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LACTANTIUS AS A CRITIC OF
GREEK PHILOSOPHY

by

PHILIP H. VITALE

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences of Loyola University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Loyola University
Chicago
1936

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INTRODUCTION

The early life of a writer who has proven himself of lasting fibre furnishes, to the deeply enlisted student of his works, a vantage-point of no mean expressiveness. Far from merely permitting him to indulge in the merry game of criticism, of descrying in the author's formative period of life the cross-references and manifold implications of his later writings, and of realizing in the latter the suggestions and sympathies and explanations of the former, it is very often the passé partout to the more recondite and man-colored complexities of his literary harvest: it is that without which there can be little hope of observing how the author laid the foundations so necessary to his later purposes, or of even attaining to a general perspective of his character. Nor is a solution to this problem found in the works themselves, for they, contrary to the ordinary course of opinion, seldom throw a sure and steady light upon the mind and character of their creator. This the history of literature clearly illustrates: Steele wrote excellently on temperance when sober---a rare occasion; Young, who wrote gloomy verses on death, was a brisk lively man; Sallust, who declaimed so eloquently against the licentiousness of the age, was himself a debauchee; Sterne, who excelled in pathos and charity, was selfish, cruel, and a wife-beater of note; Johnson's essay on politeness is admirable, yet he himself was a bore; Seneca wrote in praise of poverty

on a table formed of solid gold, with millions let out at usury. To arrive at a just and full appreciation of a writer, in fine, it is necessary to get into relation with him, to become, so to speak, one with him in sympathy and purpose. This is possible only through a knowledge of the biography and psychology of the writer, together with his social and historical background.

Personal History

Of the life of Lucius Firmianus Lactantius, one of the most important and most frequently reprinted of the Christian Fathers, there appears to be little known. According to Jerome, who calls him the most learned man of his time, and, on account of the grace and eloquence of his writings, the "Christian Cicero (Flavius eloquentiae Tullianae),"¹ he was a pupil of Arnobius.² Others³ also bear witness to this. It would seem, however, that Lactantius, if at all acquainted with Arnobius,---and the chief work of each favors the affirmative⁴---, was his senior in years. In naming others who have written against the assailants of Christianity,⁵ Lactantius makes no mention of Arnobius, which, as Dr. Smith observes, certainly would have been inexcusable in him, had the work of Arnobius been published, and doubly inexcusable had Arnobius, besides being his contemporary, been his preceptor also.⁶ Thrusting aside this last hypothesis, for the time being at least, it would seem best to regard Lactantius and Arnobius as independent of each other: Arnobius possibly an emulator of Lactantius.

This simplifies matters considerably. For Eusebius, it is to be noted, finds a place for Lactantius in his Chronicle, but none for his supposed master. Again, Lactantius and Arnobius both make Christianity three hundred years old, but the latter when he penned his principal work,⁷ the former when he epitomized his principal work, which had been published long since. It is quite possible, too, suggests Mr. Wace, that the work of Arnobius appeared when Lactantius settled in Gaul, in which case neither need have known anything of the other's work. A further point of contrast lies in the form and subject matter of the respective works. That of Arnobius is entirely limited to a refutation of the polytheism of the day and the popular objections to Christianity; that of Lactantius, like The City of God by St. Augustine, in which, incidentally, Lactantius himself is honourably and approvingly cited,⁸ divides itself into two parts, the first of which exposes the false religions, antagonistic to the true, and the second of which expounds the true.

The place and time of our author's birth has also been the subject of much dispute. Some cling to the belief that he was a native of Africa,⁹ while others¹⁰ maintain that he was born in Italy, and that his birthplace was probably Firmum (Fermo), on the Adriatic. He was born of heathen parentage about the middle of the third century, and became a Christian at a somewhat mature age.¹¹ The notion that he was of African birth is owing, in all probability, to the belief that he pur-

sued his studies in the school of the celebrated rhetorician and apologist Arnobius of Sicea, in proconsular Africa. While yet a youth he is supposed to have gained celebrity by the publication of a poetical work called the Symposium, a collection of a hundred riddles in hexameter for table amusement. The real personality of Lactantius remains a mystery. To judge from his writings that have come down to us, his character must have been cast in a somewhat austere mold, soured, perhaps, by failures, as he had, apparently, no mean estimate of himself;¹² a person of few and warm, rather than of many friends; thoughtful as well as learned, conscientious and pure. Eusebius¹³ speaks of him as never having been otherwise than poor---so poor as frequently to have been in want of the very necessities of life. St. Jerome, whether commenting upon this or not, says that it was his ill-success in getting pupils at Nicomedia, a city inhabited and visited mainly by Greeks, whence he was summoned by Diocletian to serve as a professor of Latin eloquence. This, it is opined, afforded him plenty of leisure, which he welcomed as an opportunity to devote himself largely to authorship.¹⁴ Here he is supposed to have remained for ten years, while the Christians were constantly assailed on all sides with weapons of fire, sword, wit, and ridicule. These outrages impelled Lactantius to undertake the defense of the hated and despised religion, during which, it is generally supposed, he himself became a convert to the true faith. Thus it may be accounted for that Constantine called him to his court in Gaul

as the preceptor of his son Crispus,¹⁵ whom he afterwards caused to be put to death.¹⁶ He must have been quite old when he arrived in Gaul, for he is then already spoken of as gray-haired and bowed, and is supposed to have died at the imperial residence in Treves shortly after his pupil Crispus, about 330.¹⁷

That Lactantius escaped personal injury during the Diocletian persecution has also been a matter of not little perplexity among Antiquarians. Some have hinted, on the face of no other evidence, that Lactantius was an opportunist. This, of course, is pure conjecture and should be valued as such. Others think---and this seems to be reasonable---that Lactantius escaped suffering for his faith, because he was generally regarded as a philosopher, and not as a Christian writer. We must not draw from this, as it shall be shown later, that Lactantius should be regarded primarily as a philosopher rather than a Christian writer, but that it is quite possible that he was so regarded by his contemporaries. Indeed, if we bear in mind this, that all his theological works manifest an intimate acquaintance with the masterpieces of ancient rhetoric and philosophy, the run-of-the-mill definition of Lactantius as the Christian pupil of Cicero and Seneca is apt to appear quite natural. In the words of Jerome:¹⁸

Lactantius wrote seven books against the Gentiles, and two volumes on the word and anger of God. If you wish to read these treatises, you will find in them a compendium of Cicero's Dialogues.

Even more Ciceronian, and Lactantius' true forte, is his fluent and perspicuous prose style, in the harmony, purity and beauty of which he is supposed to greatly excell all the fathers of Christianity, with the possible exception of Ambrose in some of his letters, Minicius Felix, and Sulpicius Severus. In fact, his work, De Opificio, is said to challenge comparison with Cicero's De Natura Deorum in point of style, and to be far superior to it in depth and originality. At all events, his reputation as a stylist was so celebrated in the earliest times that men loved to call him the "Christian Cicero," says Dr. Schaff. Even Milton, in one of his prefaces, warmly expresses his gratefulness for the smoothness and ease of Lactantius after the crowded and twisted figures of speech which he found so distasteful in Tertullian; while Pichen, who has given us one of the best analysis of his style, never tires of emphasizing his classic nature, "absolument, exclusivement classique." Contrasting it to the style of the African Fathers in general, he says:

Lactance est l'homme du juste milieu, dut-il paraître un peu froid, un peu trop purement rationnel. Les Africains dédaignent la tradition littéraire pour la modernité la plus aigüe: Lactance est le plus fervent admirateur de Cicéron, son imitateur de plus fidèle. Le Style africain, obsédé, par la sensation vive et brusque, est fait de rapidité, et de pittoresque avant: le style de Lactance est périodique, oratoire, et abstrait.

The case is quite otherwise with the exposition of Christian doctrine, according to Dr. Schaff. Becoming, as it seems,

a Christian only in his mature years, he never fully penetrated the deeper religious spirit of his new faith. In Brandt's edition the index of his quotations from classical authors fills twenty four pages, against four for those from Scriptures; and of the latter most are given from Cyprian's authority. Dr. Schaff says of him:²⁰

His main theological content is summed up in the belief in God as the Creator of the world, and in the power of the new law given by Christ, the following of which frees man from sin and its penalty. He was not touched by the Christological controversy, and his eschatology is a reproduction of the old millenarian teaching.

Since his doctrinal matter is very vague and unsatisfactory, Lactantius cannot be truly said to belong to the narrow circle of the Fathers, the authoritative teachers of the Church. Pope Gelasius counted his works among the Apocrypha. Notwithstanding this, authorities appear one in asserting that his mistakes and errors in the exposition of points of Christian doctrine do not amount to heresies, but are mostly due to the undefined state of the church doctrine at the time, namely, prior to the Council of Nicene.²¹

Works

Jerome names twelve works of Lactantius, of which seven are wholly or almost wholly lost.²² Of those still extant, the principal one is the Divinam Institutiones, in seven books, upon which his fame chiefly rests. It is a kind of introduction to Christianity, intended to supersede the less perfect treatises of Minicius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian (the only

three Christian Apologists, it has been observed, of whom Lactantius seems conscious), whose aim was to silence the enemies of Christianity. It is polemical, in that it contains a direct attack upon the pagan systems; apologetic, in that it undertakes to defend the new faith from the misrepresentations of its adversaries; didactic, in that it presents an exposition of the beauty, holiness, and wisdom of pure religion, in an effort to win over to Christianity the philosophers and educated men of his time, to whom the work is chiefly addressed. The exact date of the composition of the Divinum Institutiones is involved in considerable doubt. From certain passages²³ it appears that it was written not earlier than 305 or later than the toleration edict of Galerius in 311. Again, there is a direct allusion²⁴ to a persecution still raging (Spēctatae sunt enim spectanturque adhuc per orbem poēsae cultarum Dei etc.), which seems to point to the horrors under Diocletian; while, on the other hand, Constantine is addressed by name as Emperor, at the beginning of the first, second, fourth and fifth books.

Each of the seven books into which the Divinum Institutiones is divided bears a separate title (whether proceeding from the author or from a transcriber it is impossible to say) and constitutes as it were a separate essay. The first book, De Falsa Religione, asserts the ruling providence and unity of God, demonstrates the unreasonableness of a plurality of deities, and exposes the absurdity of the popular creed by

an examination of the history and legends of ancient mythology. The second, De Origine Erroris, pursues a similar objective, with particular references to the folly of paying reverence to idols, and then traces the influences under which men gradually wandered from the plain and simple truth. The third, De Falsa Sapiencia (and the book with which we are primarily if not solely concerned), exposes the empty pretences of so-called philosophy, which is pronounced to be an arrogant but weak imposture, a mass of flimsy speculations upon physics, morals, and theology, at once unsubstantial and contradictory. The fourth, De Vera Sapiencia et Religione, points out the only source from whence pure wisdom can flow, that is, pure religion, and then proceeds to prove that Christianity is the religion necessary, this by an inquiry into the nature and history of the Messiah. The fifth, De Justitia, is occupied with a disquisition upon righteousness, which, having been banished from the earth by the invasion of the heathen gods, was brought back by Christ, and concludes with a vehement denunciation of the injustice and impiety of those who persecuted the followers of the Saviour. The sixth, De Vero Cultu, treats of the manner in which homage ought to be rendered to the one true God. The seventh, De Vita Beata, embraces a variety of discussions; among others, an investigation of the chief good, the immortality of the soul, the duration of the world, the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection, and the question of future rewards and punishments.

The Epitome, an abbreviated form of the Institutiones, is appended to the larger work and is attributed to Lactantius by St. Jerome, who describes it as having been even in his time "akephalos."²⁵ In all the earlier editions this abridgment begins at the sixteenth chapter of the fifth book of the original. But in the eighteenth century the work was discovered practically untouched in a very ancient M.S. deposited in the royal library at Turin, and was published at Paris in 1712 by C.H. Pfaff, chancellor of the university of Tubingen. It may be observed that Walchius and others have doubted the authenticity of the Epitome; but we can scarcely prefer their conjectures to the positive testimony of Jerome.

The De Ira Dei, addressed to an unknown Donatus, is a controversial tract directed chiefly against the Epicureans, who maintained that the deeds of men could produce no emotions--- either of anger or of pleasure---in the deity; a position which Lactantius declares subversive of all true religion, since it at once destroys the doctrine of rewards and punishments. The date of its composition, according to Dr. Schaff,²⁶ cannot be more closely fixed than by its reference to the Institutiones; Brandt places it about 308, but it was probably written after the cessation of the persecution and thus at least as late as 311 or 312.

The De Opificio Dei is addressed to a certain Demetrianus. The first part of the book, to which there appears to be a re-

ference in the Institutiones,²⁷ belongs to natural theology, being an argument in favor of the wisdom and beneficence of God, deduced from the wonderful contrivances and adaptations of means to ends discernible in the structure of the human frame; the second part is devoted to speculations concerning the nature of the soul. This was probably written after the beginning of the persecution.²⁸

Of the lost works of Lactantius, outside of a few fragments, nothing is known beyond the titles given by Jerome. Completely lost are the Symposium and Grammaticus, two books addressed to Aesclepiades, and the metrical description of Lactantius' journey from Africa to Nicomedia, in which he followed a widespread literary fashion of his time. A few fragments remain of the three collections of letters mentioned by Jerome, which seem to have been rather small treatises on various subjects in epistolary form than letters in the modern sense. These are supposed to be tedious reading, insufficiently representative of Christian doctrine, and written too much in the tone of the pedagogue.²⁹

To the works whose authenticity is doubtful belongs the treatise which has been known since 1679 from a single manuscript where it bears the title, L. Caecilii liber ad Donatus Confessorem de Mortibus Persecutorum. The books were written before the outbreak of the Licinian persecution in 321, and, since the death of Diocletian³⁰ is mentioned in it, not ear-

lier than 317. The authorship has been questioned almost ever since its first publication---in recent times most frequently by Brandt; but conclusive grounds for denying Lactantian authorship do not seem to have yet been presented. The poem De Ave Phoenix is a version of the old legend, written by a Christian, as is shown in the conclusion, where the phoenix comes to symbolize Christ in his resurrection. There are, according to some, resemblances in diction between this and the prose works of Lactantius, who is known to have written verses;³¹ and thus they maintain, since the manuscripts ascribe it definitely to him, that there is not reason for doubting the attribution, in spite of the fact that Jerome does not include it in his list. In all probability, however, the work is comparatively modern.³² Two other poems sometimes attributed to Lactantius are now known not to be his; that entitled De Resurrectione, or De Pascha, in elegiacs, is generally believed to have been composed by Eneantius Honorianus Fortunatus, who flourished in the middle of the sixth century; the De Passione Domini, in hexameters, one of the most admired productions of the Christian Muse, not unworthy of Lactantius, but bearing in its language the impress of a much later age, was first published in the Aldine edition of 1515. No manuscript has yet been found, so that it may possibly be a Renaissance forgery.³³

The Manuscript-Tradition of the Works of Lactantius.³⁴

One of the most documented and most exhaustive study of

the manuscript-tradition of the works of Lactantius is that of Brandt. The oldest manuscripts are Cod. Bononiensis of the sixth or seventh century (Div. Instit., De Ira Dei, De Opif. Dei, Epitome Dive. Instit.), and the Cod. Sangallensis Rescriptus of the sixth or seventh century (Div. Instit.). The Editio Princeps appeared at Subiaco in 1465; it is the first dated books printed in Italy. During the eighteenth century appeared the complete editions of Chr. A. Heumann, Göttingen, 1736; F.L. Buenemann, Leipzig, 1739; F.B. Le Brun and E. Lenglet du Fresnoy, 2 vols., Paris, 1748; F. Eduardus a S. Xaverio, 11 vols., Rome, 1754-59. The edition of Le Brun and du Fresnoy is reprinted in Migne, Pl., Paris, 1844, vi. of the extant manuscripts; L.C.F. Lactanti opera omnia, rec. S. Brandt et G. Laubmann, 2 vols., Vienna, 1890-97 (Corpus script. eccles. Lat. xix, xxvii). P. Bertold, Prolegomena zu Lactantius (progr.), Metten, 1861. Freppe, Commodien, Arnobe, Lactance, Paris, 1893, pp. 94-148. H. Limberg, Quo Lactantius appellatur Cicero Christianus? (Dissert. inaug.), Unster, 1896. H. Glaesner, Several grammatical and philological articles, in Musee Belge (1901), v. 5-27. S. Brandt, Lactantius and Lucretius, in Neus Jahrb. Fur Prototer, Des Apologeten Lactantius Verhaltnis zur griechischen Philosophie (Inaug. Diss), Leipzig, 1895. E. Overlach, Die Theologie des Lactantius (Inaug. Dissx), Grima, 1887. Fr. Marbach, Die Psychologie des Firmianus Lactantius (Inaug. Diss.), Halle, 1889.

Historical Background

An invaluable index to the study of an writer, it has been observed, is the knowledge which enables a reviewer to reconstruct the forces and background which conspired to produce in the writer the inspiration necessary to his literary endeavours, the knowledge which makes for a tying up of cause and effect. To accede to such intimacy, it is not enough to know the target of an author's aim. We must also have a knowledge of the conditions favoring or opposing the course of the arrow: the distance of the target, the position of the ar-

cher, the fitness of the bow and arrow, and the general conditions of climate. To attain to a true perspective of Lactantius, in other words, we must try to visualize the times during which he lived.

It was a period, history tells us, of the veriest uncertainty. A Christian was as likely to be condemned for the name he bore, and legally persecuted, as he was to be looked down upon with fanatic dislike and contempt, which very often deepened into hate of the most extreme kind. Even when persecution slumbered, Christianity remained a religio illicita from the days of Nero's persecution, and still more from the rescript of Trajan to Pliny in A.D. 112, down to the edict of Toleration, first passed by Gallienus in A.D. 261. "Non licet esse vos,"³⁵ was the taunting theme song of the Pagans, whose sole desire, little removed from a monomania, was to overawe and crush the young and helpless faith, to trample the "ex-
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ecrable superstition" into the dust.

During the reign of Trajan, and for some time to come, the persecution was only sporadic; but it never entirely ceased. Under Antoninus Pius, Polycarp and Publius, Bishop of Athens, and Ptolemae and Lucius, died for their faith. The reign of Marcus Aurelius witnessed the martyrdom of Justine Martyr and the aged Bishop Pothinus, and, among many others, Ponticus, Blandina, and Symphorian; that of Alexander Severus, the beheading of Leonides, the father of Origen, Ptomiaena, Perpetua

and Felicitas, among the most conspicuous.³⁷ The short breathing spell enjoyed by the Christians during the reign of Severus³⁸ was followed by the furious persecution of Maximin; and after this, by other persecutions of a similar nature.

At a time when Lactantius must have been in the prime of life, and thus capable of serious and unbiassed thought, the fanatically pagan Galerius, Diocletian, issued the edict for the last and fiercest and most thorough persecution of the church. The failure of his terrific efforts wrung from Galerius his scornful and despairing edict of Toleration in A.D. 311.³⁹ Two years later the victorious Constantine issued the famous decree---Ut daremus Christianis et omnibus liberam protestatem sequendi religionum quam quisque voluisset⁴⁰ --- which was but a preliminary for that new epoch in which Christianity passed into the religion of the State and came into her own.⁴¹

Even following the famous decree of Constantine, however, it was no easy thing for Christians to endure the strong contempt and fanatic hatred of the world (to which hatred, by the way, we owe those invaluable Christian Apologies which have added so much to our knowledge of the history and theology of the early Christians). Their presence ever occasioned epithets of the most scurrilous kind. Nothing was more repulsive or shameful. Pliny, in one of his letters, terms Christianity "a distorted and extravagant superstition, aggravated by con-

tumacy and inflexible obstinacy," an attitude typical of the narrow-minded pagans of the time of Lactantius. Caecilius, the heathen interlocutor in Octavius of Minicius Felix, calls Christians "men of a lawless, reckless, and desperate faction, and their faith empty and mad." The heathen in Lactantius describes it as "an impious and crude superstition." "Publici hostes Christiani," was the general verdict of the Romans, "homines deploratatae illicitae ac desperatae factionis." "Away with the Atheists!" shouted the mobs at the amphitheatre. "Away with the witch, away with the sorceress!" were the cries which greeted the martyr St. Anastasia. Not only heathens, but heretics also, poured scorn upon the Catholics. Opinions of a more friendly nature, though hardly common, would sound something like this:⁴² "Gaius Seius is a capital fellow. Only, he's a Christian!" "I'm astonished that Lucius Titius, for all his knowledge, has suddenly turned Christian." And from Eusebius:⁴³ "So and so thinks of matter and God just as we do, but he mingles Greek ideas with foreign fables."

It must not be imagined that the Emperors were wholly to blame for the injustices heaped upon the shoulders of the Christians. In the first place, it was very difficult for the Emperors to learn the truth about the lives and beliefs of their Christian subjects, except from the lips of their accredited officers, who, it is now clear, very often distorted the true nature of things.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the tenets of Judaism had

begun to be partially understood by the Pagans, and so far as they discriminated the Christians from the Jews at all, they regarded Christianity as a yet more degraded form of superstition, looking upon the worship of one who had been crucified as the lowest abyss of religious infatuation. As Tertullian put it:⁴⁵ the Christians were accused of worshipping a god with an ass's head, and of adoring the cross, the sun, and even the genitalia of their priests. Again, it was firmly believed that there^u were magicians, that they had control over wind and weather, that they commanded plagues and famines, and that they had influence over the sacrifices.⁴⁶ But what chiefly rankled the spleen of the Pagan, and distorted the lens of his perspective, was the moral inflexibility which prevented the Christians from taking part in public amusements or social gatherings. It is not altogether strange, then, that they looked upon the Christians as morose and fanatical intruders, whose ostensible innocence was a rebuke to the commonest and most harmless practices of daily life. What made them still more indignant was that they believed the rigid exterior of Christians to be the cloak for deeds of nameless abominations. This too is not wholly intelligible. The Christians were often forced, by the stress of the persecutions, to meet at unusual hours, under the veil of darkness, and in lonely and subterranean places. How did the employment of secret signs and watchwords, such as, the "kiss of peace" and terms of brotherhood, help their cause any.

But regardless of the degree of innocence or guilt of the Emperors, this remains, that the effect the general course of the imperial persecution of Christianity must have had on the mind of Lactantius, whose austere and religious make-up, as reflected in his writings, is deeply reminiscent of Milton, cannot be easily overestimated. Unlike many others who turned to Christianity---Tatian, Justine and Athenagoras are always sarcastic, bitter, and unsparing in their censure---, Lactantius continued to preserve an appreciation for the finer religious elements of paganism. Yet he, too, as his writings clearly attest, drank the bitter drops of bias from the overflowing cup of persecution. In spirit he would appear to approach his task with a more genuine appreciation of paganism than his immediate predecessors; but in letter, wedded as he is to the cause of the true religion, he is almost as unbending in his condemnation of the Pagans as the out-and-out pagan-antagonist Tertullian: though not in the exacerbating style of the latter, however, who hated with a perfect hatred every heresy but his own, and who has seldom a word of praise for anyone, as it clear from the following:⁴⁷

But nothing at Pontus is so barbarous and gloomy as the fact that Marcion has been born there, a man more grim than a Scythian, more restless than a waggon rover,⁴⁸ more ruthless than a Massaget, more impudent than an Amazon, darker than a cloud, chiller than winter, more brittle than ice, more treacherous than the Danube, craggier than Caucasus. Nay, more, by him the true Prometheus---Almighty God--- is mingled with Blasphemies. Nay, Marcion is even more intolerable than the wild beasts of that barbarous land. For what beaver ever practiced worse

castration than he who has abolished wedlock? What Pontic mouse is a worse nibbler than he who has gnawed at the gospels? Yea, of Suxine, thou hast produced a monster more credible to Philosophers than to Christians. For that whelping Diogenes sought to find a man, carrying round his lamp at midday; but Marcion, having quenched the light of faith, has lost the God whom he had found.

Nor is Lactantius the lover of controversy in the sense that Jerome was, who, it is said, took part in every ecclesiastical controversy of his day, and who, it is generally intimated, "smelled the battle afar off, and began pawing in the valley, and swallowing the ground with fierceness and rage. Nor, Lactantius is prejudiced we grant; but his intolerance springs from a loftier motive. Not because the Pagans were Pagans is he opposed to them, but because they were not Christians, that is, because they did not possess the truth and thereby led others to the same errors. In approaching a study of Lactantius, then, we must constantly bear in mind the character of the man and the divers influences which have conspired to move the pen, particularly the temper of the times during which he lived, which, we have seen, was one of exigency and thus absolutely inimical to airy schemes and idle speculations. Bearing this in mind, we shall readily appreciate the Lactantian point of view; and though we may not value it as the true point of view of a critic, we cannot but cherish it as that of a man of high principles and refined sensibilities.

PART I.
DE FALSA SAPIENTIA
CHAPTER I.
Philosophers and Philosophy

Philosophy (ut nomen indicat, ipsique definiunt), is not wisdom, but the love or study of wisdom. Indeed, to give the sentiment of Pythagoras, who first gave meaning to the term, and who possessed a little more wisdom than his predecessors (qui se sapientes putaverunt), it is impossible to attain to wisdom by human study.¹ And thus, when he was asked what was his status in life, Pythagoras answered that he was a philosopher, meaning thereby, a searcher after wisdom. But "if philosophy searches after wisdom, it must of necessity be one thing which searches and another which is the object of search."² But the philosophers³ were not even devoted to wisdom, because by that pursuit there was no attaining to it. For if the path of the early philosophers led to the temple of truth, if it were, that is, a kind of road to wisdom, wisdom would at length have been found. As they did not, however, reach their intended destiny, it is plain that the path they followed did not lead to it. Therefore⁴

they are no devotees of wisdom who apply themselves to philosophy; but they themselves imagine that they are, because they know not where that is which they are searching for, or of what character it is. Whether, therefore, they devote themselves to the pursuit of wisdom or not, they are not wise, because that can never be discovered which is either sought in an improper manner, or not sought at all.

But let us see if anything can be derived from this kind of pursuit.

"Philosophy appears to consist of two subjects, knowledge and conjecture, and of nothing more."⁵ But since the possession of knowledge in oneself as a peculiar property belongs to God alone, the knowledge of mortals cannot come from the understanding, nor be apprehended by thought, but must come from without; for thus are mortals constituted. It is on this account that the "divine intelligence has opened the eyes and ears and the other senses of the body, that by these entrances knowledge might flow through to the mind."⁶ But to wish to know the causes of natural things---of the sun and the moon and the stars and heaven itself; whether they are as they appear to be: spherical or concave, fixed or moving, large or small; of what material the earth is composed, how great is its thickness, on what foundations it is poised and suspended---to wish to know these things, by disputation and conjecture, is very much like wishing to know the character of some very remote country, which we have never seen, and of which we have heard nothing more than the name.⁷ Not without reason, therefore, did Socrates, and the Academics who followed him, do away with knowledge which is not the part of a disputant but of a diviner.⁸ For philosophy is ultimately reduced to mere conjecture, since, where knowledge is absent, conjecture alone can prevail. Again, no one conjectures about that of which he has knowledge, but only about that of which he is ignorant. But they who discuss natural subjects seem to forget that the objects of their discussions are beyond the range of truth and

and certainty, and therefore conjecture that they are as they discuss them; all of which makes it clear that they do not know truth, "because knowledge is concerned with that which is certain, conjecture with the uncertain." Wherefore Zeno and the Stoics and Socrates himself were right in repudiating conjecture.

For to conjecture that you know that which you do not know is not the part of a wise, but rather of a foolish and rash man. Therefore, if nothing can be known, as Socrates taught, or ought to be conjectured, as Zeno taught, philosophy is entirely removed.

(Warming up to his attack upon the pagan philosophers, stressing their utter inadequacy to the purposes of teaching wisdom, despite their learnedness, Lactantius exposes their want of agreement among themselves.) Philosophy (he claims) has been divided into many sects, all entertaining conflicting sentiments (omnes varia sentiunt), yet all claiming ascendancy.¹⁰ In qua ponimus veritatem? what school of thought shall we follow? It cannot be all of them, obviously; indeed, it cannot be any of them, for whatever we shall attribute to one we shall withdraw from the others.

For each sect over-turns others to confirm itself and its own doctrines: nor does it allow wisdom to any other, lest it should confess that it is itself foolish; but as it takes away from the others, so is it taken away itself by the others.¹¹

It remains for us, then, since all things are uncertain, to either believe all or none, which, in turn, necessitates a further inference, that there are no wise men: for if we shall believe no one, the wise can have no existence, because, while

they hold conflicting points of view, they nevertheless think themselves wise, which is absurd; whereas, if we believe all, the same is equally true, because all deny the wisdom of each individually. Therefore, since each sect is individually convicted of folly by the judgments of all the others, "it follows that all are found to be vain and empty; and thus philosophy consumes and destroys itself."¹²

It was in grasping this vainness and emptiness of all philosophy, and in an effort to arm himself against all, that Arcesilas collected the mutual censures of each and every distinguished philosopher, and the confessions of ignorance made by them, and thereby founded a new philosophy of not philosophizing (novam non philosophandi philosophiam). But between these two systems of thought, the old philosophy which claims to itself knowledge, and the new one, which is opposed to the old and detracts from it, there exist palpable discrepancies, et quasi civile bellum. And yet, regardless of the outcome of the battle between the recruits (novam non philosophandi philosophiam) and the veterans (the old philosophy), the cause of philosophy itself is hopeless. For if, as it has been shown,¹³ there can be no inner and peculiar knowledge in man on account of the frailty of the human condition, the party of Arcesilas would appear to prevail.¹⁴ As there are, however, many things which we must know if we are to preserve our lives, the bulwark of Arcesilas must give way to the incessant onslaughts of nature and custom; for to know nothing at all---neither what

is useful, that it might be sought, nor what is dangerous, that it might be shunned and avoided, is to perish. Moreover (now urges Lactantius, who would seem to be not entirely averse to contradicting himself if it furthers the point of the moment, and who must have had his tongue in his cheek when he spoke of the inanity of wishing to know the sources of natural things,¹⁵ of which, however, we shall treat later, along with other inconsistencies), "there are many things which experience finds out. For the various courses of the sun and moon, and the nature of bodies....and the signs of future rains and tempests have been collected." In short, all art is dependent on knowledge. Therefore, if Arcesilas had any wisdom, he should have distinguished between the things which were knowable and those which were unknowable.¹⁶ He was right in doing away with the systems of others, but wrong in laying the foundations of his own. For wisdom, the peculiar property of which is knowledge, can in no wise be identified with ignorance, to which the system of Arcesilas is ultimately reduced. And thus, in denying to the pagans the names of philosophers, since they knew nothing, he is himself denied the name of philosopher, since his system is to know nothing. "For he who blames other because they are ignorant ought himself to have knowledge." But to constitute oneself a philosopher in virtue of the very thing which one takes away from others---to convict a person of knowing nothing, in other words, and therefore of being unwise because he knows nothing, yet at the same time deem oneself wise, because one confesses

to know nothing, is senseless.¹⁷ What progress, therefore, did Arcesilas make, "except that, having despatched all the philosophers, he pierced himself with the same sword."¹⁸

Nusquam ne igitur sapientia est? Is this the reason why the early philosophers failed to attain to wisdom? No, wisdom was amongst them, but no one saw it. Whereas some thought that all things could be known, and were thus unwise because they attributed too much to man, others thought that nothing could be known, and they were not wise because they attributed too little to him. A limit was wanting to both. Ubi ergo sapientia est? is the natural question. And to this Lactantius answers:¹⁹

Wisdom consists in thinking neither that you know all things, which is the property of God; nor that you are ignorant of all things which is the part of a beast. For it is something of a middle character which belongs to man, that is, knowledge united to ignorance. Knowledge in us is from the soul, which has its origin from heaven; ignorance from the body, which is from the earth; whence we have something in common with God and with animal creation. Thus, since we are composed of these two elements, the one of which is endowed with light, the other with darkness, a part of knowledge is given to us, and a part of ignorance. Over this bridge, so to speak, we may pass without danger of falling; for all those who have inclined to either side, either towards the left or the right, have fallen.

Arcesilas, then, should have modified his statement that nothing could be known---should have said, that is, that certain things could not be known, as, for example, the causes of the heavenly bodies, because these (according to Lactantius) cannot be known, for there is no one to each them; indeed,

(he makes haste to add), "they ought not to be inquired into, for they cannot be found out by inquiry."²⁰ Had he brought forward this exception, he would have both deterred the philosophers from searching into those things which exceeded the limit of human reflection and saved himself. Had he done this, moreover, he would have left us something to follow. But now, since he has deterred us from following others, "that we may not wish to know more than we are capable of knowing," he has also deterred us from following himself. "For who would wish to labour lest he should know anything, or to undertake learning of this kind that he may even lose ordinary knowledge."²¹

CHAPTER II.

The Summum Bonum of Pagan Philosophers

In passing over to the other part of philosophy (cautions Lactantius), quam ipsi moralem vocant, and in qua totius philosophiae ratio continetur, since in this there is not only the delight (oblectatio) which is found in natural philosophy, but utility (utilitas) also, greater watchfulness must be observed; for to err in arranging the conditions of life and in forming character is far more serious.¹ In the former subject, that is to say, some allowances may be made: for do what the Philosophers say, rave foolishly or otherwise, they are of little consequence; they neither do good nor harm. But here there is no room for difference of opinion, none for error: hic vere nullus dissidio, nullus errori est locus.² All must entertain the same sentiments," and philosophy itself must speak as it were with one mouth": for to commit an error at this stage of life's battle is to overthrow it altogether. Let us then warily approach the serious task before us: let us see what assistance for the better guidance of life is to be derived from moral philosophy, "in which the whole of wisdom centers and depends."³

The summum bonum of Epicurus consists in pleasure of mind, that of Aristippus, in pleasure of body, that of Callipho and Dinomachus, in the union of virtue and pleasure, and that of Diodorus and Hieronymus, in the absence of pain. The Peripatetics deem that the summum bonum consists in the goods of

the mind, the body, and fortune; Herillus, in knowledge; Xeno, in a life in agreement to nature; and Aristotle, in integrity and virtue.⁴ These are the sentiments of nearly all. In tanta diversitate---all of whom are of equal authority---quem sequimur? cui credimus? If we are able to save from this shapeless mass of incongruities that which is better, it follows that philosophy is not necessary for us; for to judge respecting the opinions of the wise presupposes the possession of wisdom. But since our aim is to attain to wisdom (cum vero discendae sapientiae causa veniamus), how can we judge, who have not yet begun to be wise? especially "when the Academic is close at hand to draw us back by the cloak and forbid us to believe any one, without bringing forward that which we may follow."⁵

Now since the inquiry is respecting man, the highest animal, the highest good ought to be something which it cannot have in common with the other animals. "But as teeth are the peculiar property of wild beasts, horns of cattle, and wings of birds, so something peculiar to himself ought to be attributed to man, without which he would lose the fixed order of his conditions."⁶ And since that which is given to all for the purpose of life and generation is not peculiar to any class, being, though a natural good, not the greatest, he was not a wise man who deemed pleasure of mind the highest good, since that, whether it be freedom from anxiety or joy, is common to all.⁷

As for Aristippus, he is not even worthy of an answer;

"for since he is always rushing into pleasures of the body, and is only the slave of sensual indulgences, no one can regard him as a man: for he lived in such a manner that there was no difference between him and a brute except this only, that he had the faculty of speech." Are we then to seek precepts of living from a man who patterns his life after that of the irrational creatures?⁸ or are we to take after his followers, whose comportment was promotive of even greater depravity? If so, we too must contend that virtue is to be praised in accordance with its capacity of yielding pleasure, or, like the filthy dog or the swine wallowing in the mire, make answer: "True, for it is on this account that I contend with my adversary with the utmost exertion of strength, that my valour may procure for me pleasure; of which I must necessarily be deprived if I shall come off vanquished."¹⁰ Shall we therefore seek wisdom from those who evince not the least possession of it, who differ from cattle and brutes, not in feeling, but in language?¹¹

To regard the absence of pain as the chief good, on the other hand---namely, that which a physician can give, is ridiculous. For not only must we first experience pain in order that we may enjoy good, and this severely and frequently, that the absence of pain may later be attended with greater pleasure, but it follows from this, that he is most wretched who is without pain, because he is without that which is good.¹²

Further, the summum bonum of the Peripathetics is excessive

and various and---exceptis animi bonis, quae ipsa quae sint,
magna contentio est---common to both man and beasts; whereas
it ought to be, it has been shown,¹³ peculiar to man alone.
"For the goods of the body, that is, safety (incolumitas),
freedom from pain (indolentia), and health (valetude), are no
less necessary for the dumb animals"; indeed, perhaps more so,
since man can be relieved by remedies and services, while the
dumb animal cannot.¹⁴

Let us also give ear to Zeno, for he at times dreams of
virtue. The chief good, according to him, is to live in ac-
cordance with nature. Therefore (rather hastily concludes
Lactantius) "we must live after the manner of brutes. For in
these are found all the things which ought to be absent from
man: they are eager for pleasure, they fear, they deceive, they
lie in wait, they kill; and that which is especially to the
point, they have no knowledge of God."¹⁵ Why, then, must we
live according to nature, which of itself leads to evil rather
than virtue.

The summum bonum of the philosophers already mentioned, it
must be clear, is not peculiar to man alone, but common to ani-
mals in general. But he who made knowledge the chief good
(herillus declared science in the Aristotlean sense to be the
highest good) gave something peculiar to man: nor was he right,
however, since men desire knowledge for the sake of something
else, and not for its own sake. No one is content to merely
have knowledge: knowledge is always a means to something else.

"The arts are learned for the purpose of being put into exercise; but they are exercised either for the support of life, for pleasure, or for glory." That, therefore, is not the chief good which is not sought for on its own account.¹⁶

To what subject, then, is knowledge to be referred. Not to the causes of natural things certainly, since to know the sources of the Nile, or the vain dreams of the natural philosophers respecting the heavens," augers no great happiness. On these subjects, as we have repeatedly asserted, there can be no knowledge, but conjecture only,¹⁷ because everything that is said on the subject of nature varies according to the abilities of men. It remains that knowledge must be referred to morality, wherein the chief good consists in the knowledge of good and evil. But why did not Arcesilas call wisdom rather than knowledge the chief good, since, although both words have the same signification and meaning, wisdom might more properly have been said to be the chief good. For knowledge of itself "is insufficient for the undertaking of that which is good and the avoiding of that which is evil, unless virtue also is added. For many of the philosophers, though they discussed the nature of good and evil things, yet from the compulsion of nature lived in a manner different from their discourses, because they were without virtue. "But virtued united to knowledge is that which constitutes wisdom."¹⁸

It must not be drawn from this that virtue is the chief good, however, It is merely the contriver (effectrix) and mo-

ther (mater) of the chief good, in that he who is without virtue is denied access to it. In other words, it is virtue which makes possible the attainment of the chief good, without which neither wisdom (which is the union of knowledge and virtue, nor the grace or strength essential to pursue the aims of wisdom (which is the chief good), is possible. For it must not be imagined that the ultimate good or end is attained without difficulty and labour; because if we do not achieve even common or moderate goods except by labour, "since good things are by their nature arduous and difficult, whereas evil things have a downward tendency, it follows that the greatest labour is necessary for the attainment of the greatest good."¹⁹

If this is so, there is need of another virtue, that we may arrive at that virtue which is called the chief good; but this is discordant and absurd, that the end should be arrived at by means of itself. But if a good is attained only with difficulty and labour, it is evident that it is virtue by which it is reached, "since the force and office of virtue consists in the undertaking and carrying through of labours. Therefore the chief good cannot be that by which it is necessary to arrive at another."²⁰ They²¹ were therefore ignorant of the true make-up of virtue, its effects and tendencies, who, unable to find anything more honourable, said that it is to be sought for on its own sake, thus fixing for themselves a good which itself stood in need of a good.²²

Not far removed from these was Aristotle,²³ who thought that virtue with honour was the chief good, "as though it were possible for any virtue to exist unless it were honourable, and as though it would not cease to be virtue if it had any measure of disgrace." But mindful that a bad opinion might be entertained respecting virtue by a depraved judgment, he thought it best to make some allowances for what in the estimate of men constitutes a departure from what is right and good, "because it is not in our power that virtue should be honoured simply for its own merits." For honourable character is nothing less than perpetual honour, conferred on any one by the favourable report of the people. "What, then, will happen,²⁴

if through the error and perverseness of men a bad reputation should ensue? Shall we cast aside virtue because it is judged to be base and disgraceful by the foolish? And since it is capable of being oppressed and harassed, in order that it may be of itself a peculiar and lasting good, it ought to stand in need of no outward assistance, so as to depend by itself upon its own strength, and to remain steadfast. And thus no good is to be hoped by it from man, nor is any evil to be refused.

(And having thus summarily and, one cannot get away from it, aimlessly disposed of Aristotle, Lactantius passes on to things of greater import.)

CHAPTER III.
The Summum Bonum of True Wisdom

The nature of the summum bonum of true wisdom, which none of the pagan philosophers very closely approached, with the sole exception of Merillus possibly, is to be determined in the following manner: first, it must be peculiar to man alone; secondly, it must have reference to the soul alone; lastly, it cannot be attained without knowledge and virtue.¹

In the light of these three principles, the futility of the philosophers' doctrine on the subject becomes glaringly evident. When Anaxagoras, for instance, asked for what purpose he was born, replied that he might look up at the sun and the heavens, he was deeply esteemed by all, and his answer deemed worthy of a true philosopher. But this, in all probability, he uttered at random, that he might not be silent.² For had he been wise, he ought to have considered and reflected with himself. But let us imagine that the answer was not given on the spur of the moment. Let us see how many errors he committed. First, he erred in placing the whole purpose or moral obligation of man in the eyes alone, as though, had he been blind, he would lose the duty or dignity of a man, which in youth cannot happen without the ruin of the soul. Further, why should we say that more depends upon the eyes than upon the ears, when learning and wisdom can be gained by the ears alone, but not by the eyes alone? Why were we born to see the heaven and the sun? Who introduced us to this sight? or what

does our vision contribute to the heaven and the nature of things?

Doubtless that you may praise this immense and wonderful work. Therefore confess that God is the Creator of all things, who introduced you into this world, as a witness and praiser of His great work.³

Is it not a distinct privilege to behold the heaven and the sun: why, then, do you not give thanks to Him who is the author of this benefit? "Why do you not measure with your mind the excellence, the providence, and the power of Him Whose works you admire?" Surely He Who has created objects worthy of admiration is Himself much more to be admired. Should you appear in your right sense, for instance, if, invited to dinner and well entertained, you esteemed the mere pleasure more highly than the author of the pleasure? But is this not precisely what the philosophers do who refer all things to the body, to the utter exclusion of the mind; nor see beyond that which falls under their eyes? whereas they ought to put aside the offices of the body that they might more fully contemplate the offices of the mind. For we are not created, but that we may contemplate, that, "behold with our mind the Creator of all things Himself."⁴ Wherefore, should a truly wise man be asked for what reason he was born, he will straightway answer, that he was born for the purpose of worshipping God, Who Brought us into being for this very reason, that we may love Him and serve Him. Thus Anaxagoras, who reduced a matter of the greatest magnitude to the least, by selecting two things sensible

to sight alone, namely the heaven and the sun (though Anaxagoras' statement is open to a finer and more broad-minded interpretation than that of Lactantius', as we shall soon see), ---even had he said that he was born to behold the world, meaning by this all things, he would still have fallen short of the full duty of man; for as much as the soul excels the body, so much does God excel the world, "for God made and governs the world."⁵ Therefore, not the world, but God is the object of contemplation by the soul. But the contemplation of God is the reverence and worship of the common Parent of mankind. If, then, the philosopher was destitute of this,⁶

and in his ignorance of divine things prostrated himself to the earth, we must suppose that Anaxagoras neither beheld the heaven nor the sun, though he said that he was born that he might behold them. The object proposed to man is therefore plain⁷ and easy,⁸ if he is wise; and to it especially belongs humanity. For what is humanity itself, but justice? what is justice, but piety? And piety, what is it if not the recognition of God as a parent.

Therefore the chief good of man resides in religion only; for many other things supposedly peculiar to man, are not so in the strictest sense of the term. But irrational beings, too, seem to converse when they vary the tone and frequency of their voices, now chirping sweetly and softly, nor hurriedly and raspingly; "They also appear to have a kind of smile, when, with soothed ears and contracted mouth, and with eyes relaxed to sportiveness, they fawn upon men, or upon their own mates and young." Do not their greetings oftentimes bear resemblances to mutual love and indulgence? Do not their actions

in looking forward to the future and laying up for themselves food indicate foresight? Indeed, are there not indications of reason in some of them, in those animals, say, who not only desire things useful to themselves, guard against evils and avoid dangers, which may be reasonably attributed to instinct, but who prepare themselves lurking caches or retreats standing open in different places with various outlets, as though reasoning, if I'm trapped on this side I can escape through that? Or can any one deny that they are possessed of some reason, since they often deceive man himself? While those who have the office of producing honey, when they inhabit the place assigned to them, fortify a camp, and construct dwellings with unseparable skill. Yes, I'm not so sure there is not in them perfect prudence: whence it is rather uncertain whether many of the things supposedly peculiar to man are not shared, to some degree however small, by other animals and living creatures also. But of one thing they are certainly without, namely religion.

While reason is not, then, in the strictest sense of the word, peculiar to man alone, though given to the dumb animals for protection of life, to man also for its prolongation, man's reason is comparatively perfect, and thus called wisdom, which renders him distinct from other animals in this respect, that to him alone it is given to comprehend divine things. To take away religion from man, in other words, as many philosophers have done, wishing to free the mind from all fear, is to de-

prive man of his peculiar and surpassing good, which is distinct from living uprightly, and from everntying connected with man, because God, "who made all living creatures subject to man, also made man subject to Himself."¹¹

Why then, it may now be asked, should we look up at the heavens, if not to worship God? Now we must either look up at the heavens or look down at the earth. But the latter is contrary to our upright posture. Therefore we must look up at the heavens, to which the nature of the body calls us. If this be admitted, there are but two alternatives: either we look up at the heavens that we may devote ourselves to religion, or that we may know the nature of the heavenly objects. But to know the nature of the heavenly objects, it has been again and again emphasized,¹² is impossible. It remains, therefore, that we must devote ourselves to religion: wherefore he who does not undertake this prostrates himself to the ground, and, "imitating the life of the brutes, abdicates the office of man."¹³

Religion must therefore be acknowledged and received by all. This must not be taken to mean, however, that religion alone should be acknowledge and received by man; for it is his nature to be desirous of and eager for two things, religion and wisdom.¹⁴ Hence he who accepts religion and rejects wisdom is at much in error as he who devotes himself to the acquiring of wisdom, to the utter exclusion of religion. The one cannot be true without the other.¹⁵ The blind acceptance of religion gives rise to a multiplicity of religions, all false

of course, since wisdom alone can teach one the utter absurdity of many gods. The blind devotion to wisdom---blind, since it is without the light of supernatural grace, inevitably results in falsity, since he who disregards religion disregards Him Who alone can lead one to the knowledge of truth.¹⁶

Bearing this in mind, it no longer appears to be altogether strange that not a single philosopher discovered the true dwelling place of the chief good, although they might easily have it in the following manner; namely, that "whatever the greatest good is, it must be an object proposed to all men." Now this cannot be pleasure, since it, though desired by all, is common to beasts. Furthermore, it has not the force of the honourable: it is satiating, injurious when excessive, and often evades the reach of the canaille; for they who are without resources---and this constitutes the majority of men-- must often be without pleasure. Pleasure, then, is not the chief good; in fact, it is quite debatable whether it is even a good.¹⁷

Quid divitiae? what of riches? This is even more open to dispute. "For they fall to the lot of fewer men, and that generally by chance; and they fall, very often at least, to the indolent, and sometimes by guilt, and they are desired by those who already possess them."¹⁸ Quid regnum ipsum? No, sovereignty cannot constitute the chief good for all cannot reign, whereas all should be capable of attaining the chief good. Num virtus? Virtue cannot be the chief good

either, since, although it is a good, and a universal good, and although nothing is more beautiful than virtue, nor anything more worthy of a wise man, since if vices are to be avoided on account of their deformity, virtue is to be desired on account of its beauty, it still cannot constitute the chief good, because it does not of itself create happiness; for its power and nature consists in the endurance of evil.¹⁹ Quid ergo? Is it possible that that which is admittedly good and honourable is unproductive of reward or advantage? Surely the great labour and struggling necessary to ward off the evils with which this life is filled calls for some reward, produces some great good.²⁰ But what shall we say that this good is? Not pleasure or riches, obviously, since these, it must now be clear, are frail, uncertain, and often debasing. Num gloriam? num honorem? num memoriam nominis? But all these things are extrinsic to the nature of virtue itself, for they depend upon the opinion and judgment of others, whereas the good which arises from virtue ought to be intrinsic to it, so united with it, in fact, as to be incapable of being separated or disunited from it; nor can it appear to be the chief good in any other way than if it belongs peculiarly to virtue, and is such that nothing can be added to it or taken away from it."²¹ The duties of virtue would therefore appear to consist in despising, or better, in constraining the longing or desire or love of pleasure, riches, dominions, and honours, and all those things which, overpowered by desire, one esteems as gods.

As virtue therefore effects something more sublime and excellent, we ought not to despair of being able to find it, "if we turn our thoughts in all directions; for no slight or trifling rewards are sought."²²

Now the nature of man is dual, composed neither of soul²³ alone, nor of body alone, but of soul and body. And just as there are many things peculiar to the soul and many things peculiar to the body, so too are there many things common to both. An instance of the latter is virtue itself, which, as often as it is referred to the body, is called fortitude for the sake of distinction (discernendi grati fortitudo nominatur).²⁴ Since, therefore, fortitude is connected with each,

a contest is proposed to each, and victory held forth to each from the contest: the body, because it is solid, and capable of being grasped, must contend with objects which are solid and capable of being grasped; but the soul, on the other hand, because it is slight²⁵ and subtle and invisible, contends with those enemies who cannot be seen and touched.²⁶

It is clear, furthermore, that the enemies of the soul can be none other than lusts (cupiditates), vices (vitia), and sins (peccata), which must be overcome and put to flight, if the soul is to be pure and free from stain. Unde ergo colligi potest, quid efficiat animi fortitudo? whence, then, are we able to determine what are the effects of fortitude of soul? Doubtless from the fortitude of the body, which is closely connected with and resembles it; for when this (corporis fortitudo) has come to any encounter and contest, what else does it seek from victory but life? "Therefore, as the body seeks

or obtains by victory its preservation from destruction, so the soul obtains by victory a continuation of its existence; and as the body, when overcome by its enemies, suffers death, so the soul when overpowered by vices, must die."²⁷ The only difference between the contest carried on by the soul and that carried on by the body is this, that the body seeks for temporal, the soul eternal life (corpus temporalem vitam expedit, animus sempiternam). If, therefore, virtue is not happy by itself, since its whole force consists, it has been said, in the endurance of evils; if it neglects all things which are desired as goods, is exposed to death, and must necessarily produce some great good from itself, because labours, endured and overcome even until death, cannot fail of containing a reward; if no reward, such as it deserves, is found on earth, "inasmuch as it despises all things which are frail and transitory," it remains that its reward must be found in heaven: and this can be nothing else than immortality.²⁸

Therefore Euclid, the founder of the system of the Megareans, although he did not explain in what the chief good consisted, certainly understood its nature, when he said that that was the chief good which was unvarying and always the same (quod simile sit, et idem semper)."²⁹ Had he explained the nature of the chief good, he would undoubtedly have said that it consisted of immortality, nor of anything else at all, inasmuch as it alone is incapable of diminution, increase, or change. In confessing that there is no other reward of virtue

than immortality, Seneca also hit upon the true notion of the chief good. For in praising virtue in the treatise which he wrote on the subject of premature death, he says: "Virtue is the only thing which can confer upon us immortality, and make us equal to the gods."³⁰ And in line with him are the Stoics whom Seneca followed, who maintained that happiness without virtue was impossible. For the reward of virtue (rightly understood) is happiness. Thus virtue is not to be sought for on its own account, but on account of a happy life which necessarily follows virtue. This argument must have taught them in what the chief good consisted, because the present and corporeal existence, subjected as it is to untold evils because of the body, cannot be happy; wherefore Epicurus calls God happy and incorruptible, because He is everlasting.³¹ Nor was he wrong in this, for perfect happiness presupposes a state of condition removed from the imperfections of time, a state in which nothing can harass (vexare) or lessen (imminuere) or change (immutare).

Nor can anything be judged happy in other respects unless it be incorruptible. Immortality therefore is alone happy, because it can neither be corrupted nor destroyed. But if virtue falls within the power of man, which no one can deny, happiness also falls within his power. For it is impossible for a man to be wretched who is endowed with virtue. If happiness falls within his power, then immortality, which is possessed of the attribute of happiness, also belongs to him.³²

The chief good is therefore found in immortality, which alone is peculiar to man; nor can it come to any one without the virtue of knowledge, without, that is, "the knowledge

of God and justice."³³ And how true and right this longing for immortality is, the very desire of this life clearly witnesses: for though it be but temporary, full of wickedness and evil and injustice, yet it is sought and desired by all; by old and young, kings and servants, rich and poor, sick and healthy---in mind, by the wise as well as the foolish. And therefore, since this short and laborious life, by the general consent of not only men but animals in general, is considered a great good, it is manifest that it becomes also a very great and perfect good, if it is without an end and free from all evil. In a word, no one would ever despise this life, however short and burdensome, or undergo death, however free from pain, unless through the hope of a longer life. For those who voluntarily offered themselves to death for the safety of their countrymen, as Menoecus did at Thebes, Codrus at Athens, Curtius and the two Mures at Rome, would never have preferred death to the advantages of life, unless they had thought that they should attain to immortality through the estimation of their countrymen; and although they were ignorant of the life of immortality, yet the reality itself did not escape their notice.³⁴ Just as virtue despises opulence and riches, because they are frail, and pleasure, because it is brief, so does it despise a life which is frail and brief, that it may seek one which is substantial and lasting. And advancing towards its goal, weighing everything before it, it leads us to that excellent and surpassing good, on account of which we are born.

Had the philosophers followed this mode of procedure, instead of doggedly resting upon the laurels of immediate and incomplete achievement, they would assuredly have attained truth. They would have come to realize, had they given themselves to reflection, that virtue is given to us on this account, that, lusts having been subdued, and the desire of earthly things overcome, our souls, pure and victorious, may return to God, that is, their (to) original source (ad originem suam). In virtue of this alone are the souls of mortal creatures raised to the sight of heaven, "that they may believe that our chief good is the highest place." Therefore human souls alone receive religion, the reason being, that they may know "from this soul that the spirit of man is not mortal, since it longs for and acknowledges God, Who is immortal."³⁵

Those philosophers who embraced either virtue or knowledge as the chief good kept the way of the truth, though they did not, unfortunately, complete the journey. For both virtue and knowledge make up that which is sought for, namely the chief good. The one points out the end, and the means whereby the end must be attained; the other gives us the strength necessary to carry out the means. The one without the other, as has already been said, is of little value: their true efficacy lies in union; for from knowledge arises virtue, and from virtue the chief good is produced. The highest end, then, resides in the knowledge of God, from Whom the soul has its origin. These philosophers who assigned the chief good to the soul, it

follows, approached the truth; yet they did not attain perfect truth, for they referred it to this life alone, which has its terminus with the body. Not without reason, then, did they fail to attain to the highest good; for whatever looks to the body alone, and is without immortality, must necessarily be the lowest. The happiness which the philosophers sought was not true happiness, for this, it has also been shown, is not happiness of the body but of the soul, for the soul, freed from intercourse with the body, is incorruptible, that is, incapable of diminution, increase, or change.³⁶ In this one thing alone can we be happy in this life, if we appear to be unhappy; if, avoiding the enticements of pleasure, and giving ourselves to the service of virtue only, we live in all labours and miseries, which are the means of exercising and strengthening^{en} virtue; "if, in short, we keep to that rugged and difficult path which has been opened for us to happiness." And therefore it follows that the chief good which makes men happy cannot exist, "unless it be in that religion and doctrine to which is annexed the hope of immortality."³⁷

CHAPTER IV.
The Evils of Philosophy

It has been shown that natural philosophy¹ is neither necessary nor valid. As logic also is of no great value as regards man's happiness, it remains that the whole force of philosophy is ethical, to which Socrates is said to have applied himself, laying aside the other. But the philosophers erred in this part also, since, although many of them speculated well about knowledge and virtue as being essential to it, their worship remained earthly and soared not to the true God. Accordingly, it appears that philosophy is altogether false and empty, since it does not prepare us to tackle the problem of life rightly, and thus to attain that for which we are born. "Let them know, therefore, that they are in error who imagine that philosophy is wisdom; let them not be drawn away by the authority of any one; but rather let them incline to the truth and approach it."²

(Before taking up the evil offshoots of philosophical systems, Lactantius touches upon the characters of the philosophers, which, with but few exceptions, he contends, show decisively their unfitness to be teachers of virtue. For while numberless instances may be found of men who have been good without learning, it has rarely happened that philosophers have adorned their lives with good deeds. An inquiry into their characters would prove them to have been swayed by anger, covetousness, and sensual passions; to have been ar-

rogant and presumptuous, to have concealed their vices under a pretence of wisdom, and to have practiced at home the very things which in the schools they condemned. He then instances the disgusting familiarity of Aristippus with Lais, the celebrated courtesan, and upbraids the philosopher for defending his moral infirmity on grounds that there was a great difference between him and the other lovers of Lais, because he himself possessed Lais, whereas the others were possessed by Lais (which, it must be admitted, is perfectly consistent of Aristippus, since he held that man must be the master of his pleasures and not the mastered, though it was not the man who abstains "who is pleasure's master, but rather the man who enjoys pleasures without being completely carried off his feet" [.])

O illustrious wisdom, to be imitated by good men! Would you, in truth, entrust your children to this man for education, that they might learn to possess a harlot? He said that there was some difference between himself and the dissolute, that they wasted their property, whereas he lived in indulgence without any cost. And in this the harlot was plainly the wiser, who had the philosopher as her creature, that all the youth, corrupted by the example and authority of the teacher, might flock to her without any shame.

What difference therefore did it make whether he possessed Lais or was possessed by her, when he comported himself before his rivals and pupils in a manner more depraved than the most abandoned. Nor was it long before he transferred his habits from the brothel to the school, and began also to teach lusts, contending that bodily pleasures was the chief good: "which

pernicious doctrine has its origin not in the heart of the philosopher, but in the bosom of the harlot."⁵

As for the Cynics, it is little wonder that they derived their title from dogs,⁶ since they also imitated their life. Therefore, little is to be had from this sect, "since even those who enjoin more honourable things either themselves do not practice what they advise," or if they do (which rarely happens), "it is not the system which leads them to that which is right, but nature which often impels even the unlearned to praise."⁷

It was not with a view of attaining truth that they invented systems of philosophy, therefore, but that they might screen their ignominious worldliness, or, at best, exercise the tongue. For they seldom if ever practised what they preached; indeed, not only did they detract from the weight of their own precepts by not putting into practice what they taught in the schools, but actually, as we have seen, contradicted their own teachings. And while it is a good thing to give right and honourable precepts (which, however, was not common practice among the philosophers), it is little short of trickery to fail to practice them; yes, it is more than this: for to have goodness on the lips but not in the heart, is, in plain language, a lie.⁸ Rightly therefore did Cicero contend that they sought not utility but enjoyment from philosophy. To give his very words, "all their disputation, although it contains most abundant fountains of virtue and knowledge, yet, when compared with their actions and accomplishments," would seem to have

led to a freer indulgement in pleasures and relaxation than to moral or intellectual enlightenment.⁹ Philosophy, to put it more briefly, is productive of no great good. To wisdom, then, rather than to philosophy, ought we to devote ourselves. Nor do we contradict ourselves in saying this: for philosophy is the invention of human thought (humanae cogitationis inventio est), wisdom, a divine legacy (divina traditio est). That the two are not one is readily apparent from this, that the beginning and origin of philosophy is known. For the first philosopher is supposed to have been Thales, whose age, incidentally, is somewhat recent. Whence the question arises, did not the love of truth exist among the more ancient? And to this Seneca answers: "there are not yet a thousand years since the beginnings of wisdom were undertaken."¹⁰ From which it follows that mankind for many generations lived without system. In ridicule of which, Persius says:¹¹

When wisdom came to the city
Together with pepper and palms;

as though wisdom had been introduced into the city together with unsavoury merchandise. For if it is in agreement with the nature of man, it must have had its commencement together with man; but if it is not in agreement with him, human nature would be incapable of receiving it. "But, inasmuch as he has received it, it follows that wisdom has existed from the beginning: therefore philosophy, inasmuch as it has not existed from the beginning, is not the same as wisdom."¹² The rea-

the Greeks did not know how wisdom was corrupted was that they had not attained to the sacred letters of truth (sacras veritatis litteras). And thus thinking that human life was destitute of truth, and wishing to dig it up from hidden and unknown places, they invented philosophy, "whose pursuit, through ignorance of truth, they thought to be wisdom."¹³

(In exposing the evils fostered by philosophy, Lactantius first attacks the system of Epicurus, for this, he asserts, exerted a more widespread and detrimental influence among his contemporaries and followers; not, however, because it mirrors truth, but because it adapts itself to the temperament of the multitude. Moreover, he goes on to say, lest there by some who are unmoved by the attractive name of pleasure, Epicurus appeals to each character separately):¹⁵

He forbids the idle to apply himself to learning; he releases the covetousness from giving largeness to the people; he prohibits the inactive man from undertaking the business of the state, the sluggish from bodily exercise, the timid from military service. The irreligious is told that the gods pay no attention to the conduct of men; the man who is unfeeling and selfish is ordered to give nothing to any one, for the wise man does everything on his own account. To a man who avoids the crowd, solitude is praised. One who is too sparing, learns that life can be sustained on water and meal. If a man hates his wife, the blessings of celibacy are enumerated to him; to one who had bad children, the happiness of those who are without children is proclaimed; against unnatural¹⁴ parents it is said that there is no bond of nature. To a man who is delicate and incapable of endurance, it is said that there is no bond of nature. To a man who is delicate and incapable of endurance, it is said that pain is the greatest of all evils; to the man of fortitude, it is said that the wise man is

happy even under tortures. The man who devotes himself to the pursuit of influence and distinction is enjoined to pay court to kings; he who cannot endure annoyance is enjoined to shun the abode of kings.

This is the confused potpourri which gathers to himself various and differing characters, none of whom is as greatly at variance with one another as Epicurus is with himself. But whence arises so strange a conglomeration? What is its origin?

Epicurus observed that the wicked were happy, influential, and highly esteemed, whereas the good were often looked upon with contempt, subject to adversities, poverty, labours, and exile; that the wicked and influential committed crimes with impunity, while the innocent were without resource; that death came to the good as well as to the wicked, to the old as well as to the young, to the poor as well as to the rich, and to the robust and vigorous as well as to the weak and sickly; that in wars the better men were especially overcome and slain; and---this especially moved him---that religious men were often visited with the weightier evils, whereas lesser evils, or none at all, were the lot of the impious. And reflecting upon the injustice of it all (for so it seemed to him), he concluded that there was no providence. Once persuaded of this, he undertook to defend it, and soon enmeshed himself in a net of inextricable errors. For the order and arrangement of the world calls for some explanation, some cause. But if there is no providence, as Epicurus contends,

it would be impossible to explain the foresight evidenced by the complexity of the animal organization,---how it is that each member of the animal body harmonizes so perfectly with the others in the discharge of its individual offices. But the systems of providence, Epicurus maintains, "contrived nothing in the production of animals; for neither were the eyes made fore seeing, nor the ears for hearing, nor the tongue for speaking, nor the feet for walking; inasmuch as these were produced before it was possible to speak, to hear, to see, and to walk." Therefore these were not produced for use; but use was produced for them."¹⁷ But if there is no providence, "why do rains fall, fruits spring up, and trees put forth leaves?" To which Epicurus rejoins: these are not always done for the sake of living creatures, inasmuch as they are of no benefit to providence; "but all things must be produced of their own account." But from what source do they arise? how are all things which are carried on brought about? And to this, also, Epicurus replies in the negative: "There is no need of supposing a providence, for there are seeds floating through the empty void, and from these, collected together without order, all things are produced and take their origin."¹⁸ But why then are they not distinguishable? Because, he answers, "they have neither colour, nor warmth, nor smell; they are also without flavour and moisture; and they are so minute, that they cannot be cut and divided."¹⁹ But is it not strange that bodies, though solid, are not macroscopic?²⁰ And yet, granting that the

nature of all things is the same, how is it that they compose various objects? And to this Epicurus says: "they meet together in varied order and position; as the letters which, though few in number, by variety or arrangement make up innumerable words."²¹ But letters have a variety of forms. So also have the first principles, "for they are rough, they are furnished with hooks, they are smooth." Therefore (concludes Lactantius), they can be cut and divided, if there is in them any part which projects; whereas if they are smooth and without hooks, they cannot cohere.

They ought therefore to be hooked, that they may be linked together with one another. But since they are said to be so minute that they cannot be cut asunder by the edge of any weapon, how is it that they have hooks or angles? For it must be possible for these to be torn asunder, since they project.²²

Further, by what prevision or foreordination do they come together so that anything may be constructed out of them. Order and arrangement presupposes intelligence; for that which is in accordance with reason can be accomplished only by reason.²³ It is plain, therefore, that no end of evidence can be adduced to quell this trifler "who surpassed in intellect the race of man, and quenched the light of all, as the ethereal sun arisen" (which verses,²⁴ taken from Lucretius, Lactantius finds most amusing). For this was not said of Socrates or Plato, "who are esteemed as kings of philosophers, "but concerning a man who raved more senselessly than the diseased. And thus it was that "the most vain poet (poeta inanissima),"²⁵ ---we do not

say adorned, but overwhelmed and crushed, the mouse with the praises of the lion." And this is the man²⁶ who releases us from death: for "when we have no existence, death does not exist; when death does not exist, we have no existence: therefore death is nothing to us."²⁷ As though it were death past and completed, in which sensation is destroyed, which is the object of fear, rather than death in the participial sense, in which sensation is gradually being destroyed. "For there is a time in which we ourselves even yet exist,²⁸ and death does not exist; and that very time appears to be miserable, because death is beginning to exist, and we are ceasing to exist."²⁹ For it is not death, really, that is miserable. It is the approach of death that is miserable, that is, the wasting away of the body, the thought of the not-to-be-parried thrust of death's saber, along with the thought of being burnt with fire and made food of by beasts and insects. These are the things which are feared, though not because they bring death but because they bring pain. Let us then make out that pain is not an evil. But pain is the greatest of all evils (omnium malorum maximum est), insists Epicurus. If this is so, if pain is the greatest of all evils, how can we help but fear, since that which brings about death is an evil? Perhaps souls are imperishable. But souls do perish, fancies Epicurus; "for that which is born with the body must perish with the body."³⁰ Who hearing this would abstain from the practice of vice and wickedness:³¹

For if the soul is doomed to perish, let us eagerly pursue riches, that we may be able to enjoy all kinds of indulgence; and if these are wanting to us, let us take them away from those who have them by stealth, by stratagem, or by force; especially if there is not need to fear a God who does not regard the actions of men: as long as the hope of impunity shall favour us, let us plunder and put to death. For it is the part of the wise man to do evil, if it is to his advantage, and safe; since, if there is a God in heaven, He is not angry with any one. It is also equally the part of the foolish man to do good; because, as he is not excited with anger, so he is not influenced by favour. Therefore let us live in the indulgence of pleasures in every possible way; for in a short time we shall not exist at all. Therefore let us suffer no day, in short, no moment of time, to pass away from us without pleasures; lest, since we ourselves are doomed to perish, the life which we have already spent should itself also perish.

He does not say this in word, it is true; but, in affirming that the wise man refers all things to his own advantage, he teaches it in fact. For, who, hearing this, as we have already observed, would think of loving his neighbor, of conferring benefits upon others, since he must always (if he would be wise, that is) do everything for his own sake; or shy from evil-doing, since the doing of evil may be attended with gain. What choicer or more apt words could any chieftan of pirates or leader of robbers say, in exhorting his men to acts of violence, than the words of Epicurus: "That the gods take no notice; that³²

they are not affected with anger nor feeling of any kind; that the punishment of a future state is not to be dreaded, because souls die after death, and that there is no future state of punishment at all; that pleasure is the greatest good; that there is no society among men; that every one consults for his own

interest; that there is no one who loves another, unless it be for his own sake; that death is not to be feared by a brave man, nor any pain; for that he, even if he should be tortured or burnt, should say that he does not regard it.

Is this expression the offspring of wisdom, that applies most fittingly to robbers and cut-throats?

Opposed to the Epicurean belief in the mortality of the soul is that of the Stoics and Pythagoreans. And although they fell; indeed from the truth of the soul's immortality by chance, and, in their endeavour to refute the Epicurean point of view, "that the soul must necessarily die with the body, because it is born with it,"³³ were driven to another extreme, namely, that "the soul is not born with the body, but rather introduced into it, and that it migrates from one body to another,"³⁴ they are nevertheless deserving of great indulgence: their contribution is no meagre one. Yet the error of their ways is rather similar to that of the Epicureans. The latter, in asserting that the soul must necessarily die with the body, because it is born with it, erred with respect to the past; the former, in asserting that the soul is not born with the body, but rather introduced into, unable to conceive how it could possibly survive the body unless it should have existed prior to it, erred with respect to the future.³⁵ None of them perceived the truth, that the soul is both created and immortal, because all were ignorant of the true nature of man. Thus it was that many of them, suspecting the immortality of the soul, laid violent hands upon themselves, as though the heavens beckoned to them

with arms outstretched. This was the case with Cleanthes³⁶ and Chrysippus,³⁷ with Zeno³⁸ and Empedocles,³⁹ the latter of whom cast himself into a cavity of the burning Aetna, "that when he had suddenly disappeared, it might be believed that he had departed to the gods"; in like manner died Cato, who through the whole of his life was an emulator of Socratic ostentation.⁴⁰ But the most wicked of them all was Democritus,⁴¹ who "by his own spontaneous act offered up his head to death."⁴² For if it is wrong to take the life of another, it is also wrong, by the same token, to take one's own life. The right of terminating the soul's intercourse with the body is the right of Him alone who created the soul and the body: as we did not come into being of our own accord, so must we not depart of our own accord; "and if any violence is offered to us, we must endure it with equanimity, since the death of an innocent person cannot be unavenged, and since we have a great Judge Who alone has the power of taking vengeance in His own hands."⁴³

Of the immediate cause of suicide among the Greek Philosophers, Lactantius gives none. Cato, however, is said to have read through Plato's treatise on the immortality of the soul, and led by it is to the commission of his crime. Ambrasciot,⁴⁴ also, is said to have read the same treatise before throwing himself into the sea, and for no other reason than that he had faith in Plato---" a doctrine altogether detestable and to be avoided, since it drives men from life."⁴⁵ Yet the deplorable results of Plato's teachings could have been avoided, had

the philosopher known and taught "by whom and how and to whom, and on account of what actions, and at what time, immortality is given." For it appears that Cato sought a cause of death, not that he feared Caesar (for Caesar, such was his clemency, had no other object than the welfare of the state, and thus would have preserved as excellent a citizen as Cato), but rather that he might obey the decrees of the Stoics, whom he followed.

Cicero teaches the immortality of the soul in much the same manner as the others who assert the advantage of death. His sentiment is thus set forth in the treatment concerning the Laws: ⁴⁶ We may congratulate ourselves, since death is about to bring either a better state than that which exists in life, or at any rate, not a worse." For if the soul is in a state of vigour without the body, it is a divine life; and if it is without perception, assuredly there can be no evil. All of which, though cleverly argued, as it may appear, is none the less false.

For sacred writings ⁴⁸ teach that the soul is not annihilated; but that it is either rewarded according to its righteousness, or eternally punished according to its crimes. For neither is it right, that he who has lived a life of wickedness should escape the punishment which he deserves; nor that he who has been wretched on account of his righteousness, should be deprived of his reward. ⁴⁹

This same sentiment is also expressed by Tully, who says, in his Consolation, that the abodes of the righteous and wicked are different; for those who are contaminated by vices and

crimes are thrust down into darkness and mire, whereas those who are chaste, pure, upright and uncontaminated, "being also refined by the study and practice of virtue, by a light and easy course take their flight to the gods, that is, to a nature resembling their own."⁵⁰ Moreover, what possible distinction could there possibly be between virtue and vice, if all men suffer pain or attain perfect happiness. If any one should therefore ask one in possession of the truth, whether death is a good or an evil, the answer will be that is character depends upon the course of life. For life itself is a good, and passed virtuously remains a good; but spent viciously it is an evil. Wherefore, if a life has been given to the service of God, death is not an evil, since it represents a kind of translation to immortality. But if a life has not been given to the service of God, "death must necessarily be an evil, since it transfers men, as I have said, to everlasting punishment."⁵¹

Those, then, who either desire death as a good, or as an escape from life, which they consider an evil, are in error. For death in itself is neither a good nor an evil. Its character, as we have pointed out, depends on the life which precedes it. The foolish sentiment, that this state which we call life is really death, while that which we fear as death is really life, and thus that the first good is not to be born, and the second good is an early death, arises from this, that the pain and anguish which follows close in the wake of continual gratification of sense, embitters the mind to such

an extent that death is desired, and thus life comes to be looked upon as utterly devoid of any good.⁵² Nor is the sentiment more neatly couched than in the Consolation of Cicero: "Not to be born," he says, "is by far the best thing, and not to fall upon these rocks of life. But the next best thing is, if you have been born, to die as soon as possible, and to flee from the violence of fortune as from a conflagration."⁵³ As though it were in our power to be born or not to be born; or as if life were given to us by fortune, and not by God, "or as though the course of life appeared to bear any resemblance to a conflagration."⁵⁴

Similar to this worldly view of things is that of Plato, who gave thanks to nature, "first that he was born a human being rather than a dumb animal; in the next place, that he was born a man rather than a woman (though in this, it is generally hinted, he is not without reason); that he was a Greek rather than a barbarian;⁵⁵ lastly, that he was an Athenian, and that he was born in the time of Socrates."⁵⁶ As if, had he been born a barbarian, a woman, or, in fine, an ass, he would still possess the identity of Plato, rather than that of the being which had been produced. This belief, in all probability is owing to the influence of Pythagoras, who, in order that he might prevent men from feeding on animals, said that souls passed from the bodies of men to the bodies of other animals. Whereupon the wise man, lest it might come to pass that the soul; which was then in Plato might be the soul of

some other animal, "and might be endued with the sensibility of a man, so as to understand and grieve that it was burthened with an incongruous body," gave thanks that he was Plato and not an ass (though the distinction, suggests Lactantius, in his general treatment of Plato, is one which invites controversy). More expressive of the attribute of rationality would have been to give thanks that he was born with human capacities, such as, for example, that of receiving a liberal education. For what did it profit him that he was born in Athens, and especially during the times of Socrates. Hundreds of distinguished men, individually better than the majority of Athenians, on the whole, derived their learning in other cities. Many who lived in Athens, on the other hand--- yes, and during the time of Socrates, were foolish and unlearned. "For it is not the walls or the place in which any one is born that can invest a man with wisdom." To congratulate oneself that one was born during the times of a certain man, and in a certain place, is therefore absurd. Was Socrates able to bestow talent upon learners? If so, how can we explain the fact that Critias, and Alcibiades, also, were constant hearers of the same Socrates, the one of whom "was the most active enemy of his country," the other "the most cruel of all tyrants."⁵⁷

(Moved to wonder that so wise a person as Plato should give thanks that he was born in the times of Socrates, Lactantius is led to speak of Socrates himself, in whom, however,

he also finds much to censure. For though it cannot be gainsayed that Socrates did possess more wisdom than other men, since, when he understood that the nature of things could not be comprehended by the human mind, he removed himself from questions of this kind, he is nevertheless, in many things, deserving of censure rather than praise.⁵⁸ In proof of which, Lactantius instances a well known Socratic proverb: "That which is above us is nothing to us."⁵⁹ Whereupon we must always truckle to earthly things; nor ever dream of contemplation and the heavens, for which purposes we have been raised (excitati);⁶⁰ nor can the light itself have any meaning for us, though it is, doubtless, the cause of our sustenance. Did Socrates mean, then, that we are not to devote ourselves to religion? There can be no doubt of this (says Lactantius, first doing away with the possibility of verbal inaccuracy). The reason he did not state this openly is that no one would have suffered it. Yet who can be so blind as not to perceive that his world, so intricate and so perfectly in its design and arrangement, must be governed by some providence, "since there is nothing which can exist without some one to direct it." (In illustration of which, Lactantius cites the following: a deserted house falls to decay; an unpiloted ship goes to the bottom; a body abandoned by the soul wastes away.) If this is so, and experience absolutely favors the affirmative, how can we suppose that so great a fabric as the universe "could either have been constructed without an Artificer, or

to have existed so long without a Ruler." ⁶¹ It may be, it is true, that Socrates said this in an effort to overthrow the superstitions prevalent among the people of his time, ⁶² in which case he is deserving of praise. But the same man swore by a dog and a goose. ⁶³

Oh buffoon ⁶⁴ (as Zeno the Epicurean says), senseless, abandoned, desperate man, if he wished to scoff at religion; madman, if he did this seriously, so as to esteem a most base animal as God! For who can dare to find fault with the superstitions of the Egyptians, when Socrates confirmed them at Athens by his authority? But was it not a mark of consummate vanity, that before his death, he asked his friends to sacrifice for him a cock which he had vowed to Aesculapius?

But the true reason for this, evidently, was that he feared lest he should be called to account before Rhadamanthus, the Judge. Mad, indeed, must he have been, had he died under this delusion. "But since he did this in his sound mind, he who thinks that he was wise is himself of unsound mind. Behold one in whose times the wise man congratulates himself as having been born!" ⁶⁵

Mindful of the wise man's gratefulness to Socrates, who, as we have seen, spurned natural philosophy, that he might devote himself to inquire about virtue and duty, the source of Plato's concept of justice, the force of which resides in equality, since all men are born equal, is readily intelligible. Yet Plato's insistence upon this, that all things must be possessed in common, is rather shocking. It is barely possible, though extremely hostile to one's sense of balance, that con-

men ownership might have some value in a monetary sense. But marriages must be common? Why? "That men may flock together like dogs to the same woman, and that he who shall be superior in strength may succeed in obtaining her? or, if they are patient as philosophers, await their turns, as in a brothel?" Is this equality, which does away with the virtue of chastity and conjugal fidelity? Is it the same perverted sense of equality which fosters the advice concerning the harmony of the state, which shall be possible only "if all shall be the husbands and wives and mothers and fathers of all."⁶⁶ Can there be method in such insanity as this, which would create harmony in a state through a confusion of the human race? Is it possible that affection can be preserved where there is nothing certain to be loved?

What man will love a woman, or what woman a man, unless they shall always have lived together, ---unless devotedness of mind, and faith mutually preserved, shall have made their love indivisible...moreover, if all are the children of all, who will be able to love children as his own? Who will bestow honour upon any one as a father, when he does not know from whom he was born? From which it comes to pass, that he not only esteems a stranger as a father but a father as a stranger.

Not harmony will result from such a plan, then, but discord, for it is most contrary to nature. Further, were Plato aware of the vagaries and foibles peculiar to women, and the weaknesses of man, he would have realized that there is no more vehement cause of discord than the desire of one woman by many men. This he might have known, if not through reason,

certainly through experience, "both of the dumb animals, which fight most vehemently on this account, and of men, who have always carried on most severe wars with one another on account of this matter."⁶⁸

Plato's precepts of equality, in fine, does not make for justice but injustice, for that which is opposed to virtue must needs be opposed to justice. For if justice is the mother of all virtues,⁶⁹ when they are done away with, it is also overthrown. And this is exactly what Plato has done:⁷⁰

He took above all things frugality, which has no existence where there is no property of one's own which can be possessed; he took away abstinence, since there will be nothing belonging to another from which one can abstain; he took away temperance and chastity, which are the greatest virtues in each sex; he took away self-respect, shame, and modesty, if those things which are accustomed to be judged base and disgraceful begin to be accounted honourable and lawful. Thus, while he wishes to confer virtue upon all, he takes it away from all. For the ownership of property contains the material both of vices and of virtues, but a community of goods contains nothing else than the licentiousness of vices. For men who have many mistresses can be called nothing else than the-luxurious and prodigal. And likewise woman who are in the possession of many men, must of necessity be not adulteresses, because they have no fixed marriage, but prostitutes and harlots.

{Passing on to Philosophers of lesser repute and fame, Lactantius finds even more to censure, though this, he prefaces, is hardly surprising, since the eminent philosophers themselves, it has been noted, are empty and oftentimes insincere. Despite our anticipations, he makes shift to intimate, it is not altogether unmoved that we view the shoaly waters of

philosophy. For who would imagine that the human intellect could deteriorate to such deplorable depths that public acclaim would be his,⁷¹ who abandoned his fields, and suffered them to become useless pastures, instead of giving them to the sick and indigent; or his⁷² who changed his possessions into money, which he threw into the sea, rather than employing it in acts of kindness and humanity. The least they might have done would have been to imitate the madness and fury of Tuditanus,⁷³ who scattered his property to be seized by the people. For then they would have both escaped the possession on money, which they cast away, lest they should be cast away by it, and at the same time have laid it out to advantage; "for whatever has been profitable to many is securely laid out."⁷⁴

But these errors are negligible when compared with that of Zeno, who, in placing pity among vices and diseases, deprives us of an affection most dear to human life.

For since the nature of man is more feeble than that of other animals, which divine providence has armed with natural means of protection, either to endure the severity of the seasons or to ward off attacks from their bodies, because none of these were given to man, he has received in the place of all these things the affections of pity, which is truly called humanity,⁷⁵ by which we might mutually protect each other.

What would happen to society if men were rendered savage by the sight of other men, which is often the case with animals? What civilization would indeed be ours, to rave among ourselves after the manner of the wild beasts! Yet would this

not follow inevitably from the advice of the hoary Zeno?

Even more foolish than either of these is the philosopher⁷⁶ who asserted that snow was black, from which it naturally follows that pitch is white, and the philosopher⁷⁷ who said that the "orb of the moon was eighteen times larger than the earth; and, consistent with this, that, within the concave surface of the moon, there was another earth, and that there another race lived in a manner similar to that in which we live on this earth." Is there any greater folly than this,⁷⁸ which would have us believe that this globe of ours may perhaps be a moon to another earth below this? Nor is this all. There was one among the Stoics, according to Seneca, "who used to deliberate whether he should assign to the sun also its inhabitants"; he acted foolishly in doubting. "But I believe that the great deterred him, so as not to imperil so great a multitude; lest, if they should perish through excessive heat, so great a calamity should be said to have happened by his fault."⁷⁹ Nor do any of them say anything to the purpose who speak of antipodes, or of the heavens and the stars. It is all, we have insisted, pure conjecture, and can be disproved by no ends of arguments. "But since it is not the word of a single book to run over the errors of each individually, let it be sufficient to have enumerated a few, from which the nature of the others may be understood."⁸⁰

CHAPTER V.
Philosophy and True Wisdom

Wisdom, the union of knowledge and virtue, which alone leads man to his ultimate end, we have seen, must be something accessible to all men. But philosophy (observes Lactantius, intent upon dealing a last and finishing blow upon its false nature), is not accessible to all men: it is an esoteric doctrine, not for the multitude, but for the learned only. To give the words of Cicero, "it is contented with a few judges, of its own accord designedly avoiding the multitude."¹ Philosophy cannot therefore be wisdom, for, if wisdom is given to man, it must be given to all indiscriminately. To deny wisdom to man would be to blind his mind to the true and divine light, an injustice surely. But if it is the nature of man to attain to wisdom, it is befitting that all men, regardless of race, class, sex, or age, should be taught to be wise. The Stoics, indeed, Epicurus and Plato also, maintained that all, of every condition, should be taught philosophy.² But with all their endeavour they could not gain their point; because much learning and time is necessary to profit by philosophy:³

Common learning must be acquired for the sake of practice in reading, because in so great a variety of subjects it is impossible that all things should be learned by memory. No little attention also must be given to the grammarians, in order that you may know the right method of speaking. That must occupy many years. Nor must there be ignorance of rhetoric, that you may know how to utter and express the things which you have learned. Geometry also, and music, and astron-

ony, are necessary, because these arts have some connection with philosophy.

Now all these subjects cannot be learned by women, obviously, since they must give their time to the learning of the domestic arts; nor by servants, since their early years, especially suited to learning, are devoted to the service of others; nor by the poor, who must labour to gain their daily sustenance. Epicurus, Plato, and the Stoics, in other words, were unable to proceed beyond words. Granting that philosophy ought to receive the ignorant, by what magic means will they be made to understand "those things which are said respecting the first principles of things, the perplexities and intricacies of which are scarcely attained to by men of cultivated minds?"⁴

Again, supposing that philosophy is for the multitude, the unlearned and unskilled as well as for the learned and skilled, is it not altogether strange, that, with the sole exception of Themiste,⁵ no woman was ever taught to study philosophy; nor, with the sole exception of Phaedo,⁶ any slave; nor, excepting Anacharsis the Scythian, any barbarians. Plato and Diogenes are often mentioned as slaves, but they fell into servitude only after they had been taken captive.⁷

What the philosophers thought ought to be done, but were unable to do, is effected only by divine instruction; for it alone is wisdom. Philosophers did direct many men, to be sure; but the men they persuaded were men incapable of persuading themselves of anything. Is this sort of influence to be compared

with the influence exerted on the souls of men by the precepts of God, which, because of their simplicity and truth, move all men in whatever circumstances? "Give me a man who is passionate, scurrilous, and unrestrained; with a very few words of God 'I will render him as gentle as a sheep.'" Give me one who is grasping, covetous, and tenacious; I will presently restore him to you liberal, and freely bestowing his money with full hands. Give me one who is lustful, an adulterer, a glutton; you shall presently see him sober, chaste, and temperate. Give me one who is cruel and blood-thirsty; that fury shall presently be changed into true clemency. Give me a man who is unjust, foolish, an evil-doer; forthwith he shall be just and wise and innocent; for by one laver all his wickedness shall be taken away.⁹ Can the power of the philosophers compare with that of divine wisdom, which, when infused into the breast of man, straightway expels all folly. No answer is wanting. The wisdom of philosophers at best conceals vices rather than eradicates them. "But the precepts of God so entirely change the whole man," and having put off the old, and rendered him anew, "that you would not recognize him as the same."¹⁰

To what purpose, then, must we seek virtue on its own account, as the Stoics maintain, or remain happy under all circumstances, as Epicurus says, when it is only he who suffers torture on account of his faith, on account of justice, or on account of God, that is rendered most happy by the endurance of pain, since God alone can honour virtue, the reward of which

is immortality alone. They who seek this reward, then, but do not seek religion, with which eternal life if connected are assuredly ignorant of the true power of virtue and the reward thereof; for they look to the heavens not that they might be led to acknowledge and accept religion, or persuade themselves of the immortality of their souls, but that they might inquire into subjects which do not admit of investigation.¹¹ For the mind of him who understands the nature of God, that is, the true relation between creature and Creator, the worship and immortality implied therein, is in heaven. He may not behold it with the eye of sense, but he does behold it with the eye of spirit. They who do not acknowledge and accept religion, or who do not believe in the immortality of the soul, are hopelessly earthly: beyond the material they dare not tread. Of what profit then is it to man, that he has been so moulded that he might look towards the heavens, "unless with the mind raised aloft he discerns God, and his thoughts are altogether engaged upon the hope of life everlasting."¹²

Ought we then to conclude that the philosophers did not seek wisdom? No, they sought wisdom, indeed; but, because they turned aside from the right pathway, the further they progressed the deeper they fell into error, for the more distinct were they from truth. In time, they were not only unwilling to further the cause of religion, but they even took up cudgels against it, this, in the name of nature.

For they, either being ignorant of whom the

world was made, or wishing to persuade men that nothing was completed by divine intelligence, said that nature was the mother of all things, as though they should say that all things were produced of their own accord: by which word they altogether confess their own ignorance.¹³

For what is nature, apart from divine providence and power, if nothing? whereas, if it is a kind of plain, or condition of birth, it must certainly have a cause. Perhaps they mean by nature, the heaven and earth and everything which is created. But that which is created presupposes a Creator. The only alternative is this, that by nature they mean God, which is assuredly a frowzy use of language.¹⁴

The virus of a similar germ festers the whole of their thought. Anaxagoras feels as it were a veil of darkness enshrouding all things. Empedocles complains that the paths of sense are narrow, "as though for his reflection he had need of a chariot and four horses." Truth, for Democritus, lies sunk in a well so deep that it has no bottom; foolishly, indeed, "for the truth is not, as it were, sunk in a well to which it was permitted him to descend, or even to fall, but, as it were, placed on the highest top of a lofty mountain, or in heaven, which is most true."¹⁵ But the most universal, and, in point of fact, the most injurious offshoot of philosophy is the belief in the existence of fortune, "as a kind of goddess mocking affairs of men with various casualties."¹⁶ Sometimes it is called a God, because, Cicero says, "he brings about many things unexpected by us, on account of our want of intelligence and

our ignorance of cause." And the same writer, in a work ¹⁷ of great seriousness: "Who can be ignorant that the power of fortune is great on either side"; which sentiment is also expressed by M. Tullius ¹⁸ in his Consolation. ¹⁹ To the same opinion also assented Virgil, ²⁰ who calls fortune omnipotent; and the historian, ²¹ who says, fortune always holds sway in everything.

But if fortune is a goddess, if she has more power than the others, why is she not alone worshipped. Or if she inflicts evil, only, "let them bring some cause why, if she is a goddess, she envies men and desires their destruction, though she is religiously worshipped by them." Let them also show cause why she is more favourable to the wicked and more unfavourable to the good; why she plots, afflicts, deceives, exterminates; who appointed her as the perpetual harasser of the race of men; "why, in short, she has obtained so mischievous a power, that she renders all things illustrious or obscure according to her caprice rather than in accordance with the truth." ²² These things ought to have been inquired into; for there is no reason at all why we must expose ourselves to the inexplicable whimsies of a supposedly wanton power. In fine, we must thrust from us the sayings of philosophers and poets respecting the nature of fortune as nothing but the ravings of thoughtless levity. How truly removed from wisdom these were is patent from the words of Juvenal: ²³ "No divine power is absent where there is prudence; but we make you a goddess, O Fortune, and place you in the high heavens."

It is now clear that Philosophy must in no wise be construed in terms of truth and wisdom. It is inefficacious and ill-deserving of any better name than false wisdom, because it has no weight of authority---its teachers and learners being alike men; and because its instructions are for the most part conjectural. (And bringing his book to a close, Lactantius eloquently urges an obedient reception of the true religion:)²⁴

I have taught as far as my humble talents permitted, that the philosophers held a course widely deviating from the truth. I perceive, however, how many things I have omitted, because it was not in my province to enter into a disputation against philosophers. But it was necessary for me to make a digression to this subject, that I might show that so many things and great intellects have expended themselves in vain on false subjects, lest any one by chance being shut out by corrupt superstitions, should wish to betake himself to them as thought about to find some certainty. Therefore the only hope, the only safety for man, is placed in this alone, the knowledge and worship of God: this is our tenet, this is our judgment.

PART II.
A SCALE OF VALUE
Foreword

Philosophy, according to Lactantius, we have seen, is not a medium of attaining to truth or wisdom, but rather, as it were, a kind of sewage for sundry and diverse channels of vain and wild speculation and discussion, and thus it is altogether inadequate and deserving of no better name than false wisdom: first, he points out, because it has no weight of authority,--- its teachers and learners being alike men; secondly, because its instructions are for the most part conjectural. This definition of philosophy, it need not be emphasized, hardly "jibes" with that of Plato, who, in a special sense, considered wisdom (which he identified with philosophy) to be the science of those things which are the objects of thought and really existent, a science which is concerned with God and the Soul as separate from the body;¹ with that of Aristotle, who said that the end of philosophy is truth, the text of which, in the sphere of objects actually presented, to be sensation, but in the sphere of morals, reason;² or with the general conception of St. Thomas, the most constant defender of philosophy, according to whom no error or inconsistency can be attributed to philosophy as such---these being, he expressly and repeatedly notes, the offshoots of abuses of philosophy. Not philosophy but philosophers, therefore, should Lactantius have condemned, would he have remained true to the principle of logic, "abuse

does not argue use." All this, however, is rather extraneous to our immediate purposes. It shall in no wise be our endeavour to confute the judgment of Lactantius, that the only safety for man resides in religion, the knowledge and worship of God, nor to even attempt a criticism of his inconsistencies of logic, which, it must be owned, are neither infrequent nor inconsiderable---as, for example, the argument that all systems of philosophy are vain and empty, because each system of philosophy is individually convicted of folly by the judgments of all the others, as though it follows, from the fact that ten men are at variance with one another, that all are in error. No, our primary, if not sole, aim shall be to evaluate the criticisms of Lactantius by comparing them with the doctrines of the philosophers as we have them in original and secondary sources. Doing so, we hope to arrive at an approximate and impartial estimate of our author as a Critic of Greek Philosophy.

In juxtaposing, so to speak, the points of view of Lactantius and of the other critics of Greek Philosophy, particularly Diogenes Laertius, we shall keep as much as possible to the mode of procedure employed in the first part. This is to say, we shall first view Philosophy through the perspective of Lactantius, then through those of the other critics, and, finally, by adjusting the lens, bring the rays to a truer focus. This, it is hoped, will make for a more deliberate, more exact, and smoother exposition of the field ahead of us, and, at the same time, lend greater meaning to the aim and achievement of the author in question.

CHAPTER I.
The True Wisdom of Philosophers

The first chapter of part one, as its title indicates, is preliminary to the more definite and more specific discussions upon the pagan philosophers. Yet there is contained in it, none the less, some points worthy of notice. Socrates, for example, is cited to the effect that he denied the validity of knowledge,¹ which, apparently, is untrue. For though he is said to have held that knowledge of man and of human matters is the beginning of all knowledge, and that the divine things are remote and inaccessible (meaning by this, seemingly, the "things of the clouds," as Aristophanes put it), his faith in reason, in the ability of man to know things with truth and certainty, was never shaken. Indeed, to find a standard of truth, one applicable to all men, was the primary task of Socrates. And it was in analyzing the nature of man, discriminating between sensation and thought, that he drew the following inferences: that sensations are particular and thus have only a relative value; but that thought, grasping as it does general concepts, is not particular, and thus, sifted of individual error, has a universal value.² And in harmony with the statements of Xenophon and others is that of Aristotle,³ who attributes to Socrates inductive reasoning and universal definition; and that of Diogenes Laertius,⁴ who says that Socrates held that there was only one good, namely knowledge, and only one evil, namely ignorance. Wherefore it would seem prudent to re-

ject the implication of Lactantius----"if nothing can be known, as Socrates taught."

It may be, as Lactantius has it, that Arcesilas did deny the ability of the human mind to attain to knowledge of any kind, though here, as elsewhere, he gives no source for his opinion. It may be, too, that Arcesilaus denied to the philosophers the possession of knowledge, though this, on the surface at least, does not strictly square with the evidence before us. For Diogenes Laertius⁵ represents him as a zealous student of Plato, and an emulator of Pyrrho and Diodorus as well; whence Ariston is said to have characterized him: "Plato the head of him, Pyrrho the tail, midway Diodorus." To hold with Lactantius, therefore, that Arcesilaus denied to the pagans the names of philosophers, and that, in destroying the validity of the systems of all the others, he laid, as it were, the foundations of his own---a system "which is to know nothing"---, is to slightly exceed the limits of the factual. To conclude with him, on the other hand, that Arcesilaus represents a limp in the development of Greek thought is entirely reasonable. For unable to make headway against the contradictions of opposing arguments, being a person, obviously, of no great profundity, Arcesilaus suspended all judgment, and thus suspended all progress.

It might be well to not, before going further, that Lactantius makes no mention of Arcesilaus' character, though in his criticism of all the other philosophers, we have seen, this is

a point more made of than the very doctrines themselves of the philosophers. Yet Arcesilaus was even more lavish and licentious than Aristippus himself, towards whom Lactantius looked with the veriest contempt. According to Diogenes,⁷

he lived openly with Theodete and Phila, the Elean courtesans, and to those who censured him he quoted the maxim of Aristippus. He was also fond of boys and very susceptible. Hence he was accused by Ariston of Chios, the Stoics, and his followers, who called him a corrupter of youth and a shameless teacher of immorality.

We cite this as a possible indication that Lactantius' knowledge of Greek Philosophy was not all that it might have been. For nothing, we have seen, so completely rankled his religious spirit than immorality, particularly in men who professed pre-eminence. How can we possibly seek wisdom, he never tires of repeating, from those who evince not the least possession of it, who differ from cattle and brutes, not in feeling, but in language.

Since the inquiry, says Lactantius, is respecting man, the highest animal, the highest good ought to be something which it cannot have in common with the other animals. "But as teeth are the peculiar property of wild beasts, horns of cattle, and wings of birds, so something peculiar to himself ought to be attributed to man, without which he would lose the fixed order of his conditions."⁸ Now that which is given to all for the purpose of life and generation is not peculiar to any class; it is a natural good, but not the greatest good, since that, whether it be freedom from anxiety or joy, is common to all.⁹

There appears to be two extreme views of Epicurus. According to some,¹⁰ he was every way as depraved as Aristippus, if, indeed, not more so. He is said to have corresponded with many courtesans, and to have been a votary of the most leathsome and sickening effeminacy. The following quotation from his Treatise on the Ethical End is often made much of:¹¹ "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, sexual pleasures, the pleasures of sound and the pleasures of beautiful form." And this, from his letter to Pythocles, is also frequently repeated: "Hoist all sail my dear boy, and steer clear of all culture." It will be well to observe, however, that all the disparagements come from men who might well be considered to have been his enemies. Timocrates, for example, who, in his book entitled Merriment, asserts that Epicurus vomited twice a day from over-indulgence, that his acquaintance with philosophy was small and his acquaintance with life even smaller, and that his bodily health was pitiful, was the brother of a one-time disciple of Epicurus. Despite the many (and, no doubt, exaggerated) ailments ascribed to Epicurus by his enemies, nevertheless, they do not seem to have hindered him from literary labours, a point decidedly in his favor certainly. Moreover, many things witness to the wide popularity of the philosopher:¹²

His native land, which honoured him with statues in bronze; his friends, so many in number that they could hardly be counted by whole cities; his gratitude to his parents, his generosity to his brother, his generosity and gentleness to his servants and, in general, his benevolence to all mankind.

Irrespective of the divergent sentiments respecting the character of the philosopher, the ascription of a common element to his summum bonum is somewhat gratuitous. For while Epicurus held that pleasures were of two kinds, one consisting in a state of rest, in which both body and soul enjoy freedom from pain; the other arising from an agreeable agitation of the senses, producing a correspondent emotion in the soul it was upon the former than man's well-being was chiefly dependent. Happiness, therefore, consisted in bodily ease and mental tranquillity. As for the pleasures which arise from the agitation of the sense, these, he held, were to be pursued rather as means of arriving at that stable tranquillity in which true happiness consists, than as in themselves an end of living. As Epicurus suggests: A happy life neither resembles a rapid torrent nor a standing pool, but is like a gentle stream that glides smoothly and silently along.¹³

Again, although pleasure or happiness, which is the end of living, be superior to virtue, which is only the means, one must practice all the virtues, for in a happy life, pleasure and virtue are inseparable. These virtues are: Temperance, the discreet regulation of the desires and passions by which we are enabled to enjoy pleasures without suffering any consequent inconvenience; Sobriety, which enables men to content themselves with simple and frugal fare; Continence, a branch of temperance opposed to licentiousness and unlawful amours; Gentleness, which greater contributes to tranquillity and happiness of mind

by preserving the mind from perturbation; Moderation, the only security against disappointment and vexation; Fortitude, which enables us to endure pain, and to banish fear; Justice, the common bond without which no society can subsist. And closely allied to these are the virtues of beneficence, compassion, gratitude, piety and friendship.¹⁴ But the first and foremost good of all is prudence,¹⁵

on which account prudence is something even more valuable than even philosophy, inasmuch as all the other virtues spring from it, teaching us that it is not possible to live prudently, and honourably, and justly, without living pleasantly; for the virtues are connate with living agreeably, and living agreeably is inseparable from the virtues.

There are for Epicurus, then, two kinds of goods, the highest good, "such as the gods enjoy, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting addition and subtraction of pleasures."¹ And while he views pleasure as the ultimate end of living,¹⁷ it is pleasure not wild and unrestrained therefore, but pleasure in its gentlest and most rational form; pleasure made one with peace and tranquility, that is, happiness. This is not the true summum bonum of man, to be sure, though it is not, on the other hand, common to all animals, as Lactantius has it. For the pleasure of Epicurus is inseparable from virtues, an attribute, properly speaking, peculiar to man alone. As many historians, in fine, Lactantius seems to have confused Epicurus with the Epicureans, his followers, who in time departed from his view, "first abandoning true pleasure as a guide

then giving up hope of getting positive pleasure at all, seeking only freedom from pain, and in the end, doubting whether pleasure and pain were after all the great matters."¹⁸

As for Aristippus, Lactantius continues, he is not even worthy of an answer: "for since he is always rushing into pleasures of the body, and is only the slave of sensual indulgences," he can hardly be regarded as a man: for his was a life which bore deep resemblance to that of the beasts, the philosopher himself differing from brutes in this respect only, that he had the faculty of speech. Are we then to seek precepts of living from men who pattern their lives after that of the irrational creatures?¹⁹

It is true, according to the account given by Diogenes Laertius, that Aristippus lived in a manner more befitting a beast than a man, deriving happiness from the pleasures of the moment; on account of which he is supposed to have been called the "king's poodle," or "royal cynic." To those who censured him for enjoying the favours of Lais, a courtesan, he answered: "I have Lais, not she me; and it is not abstinence from pleasures that is best, but mastery over them without ever being worsted." This sentiment, stripped of its surface varnish, faintly suggests the crudeness of the man as pictured by Diogenes: wherefore it is readily intelligible why Lactantius, a person of stern and religious tastes, disdained to give prolonged thought or consideration to him. At the same time, notwithstanding, to condemn a system of thought because its

author answers more to the description of the irrational than the rational, is not treating philosophy as such.

It cannot be gainsayed, that the system of the Cyrenaics did degenerate to the woeful extreme that it came to regard the highest good as the enjoyment of the moment;²¹ whence the distinction of value between single feelings of pleasure was not determined by the content or the cause, but only by the intensity of feelings. They asserted, accordingly, that the degree of intensity of bodily feelings is greater than that of the spiritual feelings;²² and they came to the further conclusion that the wise man need not regard himself restricted by law, convention, or indeed, religious scruples, but should so use things as to serve his pleasures best.²³ But the philosophy of the Cyrenaics as originally represented by Aristippus, despite his cheap and tawdry ways of life, would seem to have belonged to a higher stratum. For while he held that virtue was happiness, that the wisdom of life consisted in getting as much pleasure out of life as possible---of these pleasures, he insisted (as we have already indicated), man must be the master and not the mastered. And since he attributed to pleasure two qualities, intensity and duration, the contrary of which is peculiar to the pleasure of the body, and held that gentle emotions were to be preferred to violent ones, it would seem that he favored the pleasures of mind. But to this interpretation, Diogenes Laertius is opposed:²⁴

They also hold that there is a difference between

"end" and happiness." Our end is particular pleasures, in which are included both past and future pleasures. Particular pleasures is desirable for its own sake, whereas happiness is desirable not for its own sake, but for the sake of particular pleasures.... However, they insist that bodily pleasures are far better than mental pleasures, and bodily pains far worse than mental pains, and that this is the reason why offenders are punished with the former.

If Lactantius' grasp of Aristippus is not precisely what it should be, his criticism of the Cyrenaics more than makes up for it. To their contention that virtue is to be praised in accordance with its capacity of yielding pleasure,²⁵ Lactantius answers:²⁶

True, says the filthy dog, or the swine wallowing in the mire. For it is on this account that I contend with my adversary with the utmost exertion of strength, that my valour may procure for me pleasure; of which I must necessarily be deprived of if I shall come off vanquished.

Shall we, then, follow in the footsteps of those who appear to have no sense of direction, who more closely resemble a flock of blind brutes than men?

Or shall we take to the fold of Zeno, according to whom the chief good consists in living in accordance to nature, that is to say, "after the manner of brutes"? For what is it to live in accordance to nature if not to be eager for pleasure, to lie in wait, to kill, and that which is especially to the point, to have no knowledge of God; in brief, to imitate the lives of the brute animals. Following which it would seem most contrary to reason to living according to nature, which of itself leads to evil rather than to virtue.²⁷

Now this seems to be at best but an innocent distortion of the Stoic doctrine. For to conclude with Lactantius that a life according to nature is a life of evil is to conclude that a life according to reason is a life of evil, for the Stoics in a general sense, identify reason, nature, and virtue. To live agreeably to nature, in other words, is to live a virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us. And they reason to this as follows. The primary impulse of every animal is towards preservation and furtherance of its self.²⁹ Such an impulse is right because it is according to nature;³⁰

for it is not likely that nature should estrange the living creatures from itself or that she should leave the creature she has made without either estrangement from or affection for its own constitution. We are forced then to conclude that nature in constituting the animals made it near and dear to itself; for so it is that it comes to repel all that is injurious and give free access to all that is servicable or akin to it.

But the essential nature of man, who is a rational animal, is reason; this is his peculiar characteristic. Therefore nothing accords with man's nature, is to the furtherance of his own well being, that is, which is not consonant with reason, meaning thereby, reason in general, reason both of man and of the universe, of which human reason is a part. Only those acts, then, which spring from man's reason, recognizing and acquiescing in the universal or cosmic reason, makes for human well-being. Such action is virtue. But living according to virtue "is the same thing as living according to one's ex-

perience of those things which happen by nature...for our individual natures are a part of the universal nature."³¹ And this is why we may define our end as life in accordance with right reason or common law. For "Nature's rule is to follow the direction of impulse. "But when reason by way of a more perfect leadership has been bestowed on the beings we call rational," the natural life becomes for them the life of reason, as we have already indicated. "For reason supervenes to shape impulse scientifically."³² As we must live in accordance with right reason, which is a participation as it were of divine reason, we must suppress all emotions and passions arising from lack of self-control and errors of judgment---pleasures, desires, cares, fears, et cetera. For the wise man is free from "perurbations arising from strong propensities." Diogenes,³³ therefore, expressly declares the end to be to act with good reason in the selection of what is natural; Archedemus, to live a life in accordance with right reason, namely, a virtuous life, or a life in the performance of all befitting actions,³⁴ And since to live a life in accordance with right reason in the selection of what is natural, namely a virtuous life, or a life in the performance of all befitting actions, can hardly be identified with a life of evil, we are again forced to reject the conclusion of Lactantius as rather hasty and unwarranted.

Even less intelligible, and more unworthy of our author's true sense of balance and dignity, is the manner in which he

casually and summarily disposes of Aristotle, who, he says, is little removed from the philosophers already mentioned, since he thought that virtue with honour was the chief good, "as though it were possible for any virtue to exist unless it were honourable, and as though it would not cease to be virtue if it had any measure of disgrace (a nail, it would seem, point-blunt and gauchily driven). But Aristotle did not say that the chief good consisted in the union of virtue and honour, but rather in contemplation, in a life, more explicitly, in accordance with that divine particle within us which, though small in bulk, surpasses in power and dignity all the parts of our nature. Only in this wise, he insists, can we attain our final end. A life devoted to the practice of ordinary virtues, though a good life, is inferior to a life of contemplation, because the virtues, connected as they are with men's passions and corporeal nature, are too dependent on circumstances.³⁵ The philosopher's life, freest from temperable needs is (as Socrates taught), the life nearest to the divine. And all this is in perfect harmony with his system of Ethics.

The good, according to Aristotle, is that towards which everything tends. As they are many ends, however, some of which are chosen only as means, it is plain that all ends are not final. But the best of all ends, and the one which we seek, is the final end. Now that which is pursued as an end in itself is more final than that which pursued simply as a means, and that which is never pursued as means more final than that

which is pursued both as an end in itself and as a means, while that is strictly final "which is always chosen as an end in itself and never as means." This description appears to be answered more by happiness than anything else: "for we always choose it for itself and never for the sake of anything else"; while other things, such as honour, reason, pleasure, in fine, all virtues or excellences, "we choose partly for themselves.. but partly also for the sake of happiness, supposing that they will make us happy."³⁶ A more precise definition need, it will be found in the answer to man's function, which distinguish from the functions of other animals, consist in the "exercise of his faculties in accordance with the best and most complete virtue." But the exercise of man's faculties in accordance with excellence or virtue is happiness. Therefore happiness "is at once the best and noblest and pleasantest thing in the world."³⁷

As happiness is the exercise of virtue, the highest happiness will be the exercise of the highest virtue; "and that will be the virtue or excellence of the best part of us." And this faculty whose nature it is to rule and take the lead, and "to apprehend things noble and divine--whether it be itself divine, or only the divinest part of us---is the faculty the exercise of which, in its proper excellence, will be perfect happiness." And this, of course, consists in speculation or contemplation; in close agreement with which is the doctrine of Aristotle as presented by Diogenes Laertius.³⁸

Without a mention of the summum bonum of Socrates or that

of Plato, and with but a brief and superficial comment upon that of Aristotle, as we have seen, Lactantius passes on to Herillus, who alone, he contends, gave something peculiar to man, since he made knowledge the chief good. Nor was he right, however, since men desire knowledge for the sake of something else, and not for its own sake. For no one is content to merely have knowledge: knowledge is always a means to something else. The arts are not learned "for art's sake," generally speaking, as ends, but for the purpose of being put into exercise; and they are exercised "either for the support of life or for pleasure or for glory. That is not the chief good, therefore, which is not sought for on its own account."³⁹

With this treatment of Herillus, one need take no exception. For knowledge, whereby Herillus meant a habit of mind "not to be upset by argument,"⁴⁰ is at best a subordinate end, a means to divine and eternal truth, or immortality, which is the ultimate end of man.

In the light of the three principles which are said to govern the true summum bonum of man, Lactantius exposes what he considers to be the futility of the philosopher's doctrine on the subject, and at the same time arrives at his notion of the summum bonum, the nature of which, though it admits of no discussion, is scarcely as uncommon and remarkable as one might be led to suspect from the grave and detailed discussion that precedes it. Indeed, there is little to distinguish it from that of the philosopher whom he treats with indifference, name-

ly Aristotle, or from that of the philosophers whom he utterly ignores in his discussion of the summum bonum, namely Socrates and Plato. The happiness which the philosophers sought, says Lactantius, was not true happiness, for this is not happiness of body but of soul, for the soul alone is incorruptible.⁴¹ But this, it is forced upon us, is what Aristotle meant, when he said that the summum bonum consisted in a life of contemplation, a life in accordance with that divine particle within us with, though small in bulk, surpasses in power and dignity all the parts of our nature; what Plato meant by his doctrine of ideas---and this perfectly accords with the notion of Lactantius⁴²---according to which the real Good, since the real is superior to the unreal and the Idea alone is real, is the idea of the Good, which is the absolute self-existent Good. In line with which man's happiness consists in making himself more like his Idea of Good, that is, more like the self-existent good, in sloughing off, so to speak, the tissues of materiality; and this is possible only through a life of contemplation.⁴³ The summum bonum of man, to put it a bit differently, is attainable only through a life of wisdom and virtue, compatible with which are the fine and pure pleasures of knowledge and art and those consistent with reason and health of mind.⁴⁴ The conclusion of Lactantius, that both virtue and knowledge make up that which is sought for, namely the chief good, concurs with that of Socrates also. For, according to the latter, knowledge and virtue coincide.⁴⁵ To know what is right is to do

do what is right; and inversely, to know what is wrong is to avoid what is wrong. As it is elsewhere phrased,⁴⁶ virtue is knowledge of the good. Hence, since virtue is necessary for happiness, and virtue and knowledge are indistinguishable, knowledge is essential to man's well-being. All other things, namely wealth, power, pleasures, and so forth, since they are not the means whereby man distinguishes between good and evil, are not essential. Reason and virtue and the needs of the soul, as opposed to the needs of the body, are of transcendent value. Can we then say that the opinion of Socrates is at grips with that of our author, that it clashes with that expressed in the lines:⁴⁷ Both virtue and knowledge make up that which is sought for, namely the chief good. The one points out the end, and the means whereby the end must be attained; the other gives us the strength necessary to carry out the means. And in the lines:⁴⁸ "True happiness is not happiness of body but of soul; for the soul, freed from the intercourse with the body, is incorruptible." The answer is obvious. But what then ought we to draw from the statement of Lactantius,⁴⁹ that none of the pagan philosopher closely approached the true nature of the summum bonum, with the sole exception of Herillus (who, it must be remembered, said that it consisted in knowledge)? There appears to be two alternatives. Either Lactantius did not have access to the doctrines of the philosophers as we have them now, but received his knowledge of them from the writings of other men, or his work is a mass of plagiarisms. The for-

mer statement squares best with the evidence at our disposal. But let us retrace our steps a bit.

In the course of unfolding his doctrine of the summum bonum, Lactantius takes shift to touch upon the tenets of various philosophers, a discussion of which might prove interesting. With the reputed reply of Anaxagoras, when asked for what purpose he was born, that he might look at the heavens and the sun, on account of which he was deeply esteemed by all and his answer deemed worthy of a true philosopher, Lactantius finds much to censure and expresses the opinion that he probably uttered it at random, having nothing else to say. But even supposing that he did not utter it on the spur of the moment, Anaxagoras was wrong, in his sentiment, in that he placed the whole duty of man in the eyes alone, as though, had he been blind, he would lose the duty of a man, which, in truth, cannot happen without the ruin of the soul.

But this, from the account given by Diogenes Laertius,⁵⁰ would seem to be too literal an interpretation. For while Anaxagoras did answer, when asked for what purpose he was born, "to study the sun and the moon and the heavens,"⁵¹ it is clear from other statements of his that he meant this to be taken in a figurative sense. When someone, for instance, asked him, "Have you no concern with your native land?" he is said to have gently answered:⁵² "I am greatly concerned over my fatherland," at the same time pointing to the sky. Again, to one who complained that he was dying in a foreign land, he answered:⁵³

"The descent to Hades is much the same from whatever place we start." These statements, together with the general character of the man, who eminent in his own day for wealth and noble birth, was even more renowned to posterity for magnanimity,⁵⁴ incline us to the belief that his chief concern was in the world to come, rather than in the world of matter and imperfection.

In discussing immortality, Lactantius is led to speak of Euclid, the founder of the system of the Megareans, who, he says, although he did not explain in what the chief good consisted, certainly understood its nature, when he said that "that was the chief good which was unvarying and always the same." Wherefore, had he explained the nature of the chief good, Lactantius adds, he would undoubtedly have said that it consisted of immortality, nor of anything else at all, since it alone is capable of diminution or increase or change.⁵⁵

Referring to Diogenes,⁵⁶ we find that Euclid did hold that the supreme good was really one, though called by many names, sometimes wisdom, sometimes God, and again Mind, and so forth. And thus it might be inferred that the supreme good of Euclid was eternal and unchanging. But--the point will not be downed---does it not appear altogether strange that our author finds time and space to discuss the doctrine of so comparatively unimportant a personage as Euclid, but none for Plato, a great light certainly, although his doctrine on the question is identical with that of the former, namely,

that the supreme good is eternal and unvarying, that is incorruptible? Yet Lactantius knew of Plato, although, we have seen, he finds in him little to "rave" about. And so the question arises afresh, why the discrimination? To this the most plausible answer appears the following: that Lactantius' knowledge of Plato was based either on an adulterated edition of his works or on a deflowered commentary. The only other alternative would seem to be this, that our author was rather averse to give to others what was owing to them, since doing so might militate against the preservation of his works as those of an original and inventive mind, which, in the face of the slim evidence available, is a bold step to say the least.

Irrespective of the stand which none might take with regard to this, it cannot be disputed that the summum bonum of Lactantius is not as original as the tone of the author might seem to indicate. The new element which he does introduce, however, and all-important one to be sure, is the Christian point of view: that the ultimate end of man does not simply consist in immortality, which is a broad, cold, and meaningless sort of statement, but---and this is more to the point---in the knowledge and worship of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Father, which is not only a more specific way of putting it, but a more real, vital, and warmer,---in fine, a more expressive and appealing way of defining our object. But of this we shall see more of later.

After a few pointed and succinct remarks upon the charac-

ters of the philosophers, which, with but few exceptions, Lactantius avers, show their unfitness to be teachers of virtue, he exposes, in quite some detail, the evils fostered by the various systems of philosophy. The first of these is the system of Epicurus, for this, he makes clear in his general treatment of it, exerted a more widespread and injurious influence among his contemporaries and followers: not, however, he makes haste to illustrate, because it was the possessor of greater truth, but because it was designed to appeal to the multitude, yes, and to each character individually:⁵⁷

He forbids the idle to apply himself to learning; he releases the covetousness from giving largesses to the people; he prohibits the inactive man from undertaking the business of the state, the sluggish from bodily exercise, the timid from military service. The irreligious is told that the gods pay no attention to the conduct of men; that the man who is unfeeling and selfish is ordered to give nothing to any one, for the wise does everything on his own account. To a man who avoids the crowd, solitude is praised. One who is sparing, learns that life can be sustained on water and meal. If a man hates his wife, the blessings of celibacy are enumerated to him; to one who has bad children, the happiness of those who are without children is proclaimed; against unnatural parents it is said that there is no bond of nature. To a man who is delicate and incapable of endurance, it is said that pain is the greatest of all evils; to the man of fortitude, it is said that the wise man is happy even under tortures. The man who devotes himself to the pursuit of influence and distinction is enjoined to pay court to kings; he who cannot endure annoyance is enjoined to shun the abode of kings.

This appears to be an unfair representation of the Epicurean system of philosophy---very much, in fact, like judging a building in the light of photographs or snapshots of

its facades or four sides. One gets a general view of its exterior, or, as it were, its accidental nature, but none at all of its interior or essence. For the philosophy of Epicurus, though hardly idealistic in the true sense of the world, is intrinsically opposed to the worldly view of the unscrupulous and degenerate. As we have repeatedly observed, it is a philosophy ruled by reason. By pleasure, its basis, is meant that which makes for a life of peace and contentment, not "the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality,"⁵⁸ but those which create as it were an absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not, Epicurus clarifies,⁵⁸

an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of the luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the great tumults take possession of the soul.

And the beginning of all this, and hence the greatest good, is prudence. For from it arises all the other virtues, which teach man that the true life of pleasure presupposes a life of prudence, honour, and justice; and a life of prudence, honour, and justice, a life of pleasure. "For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them."⁶⁰ Whosoever alone is wise who holds a holy belief concerning the gods, and is altogether free from the fear of death; who rejects the notion of a destiny or fortune as a kind of inconstant and wilful sovereign, since in the acts of a god there is no disorder; and who, in brief,

relies on reason rather than on hope.⁶¹ Therefore, he concludes, one ought to exercise himself⁶²

in these and kindred precepts day and night, both by himself and with him who is like unto himself; then never, either in waking or in dream, will thou be disturbed, but wilt live as a god among men. For man loses all semblance of mortality by living in the midst of immortal blessings.

In this a philosophy which has packed in it, so to speak, a little of everything, what will appeal to the multitude as well as to the individual? Absolutely speaking, we think not. Yet in a certain sense it does. For the primary aim of Epicurus, a kind of humanitarian, seems to have been to free the minds of the people from fear, from that fear, particularly, which is hostile to peace and happiness. And since we can know nothing of the future with certainty (other than that we shall die, of course), it being, as he says, neither wholly ours nor wholly not ours, "we must not count upon it as quite certain to come nor despair of it as quite certain not to come."⁶³ Wherefore we ought to look upon death with indifference, as though it were nothing to us. Had Epicurus stopped here, he would have given to mankind a doctrine favorable to diverse and varied interpretations. As he took pains to identify a life of happiness with a life of virtue and reason, however, insisting that virtues are connate with living agreeably, and living agreeably inseparable from virtues, it is plain that his is a system in no wise friendly to cut-throats and pirates, as Lactantius would have it,⁶⁴ though it is not, on

the other hand, acceptable to Christians.

As for Lactantius' criticism of Epicurus' atomistic theory of the universe (during the course of which our author acknowledges no indebtedness), it is the same as that presented by Aristotle and many others, and thus need not be repeated. Lactantius, however, quotes Epicurus to the effect that the soul must perish, "for that which is born with the body must perish with the body."⁶⁵ Ibid with this discussion of the Epicurean notion of the soul's mortality, the account given by Diogenes generally agrees. It would seem, nonetheless, that Epicurus' conception of the soul as mortal is opposed to his atomistic theory. For the soul, which he describes as the principle of life and sensation, is composed of the smoothest and roundest of atoms, which, he says, are eternal and incorruptible, that is, immortal. Accordingly, if Epicurus holds that the parts of the soul are eternal and incorruptible, it would seem to follow that the soul itself is eternal and incorruptible; as a result of which, if Epicurus denied this, he would appear to be inconsistent.

Having neatly summarized the philosopher's general conception of death (a point which we shall soon touch upon), and criticized their belief in its evil nature, which is best expressed by the words of Cicero,⁶⁶ Lactantius turns to consider the general leanings of various philosophers. And making light of the worldly view of Plato, who gave thanks to nature that he was born a human rather than an animal, a man

rather than a woman, a Greek rather than a barbarian,⁶⁷ and that he was born during the time of Socrates,⁶⁸ Lactantius passes on to Socrates, moved to wonder that so "wise" a man as Plato should give thanks that he was born during his times. And while Lactantius admits that Socrates possessed more wisdom than other men, since, when he understood that the nature of things could not be comprehended by the human mind, he removed himself from questions of this kind, he is nevertheless, in many things, he asserts, deserving of censure rather than of praise.⁶⁹ In support of which Lactantius calls attention to a well-known Socratic proverb, "that that which is above us is nothing to us," and immediately concludes from this that Socrates meant us to remain among the fusty and mouldy things of matter; never to dream of contemplation, which is, one can't get away from it, a rather exceptive and captious way of looking at things. For it would seem to be more nicely critical of one to interpret the statement as meaning that the speculations of the physical universe is nothing to us, since we cannot know anything about it with certainty; particularly in view of the fact that Socrates made clear his stand on the knowledge of remote and heavenly bodies, and his belief in the immortality of the soul.

In passing, we might also call attention to Lactantius' reharplings upon the ignorance of Anaxagoras and other philosophers, who sought to know the causes of natural things, because such knowledge, according to our author, is beyond the

range of the human intellect. Indeed, he insists, to wish to know the causes of the physical universe, of the sun and the moon and the stars, is very much like wishing to know the character of some very remote country, which we have never seen, and of which we have heard nothing more than the name. And thus he imputes the greatest folly to him who expressed the belief that the orb of the moon was eighteen times larger than the earth; that within the concave surface of the moon there was another earth, wherein lived another race in a manner similar to that in which we live on this earth; and that this globe of ours may be a moon to another earth below this-- the greatest part of which, thanks to our modern astronomy, we can now reflect upon salva Zide, salva ecclesia.

CHAPTER II.
The False Wisdom of Philosophers

The general trend of our discussion might seem to favour the inference, that Lactantius is every misrepresenting the doctrines of the pagan philosophers, that he is empty for us altogether, and thus the sooner we have done with him the better; little as it is to the general liking of the truly curious student, as a usual thing,---to give the words of Henry James---, "to have to publicly throw up the sponge." If this is the sentiment our discussion elicits, it had best be dispelled. For while our author does take an apparently strange stand on many counts, and turns many and unnecessary corners to reach the gateway of truth, thus leaving the impression that the land of philosophy and of thought is strange ground, he seldom fails to reach and desired objective. If he does not know the surest and straightest path to truth, he at least knows the general direction to be avoided. As St. Jerome put it, his criticisms may not always be constructive of truth, but they are certainly destructive of falsity. Any one-sided view of Lactantius, then, is owing, in great part at least, to the fact that we have as yet touched upon his defects, not of reason primarily, but of fact, none of which, it is our firm conviction, owe their being to wilfulness. And while we cannot hope to comment upon all the virtues of our author, we shall at least, in an effort to restore the proper balance to our perspective, touch upon some of the most typical. These

appear to be his discussions upon the nature of death, suicide, and immortality. Before briefly commenting upon these, however, let us lightly outline the Lactantian criticism of the platonic system of Social Ethics, in which Plato gives to the State the Character of a human organism, and thus comes to regard individual men as mere members of a greater and superior body. "hence individual men do not exist for themselves primarily, but for the commonweal, a doctrine intrinsically subversive of the true order of things, since it regards the State, rather than the individual, as first and paramount in importance.

It is barely possible, Lactantius says, that Plato's doctrine of common ownership might have some value in the realm of the purely material, though even this, his general tone indicates, is extremely hostile to one's sense of balance. But to hold that marriages must be common---this does not even deserve second thought. What kind of equality can that be which does away with the virtue of chastity and conjugal fidelity, which fosters license and promiscuity, which, in fine, would create harmony in the state by making the husbands and wives of all the fathers and mothers of all? Can there be method in such insanity as this, which would create unanimity in a state through a confusion of the human race? How then¹

can affection be preserved where there is nothing certain to be loved? What man will love a woman, or what woman a man, unless they shall always have lived together,---unless devotedness of mind,

and faith mutually preserved, shall have made their love indivisible...moreover, if all are the children of all, who will be able to love children as his own? Who will bestow honour upon any one as a father, when he does not know from whom he was born? From which it comes to pass, that he not only esteems a Father as a stranger, but a stranger as a father.

Not harmony, therefore, but discord would result from such a plan. Further, were Plato aware of the vagaries and foibles peculiar to woman, and the weaknesses of man he would have realized that there is no more vehement cause of discord than the desire of one woman by many men. This he might have known, if not through reason, certainly through experience, "both of the dumb animals, which fight most vehemently on this account, and of men, who have always carried on most severe wars with one another for no other reason."

Plato's precepts of equality do not make for justice, then, but injustice, for that which is opposed to virtue must needs be opposed to justice. For if justice is the mother of all the virtues, when they are done away with, it is also overthrown. And this is exactly what Plato has done:²

He took away above all things frugality, which has no existence when there is not prosperity of one's own which can be possessed; he took away abstinence, which one can abstain; hence there will be nothing belonging to another from which one can abstain; he took away temperance and self-respect, shame, and modesty, if those things which are accustomed to be judged base and disgraceful begin to be accounted honourable and lawful. Thus, while he wishes to confer virtue upon all, he takes it away from all. For the ownership of property contains nothing else than the licentiousness of vices. For men who have many mistresses can be called nothing else than luxurious and prodigal. And likewise women who are in the possession of many men, must of

necessity be not adulteresses, because they have no fixed marriages, but prostitutes and harlots.

As there is no need of commenting upon this analysis of Plato's system of Social Ethics, since it accords with the general consent of critics, let us pass on to consider Lactantius' discussion upon the nature of death, suicide, and immortality.

In contrasting the Epicurean belief in the mortality of the soul to the contrary tenet of the Stoics and Pythagoreans,³ ---who, Lactantius asserts, fell upon the truth of the soul's nature by chance, and , in their effort to refute the Epicurean point of view,⁴ were driven to a further extreme---, our author conveys his conception of death, suicide, and immortality, in no halting terms. Neither the Epicureans, nor the Stoics or Pythagoreans, he avers, perceived the truth, that the soul is both created and immortal, because neither was cognizant of the true nature of man, of the true relation that is between soul and body. And so it was that many⁶ of them, suspecting the immortality of the soul, committed suicide, an act as wholly unjustifiable as murder. For the right of terminating the soul's intercourse with the body is not the common right of each and every individual, but the sole right of Him who created the soul and body. As we did not come into being of our own force and volition, so must we not depart of our own force and volition; "and if violence is offered to us, we must endure with with equanimity, since the death of an

innocent person cannot be unavenged, and since we have a great judge who alone has the power of taking vengeance in His own hands."⁷

This same perverted sense of the nature of death and of immortality is also taught by Terrence, who admonishes:⁸ "First learn if what life consists; then, if you shall be dissatisfied with it, have recourse to death"; as though you who are indignant at being exposed to evils (takes up Lactantius) are deserving of anything good, who are so hopelessly ignorant of your Master and Sovereign and your obligations to Him, and so content to wallow in the deepest depths of darkness and ignorance. It is also taught by Cicero, who says:⁹

We may congratulate ourselves, since death is about to bring either a better state than that which exists in life, or at any rate, not a worse. For if the soul is in a state of vigour without the body, it is a divine life; and if it is without perception, assuredly there is no evil.

And though the point may appear to be cleverly argued, its conclusions are nevertheless the false. For, as the Sacred Scriptures teach, the soul is not annihilated, but either rewarded according to its righteousness, or eternally punished according to its righteousness, or eternally punished according to its crimes. "For neither is it right, that he who has lived a life of wickedness should escape the punishment which he deserves; nor that he who has been wretched, on account of righteousness, should be deprived of his reward."¹⁰ Whence it is, as Tully teaches, that the abodes of the right-

eous and the wicked are different; for those who are contaminated by vices and crimes are thrust down into darkness and mire, whereas those who are chaste, pure, upright, and uncontaminated, "being also refined by the study and practice of virtue, by a light and easy course take their flight to the gods, that is, to a nature resembling their own."¹¹ Were this not so, there could be no distinction between vice and virtue, since all men would either suffer pain or attain perfect happiness. Wherefore, should a wise man be asked whether death is a good or an evil, he will answer that its character depends on the life one has spent. For life itself is a good, and passed virtuously remains a good; but spent viciously it is an evil.

And so it comes to pass, that if a life has been given to the service of God, death is not an evil, for it is a translation to immortality. But if not so, death must necessarily be an evil, since it transfers men, as I have said, to everlasting punishment.¹²

It must needs be clear from this, therefore, that to seek virtue on its own account, as the Stoics maintain, or to remain happy under all circumstances, as Epicurus says, avails one little, since it is only he who suffers torture on account of his faith, on account of justice, or on account of God, that is rendered most happy by the endurance of pain, since God alone can honour virtue, the reward of which is immortality alone. They who seek this reward, then, but do not seek religion, with which eternal life is connected, are assuredly ignorant of the true power of virtue, and the reward thereof. It is only the mind of him who understand the nature of God,

meaning by this, the true relation between creature and Creator, and the worship and immortality implied therein, that is raised aloft to see God, and foster thought altogether engaged upon the hope of life eternal. And dwelling for a moment upon the pitfalls lurking, as it were, in the background of philosophical speculations, Lactantius closes the third book of his Divinae Institutiones, as we have seen, with an eloquent appeal on behalf of the true faith.

CONCLUSION

Lactantius: The Critic

As we prepare to wind up our indirect and perforce jagged discussion, let us briefly sum up the nature of our uncoverings, that, giving point to the implements we have chanced upon, we may carve for our author, if such be the task before us, a fitting and merited niche in the Temple of the Critics of Greek Philosophy.

Upon first taking of Lactantius, the average reader cannot fail to observe that he was a writer of no inconsiderable erudition, and that his work bears the marks of a true scholar, showing a wide range of historical and antiquarian knowledge, and frequently citing the classical poets; and that the penetration and precision with which he handles sundry and diverse subjects is quite amazing. At the same time, however, he cannot fail to observe that Lactantius lacks a highly disciplined mind, that the art of the abstract is too rarefied for him. Indeed, he finds that our author not only makes use of sophistical and puerile reasonings, but frequently quotes and commends spurious writings as if they were genuine. The injudicious, the trifling, and the extravagant---these, too, are not wholly absent. But of all this puerilities, the least explicable and most apt to irk the uninitiated is his ostensibly false modesty. Again and again he laments his want of eloquence, admits the superiority of truth to it, and

ends by giving us eloquence in lieu of truth; in the words of Shakespeare, often "drawing out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument," of which the following may be adduced as a kind of specimen:

Etenim cum sciam maximos quoque oratores a causidicis mediocribus saepe victos, quod tanta est potentia veritatis, ut seipsam, quamvis in rebus exiguis, sua claritate defendat: cur hanc ego in maxima causa, ab ingeniosis quidem illis ac disertis viris, sed tamen false dicentibus, oppressum iri putem? ac non illa minus oratione nostra, quae de tenui fonte admodum exillis emanat, lumine tamen suo clare et illustris appareat? Nec si philosophi doctrinae litterarum mirabiles extiterunt, ego etiam nemo cogitando, aut disputando assequi potest.

As our acquaintance acuminates, nevertheless, our sympathy deepens. We find, notwithstanding his defects, that he is capable of reasoning justly and liberally; indeed, in points of capital interest, almost appears to do so. And while there are in his work certain historical inconsistencies and misrepresentations, none of which appear to be intentional, these fade from the picture as we contemplate the sincerity and uncompromising nature of our author's convictions and the lofty ideals which nourish them. And now, let us determine our author's significance as a Critic of Greek Philosophy.

A Critic, for we may do well do define in broad and wholesome language, is generally held to be one who possesses the characteristics of tolerance, sympathy, and sincerity; who approaches his task with an open mind, considering both sides of the question, and bases his criticism upon a sympathetic understanding of the purpose of the author, together with a

knowledge of the obstacles which may have hindered the achievement of that purpose, and thus attempts to evaluate and measure the success or failure of the accomplishment only after having penetrated to the very center of an author's ideas or purpose, which, as has already been said, is not possible through a knowledge of the biography and psychology of the author alone, but which must take into account his social and historical background as well.

In spirit, we have shown at the outset, Lactantius appears to approach his task with a more genuine appreciation of the finer elements of paganism than his immediate predecessors; but in letter, wedded as he is to the cause of the true faith, he is as unbending and virulent in his attacks upon the Pagans as the most zealous defender of Christianity. In the respect, the point of view of Lactantius often pricks the unarmed reader. Accustomed to expect in a critic the impartiality and disinterestedness of a looker-on, one is made uneasy by an apparent intolerance; for it is not a criticism of philosophy as philosophy that we often get, but a criticism of philosophy from the point of view of the philosopher's character or religion. Wherefore, in the fullest and strictest sense of the word, Lactantius is not a critic. ^{of} For the three fundamental characteristics of a true critic, one and perhaps the most important is tolerance. But the tolerant critic's view of his special field is too wide, his sympathies too catholic, to allow him to openly and consciously favor a certain work

or system, simply because the author of the certain work of a system happens to be a person of more highly refined ethical or religious sensibilities. It is not to be expected that a critic be absolutely dispassionate and impersonal, or that he have no strong convictions of his own, as Miss Nietzsche says; but it is with perfect justice that we demand that his convictions take the form of judgments and not prejudgments. But to take more kindly to a system of philosophy which is, as a system, even more root-diseased and maleficent than another, simply because the author of the other is a person of finer character, is not an effect of judgment but of prejudice: it is not treating philosophy, that is, as such. This is precisely what Lactantius does when he condemns the system of Aristippus, of Epicurus, of the Cynics, and of others. And therefore, while we cannot but admire the man-to-man stuff implicit in our author's treatment of weak-willed dissolute pretenders to wisdom, we must needs deny to him a place among the prominent critics of Greek Philosophy. This is not to say, however, that our author is a writer of little consequence, even for student of philosophy. For if we do not get a criticism of philosophy and philosophers from the point of view of a philosophy or critic, we do get a criticism of philosophy and philosophers from the point of view of a sincere Christian observer. Bearing this in mind, the work of our author assumes new proportions and meanings. Criticisms of philosophy from the point of view of the observer are rare; how much more so

are they from the point of view of a Christian writer in whom is evident the enormous influence of the Religion of our Saviour, which, by reason of its new and steady light, contributed so profoundly to the development of the true philosophy. In passing, we can pay no finer or more fitting tribute to Lactantius than to place upon the memorial he has bequeathed to posterity a wreath of his own making: the acknowledgement, that had Plato and Pythagoras, when they visited barbarous nations in order to inform themselves concerning their sacred doctrines and rites, become acquainted with the Hebrews, many and considerable mistakes in the history of philosophy might have been prevented.

NOTES

Introduction

1. The name "Christian Cicero" seems to have been first applied to Lactantius by Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494). De Viris Illustribus, c. 80.
2. Ibid.: "Firmianus qui et Lactantius, Arnobii discipulus," etc.
3. Philip Schaff, William Piercy, and Henry Wace, authorities on the early Christian Fathers, also suscribe to this.
4. They are both in seven books, and both directed against the adversaries of their common faith, though here all similarity ends, since, with the end of the third book, Lactantius parts company with his supposed model and goes off upon other lines of his own.
5. A Dictionary of Christian Biography, p. 197.
6. At the beginning of the fifth book of the Divinus Institutiones, Lactantius names only three, Minicius Felix, Tertullian, and St. Cyprian.
7. l.i, c.13.
8. xviii, 23.
9. Schaff, Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, p. 394.
10. Encyclopedia of Biblical and Theological Literature, p. 186.
11. De Ira Dei, c.1.
12. De Opificio Dei, c.1.
13. Chronicon, A.D. 319.
14. De Viris Illustribus, c. 80.
15. Ibid.
16. According to Dr. Schaff, Church History, iii, 956, it was after 312.
17. Encyclopedia of Biblical and Theological Literature, p. 187.

18. Epist. 83.
19. Histoire Universelle de L'Eglise Catholique, p. 356.
20. Religious Encyclopedia, 395.
21. Ibid.
22. De Viris Illustribus: "Firmianus qui et Lactantius, Arnobii discipulus, sub Diocletiano principe accitus cum Fabio Grammatico cuius de Medicinalibus uersu compositi extant libri, Nicomediae rhetoricam docuit ac penuria discipulorum ab graecam uellicet ciuitatem ad scribendum se contulit. Habemus eius Symposium quod adulescentulus scripsit Africae, et Odoeporicum de Africa usque Nicomediam hexametris scriptum uetsibus, et alium librum qui inscribitur grammaticus, et purchertinem De Ira Dei, et Institutionum Diuinarum aduersum gentes, libros septem, et Epitome eiusdem operis librum unum, acephalum, et ad Aescopiadem libros duos, de Persecutione librum unum, ad Probum libros quattuor, ad Seurum Epistolarum, libros duos, ad Demetrium auditorem suum Epistolarum libros duos, ad eundem De Opificio Dei.
23. v. xi, 15; vi. xviii, 6.
24. vii. c.5.
25. Without a head; without a title.
26. Church History, p. 957.
27. ii, c. 10.
28. For full information see Ency. of Bib. and Theol. Lit., p. 187.
29. Jerome, Epistle xxxvi.
30. Dec. 4, 361.
31. Hieronymus (Jerome) speaks of Lactantius as a poet.
32. See Wernsdorff, Poetae Lat. Minores, v. iii, p. 283.
33. It will be found in the Poetarum Veterum Eccles. op. Christiana edited by G. Fabricius, Bas. fol. 1564, and in the Bibliotheca Patrum Max., Lugdun, 1677, vol. ii, p. 671.
34. Bardenhewer, Otto, Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church, Second Edition, p. 204.

35. Mossman, History of the Catholic Church, pp. 152-154.
36. Minicius Felix, 9 and 31.
37. Tertullian, Apol., 4.
38. Yet it was under Severus that Ulpan (De Officio Proconsulis) collected the rescripts against the Christians.
39. This curious document is a practical confession of defeat. See Neander, 1, 213.
40. Eusebius, H.E. x.5; Lactantius, De Mort. Persec.
41. Wordsworth, Church History, 11, 111.
42. Tertullian, Apology, 111.
43. H.E., vi. 19.
44. Justin, Dial. 82.
45. Apology, xvi.
46. Emphasis was often laid also upon the empty and terrible chimeras circulated by the Christians.
47. C. Marcius, 1.1.
48. The Sarmatians who lived in wagons were called Hamaxobioi.
49. C. Marcius, 1.1.

PART I.
Chapter I.

1. Div. Institutiones (Migne's Patrologiae Latinae, 1844, v. 6), III, c. 111, p. 352: "Lamo vero Pythagoras, qui hoc primus nomen invenit, cum paulo plus saperet, quam illi priores, qui se sapientes putaverunt, intellexit nullo humano studio posse ad sapientiam perveniri, et ideo non oportere, incomprehensae atque imperfectae rei perfectum nomen imponi."
2. Ibid.
3. Lactantius always has reference to the pagan philosophers.
4. Divinum Institutiones, c. 111, p. 353: "Non ergo sapientiae student, qui philosophantur: sed ipsi studere se pu-

tant; quia illud quod quaerunt, ubi, aut quale sit nesciunt. Sive ergo sapientiae student, sive non student, sapientes non sunt; quia nunquam reperiri potest, quod aut non recte quaeritur, aut omnino non quaeritur."

5. Ibid., p. 354: "Duabus rebus videtur philosophia constare, scientia et opinione, nec ulla alia re."

6. Ibid., p. 355.

7. Ibid., p. 356.

8. Ibid.: "Recte ergo Socrates, et eum secuti Academici scientiam sustulerunt, quae non disputantis, sed divinantis est."

9. Ibid., c. iv, p. 357.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 358.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., c. iii, p. 354: "Scientia ab ingenio venire non potest, ne cogitatione comprehendi; quia in seipso habere propriam scientiam, non hominis, sed Dei est. Mortalis autem natura non capit scientiam, nisi quae veniat extrinsecus."

14. Ibid., c. iv, 358.

15. Ibid., c. iii, pp. 354-355: "Nam causas naturalium rerum disquirere, aut scire velle: sol ultimumne tantus, quantus videtur, an multis partibus major sit, quam omnis haec terra; item, luna globosa sit, an concava; et stellae ultimumne adhaereant coelo, an per aerem libero cursu ferantur; coelum ipsum qua magnitudine, qua materia constet, utrum quietum sit et immobile, an incredibili celeritate volvatur; quanta sit terrae crassitudo, aut quibus fundamentis librata et suspensa sit. Haec, inquam, disputando, et conjecturis velle comprehendere, tale est profecto, quale si disserere velimus, qualem esse arbitremur cujuscumque remotissimae gentis urbem, quam nunquam vidimus, cujusque nihil aliud quam nomen audivimus."

16. Ibid., c. v, p. 359.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.: "If you convict us of knowing nothing, and there-

fore of being unwise because we know nothing, does it not follow that you are not wise, since you confess that you know nothing?"

19. Ibid., p. 360.
20. Ibid., p. 362. (I shall sometimes avail myself of the careful translations furnished by the Ante-Nicene Library, but I shall always compare them with the original.)
21. Ibid.

Chapter II.

1. Div. Instit., p. 362.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 364: "in quo totius sapientiae cardo versatur."
4. Ibid., p. 364: "Epicurus summum bonum in voluptate animi esse censet; Aristippus in voluptate corporis; Callipho et Dinomachus honestatem cum voluptate junxerunt; Diodorus cum privatione doloris. Summum bonum posuit Hieronymus in non dolendo; peripatetici autem in bonis animi, et corporis, et fortunae. Herilli summum bonum est scientia; Zenonis, cum natura congruenter vivere: quorundam stoicorum, virtutem sequi; Aristoteles in honestate ac virtute summum bonum collocavit."
5. Ibid., p. 365: "maxime cum praesto adsit academicus, qui nos pallio retrahat, ac vetet cuiquam credere, nec tamen afferat ipse quod sequamur."
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.: "Sapiens ergo non fuit qui summum bonum credidit animi voluptatem, quoniam illa sive securitas, sive gaudium est, communis est omnibus."
8. Ibid., c. viii, p. 366.
9. Diog. Laet., II. 90.
10. Div. Instit., p. 366.
11. Ibid., p. 357.
12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 365: "Cum de officio hominis agatur, oportet summum summi animalis bonum in eo constitui, quod commune cum caeteris animalibus esse non possit."
14. Ibid., p. 367.
15. Ibid., p. 368.
16. Ibid.: "Qui scientiam summum bonum fecit, aliquid homini proprium dedit: sed scientiam alterius rei gratia homines appetunt, non propter ipsam. Quis enim scire contentus est, non expetens aliquem fructum scientiae?"
17. See page 2.
18. Div. Instit., p. 369: "Multi enim philosophorum, cum de bonis, malisque dissererent, aliter tamen, quam loquebantur, natura cogente, vixerunt, quia virtute caruerunt. Virtus autem cum scientia conjuncta est sapientia."
19. Ibid., p. 370.
20. Ibid.
21. Lactantius has reference to the Stoic philosophers who held that virtue was the highest good.
22. Div. Instit., p. 370: "Sed illi, cum ignorarent quid efficeret virtus, aut quo tenderet, honestius autem nihil reperirent, substiterunt, in ipsius virtutis nomine, quam nullo proposito emolumento, appetendam esse dixerunt, et bonum sibi constituerunt, quod bono indigeret."
23. Ibid.: "Aristoteles ab iis non longe recessit."
24. Ibid., p. 371.

Chapter III.

1. Div. Instit., I, iii, c. ix, p. 371: "Primum, ut solius hominis sit, nec dadat in ullum aliud animal; deinde ut solius animi, nec communicari possit cum corpore; postremo, ut non possit cuquam sine scientia et virtute contingere."
2. Ibid.: "At ego hunc puto non invententem quid responderet, effudisse hoc passim, ne taceret."
3. Ibid., p. 372.
4. Ibid., pp. 372-373.

5. Ibid., p. 373: "Sed ille, ut homo divinarum rerum imperitus, rem maximam redigit ad minimum, duo sola deligendo, quae sibi diceret intuenda. Quod si natum se esse dixisset, ut mundum intueretur, quanquam omnia comprehenderet, ac majori uteretur sono, tamen non impleset hominis officium: quia quanto plaris est anima quam corpus, tanto plaris est Deus, quam mundus, quia mundum Deus fecit et regit."
6. "Expedite," free from obstacles, unembarrassed.
7. Humanitas, "is probably used here in its original and proper sense, that is, something which characteristic of man.
8. "Pietas." The word denotes not only piety towards God, but also the affection due to a parent.
9. Div. Instit., p. 373.
10. Ibid., c.x. p. 374.
11. Ibid., p. 375: "quia Deus, ut cuncta viventia subiecit homini, sic ipsam hominem sibi."
12. See page 2; also, Div. Instit., c. iii, p. 354.
13. Div. Instit., p. 376.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., c. xi. p. 376: "Constat igitur, totius humani generis consensu, religionem suscipi oportere: sed quomodo in ea erretur explicandum est. Naturam hominis hanc Deus esse voluit, ut duarum rerum cupidus et appetens esset, religionis et sapientiae. Sed homines ideo falluntur, quod aut religionem suscipiunt, ommissa religione, cum alterum sine altero esse non possit verum."
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 377.
19. Ibid.: "Negari non potest, quin et bonum sit, et omnium certe bonum. Sed si beata esse non potest, quia vis et natura ejus in malorum preferentia posita est, non est profecto summum bonum."
20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 378: "Nam saepe virtus et invisibilis est, et malo afficitur. Debet autem id bonum, quod ex ea nascitur, ita cohaerere, ut divelli atque abstrahi nequeat; nec aliter summum bonum videri potest, quam si et propriam sit virtutis, et tale, ut neque adjici quidquam, nec detrahi possit."
22. Div. Instit., p. 378: "Neque enim levia aut lucifera petuntur praemia."
23. Lactantius appears to use the word in the same sense in which the Scriptures speak of "Spirit."
24. Div. Instit., c. xii, p. 379.
25. "Tenuis," as applied to the soul, opposed to "Solidus," as applied to the body.
26. Div. Instit., p. 379.
27. Ibid.: "Ergo ut corpus vicendo id assequitur, ut non intereat: sic etiam animus, ut permaneat; et sicut corpus ab hostibus suis victum, morte mulctatur: ita superatus a vitiis animus moriatur necesse est."
28. Ibid., p. 380.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.: "Una, inquit, res est virtus, quae nos immortalitate donare possit, et pares diis facere."
31. Ibid.: "Epicurus Deum beatum et incorruptum vocat, quia sempiternus est. Beatitudo enim perfecta esse debet, ut nihil sit, quod eam vexare, ac imminuere, aut immutare possit."
32. Ibid., pp. 381-382: "Nec aliter quidquam existimari beatum potest, nisi fuerit incorruptum. Incorruptum autem nihil est, nisi quod est immortale. Sola ergo immortalitas beata est, quia corrumpi ac dissolvi non potest. Quod si cadit in hominem virtus, quod negare nullus potest, cadit et beatitudo. Non potest enim fieri, ut sit miser qui virtute est praeclitus. Se cadit beatitudo, ergo et immortalitas cadit in hominem, quae beata est."
33. Ibid., p. 381.
34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., p. 382: "Idcirco enim soli animantium ad aspectum coeli erecti sumus ut summum bonum nostrum in summo esse credamus. Ideo religionem soli capimus, ut ex hoc sciamus, humanum spiritum non esse mortalem, quod Deum, qui est immortalis, et desiderat, et agnoscit."
36. Ibid., p. 383.
37. Ibid.: "Hoc uno beati esse in hac vita possumus, si minime beati esse videamur; si fugientes illecebras voluptatum, solique virtuti servientes, in omnibus laboribus miserisque vivamus, quae sunt exercitia, et corroboramenta virtutis; si denique asperam illam viam difficilemque teneamus, quae nobis ad beatitudinem patefacta est. Summum igitur bonum, quod beatos facit, non potest esse, nisi in ea religione, atque doctrina, cui spes immortalitatis adjuncta est."
38. Ibid.

Chapter IV.

1. Lactantius means physics, the "idle speculation upon nature."
2. Div. Instit., I, iii, c. xiii, p. 384: "Sciunt igitur errare se, qui philosophiam putant esse sapientiam: non trahantur auctoritate cujusquam; sed veritati potius faveant, et accedant."
3. S̄prob. Florileg., 18-19.
4. Divn. Instit., c. xv, p. 393: "Aristippo Cyrenaeorum magistro cum Laide nobili scorte fuit consuetudo, quod flagitium gravis ille philosophiae doctor sic defendebat, ut diceret, multum inter se et caeteros Laidis amatores interesse, quod ipse haberet Laidem, alii vero ad Laide haberentur."
5. Ibid., p. 394.
6. Augustine in many places expresses the opinion that the Cynics were so called from their immodesty. Others suppose that the name was given to them on account of their modesty or snarling propensity.
7. Div. Instit., p. 394: "Nullum igitur in hac disciplina magisterium virtutis est, cum etiam illi, qui honestiora praecipunt, aut non faciant ipsi quae suadent, aut si faciunt (quod raro accidit) non disciplina eos ad rectum, sed natura perducit, quae saepius etiam indoctos impellit ad laudem."

8. Ibid., p. 395: "Qui autem docent tantum, nec faciunt, ipsi praeceptis suis detrahunt pondus; quis enim obtemperet, cum ipsi praeceptores doceant non obtemperare? Bonum est autem recta et honesta praecipere: sed nisi et facias, mendacium est; et est incongruens atque ineptum, non in pectore, sed in labris habere bonitatem."
9. Ibid.: "omnis istorum disputatio, quanquam uberrimos fontes virtutis et scientiae contineat, tamen collata cum horum actis perfectisque rebus, vereor ne non tantum videatur attulisse negotiis hominum utilitatis, quantum oblectationem otii."
10. Ibid., p. 397: "Nondum sunt mille anni ex quo initia sapientia nota sunt."
11. Persius, Satyram 6., vers. 38: "Postquam sapere urbi
Cum pipere et palmis venit."
12. Div. Instit., p. 397.
13. Ibid.: "quod studium per ignorantiam veri, sapientiam putaverunt."
14. There is another reading, "adversus parentes impio," to the son whose conduct to his parents is unnatural."
15. Div. Instit., c. xvii, pp. 398-399.
16. Ibid., p. 401: "Nulla dispositio est; multa enim facta sunt aliter, quam fieri debuerunt."
17. Ibid.: "Nihil in praecreandis animalibus providentiae ratio molita est; nam neque oculi facti sunt ad videndum neque aures ad audiendum, neque lingua ad loquendum, neque pedes ad ambulandum: quoniam prius haec nata sunt quam esset loqui, audire, videre, ambulare. Itaque non haec ad usum nata sunt: sed usus ex illis natus est."
18. Ibid., pp. 401-402: "Non est providentia opus; sunt enim semina per inane volitantia, quibus inter se tætere conglobatis, unversa gignuntur atque concresecunt."
19. Ibid., p. 402.
20. The microscopic world, of course, was unknown to Lactantius.
21. Div. Instit., p. 402: "Vario ordine ac positione conveniunt; sicut litterae, quae cum sint paucae, varie tamen collectatae, innumerabilia verba conficiunt."

22. Ibid.: "Namata igitur esse oportet, ut possint invicem concatenari. Cum vero tam minuta esse dicantur, ut nulla ferri acie dissocii valeant, quomodo hamos, aut angulos habent? Quod, quia extant, necesse est posse divelli."
23. Ibid.: "Deindi quo foedere inter se, qua menta conveniunt, ut ex his aliqua construat? Si sensu carent, nec coire tam disposite possunt; quia non potest quidquam rationale perficere, nisi ratio."
24. Lucretius, iii, 1056: "Qui genus humanum ingenio superavit,
et omnes
Praestinxit Stellas, exortus uti aetherius sol."
25. Epicurus, it is known, was a poet of parts.
26. This also appears to refer to Epicurus.
27. Div. Instit., p. 403: "Quando nos sumus, mors non est: quando mors est, nos non sumus; mors ergo nihil ad nos."
28. The reading of the text which appears to be the true one is "quo nos etiamnum sumus." There is another reading, "Quo et nos jam non sumus." This latter reading would be in accordance with the sentiment of Epicurus, which is totally opposed to the view taken by Lactantius.
29. Div. Instit., p. 403: "Est enim tempus aliquod, quo nos etiamnum sumus, et mors tamen nondum est; idque ipsum videtur miserum esse, cum et mors esse incipit, et nos esse desinimus."
30. Ibid.: "Nam quod cum corpore nascitur, cum corpore intereat necesse est."
31. Ibid., pp. 404-405: "Deos nihil curare; non ira, non gratia tangi; inferorum poenas non esse metuendas, quod animae post mortem occidunt, nec ulli omnino sint inferi; voluptatem esse maximum bonum; nullam esse humanam societatem; sibi quem quis consulere; neminem esse metuendam forti vero, nec ullam dolorem, qui etiamsi torqueatur, si uratur, nihil curare se dicat. Est plane, cur quisquam patet, hanc vocem viri esse capientis, quae potest labronibus aptissime commodare?"
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 406: "non nasci animas, sed insinuari potius in corpora, et de aliis in alia migrare."
34. Ibid.: "Namquod cum corpore nascitur, cum corpore intereat necesse est."

35. Ibid.
36. Cleanthes was a Stoic philosopher, who used to draw water by night for his support, that he might devote himself to the study of philosophy by day. He ended his life by refusing to take food.
37. Chrysippus was a disciple of Zeno, and, after Cleanthes, the chief of the Stoic sect. According to some account, he died from an excessive draught of wine; according to others, from excessive laughter.
38. Zeno, the chief of the Stoic sect. He is said to have died from suffocation.
39. Empedocles was a philosopher and poet. There are various accounts of his death; that mentioned here is usually received.
40. Div. Instit., p. 406.
41. There are various accounts of the death of Democritus also. The one here mentioned is generally accepted.
42. Lucretius, iii, 1041: "Sponte sua letho caput obvius obtulit ipse."
43. Div. Instit., p. 407.
44. Cleombotus of Ambracia.
45. Div. Instit., p. 408: "Execrabilis prorsus ac fugienda doctrina, si abigit homines a vita."
46. This passage is not contained in Cicero's treatise on the Laws, but the substance of it is in the Tusculan Questions.
47. Div. Instit., c. xix, p. 410: "Gratulemurque nobis, quoniam mors aut meliorem, quam qui est in vita, aut certe non deteriorem allatura est statum. Nam sine corpus animo vigente, divina vita est; sensu carente, nihil profecto est mali."
48. See Dan. xii; Matt. iii. xiii. xxv; John xii.
49. Div. Instit., p. 410: "Docent enim divinae Litterae, non extingui animas; sed aut pro justitia praemio affici, aut poena pro peccatis sempiterna. Nec enim fas aut eum qui sceleratus in vita feliciter fuerit, effugere quod meretur; aut eum, qui ob justitiam misserimus fuerit, sua mercede fraudari."

50. Ibid., p. 411.
51. Ibid.: "Ita fit, ut si vita in Dei religione transacta sit, mors malum non sit; quia translatio est ad immortalitatem. Sin autem, malus sit necesse est; quoniam ad aeterna (ut dixi) supplicia transmittit."
52. Ibid., pp. 411-412.
53. Ibid., p. 412: "Non nasci, longe optimum, nec in hos scopulos incidere vitae; Proximum autem, si natus sis, quamprimum mori, tanquam ex incendio effugere violentiam fortunae."
54. Ibid.
55. The Greeks included all nations except themselves under the general name of barbarians.
56. Div. Institut., pp. 412: 413: "primum, quod homo natus esset potius, quam mutum animal; deinde, quod mas potius, quam foemina; quod Graecus, quam Barbarus; postremo, quod Atheniensis, et quod temporibus Socratis."
57. Ibid., p. 414: "Non enim aut parietes, aut locus in quo quisque est effusus ex utero conciliat homini sapientiam. Quid vero attinuit Socratis se temporibus natus gratulari? Num Socrates ingenia discipulis potuit commodare? Non venit in mentem Platoni Alcibiadem quoque et Critiam ejusdem Socratis assiduos auditores fuisse; quorum alter hostis patria acerrimus fuit, alter crudelissimus omnium tyrannorum."
58. Ibid., pp. 414-415.
59. Ibid., p. 416: "Quod supra nos, nihil ad nos."
60. The ellusion is to the upright posture of man, as opposed to the other animals, which look down upon the earth.
61. Div. Institut., p. 416.
62. Lactantius has reference to what we have come to term fetishism.
63. This oath is mentioned by Athenaeus. Tertullian makes an excuse for it, as though it were done in mockery of the gods.
64. Socrates was called the Athenian buffoon, because he taught many things in a jesting manner.

65. Div. Instit., p. 417: "Cum vero hoc sanus fecerit, est ipse insanus, qui eum putat fuisse sapientiam. En, cujus temporibus natus esse se homo sapiens gratulatur."
66. Ibid., pp. 418-419: "si omnes omnium fuerint et mariti, et patres, ut uxores, et liberi."
67. Ibid., p. 419.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., c. xxii, pp. 419-420.
70. Ibid., p. 421: "Nec vidit impossibilia esse, quae diceret; ex eo quod adhuc in orbe terrae, neque tam stulta, neque tam vana ulla gens extiterit, quae hoc modo viveret."
71. Lactantius has reference to Democritus.
72. No name is given.
73. Cicero speaks of Tuditanus as scattering money from the rostrum among the people.
74. Div. Instit., p. 423: "quia salvum est quidquid pluribus profuit."
75. Ibid.
76. This he he who said that he was born for this purpose, that he might behold the heaven and the sun, i.e. Anaxagoras.
77. Xenophanes.
78. Thanks to our modern astronomy, we can now believe this salva fide, salva ecclesia.
79. Div. Instit., p. 425.
80. Ibid., pp. 427-428.

Chapter V.

1. Tus. ii. 1: "Est philosophia paucis contenta iudiciis, multitudinem consulto ipsa fugiens."
2. Div. Instit., p. 1, III, c. xxv, p. 429.
3. Ibid., pp. 429-430: "discendae istae communes litterae propter usum legendi, quia in tanta rerum varietate, nec

disci audiendo possunt omnia, nec memoria contineri. Grammaticus quoque non parum operae dandus est, ut rectum loquendi rationem scias. Id multos annos auferat necesse est. Nec oratoria quidem ignoranda est; ut ea, quae didiceris, proferre atque eloqui possis. Geometria, quoque, ac musica, et astrologia necessaria est, quod hae artes cum philosophia habent aliquam societatem."

4. Ibid., p. 430: "Quomodo ergo illa, quae de principis rerum dicuntur, intelligunt, quae perplexa et involuta vix etiam politici homines assequuntur?"
5. Themiste is said to have been the wife of Leontius; Epicurus is reported to have written to her. Themistoclea, the sister of Pythagoras, is mentioned as a student of philosophy, besides many other women in different ages.
6. Plato dedicated to Phaedo his treatise on the immortality of the soul; according to other accounts, Phaedo was ransomed by Crito or Alcibiades at the suggestion of Socrates.
7. Div. Instit., p. 431.
8. Terence, Adelphi, iv. 1.
9. Div. Instit., p. 432.
10. Ibid., p. 433: "Paucis vero Dei praecepta sic totum hominem immutant, et exposito veteri novum reddunt, ut non cognoscas eundem esse."
11. Ibid., c. xviii, pp. 433-436.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pp. 436-437.
14. Ibid., p. 437: "Quod si Deum naturam vocent, quae perversitas est, naturam potius quam Deum nominare? Si autem natura ratio est, vel necessitas, vel conditio nascendi, est mentem esse divinam, quae sua providentia nascendi principium rebus omnibus praebet. Aut si natura est coelum atque terra, et omnia, quod natus est, non est Deus natura, sed Dei opus."
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.: "quasi deam quandam res humanas variis casibus illudentem";

17. Cicero, De Officio, ii. 6.
18. He says that he has always fought against fortune and that she has always been overpowered by him when he had valiantly beaten back the attack of his enemies; that he was not subdued by her even when he was driven from his home and deprived of his country; but then, when he lost his daughter, he shamefully confesses that he is overcome by fortune. I yield he says, and raise my ahdn (a signal of defeat).
19. Div. Instit., pp. 438-441.
20. Aen. viii, 33.
21. Sallust, Cat. viii.
22. Div. Instit., p. 442.
23. Satire, x. 365.
24. Div. Instit., c. xxx, pp. 444-445: "Docui, quantum mea mediocritas tulit, longe devium philosophos iter a veritate tenuisse. Sentio tamen, quam multa praeterierim, quia non erat mihi propria contra philosophos disputatio. Sed huc necessario divertentium fuit, ut ostenderem, tot et tanta ingenia in rebus falsis esse consumpta; ne quis forte a pravis religionibus exclusus, ad eos se conferre vellet, tanquam certi aliquid reperturus. Una igitur spes homini, una salus in hac doctrina, quam defendimus, posita est. Omnis sapientia hominis in hoc uno est, ut Deum cognoscat et colat: hoc nostrum dogma, haec sententia est."

PART II.
Foreword

1. From the Parmenides, Jowett's trans., p. 128 E, ff.
2. Met. I, 2, 982b 12, ff.

Chapter I.

1. "Therefore, if nothing can be known as Socrates taught." See page 18 of Thesis.
2. Xenophon, Memorabilia, iii, 9-14. See also Boutroux, Historical Studies in Philosophy, p. 26.
3. Met. 12, 4, 1078b.

4. II, 29-31.
5. Ibid., IV. 33-34.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., IV. 38-40.
8. Divinium Institutiones, I, lll, c. iii, p. 364: See also page 24 of Thesis.
9. Diogenes Laertius, X. 4-6.
10. Div. Instit., p. 364.
11. This has been interpreted as referring especially to the pleasures of the fine arts. But perhaps Epicurus, suggests Diogenes, is merely citing typical examples of intense pleasures under the heads of the four senses---taste, touch, sight, hearing.
12. Ibid., X. 7-9.
13. Ibid., X. 136-139.
14. Ibid., X. 139-143.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 121.
17. Diogenes Laertius, 130-133: "When we say that pleasure the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasure of sensuality, as we are understood by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure, we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking bouts and of revelry, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of the luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul.
18. Taylor, Ancient Ideals, p. 373.
19. Div. Instit., c. viii, p. 366.
20. Diogenes Laertius, II. 73-75.

21. Sextus Empiricus, 200.
22. Diog. Laert., II. 88-90: "However they insist that bodily pleasures are far better than mental pleasures, and bodily pains far worse than mental pains, and that this is the reason why the offenders are punished with the former."
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 84-90.
25. Ibid., 90.
26. Div. Instit., c. viii, p. 366.
27. Ibid., p. 370.
28. Diog. Laert., VII. 86-88.
29. Ibid., 83-86: "An animal's first impulse, say the Stoics, is towards self-preservation, because nature from the outset endars it to itself, as Chrysippus affirms in the first book of his work On Ends. his words are: "The dearest thing of every animal is its own constitution and its consciousness thereof."
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 88.
32. Ibid., 87.
33. Diogenes of Seleucio, the Stoic.
34. Diog. Laert., VII, 88-90.
35. Ethics, IX. 9,1.
36. Ibid., I. 1, 1-11.
37. Ibid., I, 1, 111-iv.
38. V. 31-33.
39. Div. Instit., p. 368. See note 18, Pt. 1, chap. 1.
40. Diogenes Laertius, VII, 164-166.
41. Div. Insitt., p. 383. See also page 39 of Thesis.

42. Ibid., p. 380: "The chief good is that which is unvarying and always the same (quod simile sit, et idem semper)."
43. Timaeus, 47B.
44. Philebus, 20E.
45. Xenophon, Memorabilia, III, 9, 14.
46. Ibid., iv. 6.
47. Div. Instit., p. 382.
48. Div. Instit., p. 383.
49. Ibid., p. 371.
50. Diogenes Laertius, II. 6-12.
51. Ibid., 10.
52. Ibid., 7.
53. Ibid., 11.
54. Ibid.: "He is said to have quietly and indifferently given up his patrimony to his relations when they accused him of neglecting it. His answer was simply: "Why, then, do you not look after it.""
55. Div. Instit., p. 380.
56. Diogenes Laertius, II. 105-107.
57. Div. Instit., pp. 398-399. See also page 43 of Thesis.
58. Diog. Laert., X. 131.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., X. 133.
61. Ibid., X. 134-135.
62. Ibid., X. 127.
63. Ibid.
64. See pages 47 and 48 of Thesis.
65. See note 30 of Chapter IV, Pt. 1.

66. Diog. Laert., X. 63-65.
67. Div. Instit., p. 412: "Not to be born is by far the best thing, and not to fall upon these rocks of life. But the next best thing is, if you have been born, to die as soon as possible, and to flee from the violence of fortune as from a conflagration."
68. The Greeks, as we have already noted, looked upon all other nations as barbarians, meaning thereby, foreigners.
69. Div. Instit., pp. 412+413.

Chapter II.

1. Div. Instit., p. 419.
2. Ibid., p. 421.
3. Diog. Laert., VIII. 29-32. "The soul of man," says Pythagoras, "is divided into three parts, intelligence, reason, and passion. Intelligence and passion are possessed by other animals as well, but reason by man alone. Reason is immortal, all else is mortal."
4. "The soul is mortal, since, born with the body, it must necessarily die with it."
5. "The soul is not born with the body but introduced into it, and it migrates from one body to another."
6. Lactantius here has reference to Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Zeno, Empedocles, and Democritus. For a brief description of their deaths, refer back to page 49 of Thesis, and notes, 38, 39, 41 of Chapter IV, Pt. 1.
7. Div. Instit., p. 407.
8. Ibid., p. 409.
9. Ibid., p. 408.
10. See note 49 of Ch. IV. Pt. I.
11. Div. Instit., p. 411.
12. Ibid., p. 420.

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