much greater pomp and appearance of argumentation, all these things could have been said of Gentilism when it was at war with evangelical truth — there is no one who does not know. For the superstition of the pagans had invaded not merely Europe or certain of its more celebrated parts, as pontifical superstition did, but had occupied the whole world from the most ancient ages — beyond all the testimony of history and the memory of men — in such a way that there was absolutely nothing throughout the whole world that did not bear witness to its dominion. Well known are the things which Clement, Justin, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, and others opposed to this pretext of antiquity. If, therefore, that doubtful antiquity

which can be investigated from the monuments of things and events among men is to be a presumption of truth, then surely none of mortals in any age or in any cause could have produced it with greater evidence and multitude of testimonies than the patrons of Gentilism. Without doubt, most people were no more persuaded that they were men or alive, than that from the beginning of things the religious worship of their nations had prevailed — and indeed eternally, if things themselves are eternal. Nothing, therefore, they cried out more loudly than that what is everywhere, what is always, and what is with all people. Hence, when Rocharus, king of the Frisians, was about to be baptised and had put one foot into the water, he asked “where the greater part of his predecessors were constituted — in hell or in paradise?” When told that most were in hell, he immediately pulled back, saying, “it is better to follow the many than the few.”

X. Then the cardinal places in the third position *long duration*, never interrupted — if he means past times, this *mark* in reality differs not at all from the one that preceded it, except that here the distinction is that the long duration drawn out from ancient times is said to have been never interrupted. But if he speaks of future times, that *mark* is nothing other than the conjecture of a learned man, although I for my own part would truly believe that the Roman church will endure until he comes who will destroy it with the breath of his mouth. But the pagans too dedicated by their vows a perennial duration to their worship, and confirmed it by predictions. The poet, meaning to show that he had made for himself an eternal name, says:

“Still shall I grow in the praise of posterity, ever fresh,
As long as the pontiff shall climb the Capitol
With the silent virgin.”

— Horace, *Odes* III, 30, 7.

If he would choose to play the historian, he is by no means to be compared with the pagans. The beginnings of idolatrous superstition are to this day wholly unknown. From its rise, moreover, to the preaching of the gospel in the world, at least two thousand years are agreed to have elapsed; nor was its profession ever interrupted. The matter is well known and requires no proofs. But this prejudice — arising from antiquity and long duration — had struck such deep roots in their minds regarding the religious worship which they observed, that it is not to be wondered at if they could scarcely be torn from an opinion fortified by it in any way.

XI. In the fourth place, the cardinal enumerates the *multitude and variety of believers* — and in assigning this *mark* to his church, all sectarians everywhere would doubtless pay a great price, since it falls directly against that *mark* of the true church which Christ himself pronounced, if at least the flock of Christ is the true church. But since the Pope wishes it to be a *mark*, let it be one. He who contended that the multitude is not a *mark* of the true church — if this dispute is to be referred to the Word of God for decision — and who argued that the Roman faction ought to be called neither absolutely nor comparatively great and many, would in my judgment have an easy case before him. But that is not our present business. Most of the papists are wise, learned, and most exercised in practical affairs. They know perfectly what things are fitted and suitable for alluring the minds of mortals to adopt some opinion in religion, or for persuading them to cling to it stubbornly and tenaciously. How great the force of multitude is in this cause is therefore well seen by them. Indeed, it is almost long since all hope in their cause appears to reside in nothing other than that they are many, and therefore, dismissing all other arguments, they determined long since everywhere throughout the world to settle the business of religion by the

sword. In the meantime, we know that this *mark* is most properly suited Gentilism. They were the many, all, the whole world. The sons of the mathematicians affirm that the highest mountains are no impediment to saying that the world is perfectly round. Far less can the very tiny flock of worshippers of the true God appear able to prevent the world from being said to have been lying in the evil of Gentilism. For almost whatever there was anywhere of the human race had conspired with singular harmony into polytheism — and, good God! what men, what commanders, kings, generals, philosophers, wise men, good, just, temperate, courageous, most devoted to their country, most tenacious of equity and goodness, beyond what can be imagined! — Were those people to suffer themselves to be torn away and separated from the religion of these — that is, of all men absolutely, and especially the best? What more repugnant to all reason could be said or imagined than that, fascinated by the persuasion of a few men, they should bid farewell to the persuasion of the whole world through so many ages? See, reader, this corner of the world in which, by God's gracious arrangement, we spend our days; how many are there who would not count it the height of madness to depart from the most widely received opinion of the majority — especially since that departure was accompanied by certain of those evils which rushed in crowds upon the first evangelisers? And yet we all profess that we ought to be obedient not to the multitude, not to antiquity, but to the single word of Christ. And the pontifical catholicism will never, however it burst itself, equal the amplitude of Gentilism.

XII. There follows with Bellarmine the *succession of bishops in the Roman church*; the same principle also applies among the Muhammedans with the caliphate. Old Rome likewise had its own chief pontiffs, whose

title, name, place, office, and spirit this Bellarmine bishop invaded, seized, and holds — Rev. 13:11-13. The succession of those pontiffs from the first consuls to the Emperor Tiberius — under whose reign the Christian name began to be known — was reviewed in the Fasti. And they believed that the supreme authority of those pontiffs was divinely constituted. So the orator, speaking to the pontiffs on behalf of his house, ch. 1, 12: “Although,” he says, “many things have been divinely discovered and instituted by our ancestors, O pontiffs, yet nothing is more excellent than that they willed you to preside both over the religions of the immortal gods and over the supreme affairs of state.” In which opinion all Romanists still persist. He immediately adds those things which even now fill both pages in the disputes of the papists about the church: “For what,” he says, “is so arrogant as to try to teach the college of pontiffs about religion, about divine matters, about sacred ceremonies? Or so foolish as to relate to you what anyone has found in your own books? Or so forward as to wish to know those things which your ancestors wished you alone to be consulted on and to know?” Nor was any of those pontiffs a woman, a sorcerer, a murderer, an incestuous person, or a sacrilegist — as far as we know from the monuments of those times. To adopt an opinion in matters of religion different from those pontiffs seemed to be the height of madness.

XIII. Indeed, those supreme pontiffs were of such authority that it was scarcely more permissible to dissent from their opinion in religion with impunity than it is in our time from the pope himself. For the historian describes their authority in such a way that you can scarcely know whether he is speaking of old or new Rome. Ποντίφικες, he says, by the institution of Numa, τὴν μεγίστην παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσι ... εἰσὶ καὶ τῶν μεγίστων πραγμάτων κύριοι· καὶ γὰρ δικάζουσιν οὗτοι τὰς ἱερὰς δίκας

ἀπάσας, ἰδιώταις τε καὶ ἀρχοῦσι καὶ λειτουργοῖς θείων (which is still the established distribution of the Roman church into its various classes of members), καὶ νομοθετοῦσιν ὅσα τῶν ἱερῶν ἄγραφα ὄντα καὶ ἀνέθιστα, κρίνοντες ἃ ἂν ἐπιτήδεια τυγχάνειν αὐτοῖς φανεῖν νόμων τε καὶ ἐθισμῶν. Τὰς δὲ ἀρχὰς ἀπάσας ὅσαις θυσία τε καὶ θεραπεία θεῶν ἀνάκειται, καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς ἅπαντας ἐξετάζουσι. Ὑπηρέτας τε αὐτῶν καὶ λειτουργοὺς, οἷς χρῶνται πρὸς τὰ ἱερὰ, οὗτοι φυλάττουσι μηδὲν ἐξαμαρτάνειν παρὰ τοὺς ἱεροὺς νόμους. Τοῖς τε ἰδιώταις, ὑπόσοι μὴ ἴσασι τοὺς περὶ τὰ θεῖα, ἢ δαιμόνια, σεβασμούς, ἐξηγηταὶ γίνονται καὶ προφηταὶ· καὶ εἴ τινας αἰσθωνταὶ μὴ πειθομένους ταῖς ἐπιταγαῖς αὐτῶν, ζημιοῦσι πρὸς ἕκαστον χρῆμα ὀρῶντες. Εἰσὶ τε ἀνυπεύθυνοι πάσης δίκης τε καὶ ζημίας, οὔτε βουλῇ λόγον ἀποδιδόντες οὔτε δήμῳ. Ἐκλιπόντος δὲ τινος αὐτῶν τὸν βίον, ἕτερος εἰς τὸν ἐκείνου καθίστατο τόπον, οὐχ' ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου αἵρεθεὶς, ἀλλ' ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐκείνων [The pontiffs hold the greatest authority among the Romans and are lords of the most important affairs; for they judge all sacred causes, both for private persons and magistrates and ministers of divine things, and they legislate for all sacred matters that are unwritten and not established by custom, judging what seems suitable to be their laws and practices. And they examine all magistracies to which sacrifice and the service of the gods are committed, and all the priests. And they keep their servants and ministers, whom they use for sacred rites, from committing any transgression against the sacred laws. And to private persons who do not know the reverences due to divine or daemonic beings, they become interpreters and prophets; and if they perceive any who are not obedient to their commands, they fine them, looking to each case. And they are exempt from all liability of judgment and punishment, rendering account neither to the senate nor to the people. And when any of them departs from life,

another is established in his place, chosen not by the people but by themselves], Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, Bk. II. Whether Dionysius could have given a more accurate description of pontifical authority, if he were now living at Rome as he once did, may rightly be doubted. “The pontiffs,” he says, “are endowed with the highest authority and hold dominion in the greatest affairs. For they judge all sacred disputes among private persons, magistrates, and ministers of the sacred rites.” (In the exercise of this part of their authority, the Roman pontiff has disturbed every Christian kingdom without exception, and some he has utterly ruined and overthrown.) “But they also enact laws concerning sacred things not yet written down or received into use, if they seem worthy of being supplied with laws and customs” (that is, they alone were judges of unwritten traditions; so that whatever ones they wished, and whenever they wished, they confirmed by laws and canons as things to be observed — which is the most strongly fortified citadel of present pontifical power). “They also examine all the magistrates to whom sacrifice and the worship of the gods has been committed, and all the priests, and keep the ministers of the sacred rites in their duty lest they transgress the sacred laws.” (That is, they alone are lords of the whole clergy, the source and origin of all ecclesiastical order and power.) “They also set out and interpret the worship of the gods or genii for private persons.” (For those private persons, it is sufficient if with implicit faith they reverently cultivate and embrace the things which they themselves prescribe in the worship of the saints.) “And if they perceive any contemning their prescriptions, they fine them according to the magnitude of the offence” (but we do not read that those punishments were capital, except in the case of the Vestal Virgins. But there is scarcely any region throughout all Europe which the pontiffs of Rome of

the second rank have not stained with deadly slaughters, blood, fire, and deaths of various kinds on account of contempt for their prescriptions). “They themselves are exempt from all prosecution and punishment, nor are they bound to render account either to the senate or to the people” (that is, the pontiff judges all, and is judged by no one. And ἀνυπεύθυνος [exempt from accountability] sounds sweet to pontifical ears. But whether they will or not, they will at last render account to the Judge of all). “And if any of them departs from life, another is usually subrogated in the place of the departed — not chosen by the votes of the people, but by whomever the college judges most suitable.” Just as is still done at Rome. Let the reader recognise from this, of whom the Roman pontiff is the successor and vicar.

XIV. He proposes in the next place *agreement in doctrine with the ancient church*. Since, however, he excludes from that ancient church the apostles and their writings, he means nothing other than that the true church is that which teaches about sacred matters as the predecessors of those of whom it consists taught. But this was the most strongly fortified citadel of all Gentilism. Nothing was reckoned more foolish, nothing more worthy of blame, than to reject πατροπαραδότους [ancestrally transmitted] rites. That was superstition — ignorant of the ancient gods. Socrates was condemned to death for no other reason than that he held those not to be gods whom the city, from antiquity, had believed to be gods. Against Christians, in particular, the rage was so great on the grounds that they were deserters of their ancestral and national religion. How much trouble the idolaters caused the professors of the gospel by this argument, Origen, Justin, Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, and all to a man who undertook the patronage of truth against their sophisms, are witnesses. And so they were not free from this prejudice against the gospel either.

XV. The seventh Bellarmine *mark* is *the union of members among themselves and with the head, the bishop of Rome*. The insolent boasting shames me; that union which prevails among the Romanists is the greatest reproach to the Christian name, and were it not that the consideration of self-interest is the most powerful motive among the majority, it would long since have been almost nothing at all. Remove force, the most savage tyranny, burning alive, ignorance, avarice, worldly pride, and love of the present world — that union will immediately appear too diluted to subsist. What kind it is, the wars, brigandage, butcheries, slaughters, devastations of cities, depopulations of fields which are daily perpetrated and accomplished among the members of that church — though the Roman pontiff remonstrates in vain — testify. Unless they were stupid, blind, or the most shameless of mortals and most ignorant of evangelical truth, they would long since have been ashamed of this most insane boasting. I would prefer a church divided into a thousand pieces to one united in the papist manner. The dissensions, divisions, schisms — political, ecclesiastical, of spirits, opinions, writings — which prevail in that human conspiracy which wishes to be called the church, the world knows. In this one thing only, for various political, worldly, and Satanic reasons, do those astute men, bewitched by worldly affairs, seem to agree — to strenuously oppose evangelical truth and the liberty of Christians obtained through Christ himself. Yet I would not assert that among the papists no unity at all exists; since the Spirit predicted of the pope that he “would cause all, small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to have the mark in their right hand,” Rev. 13:16. Among the pagans, very many things were otherwise. That strong man armed kept his whole house — the whole world — in peace and union. There was a certain diversity in worship not unlike what is seen among

religious orders, each of which finds more pleasure in this or that patron saint. As regards the sum of the matter, the ancient idolaters cultivated peace most closely united among themselves under their head Satan and his vicar, the supreme Roman pontiff — especially after the world had given way to that city. That different religions should be brought in, that other gods than those he himself worshipped should be adored and preached — this Maecenas persuaded Augustus not to allow, as Dio reports, as we showed elsewhere at length. It was also forbidden by the Law of the Twelve Tables to introduce foreign gods. That it was impious and unlawful for Romans to adopt sacred customs foreign to the city, this they argue against the teaching of Paul, Acts 16:21. Egypt virtually alone pressed heretical claims. There was no dissension in suppressing truth. “Pagans,” says Augustine in his *Sermon on Fasting*, “worshipping many different gods — indeed quarrelling and burning with mutual hostile hatred — yet maintain among them some kind of unity, since they go together equally to their temples and are themselves in agreement even when the very gods are angry.” And they were accustomed, elated by this appearance of harmony, to reproach Christians with their divisions — as the same Augustine testifies, *On the Sheep*, ch. 15; and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Bk. VII.

XVI. Let us proceed with the Cardinal. He mentions in the eighth and ninth places *the sanctity of doctrine, together with its efficacy, and the sanctity of its authors*. Beyond all doubt the doctrine that is most holy is most true. For the gospel itself is truth according to godliness, as the apostle testifies, Tit. 1:1. And it is most efficacious; since “the word of God is living and efficacious,” Heb. 4:12; “indeed the power of God to salvation to those who believe,” Rom. 1:16. Through it “as many as are born of God”

are regenerated, 1 Pet. 1:23. And its author is holy; since he was none other than the most holy Son of God, Heb. 1:1, 2; John 1:18. But what sanctity is, what is true and false — we cannot know unless taught by that word. Moreover, the sanctity that can be seen can be feigned; that which cannot be feigned cannot be seen. But the sanctity of the Roman church is testified by very many — nearly all — of the men of all orders within it; the clergy above all; it is testified by the lives, morals, and deaths of the popes — detestable even to pagans; by the pride, arrogance, avarice, ignorance, sloth, cruelty, and rapine of the bishops; by the cunning, frauds, impurity, hypocrisy, and unspeakable sins of those called the religious; by the idolatry of all; and especially by the frauds, impostures, lies, treacheries, murders, lusts, perjuries, and ingenuity in extenuating the sins of men of every order, of the Jesuits. And the sanctity of that church has advanced so far that on account of it, among the American Indians — where especially they ought to have cultivated it to the honour of Christ and the gospel — the very name Christian has been rendered plainly odious and abominable; so that whatever is finally determined concerning them, they stubbornly and obstinately refuse to have anything in common with Christians or their religion. Lodovicus Granatensis laments that matters have at last been brought to such a pass “that among the barbarous nations the Christian name is so execrable that when monks are sent to them, it is necessary, lest those monks be detested with the same hatred, to say that they are not Christians but fathers who have come to care for their welfare; for such cruelty have the Spaniards exercised toward them that the most holy name of Christian has been reckoned not the name of piety and religion but of cruelty and inhumanity.” The most holy Lord Jesus will, in the appointed time, exact the penalty for this contamination of his most holy institutions

and contempt of the gospel. The fathers of the Society also acted holily when in preaching the gospel among the Chinese, they studiously concealed the fact that Jesus Christ was crucified, and thus persuaded them to put their faith in another Jesus, I know not what — a thing which was finally forbidden at Rome. It is wonderful that Bellarmine dared to touch this point, since he well knew it to be very easy to compile from approved histories, by the writers of his own church, enormous volumes full of the most execrable crimes, lusts, and impieties of the chief fathers of that church — volumes compiled from daily examples. But this is not our task. If the most learned man speaks of sanctity as it strikes the eyes of men, all confess that it ought to be measured by some rule either divinely given or received by whatever means. But such was the doctrine of certain philosophers among the pagans, that many Christians are still not ashamed to call it most holy. Its efficacy for changing men's morals is proved by very many examples; and how great was the sanctity of life according to the precepts of philosophy among the pagans is well known. Except for faith alone, and the knowledge of the true God in Christ — which alone is eternal life — there appears to have been almost nothing among the things that strike the eyes that was lacking among some of them.

XVII. Then he reviews the *miracles* which he contends happen in his church, and not elsewhere. Nowhere do certain pontifical writers carry themselves more magnificently than when they come to miracles. Let the reader consult here the great Valerianus in his enumeration of the miracles of the Capuchin brothers — if the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine does not satisfy him — and along with his miraculous history, the observations of the most learned Johann Comenius. If anyone delights in prestidigitations, trifles, fictions, lies, vain, useless, portentous, diabolical,

ridiculous, and blasphemous things, let him resort to the legends, writers of saints' lives, archives of monks, papal canonisations of saints, and the compilers of ecclesiastical annals after the fourth century — and they will supply him with these things in abundance, of whatever kind can be gathered or invented. I thought it worthwhile to repeat here one only out of a thousand, by which the rest may be judged; and it is handed down in the *Book of Conformities*. When Francis, says the author, was on one occasion preaching, and a donkey was making a commotion in the crowd, Francis said to it: “Brother Ass, be quiet until I finish the sermon.” Immediately, the donkey, obedient to his word, composed itself with a fitting gesture at Francis's feet. It is a wonder if there is a donkey left in the whole world that would not immediately wish to submit itself to the power of that church in which this whole efficacy of working miracles has its place.

XVIII. In the meantime: as all know that true miracles — wrought by the immediate power of God to confirm heavenly truth, such as those of our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles — have great force and efficacy for rousing men's minds to listen to truth itself and to believe it; so it is most certain that diabolical portents and wonders whose causes cannot be investigated, and fictions sold and believed as true miracles, are most powerful for ensnaring the common people in credulous superstition and for persuading them to embrace with stubborn reverence the dogmas which appear to be confirmed by them. Now miracles of this kind were most frequent among the pagans. There is scarcely one among the better Greek or Latin historians who has not handed down very many of them in writing. Well known are what Porphyry wrote of Pythagoras and Philostratus of Apollonius — to such a degree that the impious Hierocles contended that the magician of Tyana was to be set beside Christ himself in the brilliance

of his miracles — whose criminal audacity Eusebius refutes in a single book. But this is nothing to the papists, for whom it is customary to swear that this or that friar has performed more miracles than Christ and all the apostles together. Innumerable things of this kind are reviewed here and there by Diodorus, Livy, Polybius, Plutarch, Cicero, Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus, Caesar, Pausanias, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Valerius Maximus collected some of them, Bk. I, ch. 6. I am unwilling to dwell on individual instances or to compare them with the miracles of the papists. It will suffice to have alluded to the most celebrated history of the deliverance of the temple at Delphi from the sacrilege of the Gauls. Pausanias relates it among others in his *Phocica*. All know that Satan placed his throne among men, chiefly at Delphi, for several centuries. Nowhere did he more shamelessly sell himself as the god of this world. The Gauls, breaking into Greece under their leader Brennus, attempted to plunder the temple of Apollo built there, enriched with the votive offerings of almost all nations and peoples. When Brennus, having overcome Thermopylae, made straight for Delphi, the townspeople, struck with fear, fled to the oracle; the god immediately commanded them to be of good courage and to fear nothing: Φυλάξειν δὲ αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλετο τὰ ἑαυτοῦ — “He himself promised to defend his own things]; immediately, everything full of portents.” Τοῖς βαρβάροις ἀντεσήμαινε τὰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ταχύ τε καὶ ὧν ἴσμεν φανερώτατα — “Signs sudden and of all that we have ever heard of the most evident, were divinely sent against the barbarians.” Ἡ τε γὰρ γῆ πᾶσα ὅσῃν ἐπεῖχεν τῶν Γαλατῶν στρατεία βιαίως καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐσεῖετο τῆς ἡμέρας — “First the earth, as much of it as the Gallic line occupied, shook with a great motion for almost the whole day.” Then, Βρονταί τε καὶ κεραυνοὶ συνεχεῖς ἐγίνοντο, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐξέπληττον τε τοὺς Κελτοὺς καὶ δέχεσθαι τοῖς ὥσὶ τὰ

παραγγελλόμενα ἐκώλυνον [Thunders and lightnings came without ceasing, and they both terrified the Celts and prevented them from receiving in their ears the commands given] — “Peals of thunder and lightning not only terrified the Gauls but rendered their senses so blunted and astonished that they could not hear the signals given by the leaders.” Τὰ τῶν ἡρώων τηνικαῦτα σφίσιν ἐφάνη φάσματα, ὁ Ὑπέροχος καὶ Λαίδοκός τε, καὶ Πύρρος — “Moreover, the spectres of the heroes were seen rising against them — Hyperochus, Laodocus, and Pyrrhus,” and others. Τοιούτοις μὲν οἱ βάρβαροι παρὰ πᾶσαν τὴν ἡμέραν παθήμασί τε καὶ ἐκπλήξεσι συνείχοντο. Τὰ δὲ τῇ νυκτὶ πολλῶ σφᾶς ἔμελλεν ἀλγεινότερα ἐπιλήψασθαι — “And by such terrors and disasters were the Gauls struck and routed throughout the whole day. But at night, more deadly disasters struck and overwhelmed them.” How this came about, what follows shows: Ῥίγος τε γάρ, he says, ἰσχυρὸν καὶ νιφετὸς ἦν ὁμοῦ τῷ ῥίγει. Πέτραι τε ἀπολισθάνουσαι τοῦ Παρνασσοῦ μεγάλαι, καὶ κρημνοὶ καταρρήγνυμενοι σκοπὸν τοὺς βαρβάρους εἶχον καὶ αὐτοῖς οὐ καθ' ἓνα ἢ δύο, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τριάκοντα καὶ ἔτι πλείοσιν, ὥς ἕκαστοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ φρουροῦντες, ἢ καὶ ἀναπαυόμενοι τύχοιεν, ἀθρόοις ἢ ἀπόλεια ἐγίνετο ὑπὸ τῆς ἐμβολῆς τῶν κρημνῶν — “That night the most bitter frost with snow greatly afflicted them. Great rocks moreover and crags of the mountain spontaneously breaking away from Parnassus fell upon the barbarians as upon a target set for them. Nor were they overwhelmed singly or in pairs, but thirty and more at a time, as they chanced to be standing guard together or resting in the same place, were crushed by the impact of the falling crags.” In this manner, terrified, broken, scattered, they were all utterly destroyed to a man. Thus, it pleased God to avenge the wicked impiety of the human race and its defection from the knowledge and worship of himself. For since it did not seem good to

them to retain God in their knowledge, God delivered them into the power of the prince of darkness and permitted him, for the sake of greater hardening, in the defence of the citadel of δεισιδαιμονίας [superstition], to perform so many and so great portentous miracles. In the same manner, he foretold and acted that he would deal with the followers of Antichrist. For “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God sent to them the efficacy of error, that they should believe the lie, and delivered them to be deluded by him, whose coming is according to that effective force of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders” — as the apostle teaches us, 2 Thess. 2:9, 11. This, however, is the difference between the degrees of that twofold efficacy: that the papal antichrist has never yet anywhere performed as many or as great miracles and portents as Satan produced in the patronage of ethnic idolatry. For although myriads of portents and prodigies of this kind are not worth a straw against a single testimony of holy Scripture, yet if such things as occurred at Delphi had ever anywhere happened in the defence of pontifical sacred rites — of whatever kind and quality they were — it can easily be conjectured how eagerly the pope-worshippers would have seized upon them for their own use and with what insolent boasting they would have exalted themselves everywhere. By this prejudice also, therefore — the prejudice of miracles, that is — they were not easily willing to be torn from the darkness of their errors. For what? Should they forsake powerful, propitious, present gods — who had given such illustrious evidences of their care and concern for them and their worship, whose divine majesty, power, supreme force, and benefits had been made manifest by so many marvellous portents — at the preaching of a new religion previously unheard of in the world, upon which undertaking a few obscure, superstitious, worthless men had engaged

themselves? This seemed sufficiently foreign to all wisdom, constancy, faith, and virtue. To receive an unknown God, a crucified liberator, a Jewish religion — leaving the gods of their fathers, after they had used them in war and peace through an innumerable series of years — should this be counted just? It would be better to die than to admit upon oneself this supreme wickedness and dishonour. But that the gospel surmounted these mountains of prejudice — this is well known.

XIX. The *prophetic light* is Bellarmine's twelfth mark — not indeed that which was in the divine writers of the Old and New Testaments, nor that of Jesus Christ and his apostles, upon which all Christian faith rests; but a certain gift of predicting future things which he says some persons in the Roman church have possessed — this is what the Cardinal intends. That pseudo-prophets have existed in every age, both within and without the people of God, all know; and there is nothing in which Satan has more bewitched the minds of men and made them more subject to himself than by the prediction of future things. Among the Gentiles, there lived Sibyls, and they were pagan; whose oracles were most celebrated, and all served to confirm the most foul idolatry, as appears from all the prophecies drawn from their books, which are found in Livy, Cicero, and others. The Delphic oracle and others, the whole world venerated. How far Satan can go, how far God may be willing to permit him to predict future things — we are not now disputing. This is certain: that among the Gentiles it was most firmly believed that the prophetic light resided with themselves alone; that their gods were the only foreknowers and foretellers of future things; and that they communicated that gift of foreknowing the future to many. Occupied, therefore, by this prejudice also, they made stubborn war upon truth.

XX. In his thirteenth mark — which is *the confession of adversaries* — the Cardinal extricates himself unhappily; had he not previously resolved to fill up the number of fifteen marks, he would beyond all doubt not have picked up this most absurd one from the gutter. But would that there had been none among the ancient fathers, scholastics, or others, who by their confession so assented to Gentilism as to affirm that those who lived according to it could, if only they lived μετὰ λόγου [according to reason], be saved in that superstition — nor will the Cardinal ever extort a clearer testimony from the mouths of any adversaries for his church.

XXI. *The unhappy end of those who opposed the church* constitutes the fourteenth mark. This the idolaters also claimed for themselves. We mentioned the πανωλεθρίαν [utter destruction] of the sacrilegious Gauls. “The gold of Tolosa” passed into a proverb. All historians record the unhappy ends of those who undertook any enterprise while neglecting or despising the religion. But from this one can judge how great the confidence which the pagans placed in this mark: since from the first moment the gospel began to be known, the metropolis of all superstition had grown in worldly felicity through various successes and prosperous events to such a height as it had not to ascend higher. And, therefore, all unfavourable events of things, all unhappy issues of wars, and all evils by which the human race was in any way afflicted, they constantly affirmed were to be imputed to Christians and their religion. Hence Tertullian: “For the defence of their hatred they also put forward that vanity — their belief that Christians are the cause of every public disaster and every popular inconvenience. If the Tiber has risen to the walls, if the Nile has not risen to the fields, if the sky has stood still, if the earth has moved, if there is famine, if there is plague — immediately it is cried: ‘Christians to the

lions” Cyprian, *To Demetrian*, Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. III, ch. 30, and Bk. V, ch. 22, have similar things. And in the latter part of question 126 *To the Orthodox*: Πῶς δὲ ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς οὐ δείκνυται ὀσιώτερος, ὅτι ἔως μὲν ἐκεῖνος κατεῖχε τὰς πόλεις, πᾶσαι αἱ πόλεις καὶ οἱ ἄγροι εὐπραγίαν καὶ εὐθηνίαν ἐκέκτηντο, καὶ ταῦτα συχνότερον πολεμούμεναι, ἀφ' οὗ δὲ αὐτὰς τὸ Χριστιανικὸν κατέλαβε κήρυγμα, καὶ οἴκων, καὶ οἰκούντων καὶ τῆς λοιπῆς εὐθηνίας κατέστησαν ἔρημοι· καὶ μόλις τὰ λείψανα τῶν πάλαι ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων γεγενημένων κτισμάτων κατέχουσαι τό ποτε πόλεις, γεγενῆσθαι δεικνύουσι τῆς παλαιᾶς εὐθηνίας καὶ τῆς νέας ἐρημίας ἑκατέρας τὰς θρησκείας αἰτίας ἀμφοτέρων προφέρουσαι [How is Hellenism not shown to be more holy, in that while it held the cities, all the cities and the fields enjoyed prosperity and abundance — and this even though they were more frequently attacked by war — but since the Christian preaching took hold of them, they have become desolate of houses and inhabitants and the rest of their abundance, and scarcely holding the remnants of the buildings once erected by the Greeks, the places that were once cities show that they were such, pointing to each of the religions as the cause of both the ancient abundance and the new desolation]. It is therefore most certain that Bellarmine is fighting here with nothing but pagan weapons. Let the apologetic writings of the ancient Christians — Justin, Tertullian, Arnobius, Augustine, Orosius — be consulted; they show clearly what the pagans determined about this mark, and what truly ought to be determined.

XXII. *Temporal happiness divinely granted* is the final Bellarmine mark of the true church. Had he approached the church's ruin soberly, he would scarcely have employed this mark. It is pagan, Muhammedan, and above all, contrary to the Word of God. By it the idolatrous crowd of Jews in

Egypt contended against the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. 44:15-18: “Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, even all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Jehovah, we will not listen to you. But we will certainly perform every word that has gone out of our own mouth, to burn offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done — we and our fathers, our kings and our princes — in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no evil. But since we stopped burning offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything, and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.” Let the cardinal go now and teach us what distinguishes his mark from this mark of the Jews. Both parties argue most bitterly, and both affirm — the one that temporal happiness was divinely granted to them from the time they devoted themselves to heavenly worship, the other that the greatest misery befell them from neglecting it. But what are these things — bread, food, cheerfulness — if compared with what the pagan orator offers in the assertion of this mark? “However much,” he says, “conscript fathers, we may love ourselves, we have surpassed all nations and peoples not in numbers as the Spaniards, not in bodily strength as the Gauls, not in cunning as the Carthaginians, not in arts as the Greeks, not even in that native and natural feeling which belongs to this nation and this land as the Italians and Latins themselves — but in piety and religion, and in this one wisdom: that we have perceived all things to be governed and guided by the divine power of the immortal gods,” Cicero, *Speech on the Responses of the Haruspices*, IX. If the cardinal were to hear this grave consular man

discoursing seriously about the deeds, victories, and prodigious successes of the Romans, and abusing all of these in confirmation of the most vain superstition — what, pray, would he have to reply? He would not deny that this constitutes a mark of the true church and therefore of true religion and worship; whether he would yield or not is uncertain; how he would protect himself and the truth, it is very difficult to conjecture. So Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, Bk. II, affirms that he set out the Roman sacred rites in order that ἵνα τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι τὴν Ῥωμαίων εὐσέβειαν, ἣν οἱ ἄνδρες ἐπετήδευον, μὴ παράδοξον φανῇ τὸ πάντας αὐτοῖς τὸ κάλλιστον λαβεῖν τοὺς πολέμους τέλος, ἀπάντων γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ὑποθέσεις εὐσεβεστάτας φανήσονται ποιησάμενοι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα τοὺς θεοὺς ἐσχηκότες ἐν τοῖς κινδύνοις εὐμενεῖς — that is, “So that those to whom the piety of the Romans was hitherto unknown should no longer wonder that the issues of all their wars were always favourable to them; for they will be found to have inaugurated all those things with the greatest piety and for the most just reasons; and therefore to have had the gods especially propitious in dangers.”

XXIII. And all these things are said to this end — that that divine force and efficacy of the gospel, or of the word of the cross of Christ, by which it set up distinguished trophies against all idolatrous worship in a brief space of time, may shine forth the more clearly. Relying on it alone and the presence and power of Christ in it, a very few men attacked the many — the whole world; the poor attacked the lords of things; the foolish attacked the most wise; the unlearned attacked the most learned — who were fortified by prejudices, arguments, most ancient traditions, miracles, and those arguments which even Christians in name alone still reckon irrefutable.

They did not desist until, through a thousand dangers, deaths, torments, and innumerable perils, they had subdued the whole world to God and Christ.

XXIV. Now, when the light of the gospel first began to shine out, Satan appears to have perceived from many indications the ruin of his universal and most ancient dominion. Lest, however, he should seem to falter or to fail himself *in extremis*, he left no stone unturned in order to fortify himself and his forces against heavenly truth and suppress it. For besides the fact that by monstrous cruelty he compelled his slaves to rage against the professors of the gospel — so as if possible to suffocate truth in the blood of those who cultivated it — he also attempted in various ways to restore that superstition by which alone he was everything, and to add new forces and new lustre to it. For since there were two parts of Gentilism — namely, the vain opinions about God and divine matters, and the idolatrous worship — very many things in each part, most widely received among all men, were things from which human reason itself, when it brought them to examination, was compelled to recoil. Lest therefore anyone should from these first seize an occasion for doubting about the whole of that most vain superstition by which they were ensnared, and thereby of investigating the truth — as soon as the fame of the gospel began to spread through the world — he stirred up great and learned men who, while saving its αὐτοκρατορία [autocracy], might devise and defend opinions about God and divine matters that were more spiritual and less repugnant to right reason, and might establish manners of performing worship that were at least less absurd and ridiculous than those commonly in use. In the first part of this undertaking, Amelius, Eumenius, Plotinus, Proclus, Hierocles, Celsus, and others laboured diligently at it. For these men, though most tenacious of idolatry, yet diligently set out opinions about God more sober than the

common herd of philosophers had previously transmitted, and exploded the vain, false, and harmful opinions about the divine power. But it is most certain that they used for this purpose the benefit of that truth which they hated, which had now sent its rays into the minds of men. Those who chiefly laboured to adorn the nefarious worship and its most wicked mysteries with paint were Apollonius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Julian; and in these consisted the last effort of falling Hellenism. But the Word and Spirit of God prevailed; until, with the wickedness and impiety of men growing strong, almost the whole world again shamefully defected from the true and pure worship of God.