Against the Heathen Book 5

Arnobius of Sicca (d. c. AD 330)

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1. Admitting that all these things which do the immortal gods dishonour, have been put forth by poets merely in sport, what of those found in grave, serious, and careful histories, and handed down by you in hidden mysteries? have they been invented by the licentious fancy of the poets? Now if they seemed to you stories of such absurdity, some of them you would neither retain in their constant use, nor celebrate as solemn festivals from year to year, nor would you maintain them among your sacred rites as shadows of real events. With strict moderation, I shall adduce only one of these stories which are so numerous; that in which Jupiter himself is brought on the stage as stupid and inconsiderate, being tricked by the ambiguity of words. In the second hook of Antias-lest any one should think, perchance, that we are fabricating charges calumniously-the following story is written:-

The famous king Numa, not knowing how to avert evil portended by thunder, and being eager to learn, by advice of Egeria concealed beside a fountain twelve chaste youths provided with chains; so that when Faunus and Martius Picus came to this place to drink,-for hither they were wont to come to draw water,-they might rush on them, seize and bind them. But, that this might be done more speedily, the king filled many cups with wine and with mead, and placed them about the approaches to the fountain, where they would be seen-a crafty snare for those who should come. They, as was their usual custom, when overcome by thirst, came to their well-known haunts. But when they had perceived cups with sweetly smelling liquors, they preferred the new to the old; rushed eagerly upon them; charmed with the sweetness of the draught, drank too much; and becoming drunk, fell fast asleep. Then the twelve youths threw themselves upon the sleepers, and cast chains round them, lying soaked with wine; and they, when roused, immediately taught the king by what methods and sacrifices Jupiter could be called down to earth. With this knowledge the king performed the sacred ceremony on the Aventine, drew down Jupiter to the earth, and asked from him the due Form of expiation. Jupiter having long hesitated, said, ”Thou shalt avert what is portended by thunder with a head. The king answered. ”With an onion. Jupiter again, ”With a man’s. The king returned, ”But with hair. The deity in turn, ”With the life.

With a fish,” rejoined Pompilius. Then Jupiter, being ensnared by the ambiguous terms used, uttered these words: ”Thou hast overreached me, Numa; for I had determined that evils portended by thunder should be averted with sacrifices of human heads, not with hair

and an onion. Since, however, your craft has outwitted me, have the mode which you wished; and always undertake the expiation of thunder-portents with those things which you have bargained for."

2. What the mind should take up first, what last, or what it should pass by silently, it is not easy to say, nor is it made clear by any amount of reflection; for all have been so devised and fitted to be laughed at, that you should strive that they may be believed to be false-even if they are true-rather than pass current as true, and suggest as it were something extraordinary, and bring contempt upon deity itself. What, then, do you say, O you-? Are we to believe that that Faunus and Martius Picus-if they are of the number of the gods, and of that everlasting and immortal substance-were once parched with thirst, and sought the gushing fountains, that they might be able to cool with water their heated veins? Are we to believe that, ensnared by wine, and beguiled by the sweetness of mead, they dipped so long into the treacherous cups, that they even got into danger of becoming drunk? Are we to believe that, being fast asleep, and plunged in the forgetfulness of most profound slumbers, they gave to creatures of earth an opportunity to bind them? On what parts, then, were those bonds and chains flung? Did they have any solid substance, or had their hands been formed of hard bones, so that it might be possible to bind them with halters and hold them fast by tightly drawn knots? For I do not ask, I do not inquire whether they could have said anything when swaying to and fro in their drunken maunderings;

or whether, while Jupiter was unwilling, or rather unwitting, any one could have marie known the way to bring him down to earth. This only do I wish to hear, why, if Faunus and Picus are of divine origin and power, they did not rather themselves declare to Numa, as he questioned them, that which he desired to learn from Jove himself at a greater risk? Or did Jupiter alone have knowledge of this-for from him the thunderbolts fall-how training in some kind of knowledge should avert impending dangers? Or, while he himself hurls these fiery bolts, is it the business of others to know in what way it is fitting to allay his wrath and indignation? For truly it would be most absurd to suppose that he himself appoints the means by which may be averted that which he has determined should befall men through the hurling of his thunderbolts. For this is to say, By such ceremonies you will turn aside my wrath; and if I shall at any time have foreshown by flashes of lightning that some evil is close at hand, do this and that, so that what I have determined should be done may be done altogether in vain, and may pass away idly through the force of these rites.

3. But let us admit that, as is said, Jupiter has himself appointed against himself ways and means by which his own declared purposes might fittingly be opposed: are we also to believe that a deity of so great majesty was dragged down to earth, and, standing on a petty hillock with a mannikin, entered into a wrangling dispute? And what, I ask, was the charm which forced Jupiter to leave the all-important direction of the universe, and appear at the bidding of mortals? the sacrificial meal, incense, blood, the scent of burning laurel-boughs, and muttering of spells? And were all these more powerful than Jupiter, so that they compelled him to do unwillingly what was enjoined, or to give himself up of his own

accord to their crafty tricks? What! will what follows be believed, that the son of Saturn had so little foresight, that he either proposed terms by the ambiguity of which he was himself ensnared, or did not know what was going to happen, how the craft and cunning of a mortal would overreach him? You shall make expiation, he says, with a head when thunderbolts have fallen. The phrase is still incomplete, and the meaning is not fully expressed and defined; for it was necessarily right to know whether Diespiter ordains that this expiation be effected with the head of a wether, a sow, an ox, or any other animal. Now, as he had not yet fixed this specifically, and his decision was still uncertain and not yet determined, how could Numa know that Jupiter would say the head of a man, so as to anticipate and prevent him, and turn his uncertain and ambiguous words into "an onion's head? "

4. But you will perhaps say that the king was a diviner. Could he be more so than Jupiter himself? But for a mortal's anticipating what Jupiter-whom he overreached-was going to say, could the god not know in what ways a man was preparing to overreach him? Is it not, then, clear and manifest that these are puerile and fanciful inventions, by which, while a lively wit is assigned to Numa, the greatest want of foresight is imputed to Jupiter? For what shows so little foresight as to confess that you have been ensnared by the subtlety of a man's intellect, and while you are vexed at being deceived, to give way to the wishes of him who has overcome you, and to lay aside the means which you had proposed? For if there was reason and some natural fitness that expiatory sacrifice for that which was struck with lightning should have been made with a man's head, I do not see why the proposal of an onion's was made by the king; but if it could be performed with an onion also, there was a greedy lust for human blood. And both parts are made to contradict themselves: so that, on the one hand, Numa is shown not to have wished to know what he did wish; and, on the other, Jupiter is shown to have been merciless, because he said that he wished expiation to be made with the heads of men, which could have been done by Numa with an onion's head.

5. In Timotheus, who was no mean mythologist, and also in others equally well informed, the birth of the Great Mother of the gods, and the origin of her rites, are thus detailed, being de-rived-as he himself writes and suggests-from learned books of antiquities, and from his acquaintance with the most secret mysteries:-Within the confines of Phrygia, he says, there is a rock of unheard-of wildness in every respect, the name of which is Agdus, so named by the natives of that district. Stones taken from it, as Themis by her oracle had enjoined, Deucalion and Pyrrha threw upon the earth, at that time emptied of men; from which this Great Mother, too, as she is called, was fashioned along with the others, and animated by the deity. Her, given over to rest and sleep on the very summit of the rock, Jupiter assailed with lewdest desires. But when, after long strife, he could no accomplish what he had proposed to himself, he, baffled, spent his lust on the stone. This the rock received, and with many groanings Acdestis is born in the tenth month, being named from his mother rock. In him there had been resistless might, and a fierceness of disposition beyond control, a lust made furious, and derived from both sexes. He violently plundered and laid waste; he scattered destruction wherever the ferocity of his disposition had led him; he regarded not gods nor

men, nor did he think anything more powerful than himself; he contemned earth, heaven, and the stars.

6. Now, when it had been often considered in the councils of the gods, by what means it might be possible either to weaken or to curb his audacity, Liber, the rest hanging back, takes upon himself this task. With the strongest wine he drugs a spring much resorted to by Acdestis where he had been wont to assuage the heat and burning thirst roused in him by sport and hunting. Hither runs Acdestis to drink when he felt the need; he gulps down the draught too greedily into his gaping veins. Overcome by what he is quite unaccustomed to, he is in consequence sent fast asleep. Liber is near the snare which he had set; over his foot he throws one end of a halter formed of hairs, woven together very skilfully; with the other end he lays hold of his privy members. When the fumes of the wine passed off, Acdestis starts up furiously, and his foot dragging the noose, by his own strength he robs himself of his sex; with the tearing asunder of these parts there is an immense flow of blood; both are carried off and swallowed up by the earth; from them there suddenly springs up, covered with fruit, a pomegranate tree, seeing the beauty of which, with admiration, Nana, daughter of the king or river Sangarius, gathers and places in her bosom some of the fruit. By this she becomes pregnant; her father shuts her up, supposing that she had been debauched, and seeks to have her starved to death;

she is kept alive by the mother of the gods with apples, and other food, and brings forth a child, but Sangarius orders it to be exposed. One Phorbas having found the child, takes it home, brings it up on goats' milk; and as handsome fellows are so named in Lydia, or because the Phrygians in their own way of speaking call their goats attagi, it happened in consequence that the boy obtained the name Attis. Him the mother of the gods loved exceedingly, because he was of most surpassing beauty; and Acdestis, who was his companion, as he grew up fondling him, and bound to him by wicked compliance with his lust in the only way now possible, leading him through the wooded glades, and presenting him with the spoils of many wild beasts, which the boy Attis at first said boastfully were won by his own toil and labour. Afterwards, under the influence of wine, he admits that he is both loved by Acdestis, and honoured by him with the gifts brought from the forest; whence it is unlawful for those polluted by drinking wine to enter into his sanctuary, because it discovered his secret.

7. Then Midas, king of Pessinus, wishing to withdraw the youth from so disgraceful an intimacy, resolves to give him his own daughter in marriage, and caused the gates of the town to be closed, that no one of evil omen might disturb their marriage joys. But the mother of the gods, knowing the fate of the youth, and that he would live among men in safety only so long as he was free from the ties of marriage, that no disaster might occur, enters the closed city, raising its walls with her head, which began to be crowned with towers in consequence. Acdestis, bursting with rage because of the boy's being torn from himself, and brought to seek a wife, fills all the guests with frenzied madness: the Phrygians shriek aloud, panic-stricken at the appearance of the gods; a daughter of adulterous Gallus cuts

off her breasts; Attis snatches the pipe borne by him who was goading them to frenzy; and he, too, now filled with furious passion, raving frantically and tossed about, throws himself down at last, and under a pine tree mutilates himself, saying, "Take these, Acdestis, for which you have stirred up so great and terribly perilous commotions. With the streaming blood his life flies; but the Great Mother of the gods gathers the parts which had been cut off, and throws earth on them, having first covered them, and wrapped them in the garment of the dead. From the blood which had flowed springs a flower, the violet, and with this the tree is girt.

Thence the custom began and arose, whereby you even now veil and wreath with flowers the sacred pine. The virgin who had been the bride, whose name, as Valerius the pontifex relates, was Ia, veils the breast of the lifeless youth with soft wool, sheds tears with Acdestis, and slays herself After her death her blood is changed into purple violets. The mother of the gods sheds tears also, from which springs an almond tree, signifying the bitterness of death. Then she bears away to her cave the pine tree, beneath which Attis had unmanned himself; and Acdestis joining in her wailings, she beats and wounds her breast, pacing round the trunk of the tree now at rest. Jupiter is begged by Acdestis that Attis may be restored to life: he does not permit it. What, however, fate allowed, he readily grants, that his body should not decay, that his hairs should always grow, that the least of his fingers should live, and should be kept ever in motion; content with which favours, it is said that Acdestis consecrated the body in Pessinus, and honoured it with yearly rites and priestly services.

8. If some one, despising the deities, and furious with a savagely sacrilegious spirit, had set himself to blaspheme your gods, would he dare to say against them anything more severe than this tale relates, which you have reduced to form, as though it were some wonderful narrative, and have honoured without ceasing, lest the power of time and the remoteness of antiquity should cause it to be forgotten? For what is there asserted in it, or what written about the gods, which, if said with regard to a man brought up with bad habits and a pretty rough training, would not make you liable to be accused of wronging and insulting him, and expose you to hatred and dislike, accompanied by implacable resentment? From the stones, you say, which Deucalion and Pyrrha threw, was produced the mother of the gods. What do you say, O theologians? what, ye priests of the heavenly powers? Did the mother of the gods, then, not exist at all for the sake of the deluge? and would there be no cause or beginning of her birth, had not violent storms of rain swept away the whole race of men? It is through man, then, that she feels herself to exist, and she owes it to Pyrrha's kindness that she sees herself addressed as a real being; but if that is indeed true, this too will of necessity not be false, that she was human, not divine.

For if it is certain that men are sprung originally from the casting of stones, it must be believed that she too was one of us, since she was produced by means of the same causes. For it cannot be, for nature would not suffer it, that from one kind of stones, and from the same mode of throwing them, some should be formed to rank among the immortals, others with the condition of men. Varro, that famous Roman, distinguished by the diversity of his

learning, and unwearied in his researches into ancient times, in the first of four books which he has left in writing on the race of the Roman people, shows by careful calculations, that from the time of the deluge, which we mentioned before, down to the consulship of Hirtius and Pansa, there are not quite two thousand years; and if he is to be believed, the Great Mother, too, must be said to have her whole life bounded by the limits of this number. And thus the matter is brought to this issue, that she who is said to be parent of all the deities is not their mother, but their daughter; nay, rather a mere child, a little girl, since we admit that in the never-ending series of ages neither beginning nor end has been ascribed to the gods.

9. But why do we speak of your having bemired the Great Mother of the gods with the filth of earth, when you have not been able for but a little time even to keep from speaking evil of Jupiter himself? While the mother of the gods was then sleeping on the highest peak of Agdus, her son, you say, tried stealthily to surprise her chastity while she slept. After robbing of their chastity virgins and matrons without number, did Jupiter hope to gratify his detestable passion upon his mother? and could he not be turned from his fierce desire by the horror which nature itself has excited not only in men, but in some other animals also, and by common feeling? Was he then regardless of piety and honour, who is chief in the temples? and could he neither reconsider nor perceive how wicked was his desire, his mind being madly agitated? But, as it is, forgetting his majesty and dignity, he crept forward to steal those vile pleasures, trembling and quaking with fear, holding his breath, walking in terror on tiptoe, and, between hope and fear, touched her secret parts, trying how soundly his mother slept, and what she would suffer. Oh, shameful representation! oh, disgraceful plight of Jupiter, prepared to attempt a filthy contest! Did the ruler of the world, then, turn to force, when, in his heedlessness and haste, he was prevented from stealing on by surprise; and when he was unable to snatch his pleasure by cunning craft, did he assail his mother with violence, and begin without any concealment to destroy the chastity which he should have revered? Then, having striven for a very long time when she is unwilling, did he go off conquered, vanquished, and overcome? and did his spent lust part him whom piety was unable to hold back from execrable lust after his mother?

10. But you will perhaps say the human race shuns and execrates such unions; among the gods there is no incest. And why, then, did his mother resist with the greatest vehemence her son when he offered her violence? Why did she flee from his embraces, as if she were avoiding unlawful approaches? For if there was nothing wrong in so doing, she should have gratified him without any reluctance, just as he eagerly wished to satisfy the cravings of his lust. And here, indeed, very thrifty men, and frugal even about shameful works, that that sacred seed may not seem to have been poured forth in vain-the rock, one says, drank up Jupiter's foul incontinence. What followed next, I ask? Tell. In the very heart of the rock, and in that flinty hardness, a child was formed and quickened to be the offspring of great Jupiter. It is not easy to object to conceptions so unnatural and so wonderful. For as the human race is said by you to have sprung and proceeded from stones, it must be believed that the stones both had genital parts, and drank in the seed cast on them, and when their

time was full were pregnant, and at last brought forth, travailing in distress as women do. That impels our curiosity to inquire, since you say that the birth occurred after ten months, in what womb of the rock was he enclosed at that time? with what food, with what juices, was he supplied?

or what could he have drawn to support him from the hard stone, as unborn infants usually receive from their mothers! He had not yet reached the light, my informant says; and already bellowing and imitating his father's thunderings, he reproduced their sound. And after it was given him to see the sky and the light of day, attacking all things which lay in his way, he made havoc of them, and assured himself that he was able to thrust down from heaven the gods themselves. O cautious and foreseeing mother of the gods, who, that she might not undergo the ill-will of so arrogant a son, or that his bellowing while still unborn might not disturb her slumbers or break her repose, withdrew herself, and sent far from her that most hurtful seed, and gave it to the rough rock.

11. There was doubt in the councils of the gods how that unyielding and fierce violence was to be subdued; and when there was no other way, they had recourse to one means, that he should be soaked with much wine, and bereft of his members, by their being cut off. As if, indeed, those who have suffered the loss of these parts become less arrogant, and as if we do not daily see those who have cut them away from themselves become more wanton, and, neglecting all the restraints of chastity and modesty, throw themselves headlong into filthy vileness, making known abroad their shameful deeds. I should like, however, to see-were it granted me to be born at those times-father Liber, who overcame the fierceness of Acdestis, having glided down from the peaks of heaven after the very venerable meetings of the gods, cropping the tails of horses, plaiting pliant halters, drugging the waters harmless while pure with much strong wine, and after that drunkenness sprung from drinking, to have carefully introduced his hands, handled the members of the sleeper, and directed his care skilfully to the parts which were to perish, so that the hold of the nooses placed round them might surround them all.

12. Would any one say this about the gods who had even a very low opinion of them? or, if they were taken up with such affairs, considerations, cares, would any man of wisdom either believe that they are gods, or reckon them among men even? Was that Acdestis, pray, the lopping off of whose lewd members was to give a sense of security to the immortals, was he one of the creatures of earth, or one of the gods, and possessed of immortality? For if he was thought to be of our lot and in the condition of men, why did he cause the deities so much terror? But if he was a god, how could he be deceived, or how could anything be cut off from a divine body? But we raise no issue on this point: he may have been of divine birth, or one of us, if you think it more correct to say so. Did a pomegranate tree, also, spring from the blood which flowed and from the parts which were cut off? or at the time when that member was concealed in the bosom of the earth, did it lay hold of the ground with a root, and spring up into a mighty tree, put forth branches loaded with blossoms, and in a moment bare mellow fruit perfectly and completely ripe? And because these sprang from

red blood, is their colour therefore bright purple, with a dash of yellow? Say further that they are juicy also, that they have the taste of wine, because they spring from the blood of one filled with it, and you have finished your story consistently. O Abdera, Abdera, what occasions for mocking you would give to men, if such a tale had been devised by you! All fathers relate it, and haughty states peruse it; and you are considered foolish, and utterly dull and stupid.

13. Through her bosom, we are told, Nana conceived a son by an apple. The opinion is self-consistent; for where rocks and hard stones bring forth, there apples must have their time of generating. The Berecyntian goddess fed the imprisoned maiden with nuts and figs, fitly and rightly; for it was right that she should live on apples who had been made a mother by an apple. After her offspring was born, it was ordered by Sangarius to be cast far away: that which he believed to be divinely conceived long before, he would not have called the offspring of his child. The infant was brought up on he-goats' milk. O story ever opposed and most inimical to the male sex, in which not only do men lay aside their virile powers, but beasts even which were males become mothers! He was famous for his beauty, and distinguished by his remarkable comeliness. It is wonderful enough that the noisome stench of goats did not cause him to be avoided and fled from. The Great Mother loved him- if as a grandmother her grandson, there is nothing wrong; but if as the theatres tell, her love is infamous and disgraceful. Acdestis, too, loved him above all, enriching him with a hunter's gifts. There could be no danger to his purity from one emasculated, you say; but it is not easy to guess what Midas dreaded? The Mother entered bearing the very walls. Here we wondered, indeed, at the might and strength of the deity;

but again we blame her carelessness, because when she remembered the decree of fate, she heedlessly laid open the city to its enemies. Acdestis cites to fury and madness those celebrating the nuptial vows. If King Midas had displeased him who was binding the youth to a wife, of what had Gallus been guilty, and his concubine's daughter, that he should rob himself of his manhood, she herself of her breasts? "Take and keep these," says he, "because of which you have excited such commotions to the overwhelming of our minds with fear. We should none of us yet know what the frenzied Acdestis had desired in his paramour's body, had not the boy thrown to him, to appease his wrath, the parts cut off.

14. What say you, O races and nations, given up to such beliefs? When these things are brought forward, are you not ashamed and confounded to say things so indecent? We wish to hear or learn from you something befitting the gods; but you, on the contrary, bring forward to us the cutting off of breasts, the lopping off of men's members, ragings, blood, frenzies, the self-destruction of maidens, and flowers and trees begotten from the blood of the dead. Say, again, did the mother of the gods, then, with careful diligence herself gather in her grief the scattered genitals with the shed blood? With her own sacred, her own divine hands, did she touch and lift up the instruments of a disgraceful and indecent office? Did she also commit them to the earth to be hid from sight; and lest in this case they should, being uncovered, be dispersed in the bosom of the earth, did she indeed wash and anoint

them with fragrant gums before wrapping and covering them with his dress? For whence could the violet's sweet scent have come had not the addition of those ointments modified the putrefying smell of the member? Pray, when you read such tales, do you not seem to yourselves to hear either girls at the loom wiling away their tedious working hours, or old women seeking diversions for credulous children, and to be declaring manifold fictions under the guise of truth? Acdestis appealed to Jupiter to restore life to his paramour:

Jupiter would not consent, because he was hindered by the fates more powerful than himself; and that he might not be in every respect very hard-hearted, he granted one favour-that the body should not decay through any corruption; that the hair should always grow; that the least of his fingers alone in his body should live, alone keep always in motion. Would any one grant this, or support it with an unhesitating assent, that hair grows on a dead body,-that part perished, and that the rest of his mortal body, free from the law of corruption, remains even still?

15. We might long ago have urged you to ponder this, were it not foolish to ask proofs of such things, as well as to say them. But this story is false, and is wholly untrue. It is no mat ter to us, indeed, because of whom you maintain that the gods have been driven from the earth, whether it is consistent and rests on a sure foundation, or is, on the contrary, framed and devised in utter falsehood. For to us it is enough-who have proposed this day to make it plain-that those deities whom you bring for ward, if they are anywhere on earth, and glow with the fires of anger, are not more excited to furious hatred by us than by you; and that that story, has been classed as an event and committed to writing by you, and is willingly read over by you every day, and handed down in order for the edifying of later times. Now, if this story is indeed true, we see that there is no reason in it why the celestial gods should be asserted to he angry with us, since we have neither declared things so much to their disgrace, nor committed them to writing at all, nor brought them publicly to light by the celebration of sacred rites; but if, as you think, it is untrue, and made up of delusive falsehoods, no man can doubt that you are the cause of offence, who have either allowed certain persons to write such stories, or have suffered them, when written, to abide in the memory of ages.

16. And yet how can you assert the falsehood of this story, when the very rites which you celebrate throughout the year testify that you believe these things to be true, and consider them perfectly trustworthy? For what is the meaning of that pine which on fixed days you always bring into the sanctuary of the mother of the gods? Is it not in imitation of that tree, beneath which the raging and ill-fated youth laid hands upon himself, and which the parent of the gods consecrated to relieve her sorrow? What mean the fleeces of wool with which you bind and surround the trunk of the tree? Is it not to recall the wools with which la covered the dying youth, and thought that she could procure some warmth for his limbs fast stiffening with cold? What mean the branches of the tree girt round and decked with wreaths of violets? Do they not mark this, how the Mother adorned with early flowers the pine which indicates and bears witness to the sad mishap? What mean the Galli

with dishevelled hair beating their breasts with their palms? Do they not recall to memory those lamentations with which the tower-bearing Mother, along with the weeping Acdestis, wailing aloud, followed the boy? What means the abstinence from eating bread which you have named castus? Is it not in imitation of the time when the goddess abstained from Ceres' fruit in her vehement sorrow?

17. Or if the things which we say are not so declare, say yourselves-those effeminate and delicate men whom we see among you in the sacred rites of this deity-what business, what care, what concern have they there; and why do they like mourners wound their arms and breasts, and act as those dolefully circumstanced? What mean the wreaths, what the violets, what the swathings, the coverings of soft wools? Why, finally, is the very pine, but a little before swaying to and fro among the shrubs, an utterly inert log, set up in the temple of the Mother of the gods next, like some propitious and very venerable deity? For either this is the cause which we have found in your writings and treatises, and in that case it is clear that you do not celebrate divine rites, but give a representation of sad events; or if there is any other reason which the darkness of the mystery has withheld from us, even it also must be involved in the infamy of some shameful deed. For who would believe that there is any honour in that which the worthless Galli begin, effeminate debauchees complete?

18. The greatness of the subject, and our duty to those on their defence also, demand that we should in like manner hunt up the other forms of baseness, whether those which the histories of antiquity record, or those contained in the sacred mysteries named initia, and not divulged openly to all, but to the silence of a few; but your innumerable sacred rites, and the loathsomeness of them all, will not allow us to go through them all bodily: nay, more, to tell the truth, we turn aside ourselves from some purposely and intentionally, lest, in striving to unfold all things, we should be defiled by contamination in the very exposition. Let us pass by Fauna Fatua, therefore, who is called Bona Dea, whom Sextus Clodius, in his sixth book in Greek on the gods, declares to have been scourged to death with rods of myrtle, because she drank a whole jar of wine without her husband's knowledge; and this is a proof, that when women show her divine honour a jar of wine is placed there, but covered from sight, and that it is not lawful to bring in twigs of myrtle, as Butas mentions in his Causalia. But let us pass by with similar neglect the dii conserentes, whom Flaccus and others relate to have buried themselves, changed in humani penis similitudinem in the cinders Under a pot of exta. And when Tanaquil, skilled in the arts of Etruria, disturbed these, the gods erected themselves, and became rigid. She then commanded a captive woman from Corniculum to learn and understand what was the meaning of this: Ocrisia, a woman of the greatest wisdom divos inseruisse genitali, explicuisse motus certos. Then the holy and burning deities poured forth the power of Lucilius, and thus Servius king of Rome was born.

19. We shall pass by the wild Bacchanalia also, which are named in Greek Omophagia, in which with seeming frenzy and the loss of your senses you twine snakes about you; and, to show yourselves full of the divinity and majesty of the god, tear in pieces with gory mouths the flesh of loudly-bleating goats. Those hidden mysteries of Cyprian Venus we pass by

also, whose founder is said to have been King Cinyras, in which being initiated, they bring stated fees as to a harlot, and carry away phalli, given as signs of the propitious deity. Let the rites of the Corybantes also be consigned to oblivion, in which is revealed that sacred mystery, a brother slain by his brothers, parsley sprung from the blood of the murdered one, that vegetable forbidden to be placed on tables, test the manes of the dead should be unappeasably offended. But those other Bacchanalia also we refuse to proclaim, in which there is revealed and taught to the initiated a secret not to be spoken; how Liber, when taken up with boyish sports, was torn asunder by the Titans; how he was cut up limb by limb by them also, and thrown into pots that he might be cooked; how Jupiter, allured by the sweet savour, rushed unbidden to the meal, and discovering what had been done, overwhelmed the revellers with his terrible thunder, and hurled them to the lowest part of Tartarus. As evidence and proof of which, the Thracian bard handed down in his poems the dice, mirror, tops, hoops, and smooth balls, and golden apples taken from the virgin Hesperides.

20. It was our purpose to leave unnoticed those mysteries also into which Phrygia is initiated, and all that race, were it not that the name of Jupiter, which has been introduced by them, would not suffer us to pass cursorily by the wrongs and insults offered to him; not that we feel any pleasure in discussing mysteries so filthy, but that it may be made clear to you again and again what wrong you heap upon those whose guardians, champions, worshippers, you profess to be. Once upon a time, they say, Diespiter, burning after his mother Ceres with evil passions and forbidden desires, for she is said by the natives of that district to be Jupiter's mother, and yet not daring to seek by open force that for which he had conceived a shameless longing, hits upon a clever trick by which to rob of her chastity his mother, who feared nothing of the sort. Instead of a god, he becomes a bull; and concealing his purpose and daring under the appearance of a beast lying in wait, he rushes madly with sudden violence upon her, thoughtless and unwitting, obtains his incestuous desires; and the fraud being disclosed by his lust, flies off known and discovered. His mother burns, foams, gasps, boils with fury and indignation; and being unable to repress the storm and tempest of her wrath, received the name Brimo thereafter from her ever-raging passion: nor has she any other wish than to punish as she may her son's audacity.

21. Jupiter is troubled enough, being overwhelmed with fear, and cannot find means to soothe the rage of his violated mother. He pours forth prayers, and makes supplication; her ears are closed by grief. The whole order of the gods is sent to seek his pardon; no one has weight enough to win a hearing. At last, the son seeking how to make satisfaction, devises this means: Arietem nobilem bene grandibus cum testiculis deligit, exsecat hos ipse et lanato exuit ex folliculi tegmine. Approaching his mother sadly and with downcast looks, and as if by his own decision he had condemned himself, he casts and throws these into her bosom. When she saw what his pledge was, she is somewhat softened, and allows herself to be recalled to the care of the offspring which she had conceived. After the tenth month she bears a daughter, of beautiful form, whom later ages have called now Libera, now Proserpine; whom when Jupiter Verveceus saw to be strong, plump, and blooming, forgetting what evils and what wickedness, and how great recklessness, he had a little

before fallen into, he returns to his former practices; and because it seemed too wicked that a father openly be joined as in marriage with his daughter, he passes into the terrible form of a dragon: he winds his huge coils round the terrified maiden, and under a fierce appearance sports and caresses her in softest embraces.

She, too, is in consequence filled with the seed of the most powerful Jupiter, but not as her mother was, for she bore a daughter like herself; but from the maiden was born something like a bull, to testify to her seduction by Jupiter. If any one asks who narrates this, then we shall quote the well-known senarian verse of a Tarentine poet which antiquity sings, saying: "The bull begot a dragon, and the dragon a bull. Lastly, the sacred rites themselves, and the ceremony of initiation even, named Sebadia, might attest the truth; for in them a golden snake is let down into the bosom of the initiated, and taken away again from the lower parts.

22. I do not think it necessary here also with many words to go through each part, and show how many base and unseemly things there are in each particular. For what mortal is there, with but little sense even of what becomes a man, who does not himself see clearly the character of all these things, how wicked they are, how vile, and what disgrace is brought upon the gods by the very ceremonies of their mysteries, and by the unseemly origin of their rites? Jupiter, it is said, lusted after Ceres. Why, I ask, has Jupiter deserved so ill of you, that there is no kind of disgrace, no infamous adultery, which you do not heap upon his head, as if on some vile and worthless person? Leda was unfaithful to her nuptial vow; Jupiter is said to be the cause of the fault. Danae could not keep her virginity; the theft is said to have been Jupiter's. Europa hastened to the name of woman; he is again declared to have been the assailant of her chastity. Alcmena, Electra, Latona, Laodamia, a thousand other virgins, and a thousand matrons, and with them the boy Catamitus, were robbed of their honour and chastity. It is the same story everywhere-Jupiter. Nor is there any kind of baseness in which you do not join and associate his name with passionate lusts;

so that the wretched being seems to have been born for no other reason at all except that he might be a field fertile in crimes, an occasion of evil-speaking, a kind of open place into which should gather all filthiness from the impurities of the stage. And yet if you were to say that he had intercourse with strange women, it would indeed be impious, but the wrong done in slandering him might be bearable. Did he lust after his mother also, after his daughter too, with furious desires; and could no sacredness in his parent, no reverence for her, no shrinking even from the child which had sprung from himself, withhold him from conceiving so detestable a plan?

23. I should wish, therefore, to see Jupiter, the father of the gods, who ever controls the world and men, adorned with the horns of an ox, shaking his hairy ears, with his feet contracted into hoofs, chewing green grass, and having behind him a tail, hams, and ankles smeared over with soft excrement, and bedaubed with the filth cast forth. I should wish, I say,-for it must be said over and over again,-to see him who turns the stars in their courses, and who terrifies and overthrows nations pale with fear, pursuing the flocks of wethers,

inspicientem testiculos aretinos, snatching these away with that severe and divine hand with which he was wont to launch the gleaming lightnings and to hurl in his rage the thunderbolt. Then, indeed, I should like to see him ransacking their inmost parts with glowing knife; and all witnesses being removed, tearing away the membranes circumjectas prolibus, and bringing them to his mother, still hot with rage, as a kind of fillet to draw forth her pity, with downcast countenance, pale, wounded, pretending to be in agony; and to make this believed, defiled with the blood of the rain, and covering his pretended wound with bands of wool and linen. Is it possible that this can be heard and read in this world, and that those who discuss these things wish themselves to be thought pious, holy, and defenders of religion?

Is there any greater sacrilege than this, or can any mind be found so imbued with impious ideas as to believe such stories, or receive them, or hand them down in the most secret mysteries of the sacred rites? If that Jupiter of whom you speak, whoever he is, really existed, or was affected by any sense of wrong, would it not be fitting that, roused to anger, be should remove the earth from under our feet, extinguish the light of the sun and moon; nay more, that he should throw all things into one mass, as of old?

24. But, my opponent says, these are not the rites of our state. Who, pray, says this, or who repeats it? is he Roman, Gaul, Spaniard, African, German, or Sicilian? And what does it avail your cause if these stories are not yours, while those who compose them are on your side? Or of what importance is it whether you approve of them or not, since what you yourselves say are found to be either just as foul, or of even greater baseness? For do you wish that we should consider the mysteries and those ceremonies which are named by the Greeks Thesmophoria, in which those holy vigils and solemn watchings were consecrated to the goddess by the Athenians? Do you wish us, I say, to see what beginnings they have, what causes, that we may prove that Athens itself also, distinguished in the arts and pursuits of civilization, says things as insulting to the gods as others, and that stories are there publicly related under the mask of religion just as disgraceful as are thrown in our way by the rest of you? Once, they say, when Proserpine, not yet a woman and still a maiden, was gathering purple flowers in the meadows of Sicily, and when her eagerness to gather them was leading her hither and thither in all directions, the king of the shades, springing forth through an opening of unknown depth, seizes and bears away with him the maiden, and conceals himself again in the bowels of the earth. Now when Ceres did not know what had happened, and had no idea where in the world her daughter was, she set herself to seek the lost one all over the world. She snatches up two torches lit at the fires of Aetna; and giving herself light by means of these, goes on her quest in all parts of the earth.

25. In her wanderings on that quest, she reaches the confines of Eleusis as well as other countries -that is the name of a canton in Attica. At that time these parts were inhabited by aborigines named Baubo, Triptolemus, Eubuleus, Eumolpus, Dysaules: Triptolemus, who yoked oxen; Dysaules, a keeper of goats; Eubuleus, of swine; Eumolpus, of sheep, from whom also flows the race of Eumolpidae, and from whom is derived that name famous

among the Athenians, and those who afterwards flourished as caduceatores, hierophants, and criers. So, then, that Baubo who, we have said, dwelt in the canton of Eleusis, receives hospitably Ceres, worn out with ills of many kinds, hangs about her with pleasing attentions, beseeches her not to neglect to refresh her body, brings to quench her thirst wine thickened with spelt, which the Greeks term cyceon. The goddess in her sorrow turns away from the kindly offered services, and rejects them; nor does her misfortune suffer her to remember what the body always requires. Baubo, on the other hand, begs and exhorts her-as is usual in such calamities-not to despise her humanity; Ceres remains utterly immoveable, and tenaciously maintains an invincible austerity. But when this was done several times, and her fixed purpose could not be worn out by any attentions, Baubo changes her plans, and determines to make merry by strange jests her whom she could not win by earnestness. That part of the body by which women both bear children and obtain the name of mothers, this she frees from longer neglect:

she makes it assume a purer appearance, and become smooth like a child, not yet hard and rough with hair. In this wise she returns to the sorrowing goddess; and while trying the common expedients by which it is usual to break the force of grief, and moderate it, she uncovers herself, and baring her groins, displays all the parts which decency hides; and then the goddess fixes her eyes upon these, and is pleased with the strange form of consolation. Then becoming more cheerful after laughing, she takes and drinks off the drought spurned before, and the indecency of a shameless action forced that which Baubo's modest conduct was long unable to win.

26. If any one perchance thinks that we are speaking wicked calumnies, let him take the hooks of the Thracian soothsayer, which you speak of as of divine antiquity; and he will find that we are neither cunningly inventing anything, nor seeking means to bring the holiness of the gods into ridicule, and doing so: for we shall bring forward the very verses which the son of Calliope uttered in Greek, and published abroad in his songs to the human race throughout all ages:- "With these words she at the same time drew up her garments from the lowest hem, And exposed to view formatas inguinibus res, Which Baubo grasping with hollow hand, for Their appearance was infantile, strikes, touches gently. Then the goddess, fixing her orbs of august light, Being softened, lays aside for a little the sadness of her mind; Thereafter she takes the cup in her hand, and laughing,

Drinks off the whole draught of cyceon with gladness." What say you, O wise sons of Erectheus? what, you citizens of Minerva? The mind is eager to know with what words you will defend what it is so dangerous to maintain, or what arts you have by which to give safety to personages and causes wounded so mortally. This is no false mistrust, nor are you assailed with lying accusations: the infamy of your Eleusinia is declared both by their base beginnings and by the records of ancient literature, by the very signs, in fine, which you use when questioned in receiving the sacred things,-" I have fasted, and drunk the draught; I have taken out of the mystic cist, and put into the wicker-basket; I have received again, and transferred to the little chest."

27. Are then your deities carried off by force, and do they seize by violence, as their holy and hidden mysteries relate? do they enter into marriages sought stealthily and by fraud? is their honour snatched from virgins resisting and unwilling? have they no knowledge of impending injury, no acquaintance with what has happened to those carried off by force? Are they, when lost, sought for as men are? and do they traverse the earth's vast extent with lamps and torches when the sun is shining most brightly? Are they afflicted? are they troubled? do they assume the squalid garments of mourners, and the signs of misery? and that they may be able to turn their mind to victuals and the taking of food, is use made not of reason, not of the right time, not of some weighty words or pressing courtesy, but is a display made of the shameful and indecent parts of the body? and are those members exposed which the shame felt by all, and the natural law of modesty, bid us conceal, which it is not permissible to name among pure ears without permission, and saying, "by your leave? " What, I ask you, was there in such a sight, what in the privy parts of Baubo, to move to wonder and laughter a goddess of the same sex, and formed with similar parts? what was there such that, when presented to the divine eyes and sight, it should at the same time enable her to forget her miseries, and bring her with sudden cheerfulness to a happier state of mind? Oh, what have we had it in our power to bring forward with scoffing and jeering, were it not for respect for the reader, and the dignity of literature!

28. I confess that I have long been hesitating, looking on every side, shuffling, doubling Tellene perplexities; while I am ashamed to mention those Alimontian mysteries in which Greece erects phalli in honour of father Bacchus, and the whole district is covered with images of men's fascina. The meaning of this is obscure perhaps, and it is asked why it is done. Whoever is ignorant of this, let him learn, and, wondering at what is so important, ever keep it with reverent care in a pure heart. While Liber, born at Nysa, and son of Semele, was still among men, the story goes, he wished to become acquainted with the shades below, and to inquire into what went on in Tartarus; but this wish was hindered by some difficulties, because, from ignorance of the route, he did not know by what way to go and proceed. One Prosumnus starts up, a base lover of the god, and a fellow too prone to wicked lusts, who promises to point out the gate of Dis, and the approaches to Acheron, if the god will gratify him, and suffer uxorias voluptates ex se carpi. The god, without reluctance, swears to put himself in his power and at his disposal, but only immediately on his return from the lower regions, having obtained his wish and desire. Prostmmus politely tells him the way, and sets him on the very threshold of the lower regions.

In the meantime, while Liber is inspecting and examining carefully Styx, Cerberus, the Furies, and all other things, the informer passed from the number of the living, and was buried according to the manner of men. Evius comes up from the lower regions, and learns that his guide is dead. But that he might fulfil his promise, and free himself from the obligation of his oath, he goes to the place of the funeral, and -"ficorum ex arbore ramum validissimum praesecans dolat, runcinat, levigat et humani speciem fabricatur in penis, figit super aggerem tumuli, et postica ex parte nudatus accedit, subsidit, insidit. Lascivia

deinde surientis assumptâ, huc atque illuc clunes torquet et meditatur ab ligno pati quod jamdudum in veritate promiserat."

29. Now, to prevent any one from thinking that we have devised what is so impious, we do not call upon him to believe Heraclitus as a witness, nor to receive from his account what he felt about such mysteries. Let him ask the whole of Greece what is the meaning of these phalli which ancient custom erects and worships throughout the country, throughout the towns: he will find that the causes are those which we say; or if they are ashamed to declare the truth honestly, of what avail will it be to obscure, to conceal the cause and origin of the rite, while the accusation holds good against the very act of worship? What say you, O peoples? what, ye nations busied with the services of the temples, and given up to them? Is it to these rites you drive us by flames, banishment, slaughter, and any other kind of punishments, and by fear of cruel torture? Are these the gods whom you bring to us, whom you thrust and impose upon us, like whom you would neither wish yourselves to be, nor any one related to you by blood and friendship? Can you declare to your beardless sons, still wearing the dress of boys, the agreements which Liber formed with his lovers? Can you urge your daughters-in-law, nay, even your own wives, to show the modesty of Baubo, and enjoy the chaste pleasures of Ceres? Do you wish your young men to know, hear, and learn what even Jupiter showed himself to more matrons than one?

Would you wish your grown-up maidens and still lusty fathers to learn how the same deity sported with his daughter? Do you wish full brothers, already hot with passion, and sisters sprung from the same parents, to hear that he again did not spurn the embraces, the couch of his sister? Should we not then flee far from such gods; and should not our ears be stopped altogether, that the filthiness of so pure a religion may not creep into the mind? For what man is there who has been reared with morals so pure, that the example of the godsdoes not excite him to similar madness? or who can keep back his desires from his kinsfolk, and those of whom he should stand in awe, when he sees that among the gods above nothing is held sacred in the confusion caused by their lusts? For when it is certain that the first and perfect nature has not been able to restrain its passion within right limits, why should not man give himself up to his desires without distinction, being both borne on headlong by his innate frailty, and aided by the teaching of the holy deities?

30. I confess that, in reflecting on such monstrous stories in my own mind, I have long been accustomed to wonder that you dare to speak of those as atheists, impious, sacrilegious, who either deny that there are any gods at all, or doubt their existence, or assert that they were men, and have been numbered among the gods for the sake of some power and good desert; since, if a true examination be made, it is fitting that none should be called by such names, more than yourselves, who, under the pretence of showing them reverence, heap up in so doing more abuse and accusation, than if you had conceived the idea of doing this openly with avowed abuse. He who doubts the existence of the gods, or denies it altogether, although he may seem to adopt monstrous opinions from the audacity of his conjectures, yet refuses to credit what is obscure without insulting any one; and he who asserts that

they were mortals, although he brings them down from the exalted place of inhabitants of heaven, yet heaps upon them other honours, since he supposes that they have been raised to the rank of the gods for their services, and from admiration of their virtues.

31. But you who assert that you are the defenders and propagators of their immortality, have you passed by, have you left untouched, any one of them, without assailing him with your abuse? or is there any kind of insult so damnable in the eyes of all, that you have been afraid to use it upon them, even though hindered by the dignity of their name? Who declared that the gods loved frail and mortal bodies? was it not you? Who that they perpetrated those most charming thefts on the couches of others? was it not you? Who that children had intercourse with their mothers; and on the other hand, fathers with their virgin daughters? was it not you? Who that pretty boys, and even grown-up men of very fine appearance, were wrongfully lusted after? was it not you? Who declared that they were mutilated, debauched, skilled in dissimulation, thieves, held in bonds and chains, finally assailed with thunderbolts, and wounded, that they died, and even found graves on earth? was it not you? While, then, so many and grievous charges have been raised by you to the injury of the gods, do you dare to assert that the gods have been displeased because of us, while it has long been clear that you are the guilty causes of such anger, and the occasion of the divine wrath?

32. But you err, says my opponent, and are mistaken, and show, even in criticising these things, that you are rather ignorant, unlearned, and boorish. For all those stories which seem to you disgraceful, and tending to the discredit of the gods, contain in them holy mysteries, theories wonderful and profound, and not such as any one can easily become acquainted with by force of understanding. For that is not meant and said which has been written and placed on the surface of the story; but all these things are understood in allegorical senses, and by means of secret explanations privately supplied. Therefore he who says Jupiter lay with his mother, does not mean the incestuous or shameful embraces of Venus, but names Jupiter instead of rain, and Ceres instead of the earth. And he, again, who says that he dealt lasciviously with his daughter, speaks of no filthy pleasures, but puts Jupiter for the name of a shower, and by his daughter means the crop sown. So, too, he who says that Proserpina was carried off by father Dis, does not say, as you suppose, that the maiden was carried off to gratify the basest desires; but because we cover the seed with clods, he signifies that the goddess has sunk under the earth, and unites with Orcus to bring forth fruit. In like manner in the other stories also one thing indeed is said, but something else is understood; and under a commonplace openness of expression there lurks a secret doctrine, and a dark profundity of mystery.

33. These are all quirks, as is evident, and quibbles with which they are wont to bolster up weak cases before a jury; nay, rather, to speak more truly, they are pretences, such as are used in sophistical reasonings, by which not the truth is sought after, but always the image, and appearance, and shadow of the truth. For because it is shameful and unbecoming to receive as true the correct accounts, you have had recourse to this expedient, that one thing

should be substituted for another, and that what was in itself shameful should, in being explained, be forced into the semblance of decency. But what is it to us whether other senses and other meanings underlie these vain stories? For we who assert that the gods are treated by you wickedly and impiously, need only receive what is written, what is said, and need not care as to what is kept secret, since the insult to the deities consists not in the idea hidden in its meanings, but in what is signified by the words as they stand out. And yet, that we may not seem unwilling to examine what you say, we ask this first of you, if only you will bear with us, from whom have you learned, or by whom has it been made known, either that these things were written allegorically, or that they should be understood in the same way? Did the writers summon you to take counsel with them? or did you lie hid in their bosoms at the time when they put one thing for another, without regard to truth? Then, if they chose, from religions awe and fear on any account, to wrap those mysteries in dark obscurity, what audacity it shows in you to wish to understand what they did not wish, to know yourselves and make all acquainted with that which they vainly attempted to conceal by words which did not suggest the truth!

34. But, agreeing with you that in all these stories stags are spoken of instead of Iphigenias, yet, how are you sure, when you either explain or unfold these allegories, that you give the same explanations or have the same ideas which were entertained by the writers themselves in the silence of their thoughts, but expressed by words not adapted to what was meant, but to something else? You say that the falling of rain into the bosom of the earth was spoken of as the union of Jupiter and Ceres; another may both devise with greater subtlety, and conjecture with some probability, something else; a third, a fourth may do the same; and as the characteristics of the minds of the thinkers show themselves, so each thing may be explained in an infinite number of ways. For since all that allegory, as it is called, is taken from narratives expressly made obscure, and has no certain limit within which the meaning of the story, as it is called, should be firmly fixed and unchangeable, it is open to every one to put the meaning into it which he pleases, and to assert that that has been adopted to which his thoughts and surmises led him. But this being the case, how can you obtain certainty from what is doubtful, and attach one sense only to an expression which you see to be explained in innumerable different ways?

35. Finally, if you think it right, returning to our inquiry, we ask this of you, whether you think that all stories about the gods, that is, without any exception, have been written throughout with a double meaning and sense, and in a way admitting of several interpretations; or that some parts of them are not ambiguous at all, while, on the contrary, others have many meanings, and are enveloped in the veil of allegory which has been thrown round them? For if the whole structure and arrangement of the narrative have been surrounded with a veil of allegory from beginning to end, explain to us, tell us, what we should put and substitute for each thing which every story says, and to what other things and meanings we should refer each. For as, to take an example, you wish Jupiter to be said instead of the rain, Ceres for the earth, and for Libera and father Dis the sinking and casting of seed into the earth, so you ought to say what we should understand for the bull, what for the

wrath and anger of Ceres; what the word Brimo means; what the anxious prayer of Jupiter what the gods sent to make intercession for him, but not listened to; what the castrated ram; what the parts of the castrated ram; what the satisfaction made with these; what the further dealings with his daughter, still more unseemly in their lustfulness; so, in the other story also, what the grove and flowers of Henna are;

what the fire taken from Aetna, and the torches lit with it; what the travelling through the world with these; what the Attic country, the canton of Eleusin, the but of Baubo, and her rustic hospitality; what the drought of cyceon means, the refusal of it, the shaving and disclosure of the privy parts, the shameful charm of the sight, and the forgetfulness of her bereavement produced by such means. Now, if you point out what should be put in the place of all these, changing the one for the other, we shall admit your assertion; but if you can neither present another supposition in each case, nor appeal to the context as a whole, why do you make that obscure, by means of fair-seeming allegories, which has been spoken plainly, and disclosed to the understanding of all?

36. But you will perhaps say that these allegories are not found in the whole body of the story, but that some parts are written so as to be understood by all, while others have a double meaning, and are veiled in ambiguity. That is refined subtlety, and can be seen through by the dullest. For because it is very difficult for you to transpose, reverse, and divert to other meanings all that has been said, you choose out some things which suit your purpose, and by means of these you strive to maintain that false and spurious versions were thrown about the truth which is under them. But yet, supposing that we should grant to you that it is just as you say, how do you know, or whence do you learn, which part of the story is written without any double meaning, which, on the other hand, has been covered with jarring and alien senses? For it may be that what you believe to be so is otherwise, that what you believe to be otherwise has been produced with different, and even opposite modes of expression. For where, in a consistent whole, one part is said to be written allegorically, the other in plain and trustworthy language, while there is no sign in the thing itself to point out the difference between what is said ambiguously and what is said simply, that which is simple may as well be thought to have a double meaning, as what has been written ambiguously be believed to be wrapt in obscurity. But, indeed, we confess that we do not understand at all by whom this is either done, or can be believed to be possible.

37. Let us examine, then, what is said in this way. In the grove of Henna, my opponent says, the maiden Proserpine was once gathering flowers: this is as yet uncorrupted, and has been told in a straightforward manner, for all know without any doubt what a grove and flowers are, what Proserpine is, and a maiden. Summanus sprung forth from the earth, borne along in a four-horse chariot: this, too, is just as simple, for a team of four horses, a chariot, and Summanus need no interpreter. Suddenly he carried off Proserpine, and bore her with himself under the earth: the burying of the seed, my opponent says, is meant by the rape of Proserpine.What has happened, pray, that the story should be suddenly turned to something else? that Proserpine should be called the seed? that she who was for a long

time held to be a maiden gathering flowers, after that she was taken away and carried off by violence, should begin to signify the seed sown? Jupiter, my opponent says, having turned himself into a bull, longed to have intercourse with his mother Ceres: as was explained before, under these names the earth and falling rain are spoken of I see the law of allegory expressed in the dark and ambiguous terms. Ceres was enraged and angry, and received the parts of a ram as the penalty demanded by vengeance: this again I see to be expressed in common language, for both anger and (testes and) satisfaction are spoken of in their usual circumstances. What, then, happened here,-that from Jupiter, who was named for the rain, and Ceres, who was named for the earth, the story passed to the true Jove, and to a most straightforward account of events?

38. Either, then, they must all have been written and put forward allegorically, and the whole should be pointed out to us; or nothing has been so written, since what is supposed to be allegorical does not seem as if it were part of the narrative. These are all written allegorically, you say. This seems by no means certain. Do you ask for what reason, for what cause? Because, I answer, all that has taken place and has been set down distinctly in any book cannot be turned into an allegory, for neither can that be undone which has been done, nor can the character of an event change into one which is utterly different. Can the Trojan war be turned into the condemnation of Socrates? or the battle of Cannae become the cruel proscription of Sulla? A proscription may indeed, as Tullius says in jest, be spoken of as a battle, and be called that of Cannae; but what has already taken place, cannot be at the same time a battle and a proscription; for neither, as I have said, can that which has taken place be anything else than what has taken place; nor can that pass over into a substance foreign to it which has been fixed down firmly in its own nature and peculiar condition.

39. Whence, then, do we prove that all these narratives are records of events? From the solemn rites and mysteries of initiation, it is clear, whether those which are celebrated at fixed times and on set days, or those which are taught secretly by the heathen without allowing the observance of their usages to be interrupted. For it is not to be believed that these have no origin, arc practised without reason or meaning, and have no causes connected with their first beginnings. That pine which is regularly born into the sanctuary of the Great Mother, is it not in imitation of that tree beneath which Attis mutilated and unmanned himself, which also, they relate, the goddess consecrated to relieve her grief? That erecting of phalli and fascina, which Greece worships and celebrates in rites every year, does it not recall the deed by which Liber paid his debt? Of what do those Eleusinian mysteries and secret rites contain a narrative? Is it not of that wandering in which Ceres, worn out in seeking for her daughter, when she came to the confines of Attica, brought wheat with her, graced with a hind's skin the family of the Nebridae and laughed at that most wonderful sight in Baubo's groins? Or if there is another cause, that is nothing to us, so long as they are all produced by some cause. For it is not credible that these things were set on foot without being preceded by any causes, or the inhabitants of Attica must be considered mad to have received a religious ceremony got up without any reason. But if this is clear and certain, that is, if the causes and origins of the mysteries are traceable to past events, by no

change can they be turned into the figures of allegory; for that which has been done, which has taken place, cannot, in the nature of things, be undone.

40. And yet, even if we grant you that this is the case, that is, even if the narratives give utterance to one thing in words, but mean something else, after the manner of raving seers, do you not observe in this case, do you not see how dishonouring, how insulting to the gods, this is which is said to be done? or can any greater wrong be devised than to term and call the earth and rain, or anything else,-for it does not matter what change is made in the interpretation,-the intercourse of Jupiter and Ceres? and to signify the descent of rain from the sky, and the moistening of the earth, by charges against the gods? Can anything be either thought or believed more impious than that the rape of Proserpine speaks of seeds buried in the earth, or anything else,-for in like manner it is of no importance,-and that it speaks of the pursuit of agriculture to the dishonour of father Dis? Is it not a thousand times more desirable to become mute and speechless, and to lose that flow of words and noisy and unseemly loquacity, than to call the basest things by the names of the gods; nay, more, to signify commonplace things by the base actions of the gods?

41. It was once usual, in speaking allegorically, to conceal under perfectly decent ideas, and clothe with the respectability of decency, what was base and horrible to speak of openly; but now venerable things are at your instance; vilely spoken of, and what is quite pure is related in filthy language, so that that which vice formerly concealed from shame, is now meanly and basely spoken of, the mode of speech which was fitting being changed. In speaking of Mars and Venus as having been taken in adultery by Vulcan's art, we speak of lust, says my opponent, and anger, as restrained by the force and purpose of reason. What, then, hindered, what prevented you from expressing each thing by the words and terms proper to it? nay, more, what necessity was there, when you had resolved to declare something or other, by means of treatises and writings, to resolve that that should not be the meaning to which you point, and in one narrative to take up at the same time opposite positions-the eagerness of one wishing to teach, the niggardliness of one reluctant to make public? Was there no risk in speaking of the gods as unchaste? The mention of lust and anger, my opponent says, was likely to defile the tongue and mouth with foul contagion. But, assuredly, if this were done, and the veil of allegorical obscurity were removed, the matter would be easily understood, and by the same the dignity of the gods would be maintained unimpaired. But now, indeed, when the restraining of vices is said to be signified by the binding of Mars and Venus, two most inconsistent things are done at the very same time; so that, on the one hand, a description of something vile suggests an honourable meaning, and on the other, the baseness occupies the mind before any regard for religion can do so.

42. But you will perhaps say, for this only is left which you may think can be brought forward by you, that the gods do not wish their mysteries to be known by men, and that the narratives were therefore written with allegorical ambiguity. And whence have you learned that the gods above do not wish their mysteries to be made public? whence have you become acquainted with these? or why are you anxious to unravel them by explaining

them as allegories? Lastly, and finally, what do the gods mean, that while they do not wish honourable, they allow unseemly, even the basest things, to be said about them? When we name Attis, says my opponent, we mean and speak of the sun; but if Attis is the sun, as you reckon him and say, who will that Attis be whom your books record and declare to have been born in Phrygia, to have suffered certain things, to have done certain things also, whom all the theatres know in the scenic shows, to whom every year we see divine honours paid expressly by name amongst the other religious ceremonies? Whether was this name made to pass from the sun to a man, or from a man to the sun? For if that name is derived in the first instance from the sun, what, pray, has the golden sun done to you, that you should make that name to belong to him in common with an emasculated person? But if it is derived from a goat, and is Phrygian, of what has the sire of Phaethon, the father of this light and brightness, been guilty, that he should seem worthy to be named from a mutilated man, and should become more venerable when designated by the name of an emasculated body?

43. But what the meaning of this is, is already clear to all. For because you are ashamed of such writers and histories, and do not see that these things can be got rid of which have once been committed to writing in filthy language, you strive to make base things honourable, and by every kind of subtlety you pervert and corrupt the real senses of words for the sake of spurious interpretations; and, as oft times happens to the sick, whose senses and understanding have been put to flight by the distempered force of disease, you toss about confused and uncertain conjectures, and rave in empty fictions. Let it be granted that the irrigation of the earth was meant by the union of Jupiter and Ceres, the burying of the seed by the ravishing of Proserpine by father Dis, wines scattered over the earth by the limbs of Liber torn asunder by the Titans, that the restraining of lust and rashness has been spoken of as the binding of the adulterous Venus and Mars.

44. But if you come to the conclusion that these fables have been written allegorically, what is to be done with the rest, which we see cannot be forced into such changes of sense? For what are we to substitute for the wrigglings into which the lustful heat of Semele's offspring forced him upon the sepulchral mound? and what for those Ganymedes who were carried off and set to preside over lustful practices? what for that conversion of an ant into which Jupiter, the greatest of the gods, contracted the outlines of his huge body? what for swans and satyrs? what for golden showers, which the same seductive god put on with perfidious guile, amusing himself by changes of form? :that we may not seem to speak of Jupiter only, what allegories can there be in the loves of the other deities? what in their circumstances as hired servants and slaves? what in their bonds, bereavements, lamentations? what in their agonies, wounds, sepulchres? Now, while in this you might be held guilty in one respect for writing in such wise about the gods, you have added to your guilt beyond measure in calling base things by the names of deities, and again in defaming the gods by giving to them the names of infamous things. But if you believed without any doubt that they were here close at hand, or anywhere at all, fear would check you in making mention of them, and your beliefs and unchanged thoughts should have been exactly as if they were listening to you

and heard your words. For among men devoted to the services of religion, not only the gods themselves, but even the names of the gods should be reverenced, and there should De quite as much grandeur in their names as there is in those even who are thought of under these names.

45. Judge fairly, and you are deserving of censure in this, that in your Common conversation you name Mars when you mean fighting, Neptune when you mean the seas, Ceres when you mean bread, Minerva when you mean weaving, Venus when you mean filthy lusts. For what reason is there, that, when things can be classed under their own names, they should be called by the names of the gods. and that such an insult should be offered to the deities as not even we men endure, if any one applies and turns our haines to trifling objects? But language, you say, is contemptible, if defiled with such words. O modesty, worthy of praise! you blush to name bread and wine, and are not afraid to speak of Venus instead of carnal intercourse!

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.