Translation: On the Ages of the World and of Man

Prologue

It has been very necessary, most renowned of men, to think of this span of time in which we are now confined, in an unbroken silence, without any enthusiasm for discussing it, particularly when nothing else is involved but the business of pursuing money, and every single day an unremitting concern for making profits spreads its corruption through our minds: the greed of a moneygrabber, not the words of a commentator, better suits our mood and is far more appealing. In these concerns no grief is extended to those who mourn, no sympathy is felt for those in want, but calculation of interest solely for accumulating wealth goes on all through the night. Beside the avaricious mind, the voice becomes insignificant. Believe me, as God is our witness, I confess I wanted to ignore your request for these writings, but I had impressed on my mind that in no respect should it be found disobedient to your command. Be therefore satisfied with this load, which I have garnered for you from the flowery gardens of the Muses, and like Eurystheus you have taken upon yourself the task of making me sweat like Hercules.

Also I beg you, as a reader concerned with my writings, notice carefully that, if reading the work subjoined does not offend your judgment (though I have little enough hope of this), I have been pleased to carry through a device of poetry; but if the writing grows confused and darkens into a black cloud of foolishness, even so many lamps burning through the night must die away into the ashes of silence, and nights be prolonged till dawn without achieving anything worthwhile. Therefore, Master, for whatever reason I am seen to begin this little work of mine, or from whatever impulse I am known to take upon myself this hardest of labors, it was appropriate, in so signal and ambitious an affair as this, when the height of skill should be employed, that you realize the true order of the letters is not to be followed, and thereby the orderly arrangement of so wonderful a work as this may not lose its due eloquence. When the mind is preoccupied with letters which can
be discarded, the work has a less pleasing effect. Where it is permissible to
discard whatever you find unsuitable, so long as the letters which are avoided
get in the way, it becomes indeed the exertion of a troubled spirit. Decide
then in your own able mind whether, when you find what you do not want
among what you seek, you may not be choked by such bursts of ingenuity.
For the more thoroughly I once confine myself to a method not expressly
imposed on me, the less polished I estimate will be my way of describing
it, and I do not propose to depart in any way from the true order of the sub-
ject I have undertaken. I beg you therefore, Master, that when no elevated
elegance is forthcoming you do not conclude I was capable only of a home-
spun style. There is in me a plenteous and broad flow of words, which
my work would wonderfully illustrate were it not proscribed by the limita-
tions of what I propose to do. You told me you had read the work of the
poet Xenophon in twenty-four books, with one letter left out of each book,
an admirable work to which all of us involved with it have rightly given
preeminence; there it was the case that no difficulty was involved when
the spelling of names had to be filled out with the remaining letters, and in
Greek it is permissible to change letters where anyone is constrained to do
so by the grip of necessity, as $e$ to $i$ and $o$ to $u$, something not found to be
permissible in Libyan. I have persisted with this in regard to the name of the
first man, his consort, and his two sons, compelled even to do without them
because of this heavy labor, to the extent that I did not permit myself to
make any use of names for those whom the true order of the Scriptures de-
manded should be named. And, of course, this may be put to me: The work
will not be worth admiring unless your preoccupation with this ambitious
scheme is laid aside.

Thus, having reviewed basic notions, the scope of my work may be dealt
with. In Hebrew the spelling of words is covered by twenty-two letters, the
range of our own language, Libyan, requires one more to be added, but the
Roman or Latin has that same total; to show the full range of the Greek
language you must add one more to the number of twenty-three letter
symbols. Thus for anything in works such as these where Greek thought
predominates, the normal range of our language, the middle order of Libyan,
which displays not twenty-four or twenty-two letters but has one less than
Greek and one more than Hebrew, must be supplemented. With these
twenty-three letter symbols, by which a universal range of words can be
accounted for, we must equate the separate ages of the world itself and those
of mankind. In this way, man because he progresses, the world because it
exists, and the number of letters because it comes to this total, a harmonious
distribution can be discovered in my book: as you observe the connecting links
of its contents arranged in natural order, you discover both a full description
of men's ways, a clear picture of natural laws, and the range of letters in
congruence with them. Furthermore, you may the more readily show your
admiration for all this when in each book one letter in turn is left out, the
first letter from the first book, the second from the second, and so on until
by diminution the final book discards the final letter. My powers of expres­
sion are limited by being held in the grip of this restriction, which needs
great skill to control, lest, because of what I have explained as having to be
left out, I should in any way be marked out for attack by the judgment of my
readers. Thus if you might wish to set the start of my exercise according to
the shapes of the Greek letters and the Greek system, in which from the first
figure symbol to the last one, ω or omega, the numbers total up to eight
hundred, and then want to calculate the total which has to be linked to the
Roman and Libyan letters, the sets of numbers could in no way be recon­
ciled; for k and h are not the same as in Greek, and the Roman series does
not recognize the episemon and the cuf which the Greek interposes to serve
as numbers. Thus with our letters, if you count by them as far as the last one,
z, the total comes to five hundred, whence twelve times five hundred shows
the age of the existing world, but if twelve times twelve is taken it must show
the span of human life; again, if you reckoned twelve times twenty-three,
you would discover the number nine for the months and six for the days, the
precise period for man as he comes forth from the womb, as taken from the
inception of birth, whence also the span of death may be indicated. Just as in
man, therefore, his activities and life span are covered in twenty-three peri­
do of five years (lustra), and the total range of words is covered by twenty­
three letters, so also in the world twenty-three periods of time are to be set
in order, whereby in each single book, as has been explained, both the let­
ters of each age may be observed, and the activities and lives of men de­
picted, and the events of the world itself made clear.

1 (lacking A)

Thus the first age of the world is to be reckoned from the first man, the
unfortunate who scorned the Lord's decree, and from his consort, who se-
duced this guileless being, both of whom the envious serpent is seen to have deceived, and the woman is found to be the primal cause of death for her wretched descendants. For what did it profit, either the serpent that it did not perish alone, or the man that he ate of what was forbidden, or the woman that she made the man consenting to her, unless it was that on all of them should fall the retribution of God’s just doom? For the most high Creator of all things did not set a trap with the forbidden fruit, but gently discouraged man from the tree by marking it distinctively, so that he might continue to live. Notice then that the deceit of the serpent was suffered in the hope of divine favor, that the woman was impelled by the promise of eternal life, and that through her blandishment the man in his greed was driven to eat the sweet-tasting apples. Thus Satan the idle product of bliss, who first earned the position of being a procurer with apples in the stewardship of these parents, progressed to becoming a procurer of envy in their sons, destroying the elder one by murder and ruining the younger one. Ah, nothing is safe from the wiles of the serpent, that the man who stood for the beginning of life should become the symbol of death for his posterity, and the woman who gave birth to the living should emerge as the destroyer of her own descendants! Alas for the world, alas for men, whose beginning is death, whose end is the judgment. For what profit to man was the course of life, when it was decreed that his span of years must end? That everything with which he is associated should be impermanent—what kind of life is this? Weep then, man, I urge you, because you have life: what you esteem is fleeting as the wind; wealth does not serve the dying, honors are of no avail to corpses; naked one enters the world, and naked one leaves the world. Let there be honor only to the invisible God, ever without end, Who ranges at the lofty, exalts the downtrodden, and always by destruction brings to naught the schemes of men; yet truly righteous, truly holy is He; and what, even were it able to exist eternally, might this world’s presumption effect or produce? But let us now examine the first stage of the world, how its development was in harmony with man as he emerged from the womb. Then, the new seed of the first womb succeeded, with enmity and poisonous jealousy, the offspring of the state of innocence; and now, as child succeeds child, innocence may still exist, but shows the effect of this innate enmity. The first man learnt how to say the various sounds of the names of the birds and beasts, even in his state of innocence he learnt how to produce melodiously unrehearsed sounds. Thus the first age of the world, brought forth by virtue of the divine power, was decreed up to, and including, Enoch. It coincided with the time of the innocents, for God esteems nothing greater than the pure state of innocence.
Whereas in the first section, in which in the tight fetter of a binding restriction I abandoned the full faculty of expression, and, subjected to a firm grip, gave up the full display of ideas and phrasing, in which I was unable to name in any way Adam or his consort and their children who differed so markedly, the one stricken in poisonous jealousy by the crime of fratricide, the other the protomartyr of innocence, it was fitting to describe such things, —so now the second age of the world is to be looked into, which we must pursue from the blissful translation of Enoch and an inhabitant of earth gathered up to paradise (whereby death, though it seized all the children of earth in its greedy jaws, yet in that one case abandoned its fraudulent monopoly) as far as the roaring waters of cataclysmic destruction and the down-pour issuing from the skies for the avenging of crimes. In this Noah, both confined and transported in the happy care of the life-preserving ark, both heir to the age gone by and to become the founder of the age to follow, was whirled in safety in a disaster which yet was propitious for him. By acting righteously he earned the right to escape from a world in ruins and to rule in a newly formed one. How much better would it have been, my God, to build this unruly world anew and to end even the righteous Noah by some completing act of death, especially since for God the fatigue of his labor was never sufficient, nor did he exert himself to excess in achieving anything, but relied on orders for anything which had to be done, although he did not have to extricate himself completely from the tree of transgression into a second age of sinful Adam, and no child of the past age of this unruly world was thereby stained with sin. But You will be the only knowledgeable witness of Your ordering, You who can do all things in righteousness and establish secret decisions. Let me then describe what this age achieved in the course of the world.

First, therefore, the angels banished from heaven for sin burned fiercely with the heat of lust, and contrary to the law of nature took part in human sexual union. From this congress the concoction of a monstrous birth took place, and contrary to the law of nature a massive giant extended itself to a most enormous size: from its mother's seed it received a form like a human, from its father's labors in love it took on the prodigious strength fitted to its vast height. Thence among those bloated results of the sins of men and angels Noah, alone found righteous in the sight of God, was chosen as father of the ark and was preserved by his mother the ark, became the tenant of his
own construction, became the associate of snakes, the host of birds, the com-
panion of cattle and wild beasts: he beheld his sons playing with horned rep-
tiles and serpents, he had no fear for his granddaughters as they chattered
happily seated beside elephants. This nucleus of the world to be, destined
to come into existence in the age to come, outlived the remnants of the pre-
vious population, and the death-dealing waters roared on all sides round this
safe contrivance as together with the first destruction of the world they strove
to destroy its future seed; but even as the world was destroyed the safety
of the righteous could not be imperiled by any upheaval. Now, therefore,
as I reveal the circumstances connected with the first age of the world, when
the poison of jealousy developed in Cain and he begged his brother for as-
sistance with milk, which the one sacrificed and the other drank,—let me
now reveal how in the second age a like affair matches this one. Just as a time
of folly develops in boys, so there arose a wild disposition in the giants; just
as with them an instinct (instinctura) for destruction predisposed to evil,
so for boys immersion (tinctura) in the water of baptism washes evil away;
then an evil angel yearned for sin, now the fruit of man’s evil desire is
purged away; then the substance of a sinful world transferred to one de-
scendant escaped from the cleansing waters into a new age, now by the sole
effort of Christ’s redemption unredeemed man is reborn in the confirma-
tion sacrament of the church; then man escaped from the world (ex mundo)
into the ark in order to flee (fugiat) the holocaust, now he flees (confugit)
from filth (ex immundo) to the ark of the church in order by receiving
baptism to evade (effugiat) the fiend. Then man shut wild beasts and snakes
in the ark, now man eludes the roaring threats of lions and the swelling crests
of serpents in the edifice of the ark which is the church. Man then was given
the law not to eat flesh with the blood in it, now man receives a law by which
he may be filled with the flesh and blood of Christ. The waters roared
round that man, seeking to drown and choke him; water sanctifies man now
by its work of purification. Observe therefore that by the work of water all
things are matched and linked together by an almost exact correspondence.
There two birds with the task of serving as messengers were despatched
from the side of the ark, one of whom returned with the evidence of an
olive branch and, in obedience to the behest of him who had sent it, brought
the joyful news of the subsidence of the waters, while the other lingered to
eat of dead flesh through a perverse compelling urge, and did not return
any blacker in mind than it was black in body. You may discover this is the
same with man, that microcosm, when the true Christian (catholicus),
grafted to a fruitful stem through the olive branch of baptism, regularly and daily returning to it keeps the church firm in his memory, but the heretic (hereticus), held captive by the foul curse of sin, not only neglects to return to mother church but, urged to an alien course, throws scorn upon it. Blessed is a man, and limitlessly blessed, if unrestrained indulgence from his ancestral vineyard does not cause scandal. That drinker of strong wine lost the righteousness by whose aid he prevailed safely in the midst of the roaring waters. What then is our achievement, human frailty? That most holy patriarch fought with the swelling ocean, the threatening sky, the roaring deep, a raging destruction; and yet that conqueror of all these elements was himself conquered and shamefully debased by a little strong wine; with skill he built an ark of three stories, wherein the water seeking to invade could find no crack, and yet soaked in the drinking of wine he showed his naked private parts to his sons in a shameless exposure. Let this be sufficient, as much as the theme requires, for a description of the harmonizing evident between the second age of the world and that of man.

3 (lacking C)

The due order of the work now in progress requires that the third age of the world and of man be shown in the same fashion by a third purging, keeping the third letter of the series suppressed, lest by not removing itself from this section it disturb the due order of the work as it progresses.

This section will in fact make a start with the founding of Babylon in the age of King Ninus and Queen Semiramis, dealing also with the tower set on its base on an infamous site and inspired by a common unity of people and the sameness of their language, a tower which with its tiled sides and Puteolan brick-dust or asphalt rose ever higher and nearer the loftiness of the stars, and with its corners almost threatened the orbit of the moon—but then the diffusion of languages scattered through the world destroyed the central purpose of what had been undertaken, in that when one of the builders asked for something he wanted someone down on the ground would offer him something else, and when there was something chosen by the planners, the laborers would interpret it as something different. What a mighty and inestimable plan on the part of God! What depths to God's
fountainhead of wisdom! One united tongue, one spirit, and one united work that mortal man had undertaken, and yet what humanity rejoiced at to have found diversity in completing what it had begun, the wisdom of God all the more readily destroyed, mocking men's vain ambition. Thus in the impulsive notions of men's minds there sprang up a broad divergence, so that what was said meant one thing and what was heard was construed as something different. What was said emerged as the opposite of what was intended, and what the sounds of speech had uttered the ear, as a foreigner's, interpreted differently. A division arose in what had been one and the same coherence of members; the tongue strove to make known what the hearing vainly strove to understand, the hearing passed on what the tongue had in no way sought to utter; and as each of the senses butted the other like a ram, the work was abandoned half-finished. Also at that time there sprang up through infamous design the walls of Babylon, which Semiramis is said to have erected in a swollen ferment of vainglory.³ For after the death of her husband Ninus she labored to convert the foundations of this ancient work to a better state, in fact fancifying her set of morals (morum) rather than extending the range of her walls (murorum). For she was the executioner of her own lovers and the mistress of those doomed to death; then came the height of her lust: as she flamed with desire for her own son her dignity as a mother was burned away and she became his bride.⁴ But it is not to be wondered at that she should take as her husband the very same son whom she had conceived in adultery and born to such a father, so that he whom she had produced with groaning from her thighs should now be fired with the ardors of lust and drive his seed into the glutinous maw of those same thighs. Ninus as well, no different from the evil ways of his wife and deserving marriage to this debased woman, by first invading the boundaries of his neighbors became first to establish the first stages of dominion in the world, and by first invading the territories of the Scythians, who lived in calm and undisturbed peace,⁵ made his sword reek with foreign blood. With the hostile carnage of warfare he wrought havoc on human affairs hitherto conducted in pure gentleness. Let us then ask what resemblance the condition of those times has to the present state of man. Just as the vastness of the tower was raised up to the skies, so the period of man's youth is inflated by ambition. That wondrous work was destroyed by the dissemination of languages, and so is their folly ended by the dissemination of learning; ill-understood speech destroyed its presumption, and so does ill-understood learning expose the mere senses. Semiramis was inflamed with the ardor of
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consuming lust, and so is youth fired to immoderate excesses by the flame of desire. For those, God scattered languages with a divergent confusion of meanings; these, wisdom elevates to a full knowledge of her ways. In the world of those times Babylon was set up as the first power to possess dominion; in men wisdom is taken as the ornament of rule. Then, Semiramis ruled contrary to justice; our age threatens to become the procurer of lust. She was both fired with lustful yearning and defiled with a spate of blood, while our age either boils with lust or is inflamed in the ferment of altercation. She greedily invaded a foreign realm; a man of our time pursues the embraces of wife or daughter. Then, the circuit of the walls was erected with wondrous elaboration; now, the state of youth is strengthened by the potent ties of virtue. What else beside these resemblances would you by any chance find worth comparison? Semiramis became the mistress of shameful crimes; our age is becoming the daughter and the handmaiden of destruction. Thus man is a microcosm of the world which he is both seen to be born into and found to resemble; you may detect nothing very different between the two. It remains to show the fourth age of the world and the progress in it of man, and this includes both the age of Abraham and the same affinities.

4 (lacking D)

Thus Abraham became the first worker of righteousness, in that he proclaimed the ineffable gift of the Godhead, and just as he showed obedience according to his knowledge, so he fulfilled the service required for what was promised him. He was commanded to abandon without delay what he possessed, and to seek as a wanderer what was unknown to him, in essence what he had pledged without knowledge and arranged without plan. He was tested by the subsequent return of his substance, of which he had knowledge; he was tested by the physical pain imposed by the operation of circumcision, the virtue of which he did not know; he was tested by the restoration of his son Isaac which in his generousheartedness he earned without pleading for it; and because in these three trials he was found firm, he is described as the ancestral father of righteousness. The Almighty dealt generously with his son and richly sustained him, returned and freely restored him; he showed himself grateful in receiving him back and did
not in any agitation murmur at his proposed sacrifice. He did not lose his son, because he was willing to lose him; he handed him over to sacrifice without showing distress; and by not trembling with anxiety at losing him, he in fact made things better for himself. So he was commanded in his ignorance, and inspired by the promise of dominion he did not hesitate to leave his homeland, abandon his possessions, turn his back on his parents, and become an exile and a wanderer. And I can tell of another miraculous happening at this time. Did not Job also belong to this period, that protagonist in a mighty struggle, that conqueror of Satanic forces, in whom no evil found its abode, and righteousness discovered no guile? For by him the vanquished prince of darkness was shamed, and because he deserved it, not because he coveted it, the Author of goodness granted him a crown. He showed himself unperturbed at the death of his sons, content in the alienation of his substance, a patient bearer of afflictions, sustained in mind at the loss of his honor, strong in contending with his afflicted frame. Since he did not bemoan what he had lost he received the greater reward; because in his patience he did not lament these losses, he gained all the more for his great longsuffering; and although the restiveness of his wife served as an incentive to sin, yet his righteousness and patience conquered over all, and he wore down the rage of his impatient wife, fought and crushed the force of Satan, and gained (meruit) a heavenly reward because he deserved (promeruit) it.

But human nature asks where lies any resemblance to itself in such matters, and this I may deal with more fully. For when a mind embued with learning has by such skills equipped its senses to a hope of future knowledge, straightway scorning the cloud of natural folly as the abode of sheer earth it will desire to know the workings of good deeds, and just like the compliance of Abraham of old, so now the hope of future goodness will be pursued. Thereafter, with the foreskin cut off from those who would seduce him to the flesh and to lust he will look only to union with his wife, and will have no desire to dissipate his youthful embraces in promiscuous gratification, where love grows bitter (amor amarus), its results tarnished, and its effect always mercenary and open for sale. Thereafter, sexual congress, entirely fitting to all fathers, who are yet also sons under heavenly control (this for a prudent man being as much by his own choice), would begin to observe its own restrictions. For every man who is prudent and rightly perceptive prizes the excellence of his Maker more than he is constrained by love for his children; he puts this before all affection and is fully prepared to serve the One who has no wish to lose any part of His own; as Solomon says, "The begin-
ning of wisdom is the fear of God's majesty." Note then how that whole span of time is in harmony with the ways of men: in youthful hearts wisdom is desired, in Abraham this heavenly gift was confidently awaited; then Gentile flesh retained the foreskin, now a man's age as it advances acquires a circumcision from evil desire; then the son whom it was the father's delight to have begotten was offered for sacrifice for the love of God, now love of lust which is the alluring evil of sin can be brought to an end.

5 (lacking E)

Now the fifth age of the world has come to hand, and in the same way the life of man is adapted to it. For this period I shall show the workings of righteous men, the first two proved so by their twin birth, the younger catching the elder by pulling at his leg in such a way that he either would be first in emerging to the light of day or would maliciously delay his brother's birth. What is to be inferred from this? Man did not as yet show hatred in his heart, for one in whom there was still no life did not, when born, take on the poison of malice. Surely it was not by divine decree that true malice rather than a mere imitation of it was first formed in the mother's womb, for in what place could malice take up its abode when there was as yet no soul? The one who sought to be the first born was in fact born to poverty; he coveted the rank of first born, but this would only be achieved by overcoming nature itself. O wondrous and holy decision of the Creator: the elder, who gave no cause, was hated; the younger, who conceived of malice while still held in the womb, was favored. There was no righteousness in the younger, no offense was to be found in the elder, to show why the grace of God should be so disproportionate. But it was as the apostle says: "O man, can you ever presume to give instruction to your Lord?" And it would have been a small matter that he showed his malice while still enclosed in the womb, except that he went on enviously to seize his brother's birthright. When he prepared for his famished brother a red pottage as a snare, he craftily exchanged the savory food for the birthright, and showed no pity for his brother's exhausting labors in the field. This too would have been a small matter, except that he went on to set in motion other tricks. When he had provided this crafty meal he armed himself at his mother's urging,
the touch of the deprived one worked its deception, the thief deceived his father with the device of hairy skin, the crafty one stole what was due to the first born. He was blessed in his produce, he became the leader in mastery over his brothers, he was confirmed as lord over all his enemies. What offense was to be found in his innocent brother, who suspecting nothing evil was roaming the field in search of savory food for his father? What did not the mother’s trickery deserve, that his harmless innocence should be ensnared by his brother’s fraud? I stress that he had no envy for his brother, did not steal from his father, did not snatch away the food from the usurper, did not covet a birthright not his due. Moreover, when with an armed force he encountered his brother after he was married, he did not show any malice, was the first to offer the kiss of peace, deliberately forgot his wrongs, and welcomed the other with his consorts and children. What offense to God did he commit in all these matters? And why, being so generous, was he not the one to be favored? The sacred Godhead may know His own counsel, but it cannot be comprehended by human nature. For the Lord sees in the heart what the human eye never discerns. What am I to say of Leah the weak-eyed, hating her fairer sister Rachel and substituting herself in her marriage-bed, seizing as the elder what had been pledged to the younger, deceitfully with the ready aid of night securing her sister’s betrothal, and in the morning by a successful fraudulent trick turning servitude to marriage. This too would have been a small matter, except that with mandrake fruit she maliciously procured an adulterous conception by night. What further? As the two wives quarreled their dispute led to concubines as pretended wives, whose offspring the husband adopted along with his legitimate children. By such evil is human nature enchained and constrained, that as one sister worked her envy on the other, the husband preferred for his consort a slave-woman to a wife.

Let us then ask how this age of the world resembles that of man. A true picture of the world is fully shown in these happenings, when one sees feminine malice in Leah, misfortune in her fair sister, malice towards a brother in Jacob, a certain negligence in his elder brother, the marks of suffering and the heavenly reward of a future crown in Job, and the common way of life in Jacob when he did not restrain his love of concubines and when he was party to the lust of his wife. Notice, therefore, that in this world one man chances to gain a fair wife, another is condemned to an ugly consort, but some consolation is given him by God in the boon of children. We see the righteous suddenly ruined by evil men, we observe an evil man
suddenly loaded with great riches; sometimes the less worthy is raised aloft, sometimes the mighty, brought low after inflated glory, is trampled underfoot by all. Praise be only to the Lord and His unchanging goodness; for humanity cannot change a single one of His decrees.

6 (lacking F)

Take up now the sixth age of the world as determined by the plan of this book, the age which was both distinguished by God's witness and illustrative of man's fulfillment. As this period took shape Christ our Lord was deemed worthy to appear, revealing His full nature in both substances, strength of body and wisdom of mind, in that He was the power and wisdom of God but also perfect man. There was made manifest in this age both the torment in Egypt, the restoration under Moses, and the giving of the law. First, then, the Israelites in their slavery were tormented by harsh bondage of their limbs, and God's chosen people, when the purchase of straw for the labor inflicted upon them was refused, by this punitive treatment were scattered in their search for stalks. Male children were condemned to the death sentence; but see how in an ark of reeds on the river's edge the safety of the restorer of the Hebrews was preserved, until the king's daughter was attracted by the sound of the whimpering babe and, softened by the appeal of Moses's beauty, took under adoption the one sentenced to death and gave to his mother for nursing the babe disclosed to her in his basket of rushes. Ah, the hidden purposes of God: did the queen realize that destruction for her father and his land lurked in this ark, or the mother know that the salvation of the Hebrews was crying as he whimpered on the river's edge? But observe how with the passing of the baubles of innocent babyhood and the emergent dawn of boyhood his youthful energy grew hot. Then his temper first showed a foretaste of Israelite independence in the murder of an Egyptian, whom in revenge for a brutal wrong he slew, felling him to his feet and making him collapse in the sand, thus proclaiming to the Hebrews this first relief from the blow dealt to their hopes of continuance as a race. Thence, fear-stricken, he sought out foreign abodes in exile, as a stranger among the Midianites he worked for hire as a shepherd, dependent on their orders for his existence as a slave. When God had observed the full evil of
the Egyptians and realized the total bondage of the Hebrews, then the proven justice of the divine grace came near to Moses, prepared to reward him with gifts. Forthwith the smoke of Mount Sinai, swirling in dark mists, and the secret places of the hollow mountain, echoing with the roar of thunder, evidenced the awesome arrival of God; and fire, flashing in vivacious sprays, its tongues fluttering in vibrating eddies, licked the green branches of the bush with a yet harmless motion, and like the grass offering a slavelike submission to the divine steps, playfully waved in innocent flutterings. Thereafter the holy sweetness of God's voice radiated forth, piercing the heart of the silence of His wondrous dazzling glow (if indeed such a voice can be described, for the Godhead itself and the blessed ear of Moses who received it were the only witnesses to what it uttered), saying: "I have heard the heavy groans of my people rising up from the bondage of their travail, and I have heeded their male children already at birth condemned to death by drowning; wherefore I have chosen you to be the destroyer of the Egyptians, the leader of the Israelites, the controller of the elements, the master of their magicians, the lord of their plagues, and the divider and ruler of the sea." Thus God, reversing His role as defender of the Egyptians' crime, brought down destruction upon them. The elements lent their compliance to serving the commands of this one man; also the rod submitted itself to this leader, and on it the whole matter of his maintaining the upper hand depended; for it first changed completely into a serpent and by that power swallowed the serpents of the magicians, was able to make its wood come alive and crawl contrary to nature, had the material of its wood devour living creatures. Nature labored to become what it had not been, so that Moses could demonstrate his powers of control. The waters of the Nile grew red with blood, drops of rain hardened into stone, the dust of the earth erupted into open sores, the mud came to life in the form of frogs, the ashes grew black in a thick darkness, the wind produced a swarm of flies and locusts, among the Egyptians the light of day lost its power, condemned to endless night; from the Hebrews night departed, restrained by a three-day banishment. For the former darkness neither allowed the light to appear nor withdrew itself, for the latter the captive light endlessly persisted and did not concede its power to night. In this temporary havoc wrought by the night the firstborn of the Egyptians were wiped out, and the doorposts of the Jews were safe when daubed with lamb's blood. What agony for the many: at the last their leader, thirsting for Israelite blood, swelled up drunk with its crimson draughts, and the instigator of death for innocent babes
slept covered in a watery shroud. Thereafter the cloud was sent before to guide them, the morning dew fell with manna, a fleshly shower contrary to nature descended in a downpour of winged creatures. What merciful goodness is yours, O my God, that a drop of rain should fall, the moistened earth absorb it, the crops begin to glow in the sun's heat, the stalks acquire their wax-like ripeness, and that in order not to make any delay for the hungry, food ready for eating in fact fell in this way, and tasty manna was distributed in complete compliance with their wish. There was no need to thresh corn for grinding, no heat needed for cooking: the food was ready prepared and sent from the skies, the only delay for those who would eat of it being either their own inclination or the setting up of a table; also, this rain of birds had the power not to dissolve into liquid only fit for drinking, but lasted so that it could be chewed in the teeth. The rock, inscribed with the text of the law, was engraved by God's finger.

And all this does not lack resemblance to human affairs; now that mankind in its maturity and age of fulfillment has dispensed with the darkness of the time in Egypt, and disposed of its earlier sins through the purposeful blood of the Lamb, now that the disturbance of the Red Sea and the swelling of its salty spirit have been passed through, the manna of beneficent wisdom is savored, and man instructed in the precepts of the law walks a safe path through life with the pillar of knowledge providing a clear guide, and, by the expenditure of toil, the longed-for land of promise is attained. Now that after Moses, leader in the desert-wandering and destroyer of the Egyptians, the awesome purpose of God has been made manifest to us through knowledge of the law, we are straightway borne up by Jesus, our good leader, by whom we also are led to the land of the promised bliss.

The thirtieth year of a man's life is now reached and has to be fitted into this section of my work; in it is to be described the reasoned course of existence, purged of the outbursts of unsettled youth, comparable to that period in the world when the Hebrew people placed themselves under the rule of judges. Then, indeed, the lifelessness permanently imprisoned in Hannah's womb had lost its ability to conceive, and nature, enchained by the fetters of...
sterility, rejected the excitement of healthy childbearing, for her womb refused the seminal liquid an entrance into its languid recess, and her beauty, darkened by the shadow of barrenness, turned to hate Elkanah her husband's affection. A rival fertility opposed her in the childbearing of her sister Peninnah, who as a mother pregnant with frequent conceptions tormented the mind of her unfortunate relative. But observe how God's mercy appeared to heal her melancholy, and how God in His grace did not abandon His role as the sovereign antidote for the afflicted. In her sterility she received but one portion of the sacrifice, and in her grief she murmured at her sister, loaded with the gift of a triple share; though the comfort of her husband found her not unmoved, yet there came to her that ulcerous wound produced by the poison of burning jealousy. Thereafter, as her growing sadness impelled her, she was prostrate in the temple, choking back her tears and masking in silence the prompting of her agitated heart, in silent withdrawal she would knock on one small shaving of the gate of heaven. But see how the Physician, who never sleeps, who requires no vocal reminder but the unveiling of secret thoughts and the hidden depths, wondrously untarnished, of the ear, how He sets up no exchange by words, does not ignore a secretive silence, for in His hands silence gives tongue with clamorous roar and conscience, however hidden it may be, cannot retain its secrets; how He is there to hand to make fruitful the barren sterility, to dry the weeping eyes, to grant supplications, to satisfy the desires of those who yearn, to raise the fallen state of the sick. See how in such a holy and wondrous relationship between the wife who petitioned and the Lord who bestowed, as in tears she begs what she desires and the Lord grants her desires, how Eli the priest intervened and with an overhasty misunderstanding attributed to strong drink the woman's perplexity of mind; but when he realized drinking was not to blame, but that this was the penalty of tears, he lent his aid to the matter she desired, and since God would not speak in His own voice He confirmed what He had promised by the mouth of the priest. So the once enslaved barrenness dwelling in Hannah's womb was driven out, and fruitfulness was ordered to take up its abode in a womb where it had never yet abode. Some force unknown to her enabled her to be a mother, and fruitfulness offered new bargains to the one who had been sterile. Ah, that tears should conceive and prayer be impregnated through the supplication of this weeping wife: she conceived her son in the temple, something she did not achieve by meeting her husband's embraces in the marriage bed. It is thus made clear that when God's help is not vouchsafed, nothing is to be ex-
pected from the gift of nature. But observe that insofar as it behoved the Lord to grant children to those who supplicate Him, the birth of Samuel was brought to pass; prayed for in the temple, conceived in the temple, having before pleased God in his birth, he continued to please Him in his ways. Now therefore the priest Eli was displeased with his sons, and in refusing to spare his offspring did not spare himself; for anyone who is constantly indulgent acquires much blame, and one who does not help in stopping a small segment from collapse drags down with himself all that is sound. Ah, the wondrous and secret decrees of God, for much as His mercy would accommodate itself to distresses, it does not have the means to do so, and much as it is inflamed by the assaults of sinners, the remedy does not lie in striking them down; thus the blame laid upon these two sinners did not excuse the loss of the ark of the covenant, nor mitigate the loss of a thousand innocent victims. Were not such crimes as these two men committed full to overflowing, when they exposed the sacred objects of the sanctified to pollution with the taint of the uncircumcised, and even the numberless excesses of a sinful people had never reached such depths? But, just as in working to make the world God’s aim was not to make a universe incapable of working for itself, so His concern is not to allow any part of the sinful to be destroyed through the destructive assaults of the world; He does not seek a goodness of use only to Himself, nor is it for His own benefit that He punishes hostile evil, but He seeks the good on their behalf, and punishes evildoers for their own good; for as you realize by the clear unfolding of events, He is mighty in . . . to condemn the end of evildoers to the penalty of a second death, and to enrich the undeserved death of the good with the gift of eternal life. Notice, finally, that although He decreed that the ark of the covenant should be captured, yet in no way did He hold back His vengeance on those who thus polluted it. He afflicted their posteriors with erupting piles, poisonous sores fetid with matter. The punishment was made to fit the crime and, with victory achieved by the enemy yet fatal to them, the crime became the punishment. Those who wept in torment lacked what the joyful and triumphant had seized, and what had been thought the crowning victory became the tormenting vengeance of retribution: the enemy sought a remedy by the power of which what he had gained could be lost, and considered it torment to go on possessing what he had seized as spoils. At his own loss he made a gift of calves and a cart, shaped in gold the very punishment and its locality, and by the very torment of his victory added to his losses. The ark requited to its enemies as they perished what it had lost with
its own fallen supporters. Such was God's anger that He did not spare His own, such was the victory that, once celebrated, it turned its back on their foes. Observe then God's unrevealed plan: one as a boy was molded by the events of his babyhood, the other as an old man was destroyed by his weakened mind; one was called and ordered to be a messenger through his dream concerning Eli and it was pledged him that he should be the high priest, the other having received the message was made to fall lifeless from his seat, and his descendants were banned forever from the priesthood. But it is in fact highly tedious to trace the events in the world at this period. What am I to recall of such an involved record of complications, wherein Samson received as a gift the invincible prize of his long hair, when stronger than a lion, harder than iron, on his own superior to a thousand foes, he weakened enough to be conquered in the toils of Delilah. Her lust could not overthrow those ramparts of his strength, and yet she tore off the Nazarite his God-given hair; and he was banished to the shadows, deprived of his sight, and provided sport for those to whom he had formerly been an object of fear. I leave aside this son of Manoah announced in the statement of God's angel, whom the mother received unbidden, and the father grew afraid to look upon because of the admonition that Israel had earned itself an unsought defender, and the Philistine had found his destroyer. Thousands upon thousands were overthrown by three hundred, and a victory in battle could be celebrated because of the pitcher rather than the sword.

Let me show how all these events are matched with the state of man's life. Do not matters change with the thirty-fifth year of human life? One's sons become a problem: just as you do now find some sons like Samuel to delight their parents, so you now come upon others like Hophni and Phinehas, serving to destroy their father as much as themselves. Regarding the progress of marriage—for the many that barrenness condemns and beauty commends, there are just as many that fruitfulness blesses and ugliness mars. In all these things God's balance is praiseworthy, for it provides consolation as a counter-effect to grief, lest it should penetrate further (ne plus consumat), and checks the growth of pride, lest that should swell yet more (ne plus adsumat).

8 (lacking H)

The previous section, having dealt with the establishment and custom of the judges, leads on to the present section, in which I must detail step by
step the establishment of the kingships and the deeds of the kings; for in
this age the thick-skinned obduracy of Judaea and its customary obstinacy
reared its stiff neck in intransigence and did not cease to provoke God with
its evil deeds; confronting Samuel they requested a king chosen by them­
selves, and a manmade kingship was asked for by those for whom it was
shameful to have God as their king. Thus after Samuel, the consecrated
high priest, had put to God the wish of the people—there was no need for
an intermediary who could know how to probe His deep secrets, yet tradition
demanded that He instruct His priest so that he might either reject or im­
plement the people's will. But observe how one seeking for Kish his father's
animals made his blundering search for the she-asses and thereby obtained
the kingship, one who according to the Israelites possessed the highest qual­
ifications and yet was a lowly searcher for the most lowly of beasts. How
differently and much better did God make His plans than the way in which
Saul in his lowliness made his laborious search. For he made his way in
search of the priest and yet was only saddened at the loss of his asses; but
the priest rejoiced not for the flight of asses but for the grant of kingship.
Saul hoped he might return to his father what he had lost, and he found
what his father at no time had owned or hoped for. Then the horn conse­
crated to God's will, wherein both the riches of kingship were filled to over­
flowing and the secret art of the priest was linked to divine inspiration, per­
suaded the prophet to bear witness to the compact, and sprinkled his head,
little expecting it, with the outpouring which marked the first stage of a royal
diadem; and lest there should be only an earthly testimony, he was able to
prophecy before he assumed the rule. Then the mighty power of divine
providence made known the choice, and as greatly as His majesty grew from
the nature of kingship, so did His loftiness exceed all in height. Thereafter,
so long as the standard of God's precept was maintained, the beneficiary of
kingship both flourished and triumphed victoriously over his enemies. But
observe how disobedience, the destroyer of all good, which had eaten into
the roots of all good works since the creation of the world, how covetous­
ness, as it had done elsewhere, worked its way into Saul's rule; and just as
He first drove out the devil from the heavenly kingdom, then made Adam
for the first time an exile from the earthly paradise, then later brought to
naught the pursuit of Pharaoh and the chariots of the Egyptians, drunk as
they became with the waters of the Red Sea when the salty intoxication of
such a drink led them as they drowned to the revelry of hell, so also Saul by
his wish for fat flocks and his appetite for fat bulls drove out from his king­
ship what it had ensnared and entrapped, imposed sentence of death and,
what was twice as bad, replaced the anointed counsellor of the Lord with a familiar spirit. What cause was there then to show mercy to this hostile king? How could he now appear more merciful than God himself and His mercy? But these are your secret mysteries, O God, in which human nature stumbles in ignorance. Agag became the enemy of the Lord, and Saul also became the enemy of the Lord; Saul spared King Agag and so displeased God, David spared Saul and so pleased Him; the one lost the kingdom by showing mercy, the other gained the kingdom by showing mercy. Either the mercy shown by both went beyond God's will and should be condemned, or the indulgence shown by both should be pleasing to Him. But with Saul it was not less the desire for plunder that drove him to maintain his enmity, and the wish to show kindness to the one in his power was no more important than the desire for plunder; when patient tolerance came to David, on the contrary, there was no desire for dominion. Observe, therefore, that David submitted his vengeance to God's mercy, but Saul scorned God's mercy in exploiting his own evil one; for God allowed Saul to be the avenger of his own wrong, while David turned to God to avenge his. Thus the one was raised up by righteous mercy, the other was cast down by unrighteous mercy. Furthermore, David was raised up to dominion as the faithful follower of his Lord, acquired the rule from being the most lowly of shepherds, less forceful than all his brothers; but notice the shepherd's bravery, how he plucked the prey from the jaws of lions, how the rich helmet of Goliath was pierced by the whistling flight of his sling-stone, and how a hundred Philistine foreskins were collected in his honor. How wondrous are your gifts, O God, in such matters, for what You bestow in mighty generosity exceeds even the power of belief. A mere lad became the destroyer of a lion, an unarmed champion triumphed over an armed one, a shepherd exulted over the giant race, unaided he gave Michal, his wife, the dowry of a hundred foreskins, the master's servant succeeded to the master's kingdom. How great your superabundance of grace, O Lord my God, as herein once again its opposition stands firm against the enmity of men. You grant to the undeserving what You have no obligation to grant, and You accept from the ungrateful mighty rebuffs which You in no way deserve. You raised this destitute one from the dung, that he might take his seat with princes; You granted victory to his people, You granted power to the dwellers in his cities; and yet as an adulterer he shared in the crime of murder. He rejoiced at the corpse of an innocent man slain in battle, and the member (glandula) of this lustful adulterer roamed at large in another man's bed; I could not
hope to describe the marital exploits which involved so many and such im-
portant wives, and yet this lecherer deprived a poor man of his single union
with one wife. No restraint tempered the lecherer’s mind, no thought of
acting like a king, no possession of many wives already, and, what is worse,
no trace of any sense of shame. Yet in all these matters what wonderful
forebearance on the part of God, whose ways I cannot explain in words or
take up with any hope of dealing adequately with them. Being a just man
he could not abandon his crime unavenged; being a righteous one he rec-
ognized it was to be avenged in his soul; by admonition he was driven to
repent, fully punished himself in this life so that he might lessen the pun-
ishment through eternity; he renounced for his own wife what he had
heaped up for someone else’s marriage, and where any further grief and
sin remained, his son became the avenger of the father’s crime; just as in
the itch of sex he had burned with the fire of lust, so now when smitten with
the fear of sex he abandoned his rule in flight, relying solely on the wit-
ness of what he had once committed in secret. But, my God, why once again
should the dispensation of Your decree require such mystery? Why should
the offspring of this shameful crime enjoy succession to his father’s realm?
Was it necessary that Bathsheba, stained by the blackness of so shameful a
crime, should consider herself queen when her son was ruling, or that Solo-
mon, shamed by his association with her adulterous womb, should either
earn the privilege of building the temple, or delve into the storehouses of
wisdom, or become the even more powerful successor to his father’s rule?
What kind of a father was this? That other destroyer of marriage, that
other shedder of blood, where there was no legal wife for the marriage bed,
no legitimate union, but the fatal writing of a letter had been the means of
procuring the lady and the way to her conquest; but God did what was
fitting, showed an undeserved mercy, manifested His indulgence to sinners,
and because He is ever good, rewarded good for evil. But see how the son
of their sin himself incurred sin, and how the offspring of adultery did not
come to a good end. He could speak of trees, from the hyssop to the cedars
of Lebanon, his queen from the south could experience his wondrous
wisdom, and yet although he built that temple beyond description, ordered
it by his own inspiration, assembled it with his skill, put it into operation
by his own decisions, adorned it with riches, made it shine with gold and
gleam with jewels, yet he reflected in his life whatever innate quality he had
taken from nature, and showed in his rule that same fire of lust, revealed
in his inborn yearning for the dregs of life. Thus he became an experi-
enced adulterer with concubines, the pursuer of a tribe of wives, the drover of herds of young maidens, a lover of the foreign-born contrary to the ban upon them, and, what was worst of all, in his old age a worshipper of Gentile gods, not in that great wisdom of his but in folly. Why should I mention so many ruins of kings, so many sins of wrongdoing, so many crimes of sinfulness, as when Ahab, rapacious seizer of another’s vineyard, received a just punishment suited to his offense, and although he was an eyewitness of a divine miracle when Elijah wrested burning flashes of lightning from the sky and flames whirling over the sacrifice as a witness to the true God, then when he had achieved the destruction of the priests of the groves, the rain clouds, kept away for a three-year absence by the prophet’s command, returned in a trice once more, and a shower coming back reclothed with green buds all that had dried up, parched by arid sterility,—while this was proved by so many and so great clear signs, he yet drank in by night the poison of his wife Jezebel’s vicious persuasion. But see how God’s right hand was turned in vengeance against this idol-worshipping queen, and how she was seen to be devoured in the jaws of swine and scattered in the dung of the stable.

Thus, because the evil deeds of the later kings go beyond the scope of this book, who cannot detect in the resemblances of the few items described the activities of all mankind? Therefore let everyone strive towards what he hopes will be observed in himself.

9 (lacking 1)

The chronological sequence of events requires that the even tenor of circumstances, preserved into the present age, should not now be lost; for the age past forty expects a section in my work, in which it may rejoice that the limit of its affairs has been reached. I must therefore describe the time when the insurrection of the leaders of the Hebrews and the Maccabees was made. For as God observed that His people had defected and the measure of wrong-doers was filled, when Jezebel gave the priests of the sacred groves preference over God, and Manasseh stained with blood his teeth, which cut like a saw through the bodies of the prophets, and introduced in the temple images not of gods but of demons, burning with anger He drove the Hebrews from their own kingdom, and as they had chosen foreign gods to worship, so as exiles they wandered through the corners of foreign realms. For Nebu-
zaradan, the captain of the royal kitchens, the more to emphasize the reproach and shame of war, that a chosen people distinguished by mighty domains could not endure the humiliation of a cook making war on them.—Nebuchadnezzar setting him up with an armed force drove out Zedekiah, the king of the Hebrews, depriving him of the boon of his eyes and binding him along with his people in iron, plundered the temple he had defiled, polluted the sacred altar, and profaned with heathen sacrifice the ark of the covenant consecrated to the tables of the law which deserved high reverence, likewise the golden vessels which, intended for the reverent use of the priests, became tarnished with the drinking of strong wine by these barbarians. But observe how the dedicated right hand did not cease to work for its accustomed restoration; for it fully armed for war the seven Maccabees brothers, sprung of an illustrious race, demonstrating that what the whole sinful people had not been able to do with their king, this small number could perform with the favor of God.

How lofty and wondrous, O God, are your secret ways! A sinful people could not cope with a fighting cook and surrendered their king to be blinded; but the puny race of the Maccabees, being pleasing to God, held back the whole weight of Nebuchadnezzar arrayed against them, not only by defending but also by successfully attacking achieved victory, restoring distinction to the Hebrew now on the offensive, whom he had previously despised and slighted and marked out for the shedding of his blood, whose king he had recently taken out, bound in iron, and reft of his eyes. Human nature may learn from this, what has been shown before this, not to yield to the enemy either when God is on their side or in a time of stress.

Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's general over a whole devastated region of the earth, had besieged Bethulia, a spacious city of the Hebrews, and as he strove to scale the walls was pressing on its ramparts now encircled by a fearsome army. For in the eyes of the people the certain capture of death awaited them, and gnawing hunger eating at their hollow frames made corpses of the living. No tears for the eye remained for them, no moisture in the mouth, no sap in the limbs; swelling set up in the knees, pallor seized the face, decay gripped the step, whereby dead limbs yet deprived of burial were considered to retain human power only for speaking. Famine had invaded the innermost recesses of the homes, death had laid siege to the doorways, Holofernes laid waste the fields and meadows. What salvation could the oppressed either hope for or seek, when death ruled supreme as it moved over field and home? But observe this glory of women, this chaste maiden, coming forth from the confinement of the walls, emerging as the
one who could work salvation for her people, armed with beauty of countenance, distinguished by modesty of manners, fired by the urging of God, advancing to seize the head of Holofernes. She wandered in safety through the whole battlefield, demanding that the ruler should be choked with a noose. When this was discovered she cleverly proffered smooth words, with pleasant chatter lent her beauteous countenance as a means of seducing this adulterer. One opposed the other, the allure of her eyes and ruinous love on the one hand, a countenance hiding the plan of a deadly noose on the other. See how the ruler was exhausted with drinking, parched with heat, surfeited with strong wine, and thereby made available to the sword his liquor-filled throat. See then how, though no voice announced the coming of warriors, no blood of assassins flowed, yet with all speed battle was joined that night, his head was carried off in her wallet, the woman's trophy was secured, the ruler's couch was emptied, a single maiden became the salvation of the Hebrews, the putting to flight of the Persians, and an undying legend through the centuries till now. But no voice in this conflict announced the clash of warriors, no blood of assassins flowed, yet his head was carried off in her wallet, removed with only the night to witness it. For her comely form had served as the allure in this astonishing exploit, which had secured the head separated from the body, and the salvation of a despairing people.

This also I do not choose to omit, that God the Consoler had raised up Mordecai for the salvation of the Hebrews in captivity. For Esther, the Hebrew maiden chosen to rule, destined to save her people, to raise up her uncle and to bring Haman low, had submitted to this rule. Such, my God, are your illustrious and most awesome unrevealed purposes. For the king was at the time alienated from Vashti his consort, and stretching out his scepter raised up Esther as his wife as she sank down in trembling. But, in truth, Haman, the king's associate in the rule and the spokesman of his secret plans, trembled at the king whom he had deceitfully opposed by whispering for his own ends. See how suddenly Mordecai, condemned to imminent punishment, was brought to favor by a compensatory restoration; and Haman having made ready a gallows for him one night, early next morning found himself awaiting the very same gallows.

10 (lacking K)

Having covered the span of Jewish history, which, leaving out ten consecutive letters, I have detailed from the creation of the world to this present
On the Ages of the World and of Man

age, wherein just as God’s grace revealed itself at work in the beginning, so His anger is manifested in the end, I must now turn to Gentile history, which at one time a favorable fortune has raised up from its spells of folly, at another hostile fortune has in a flash cast down to the brink of the abyss those whom at a happy turn of events it had guided up to the skies. I shall now take up the beginning of this, where for the Jewish dominion I have already reached the end. For Jerusalem was later captured and made subject to the might of Babylon, and through worshipping foreign idols and prostituting its own God it was led captive by a foreign power—it suffered full punishment for its sin and tasted the most bitter fruits, sown in evil, of its error—, for a long period Babylon controlled its might in a state of ferment, until it too experienced the poisonous flavor of what it had seized from the chosen people and the Lord’s temple, then straightway voided whatever it had greedily absorbed of this sacred booty along with its own possessions. Certainly it was the avenger of Israelite evil-doing, but woe to him who is chosen to be the scourge of evil-doers; and just as Jerusalem wept for its relics scattered through the world and to this day not yet restored, so Babylon as it perished also lost to foreigners its own wealth. So fortune, swollen by this upheaval into a boiling rage of turbulence, produced its notorious evil in the little kingdom of Macedon. For Alexander, son of uncertain parentage, rose up, stained with evil, with the doubtful title of being the son of Philip of Macedon. For some writers report his birth was due to a Dictanabus, who in the upsurge of his lust had secretly embraced a magic image of Olympias, while others relate that she produced her venomous child when made pregnant by the scaly, suffocating embrace of a serpent. But there is no need of such tales: since the control of his father Philip fluctuated in these matters, there is no need to dress up the adultery of his mother by inventing names, for she is said to have had a husband to whom few attributes of husbands applied. Thus although from the tyrannous and cruel rule of his father he succeeded to the quite adequate kingdom of Macedon, yet he in his furor pushed his insatiable empire beyond the bounds of the whole world; not content with what his father had seized with murderous tyranny, but reckoning the world all too small for him, he strove for something beyond the world. First, he seized the kingdom of Babylon which had stood firm for a thousand years, loaded as it was with so many conquests and victories over the whole earth. For to it had passed both the glory of Israel and the once famous might of Egypt, to it the preeminence of Sparta and of Athens, and the strength of Scythia, once invincible but now fallen, had yielded. In this spread of dominion, with only twenty thousand, one
hundred eighty thousand casualties are reported in three campaigns, but Babylon had no feeling of loss in such carnage. Who could believe this possible, O Lord my God, ineffable Creator of the whole world? The tally of the dead and dying is beyond count: the occasion of the upheaval in the Parthian domain is not on record. If what one province lost is beyond reckoning, who shall satisfactorily state, O world, your total account? Thus a host of such vast size did not deter the swift-moving ambitions of Alexander in his greed for empire, but without hesitation he would embark upon a campaign quite unprovoked, and find dubious victory over the one he had surprised. In short space he conquered those whose tally goes beyond counting; he vanquished whoever sought to flee him, pursued the fugitive, had the wounded bound with a golden chain of fetters, gave him a burial lacking all pity; his daughters even, like his sisters. . . . As was deserved of one who in violation of his vow to his mother chose rather to be an avenger, and the father of his own sisters, he lost his life, he lost his rule; he showed no shame in delighting to expose the most shameful part of their body when the signs of a child coming to birth were first revealed. Thereafter, not even satisfied with his conquest of the Persian realm, to which the domination of the whole world had contributed, enough to fill even the insatiable chasms of his greed—and even one who up to that point could not be satisfied would not possibly have needed anything after it,—yet he sought out the bounds of India, hitherto unreached by anyone, and penetrated with his burning rapacity limits unknown to our world. First, with a burst of fire he broke up the animals displayed as insignia in battle array and put these beasts to flight with a surge of flame. Thereafter, having taken the Indian king Porus captive, he began to invade the recesses of Colchis. Their gold was spurned by this Macedonian who could not be satisfied with acquiring the whole world. Then naked Bragmones, heat-withered Orientals, sunburnt Passadrae, inhabitants of the Caucasian mountain range, Drangae and Vergetae, people of Hyrcania, Chorasmia and Dahae, Amazons of Ocionitides, all these he fiercely attacked, insolently challenged, and piratically invaded; impetuously he penetrated to Meroë, unknown to our world and bursting with Falernianlike liquid, beyond the heat of Syenness; in haste, yet not without premeditation, he overthrew Candace of Ethiopia; fearlessly he faced the Atlantean cataracts hurling down the waters of the Nile. What am I to say of his assaults in attacking the Maeotae, primitive eaters of curds, savage cannibals, naked eaters of fish? As the searcher toiled on he even reached the oracular groves of the Sun and the Moon, which proclaimed
the destruction of his own royal personage. What more can be added? No hidden mysteries of the world, no race shut off in remote corners of the earth, no secluded island of the Atlantic Ocean with its fringes sprayed in surf, but did not stand in awe of Alexander as its ruler, or dread his unexpected attack, or fear his plundering. Who, O Lord my God, so reckless in their passions as he? With his expeditions the world was exhausted, already there was nothing left it might reveal to human eyes, and yet the force of his greed was unsated. What God had been satisfied in creating was thought puny by the endlessly searching Alexander; he would have climbed up to heaven if either the art of using wings or the pathway there had disclosed itself to him. And where he thought the world all too puny for his wanderings, he came to his rest satisfied with three cubits of grave-earth. Human nature may thus learn from him that nothing is to be taken for granted even by the mighty, for death is heir of rich and poor alike. He looked upon the might of Ethiopia and the spread of the Atlas Mountains, upon Oriental fire and Scythian ice. But what did it profit him, to conquer all that was unconquered, and then to succumb to a base disease? Whoever ponders in mind his deeds and his death, can scarcely believe that he himself must die; for one who is set straight by considering other evils, can never be frightened by the evil of death.

11 (lacking L)

Once the Persian and Macedonian dominion was broken, behold a short time after Rome raised its head from the upheaval, assuming its power in a shameful and evil beginning. For Rhea, the mother of the twins, her name suited to her work, who yet had not been embraced by the god Mars when giving birth—although if it were Mars, it could not have been the one who was the god—, yet the ancient idle gossip of the pagans had always been accustomed to describe her children as born of that brothel of their gods, dressing up the sins of harlots as divine indiscretions: truly a rocklike and insensate religion, to dress up common causes of sin with its own coloring. Yet Roman history celebrated such an origin, never ceasing to write flowing accounts of their shameful birth, of those exalted by an evil mother, of those produced by a vile nurse, and in its writings never abandoned exploiting
her evil life. Thereupon, lest the first stage originating in this evil deed should lack an evil development, the first foundations of the walls were reddened with the brother's blood, as the beginning of the wondrous city blushed to be dedicated with the gore of fratricide. See too that this was a sanctuary set up for the protection of crimes, and where justice and sanctity should have been pursued, remission was provided for the crimes of evil deeds. The products of crime became its army, and unpunished crime became its senate; and so that the supply of wives should not be out of proportion to the way of life, a seizure of maidens was shamefully carried out. What pleasure could be found in such marriages? The bride wept because she was stolen, her father fumed because he had been robbed, her mother groaned because she was deprived, and lest there should be any pleasure even for the plunderer, the husband was not even assured that a divorce might not be occasioned by subsequent warfare. What am I to say thereafter of that Brutus who for noble motive (Brutum inbrute) killed his own sons, of Tarquinius the destroyer of his own marriage to a foreigner when the wife turned a sword upon herself as evidence of his evil, and because she could not live defamed avenged the evil on herself rather than on the blood of the doer of evil? I say nothing of Fabius, murderer rather than husband of Metennia, he who slew his wife when she was affected by a little strong wine, and did sacrifice with her blood within his own family because of an opened winestore. What am I to say of Curtius, that filler of the chasm and of the splitting of the earth? What did it profit him to have filled the abyss on the pretext of knightly honor? The earth would never mend what it had broken, and yet he did not sacrifice his life in vain. Mucius uselessly burnt his right hand, and because he sought to make a spectacle of himself by this futility, lived a futile life shorn of one forearm—thus did foolish vanity make a sacrifice which only served as a punishment for his wretched body and, as may be surmised from his nickname, the ruin of his limbs brought him dishonor. What am I to say of the destruction at Cannae, three hundred times defamed by plunderings, when Carthage wore down the Roman forces and the Cere-ra was swollen with the blood of dead senators? What of the upheaval of the massacre under Marius, overflowing with the blood of the citizens? The victory of Pompey swept over the poison of Mithridates, over pirate hordes, over the lamenting Tigranes of Armenia, and over that disillusioned captive Vindomarus of Pontus. First, this plunderer seized the wealth of Judaea and put to Roman uses the ornaments of the Lord's temple. What am I to tell of the victories of the Scipios in their triumphant conquest of Car-
thage, when its rich and ancient power perished in war, to the benefit of Rome's military position— for Rome, previously exhausted, recovered by regaining what it had lost, and on the other hand Carthage, previously victorious, but now ravaged, both surrendered what it had seized and lost what it had held? What of the glorious victory over Corinth, the slaughter of the Cimbri, the fury shown the Teutoni; and so as not to pursue every detail: Rome grew by always taking pains over its economy, and so long as it did not spare itself its dominion was effective through the world. Just as Viriathus was sated with blood, so the Carthaginian was bedewed with it; I leave out the crime in Parthia, a leader condemned to a golden death, where greed found by a just punishment what it had sought by an unjust desire, and avarice when it gained those things it desired lost its life in imbibing of them, a novel judgment of the Persians, I declare, that when greed was sated with what it desired the very satiety became the punishment. What of Caesar, who, himself unexhausted in a world exhausted by so many successive triumphs, did not spare the blood of the citizens when he failed to find the one he had driven oversea, little believing that he could rule half the world unless he could take it all by having his son-in-law slain? Thus on every occasion the Roman empire, nourished on its own and foreign blood, either was depleted by the wrongs it was obliged to commit, or escaped depletion by those it deserved to receive; and always it grew by the ruin of other nations or more often by its own decline.

12 (lacking M)

There has now been reached in my little work a new and greatly longed-for age for a world illumined by a radiant arrival, one for which must be described in my hastening work the delectable gift of Christ's birth, whence indeed light shone in darkness, glory arose in the highest, peace in heaven, and bliss for the righteous. View it as the angel announced, the shepherd heeded, the Chaldean acknowledged, and Herod trembled with fear. Why then do you falter, O tongue? Will you be silent when faced with the coming of your Creator? By what sin are you restrained, if you remain silent when the very angels give tongue? Behold there falls a dew of words shimmering on the event, if hidden as to its annunciation. The proclaimer of a
heavenly union filled the ears of the Virgin, but her modesty was not to be
imperiled. He announced a union in which neither the divinity of the father
was dishonored nor the purity of the mother violated; through her ear came
the immaculate conception, fullness grew in her womb but there was no op­
pressive weight; and so the birth came about with the emblems of modesty
untouched. But see how in this pledge what the holy messenger announced
may be recognized. "Hail," he said, "full of grace," and what followed this.
I confess that in dealing with this I was astounded at the superiority of rank
the heavens maintained in their promises. See, as I see, how no explanation
was thus far made to the very one who required it, no revelation from such
wording to the betrothed, no hint of the amount of the marriage portion;
and yet by the fruit of grace the Virgin was with child. But see how the ex­
cellence of the dowry was now declared and how the bearer of the promise
made it known. The angel said: "The Holy Ghost shall light upon you,"—
observe the unchallengeable meaning of the words. And this too: "Of
his kingdom there shall be no end"—which was a dowry far greater than
this last one, and granted to one who should rule through eternity. After
it the dawn cast its divine rays over our age; it dispelled from our minds
whatever had grown dark with dense shadow; sadness retreated, distress fled,
lest they should be found standing in the path of the advancing king. O pure
and welcome event, in that, when the king came down to earth, one mightier
than kings had appeared, in that God had manifested Himself to the Jews,
in that unutterable wisdom had deflated the scribes and the Pharisees; yet
He appeared to lowly shepherds, He was a light from heaven to the Chal­
deans, in His humility He taught fishermen. The power of divine salvation
was made available to the sick, and His miraculous doings shone through the
world. Then, too, the water at the marriage feast was made potent as red
wine; the waves of Tiberias were hardened to support the feet of Peter,
the clay was made to produce eyesight through His life-giving spittle, at
the touch of Christ's garments an issue of blood was made to dry up and
held in permanent check, pardon for an adulterous land was put on record,
at His word the filth of leprosy was healed, the crown of a thief
was earned by crucifixion. And of further matters: corpses walked on their
own feet, beds were carried by the very persons who had lain sick upon
them; a fish presented Peter with coins when he had no money, and when
cooked for meals, in a state where there was no life in it, began to grow
larger. At His word the sickness He had driven out faded away; at His
word uproar grew calm and lost its force, at His word the turbulent seas
grew smooth; and, not to mention other things, nature itself could not become what He did not wish it to be, nature itself could not refuse to find the power to achieve what He ordained. But after this, in order for the full measure of Jewish anger to reach a climax, spite grew from goodness, and because blindness had taken the light from clear vision, the very Bestower of light became the object of His enemies' malice: truly this was the ruler of darkness, who had no doubt of the evil existing in the creatures of his molding. The embodiment of eternal virtue was scourged, the Savior of the whole world was spit upon, and God Himself was pilloried by being hung on the cross. Who would dare to say this, or believe those who did say it, that the Jews could be roused to take such risks, or show their malice by such reprisals, or grow so blind to such goodness, that they could do this thing to their own God? But that He died as a son of the Jewish race, and rose again as an adoptive son of the Gentiles, was it not because the one race showed itself lacking in all gratitude for such goodness, and the other emerged in possession of a grace not purchased by any previous display of favor?

13 (lacking N)

Meanwhile, it had become necessary in strict time sequence to include a description of the acts and lives of the Roman emperors; but because it was shameful to give them precedence over God or the apostles, I shall shortly relate in a final passage what I have passed over. And so after the Jews pilloried on the cross the means of salvation and abandoned the cure for death whom they should have the more greatly esteemed, the exile from God was brought to an end and His wandering Son was restored to His side. Immediately He instructed His learned apostles in the faith, set them up as preachers of the heavenly word, glowing at the flaming touch of the Holy Spirit, and chose them as ministers of His baptism. Immediately in the granary of heaven the true harvest succeeded the scattered chaff; the reaping ended in tears but the fruit of the press was gathered in joy. The net was cast, the final catch was hauled in, leaving behind the salt seawater, and from it Christ fed on dishes dried and drained of sin, and received them as prepared in heaven, mingled with honeycomb. Observe then that the net was cast on the right side for its catch and a fixed number was hauled in, in that
it included the ten commandments of the law and seven spirits were pos-
sessed by the final state of life, and in the final reckoning this amounted to
seventeen. The apostle Peter (Petrus), to whom was given the key of the gate
of heaven and by whom the flock of sheep was commanded to be led to its
pastures, who received a double gift, whereby he might tend the sick world
by applying the oil of baptism and the wine of propitiation, established the
church on firm rock (petram), and thereby threw down the gate of death. He
bound what he willed in heaven, he loosed what he ordained on earth.
This is the commandment which the loving associate of Christ received: a
dutiful shepherd carries a lost sheep on his shoulders, and snatchs from
the jaws of the wolf the one that has strayed.

Paul, as he kicked against the pricks, struggle though he might, was
snatched away to be an apostle, when he sought to see he was struck down
by a blessed blindness; the bedazzling blindness fell from his eyes, and his
inflamed hostility turned to gentle persuasion. What generous grace on the
Physician’s part, when at His sole command the scaly blindness was dis-
persed and the obstinacy of his heart was softened! The rapacious wolf be-
came a sheep, or rather a young lamb, and where he had raged with malice
he abounded in grace: those whom he sought out to torture by taking up
their bills of indictment, he afterwards taught with letters of exhortation. A
fuller struck down James with his club and, where he had once begged peo-
ple for something he could beat, took upon himself this deed out of hatred
in the place of those responsible; this fuller being a Jew with whom had
been left a whole pile of dirty laundry. The Ethiopian eunuch believed
Philip and, purified by baptism, went on his happy way rejoicing. He de-
parted from there bearing the grace of belief and faith, bound for the ends
of the earth where the gospel had penetrated with difficulty. Peter was cast
into prison in the city and solely by prayer and the magical flight which
came to him was borne away aloft to the sky and he was able to appear
again and again in the form of a spirit, though eventually he perished for-
ever in the face of death. The dead Dorcas was restored to those who grieved
for her, and her recovery from death was effected through mercy. The lock
of the prison doors was broken open and Peter freed from becoming a spec-
tacle before Herod and the Jews. Sapphira with her husband cheated on
the property they had promised, and because she avoided giving it all, lost
by her stealth what she had been able to enjoy. Peter saw a vessel lowered
to him from heaven, full of various alluring foods of the world about to be
offered to the apostle, and when he thought that if he ate of them it would
be an offense forbidden to Jews, he was told that whatever the liberality of God in His grace bade be set before him was fully purified for a Christian to receive. Thus Christ, who also purified the hearts of His people with the water of baptism, purifies food for them. By Peter's stretching out his right hand a lame man was restored to a perfect ability to walk, and one who had been confined from boyhood to the one place, where he had only sat, now as a grown man learned to move and walk with unimpeded step. From their envy of this miracle the Jews burned with poisonous jealousy, and those who should have offered thanks to God rather swallowed the baited hook of spite. Paul was threatened with death when Apollos, the proclaimer of things to come, lost his claim to divine powers; and because his spirit strongly pursued the apostles with outcries, he was cast down to make him cease. Pharisee was matched with Sadducee, and Paul was dragged away from the midst of their turmoil, as the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead and the Pharisees positively asserted what they denied; by this means the apostle regained his freedom from the place where wrangling preoccupied his investigators. The casting of lots handed over (tradit) the duty of an apostle to Matthias, and the betrayal (traditio) of Judas stretched a noose for himself. Thaddaeus was sent to Abgar to heal his disease of gout, and, as Christ's letter had previously promised, the sufferer restored to health delighted in this boon: long-felt suffering left the king's limbs, and the sound health which had sped away and divorced itself from him as a boy returned to delight him once more as a man. About the third hour, when the apostles were gathered together, the promise of the Savior was fulfilled and with a flash of fire the grace of the spirit fell upon them all. Whatever the spirit declared was announced by the lips of the apostles, and Medes, Elamites, and Persians understood what they heard. By some this was considered mere (mera) drunken babbling, and yet it was rather a wondrous (mira) God-given power.
the empire, held first rank in the whole world; for the divine birth of Christ lent its support to his happy state, and he was able to conquer hitherto unconquerable tracts of the earth. Just as the whole free world arose from his rule, so the Deity was worthy of being born in the territory he ruled. For he first in imperial majesty set the bounds of the whole world, with wondrous success conquered the islands of Britain situated beyond the Atlantic ocean, emerged triumphant from the struggle at the battle of Actium, and induced Cleopatra, the vanquished queen of Egypt, to offer to snakes her breast for suckling. He first held or initiated absolute rule in perpetuity and a golden throne in the city of Rome. Fearlessly he stopped the gates of the temple of warlike Janus being forever kept shut. He spread the recognition of his authority beyond the distant fringes of India. And to cover anything left out, he decreed a full account and census be taken of the world as it is bounded by the curves of the sea. These, O God, are your secret mysteries, these the eternal gifts of your sanctified birth; yet it was not thought fitting that any share in ruling should be held by the King whom You brought to lowly birth, that God should be the ruler of Caesar as Caesar was the ruler of the world.

Then, to make clear the divine power, notice what happened later. Do you not observe how the empire grew weaker and weaker under other men, and successively more corrupt in later times through debauchery and apathy? Think of Caligula fishing with gold nets and purple lines; think of that disgrace to the family of the Caesars, that besotted ruler, storehouse of evil, who destroyed any man he disliked and took any woman he felt he deserved, who stained his rule with crimes, and either planned or carried out such shameful acts as stuffing his intestines with tadpoles so that they squirmed about with distended rumbling and groaning entrails—he performed exactly what the endless saga of his evil ascribes to him. Thence virtue languished, broken by debauchery, and orderly discipline vanished, enflamed by insidious allurements. Yet the degeneration caused by such disaster did not succeed in affecting all the line of Augustus, for there were some in whom this lost virtue was restored and concern for spiritual things was reawakened with its watchful flame. For Vespasian, chosen by Christ to avenge the injustice done Him, did avenge the evil of the Jews, brought to an end the Israelite iniquity, and yet did not condemn to permanent exile the remnant who sought to return from the bondage of captivity. Ending the obstinate and evil resistance of the Hebrews against God with an execrable famine, he prolonged their wretchedness, so that one would devour the babe hang-
ing from the milk-giving breasts of its starving mother, and (what an un-
feeling brute animal would never do to its own young) a mother, reduced to
utter savagery, consume her own offspring. These are the violent evils, my
God, permitted by your wrath, that hunger should overcome natural kin-
ship and a starving mother eat of her own offspring. Yet this punishment
of the insurgents by God was just, for Judaea maintained in its sons this
obduracy which held out in its defense to the very sentence to crucifixion:
and they who had scorned to receive the flesh of the Son of God, prepared
for food the flesh of their own children. Notice, therefore, that they had
once ridiculed the five thousand satisfied by five loaves, and now—such
their life had become—in their hunger they tasted the flesh of their own
children. First, a ruler of the Jews slaughtered the infants as he sought to
take Christ, then a second such as he, seeking to avenge Christ, gave up in-
fants to be chewed by their parents. What shall I set down of the swelling
hostility of Aurelian against God, softened by the effect of one miracle?
For when the soldier . . . the air grew thick, the fogs filled with mist,
and fire itself, incredible as it may seem, is said to have given rise to water.
Fire lost its nature by turning into wetness; Phoebus, the sun, sweated
moisture in its rays, and as the Deity commanded, its flame turned to rain
and caused terror by having unlooked-for drops of water in its fires. Thus
might pagan obduracy learn that even the elements cannot assert their na-
ture when Christ holds it captive to His will. Thus a shower of rain was a
parching draught for the thirsty, and the flood of the pagan persecutor
turned to flame. For he had published binding edicts against the Christian
faith, affixed penalties, and signed public decrees for the crucifixion of the
martyrs. These fires Your shower of rain, O God, put out, by the very same
means the imperial prosecution was ended, and the scorching by armed force
turned to refreshing moisture. What shall I set down concerning the gentle
Nerva, the blessed Trajan, and Philip, who first joined in one the offi-
cial cult of Augustus and the benefits of Christianity? I must omit the in-
sane tyranny of Julian which surged out against the churches of God in
wild onslaughts, when the opportunity was granted to the Jews of restoring
their temple, and an imitation of the temples of Venus was considered fit
for adoption. But the curling flame both destroyed in its rapid eddies the
very cement applied to these walls of the Jews, and showed marks in their
tapestries like the sign of the cross; and the presence of the Babylonian
martyr prevented the transference to Venus. Valentinian scorned the
soldier's sword belt and accepted the gift of an imperial crown.
Prologue

1. Pieridum, the nine daughters of Pierus, king of Emathia in Macedonia, to whom he gave the names of the Muses; but the Hesperides are meant, see the introductory note.

2. Two writers named Xenophon are known, but neither was a poet; see the introductory note.

1. See Gen. 3.
2. Gen. 4.
3. Compare Phil. 3:19.

2

2. Gen. 6–9.
5. Gen. 4:1–8.
7. The notion of the Church as mother is probably taken from Tertullian, Ad martyras 1.1, and De oratione 2.6; see J. Plumpe, Mater ecclesia (Washington, D.C., 1943).

3

1. Semiramis (called Sameramis by Fulgentius) was the legendary Assyrian queen of Babylon and Nineveh (described by Herodorus, Diodorus Siculus, and thence Orosius, whose account, Historiae adversum paganos 1.4, 2.2–3, Fulgentius follows in certain details), who continued her rule after the death of her husband, King Ninus, and is perhaps to be associated with the Sammuramat of history who ruled Assyria as regent from 810 to 805 B.C. Semiramis was credited with the conquest of Persia, Libya, and Ethiopia, and with the enlargement of the walls of Babylon and their hanging gardens which were one of the wonders of the ancient world.

2. The building of the Tower of Babel, from Gen. 11:1–9, where in the construction brick and slime are mentioned, the latter presumably implying bitumen. Puteoli, modern Pozzuoli, was a port on the bay of Naples (mentioned in Acts 28:13); presumably the lava and pumice deposits from nearby Vesuvius provided suitable material for brick-making, though Fulgentius is, of course, guilty of anachronism in associating the place with ancient Babylon.
3. Orosius 1.2.
4. Orosius 1.4.7.
5. Orosius 1.4: "And barbarous Scythia, until then peaceful and innocent."

2. Compare Heb. 11:8.
4. Gen. 22.

5

1. Jacob, meaning "supplanter," was the younger, and Esau, "hairy," the elder; see Gen. 25:24-26.
2. I Cor. 2:16, Rom. 11:34, compare Wisdom of Solomon 9:13, "What man can know the counsel of God?"
4. Rebekah the mother, and Isaac the father; see Gen. 27.
5. Gen. 33.
7. See section 4 above.

6

1. I Cor. 1:24.
2. Exod. 1:8-14.
4. Exod. 2.
5. Compare Ecclesiasticus 11:4, "For the works of the Lord are marvellous, and his doings are hidden from men."
7. Exod. 3.
10. Cynomii, for κυνάμων, "dog-fly."
11. Exod. 12.
13. Exod. 16.
14. Eremi, for ἔρημος, "desert, abandoned."
1. I Sam. 1.
3. The original of this sentence (Helm, p.151, 20-24) serves as a notable example of Fulgentius's remorseless striving for antithesis, alliteration, and assonance: "Ecce enim inter tam sacra admirandaque commercia mulieris petentis et domini concedentis, dum dolens quae desiderat quaerit et dominus desiderata concedit, sacerdos interuenit et inconsideratione praepropera merorem mentis merulentiam credit mulieris."
4. I Sam. 2:22-25.
5. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli.
6. I Sam. 4.
7. Lacuna assumed.
8. I Sam. 4-6.
9. I Sam. 3.
10. Judges 14, 16.
12. Led by Gideon, Judges 7, 8.

1. I Sam. 8.
2. I Sam. 9.
3. The vial of holy oil.
4. I Sam. 10.
5. I Sam. 15.
6. I Sam. 28.
7. King of the Amalekites.
8. I Sam. 24.
9. I Sam. 16-18.
11. II Sam. 11.
12. Uriah the Hittite.
13. II Sam. 12.
14. II Sam. 16.
17. I Kings 4:33.
19. I Kings 6-10.
20. I Kings 11.
22. I Kings 16-18.
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9

1. I Kings 18:19.
2. II Kings 21.
4. Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers; see apoc. I Macc. 2 ff.
7. Recte Assyrians.
9. This sentence echoes almost word for word the one just above, and is presumably an inadvertent repetition.
10. Esther 1 ff.
11. Recte cousin; see Esther 2:7.
12. Ahasuerus, probably identical with King Xerxes of Persia who reigned 485–65 B.C.

10

1. Alexander the Great, 356–23 B.C., son of Philip II of Macedon, died 336, and Olympias. In what follows Fulgentius may be using details from Orosius, 3.16, and the 4th-century *Itinerarium Alexandri* attributed to Julius Valerius; the hostility shown to Alexander was traditional, but in view of the previous section there may be an echo specifically of apoc. I Macc. 1:1–7, especially 3, "And he made his way to the ends of the earth and despoiled a multitude of nations." For the career and campaigns of Alexander, see W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1948).
3. See Valerius, 1.2–6.
4. A lacuna is assumed. The allusion, as Orosius makes clear (3.16.9), is to Alexander’s treatment of Darius the last king of Persia (died 330), who had been bound in golden fetters by his nearest kin; Alexander buried him without honor and held captive both his mother, wife, and young daughters.
5. Latin *Fasiaces*, people of the river Phasis in Colchis which flows into the eastern Black Sea.
6. The list of tribes appears to be largely compiled from Valerius, 3.10, and Orosius, 3.18.5, 7, 11, the latter naming Hyrcani, Mardi, Amazons, Drangae, Euergetae, Parimae, Parapameni, Adaspis, Chorosni, Dahae, “and other tribes of the Cau-
The Bragmones seem to be identical with Brahmans (Brahmins), the priestly caste of the Hindus; possibly Fulgentius knew of a work *De moribus Brach­morum* (ed. in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 17.1167 ff.) traditionally attributed to St. Ambrose (died 397), in fact a free version of part of a work in Greek on the subject of India by the Galatian monk Palladius (died ca. 430). The *De moribus* and the Ambrosian authorship come up for discussion in a later age in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* 2. Of the other peoples and regions in Fulgentius's list, for Orientals the original has *Eoas,* for *eos,* "the dawn, the east"; the Passadrae may possibly be the people of Passagadai, one of the royal cities of Persia; the Drangae were people of Artica in eastern Persia, neighbors of the Parthians; Hyrcania lay on the southeastern corner of the Caspian Sea; the Chorasmi were from Sogdiana on the lower Oxus; the Dahae or Dahai were nomadic Scythian peoples living east of the Caspian; the Amazons were traditionally associated with Pontus, and the curious form Ocionitides may represent a corruption of the full name (Pontus) Euxinus, for the Black Sea; Meroði lay in upper Egypt, in a region famed for its strong wine, see *Mythologies* 2.12; Syennesis was a common name for the kings of Cicia in Asia Minor; and by Atlantean is meant Libyan or Egyptian. Vergetae, if for Orosius's *Euergetae,* may represent a misunderstanding on Fulgentius's part: *Euergetes* occurs as a title of honor given by the Greek states to those from whom they had received benefits, and most famously as a cognomen, *euergetes,* "the benefactor," of the Egyptian King, Ptolemy VIII (died 116 B.C.), the brother-husband of Cleopatra; however, according to Quintus Curtius (Rufus, 1st century A.D.), *Historiae Alexandri magni* 7.3.1 (ed. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classics [1946], 2:142), *Euergetae* was a new name for the Arimaspi of northern Scythia, mentioned there alongside the Drangae.

7. The Maeotae were Scythian peoples of Lake Maeotis, the modern Sea of Azov. For "eaters of curds" the Latin has *thyrofagos,* for *rōpos,* "cheese," and *phagos,* "eater"; "cannibals" is *antropofagos,* for *ḥudpouos,* "man," and *phagos,* "eater of fish" is *ictiofagos,* for *typos,* "fish," and *phagos.*

8. The most famous occasion for Alexander consulting the oracles was his visit in 331 to the temple and oracle of Jupiter Ammon at Siwa in the Libyan desert. There the priests proclaimed him to be the son of the god; see Orosius, 3.16.

9. Three cubits, somewhat less than six feet. The end of Alexander became a traditional occasion for moralizing: "Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust," as Hamlet says in the churchyard (5.1). The anonymous 12th-century continuation of Lambrecht's *Alexanderlied* in Middle High German verse ends: "Of all that he ever conquered, he retained nothing more than seven feet of earth, like the most wretched man ever to enter the world;" the 14th-century *Gesta Romanorum,* tale 31, has: "At the death of Alexander the philosophers who came and gazed at his golden tomb uttered a maxim as this, 'Yesterday the whole world did not suffice for Alexander, today three or four yards of cloth suffice for him,'" see F. Bourne, in C. F. Fiske, ed., *Vassar Mediaeval Studies* (New Haven, 1923), pp.373-74; in the medieval *Travels of Sir John Mandeville,* 33, the Gymnosophists rebuke Alexander for his ambition, and remind him he shares the common lot of mankind; see further Cary (note 2 above) pp.98-99 (Cary reprints this chapter of Fulgentius from Helm's ed., pp.369-70). The same notion was frequently applied to any great hero or conqueror brought by death to a few feet of earth. Compare, e.g., the epitaph on Lichas sometimes found added to Petronius's *Satyricon,* 115: "A house five feet long, in which a noble body has sought a little earth"; that on William the Conqueror in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (E), annal 1067: "He who was once a mighty king, and lord of many a land, was left of all the land with noth-
ing save seven feet of ground”; also Hamlet’s words on the lawyer and on poor Yorick; Prince Hal’s on the dead Hotspur, *Henry IV*, Part 1, 5.4; and Mark Antony’s on the fallen Caesar, *Julius Caesar* 3.1.

11

1. The traditional date for the founding of Rome is 753 B.C., well before, not shortly after, the empire of Alexander.

2. Latin *Rea* for Rhea, perhaps following Orosius, 6.1.14, that is, the Rhea Silvia or Rhea Ili of the Romans, mother of the twins Romulus and Remus by the god Mars, but also taken here as *rea*, “evil, criminal.”

3. The slaying of Remus by Romulus.

4. Romulus made the new city a refuge for runaway slaves and murderers.

5. There being no women in the community of Rome, the Sabine maidens were carried off as wives.

6. Lucius Junius Brutus, regarding his country more highly than his children, put to death his two sons for their part in the attempt to restore the Tarquin dynasty, which he had expelled from Rome.

7. Alluding to the usurper and tyrant Tarquinius Superbus, banished from Rome in 510 B.C., and to the death of Lucretia, wife of his cousin Tarquinius Collatinus (seemingly confused with him by Fulgentius), who after being outraged by Superbus’s son Sextus stabbed herself to death, Superbus’s banishment being engineered by Brutus to avenge her.

8. Latin *wine chest or cellar*; Pliny, *Natural History* 14.13, dealing with tragedies produced by wine, relates that “the wife of Egnatius Maenius was clubbed to death by her husband for drinking wine from the vat, and Romulus acquitted him on the charge of murder”—a similar reference is found in Valerius Maximus’s collection, *Memorabilia* 6.3.9 (whence Chaucer, *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, 460–63, on “Metellius, the foule cherl”), and in Tertullian’s *Apology* 6.4. Pliny then goes on to another anecdote: “Fabius Pictor has written in his *Annals* that a matron was starved to death by her relatives for having broken open the casket containing the keys of the wine-cellar.” It looks as if Fulgentius has confused the names in the two stories in making Fabius the husband and Metenia the wife. In his *Explanation of Obsolete Words* 58, he alludes to Mettenia’s strong wine, probably with the like confusion.

9. The legend went that in 362 B.C. the earth in the Roman forum opened into a great chasm; the soothsayers having declared that it could be filled only by throwing in Rome’s greatest treasure, the noble youth Manlius Curtius mounted his steed in full armor and, saying that Rome possessed no greater treasure than a brave citizen, leaped into the abyss, whereupon the earth closed over him; see Orosius, 3.5.

10. The Roman Gaius Mucius came to Porsena’s camp to kill him, and when caught thrust his right hand into the fire, thereafter being known as Scaevola, “left-handed”; see Orosius, 2.5.

11. Cannae in Apulia was the scene of Hannibal’s defeat of the Romans in 216 B.C. By the Cremera, a tributary of the Tiber in Etruria, lay the site of the fortress wherein all but one of the three hundred members of the patrician clan of the Fabii were wiped out by the Veientes in 477 B.C. Fulgentius appears to have confused two widely separated events. His “three hundred times” is literally “by a measure of
the fingers taken in threes” (*terno modio digitorum*), that is, 3 times 10 or a multiple.

12. The Roman general Gaius Marius, 157-86 B.C., after the famous incident of his “sitting in the ruins of Carthage,” purged Rome of the aristocratic supporters of his enemy Sulla.

13. Pompey the Great cleared the Mediterranean of pirates in 67 B.C., in the next year defeated the long-lived King Mithridates VI of Pontus, celebrated for his acquired immunity from poisons, and received the submission of King Tigranes of Armenia; a Vindomarus "of Pontus" may have been involved in these events, but there may be confusion with the celebrated Vindomarus, chieftain of the Aedui in Gaul, who was favored by Julius Caesar but later joined in the great Gaulish revolt of 52 B.C.

14. Scipio Africanus the elder secured the submission of Carthage in 201 B.C., and Scipio Africanus the younger captured Carthage in 146 B.C.

15. Corinth was destroyed by the Roman Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C., and re-colonized by Caesar in 46 B.C.

16. The Celtic race of the Cimbri was decisively defeated by Marius in northern Italy in 101 B.C., and their Germanic allies the Teutoni or Teutones were cut to pieces the year before by Marius near Aix.

17. Viriathus, the bandit-leader of Lusitania, modern Portugal, defeated a succession of Roman armies in 149 B.C., but was assassinated nine years later; see Orosius, 5.4, where the juxtaposition of Viriathus and Mithridates may explain Fulgentius's confused geography.

18. That is, Hannibal.

19. Probably an allusion to the fate of the Roman general Aquilius, captured after the battle of Protomachium in 88 B.C. by King Mithridates VI of Pontus, already alluded to above, who put him to death by pouring molten gold down his throat; the story is briefly given by Pliny, *Natural History*, 33.14.

20. His enemy and erstwhile sharer of the Roman dominions, Pompey, who had married Julius Caesar's daughter Julia.

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11. John 8:3-11.
12. Matth. 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45.
13

7. Eusebius (Historia ecclesiastica 2.23.18) takes from Hegesippus this account of the martyrdom of James "the Just," the brother of Jesus, at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem (transl. K. Lake, Eusebius: The Eccles. History, Loeb Classics [1926] 1:175): "And a certain man among them, one of the laundrmen [who used fuller's earth], took the club with which he used to beat out the clothes, and hit the Just on the head, and so he suffered martyrdom."
10. Acts 9:36-42.
17. Matth. 27:5, Acts 1:15-26; compare also Eusebius H.E. 2.1.1, transl. Lake, 1.103: "Matthias was the first to be chosen to the Apostolate instead of the traitor Judas."
18. Eusebius (H.E. 1.13.1-22) takes "from the archives at Edessa" an episode devoted to an exchange of letters, between King Abgar of Edessa and Jesus, which he quotes as verbatim. Abgar begs for aid against some terrible disease, and Jesus promises to send a disciple after his ascension; when this had taken place, the apostle Thomas despatched Thaddaeus, one of the seventy disciples, who effected a miraculous cure on the king and, among others, on a man called Abdus who was cured of gout. Fulgentius echoes this tradition, additionally confusing Abgar and Abdus. Eusebius, writing in the early 4th century, has clearly incorporated an apocryphal story, one which perhaps anticipates events of the 2d century, during which a later Abgar (EX), ruler of Edessa or Osroene in 179, became the first Christian king. Some indication of the period in which Fulgentius wrote may be seen in the possibility that the Abgar-Jesus letters were condemned as spurious by Pope Gelasius I in 495, and would not have been accepted so uncritically much later than that year.
1. The emperor Augustus, who ruled from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D.
2. In 31 B.C.
3. Cleopatra killed herself in 30 B.C.
4. That is, established a general peace; see Orosius, 6.3.
6. Emperor from 37 to 41 A.D. Orosius, 7.7, following Suetonius, more accurately assigns to Nero, not Caligula, the habit of fishing with gold nets and purple lines (similarly Chaucer, Monk’s Tale, 2475–76, associates gold nets with Nero).
7. Emperor from 68 to 79 A.D.
9. This allusion echoes, in somewhat fanciful and garbled form, the horrific story of a Jewish mother named Mary, who ate her own child during the famine of the siege of Jerusalem under Vespasian, first related by Josephus later in the 1st century (Bellum Judaicum 6.3, 4), and reproduced by Eusebius (H.E. 3.5.21–28), in the early 4th. To judge by his previous use of Eusebius, Fulgentius took the episode from him rather than direct from Josephus, as Helm implies (p. 177).
10. Herod; see Matth. 2:16.
11. Emperor from 270 to 275, Helm (p. 178) referring to the incident in Orosius, 7.7 ff. But this involves a big jump forward in the chronology, and Fulgentius’s form Aurelian, if modelled on Αυρήλιος, may allude rather to Marcus Aurelius, emperor from 161 to 180, and to a famous event recorded by Eusebius (H.E. 5.5.1–7), from the earlier persecution of Christians under his rule: while fighting the Germanic tribe of the Quadi, 174 A.D., Aurelius’s army was oppressed by thirst, but some legionaries prayed in Christian fashion and miraculously “lightning drove the enemy to flight and destruction, and a shower falling on the army which had prayed to God, refreshed them all when they were on the point of destruction from thirst,” transl. Lake, 1.447. Eusebius goes on to say that the story is well known from other accounts, for instance, Dio Cassius’s Roman History 71.8, and Tertullian’s Apology 5.6, and Ad Scapulam 4; for further references to what is often called the story of the “Thundering Legion,” see P. B. Watson, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (London, 1884), pp. 195–98; J. Stevenson, ed., A New Eusebius (New York, 1957), pp. 43–44.
12. A lacuna is assumed.
13. Emperor from 91 to 98.
14. Emperor from 98 to 117.
15. Philip the Arab, emperor from 244 to 249; the action attributed to him here may seem to go more obviously with Constantine the Great, a rather surprising omission on Fulgentius’s part, but the secret Christianity of Philip and his Christianization of the yearly imperial feast are mentioned by Orosius (7.20–21), the most obvious source at this point.
16. Julian the Apostate, emperor from 360 to 363.
17. Latin Babylae martyris, presumably meaning Christ.
18. Immediately after Julian came Valentinian I, emperor from 364 to 375, with his reputation for allowing religious freedom, though the brief allusion here would also allow for his son, Valentinian II, emperor to 392, or more likely for the later Valentinian III, emperor from 425 to 455, a negligible ruler but one who per-
haps best suits Fulgentius's comment in that he was seated on the throne of the West by favor of Theodosius II, emperor of the East, and because Orosius alludes to his Christian spirit (7.33).