

THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

[Podcast 2 of 50]

BOOK FIRST.

[continues]

18. Of the violence which may be done to the body by another's lust, while the mind remains inviolate. But is there a fear that even another's lust may pollute the violated? It will not pollute, if it be another's: if it pollute, it is not another's, but is shared also by the polluted. But since purity is a virtue of the soul, and has for its companion virtue the fortitude which will rather endure all ills than consent to evil; and since no one, however magnanimous and pure, has always the disposal of his own body, but can control only the consent and refusal of his will, what sane man can suppose that, if his body be seized and forcibly made use of to satisfy the lust of another, he thereby loses his purity? For if purity can be thus destroyed, then assuredly purity is no virtue of the soul; nor can it be numbered among those good things by which the life is made good, but among the good things of the body, in the same category as strength, beauty, sound and unbroken health, and, in short, all such good things as may be diminished without at all diminishing the goodness and rectitude of our life. But if purity be

nothing better than these, why should the body be perilled that it may be preserved? If, on the other hand, it belongs to the soul, then not even when the body is violated is it lost. Nay more, the virtue of holy continence, when it resists the uncleanness of carnal lust, sanctifies even the body, and therefore when this continence remains unsubdued, even the sanctity of the body is preserved, because the will to use it holily remains, and, so far as lies in the body itself, the power also. For the sanctity of the body does not consist in the integrity of its members, nor in their exemption from all touch; for they are exposed to various accidents which do violence to and wound them, and the surgeons who administer relief often perform operations that sicken the spectator. A midwife, suppose, has (whether maliciously or accidentally, or through unskilfulness) destroyed the virginity of some girl, while endeavouring to ascertain it: I suppose no one is so foolish as to believe that, by this destruction of the integrity of one organ, the virgin has lost anything even of her bodily sanctity. And thus, so long as the soul keeps this firmness of purpose which sanctifies even the body, the violence done by another's lust makes no impression on this bodily sanctity, which is preserved intact by one's own persistent continence. Suppose a virgin violates the oath she has sworn to God, and goes to meet her seducer with the intention of yielding to him, shall we say that as she goes she is possessed even of bodily sanctity, when already she has lost and destroyed that sanctity of soul which sanctifies the body? Far be it from us to so misapply words. Let us rather draw this conclusion, that while the sanctity of the soul remains even when the body is violated, the sanctity of the body is not lost; and that, in like manner, the sanctity of the body is lost when the sanctity of the soul is violated, though the body itself remain intact. And therefore a

woman who has been violated by the sin of another, and without any consent of her own, has no cause to put herself to death; much less has she cause to commit suicide in order to avoid such violation, for in that case she commits certain homicide to prevent a crime which is uncertain as yet, and not her own.

19. Of Lucretia, who put an end to her life because of the outrage done her. This, then, is our position, and it seems sufficiently lucid. We maintain that when a woman is violated while her soul admits no consent to the iniquity, but remains inviolably chaste, the sin is not hers, but his who violates her. But do they against whom we have to defend not only the souls, but the sacred bodies too of these outraged Christian captives, —do they, perhaps, dare to dispute our position? But all know how loudly they extol the purity of Lucretia, that noble matron of ancient Rome. When King Tarquin's son had violated her body, she made known the wickedness of this young profligate to her husband Collatinus, and to Brutus her kinsman, men of high rank and full of courage, and bound them by an oath to avenge it. Then, heart-sick, and unable to bear the shame, she put an end to her life. What shall we call her? An adulteress, or chaste? There is no question which she was. Not more happily than truly did a declaimer say of this sad occurrence: "Here was a marvel: there were two, and only one committed adultery." Most forcibly and truly spoken. For this declaimer, seeing in the union of the two bodies the foul lust of the one, and the chaste will of the other, and giving heed not to the contact of the bodily members, but to the wide diversity of their souls, says: "There were two, but the adultery was committed only by one." But how is it, that she who was no partner to the crime bears the heavier punishment of the two? For the

adulterer was only banished along with his father; she suffered the extreme penalty. If that was not impurity by which she was unwillingly ravished, then this is not justice by which she, being chaste, is punished. To you I appeal, ye laws and judges of Rome. Even after the perpetration of great enormities, you do not suffer the criminal to be slain untried. If, then, one were to bring to your bar this case, and were to prove to you that a woman not only untried, but chaste and innocent, had been killed, would you not visit the murderer with punishment proportionably severe? This crime was committed by Lucretia; that Lucretia so celebrated and lauded slew the innocent, chaste, outraged Lucretia. Pronounce sentence. But if you cannot, because there does not compear any one whom you can punish, why do you extol with such unmeasured laudation her who slew an innocent and chaste woman? Assuredly you will find it impossible to defend her before the judges of the realms below, if they be such as your poets are fond of representing them; for she is among those "Who guiltless sent themselves to doom, And all for loathing of the day, In madness threw their lives away." And if she with the others wishes to return, "Fate bars the way: around their keep The slow unlovely waters creep, And bind with ninefold chain." Or perhaps she is not there, because she slew herself conscious of guilt, not of innocence? She herself alone knows her reason; but what if she was betrayed by the pleasure of the act, and gave some consent to Sextus, though so violently abusing her, and then was so affected with remorse, that she thought death alone could expiate her sin? Even though this were the case, she ought still to have held her hand from suicide, if she could with her false gods have accomplished a fruitful repentance. However, if such were the state of the case, and if it were false that there were two, but one only committed

adultery; if the truth were that both were involved in it, one by open assault, the other by secret consent, then she did not kill an innocent woman; and therefore her erudite defenders may maintain that she is not among that class of the dwellers below "who guiltless sent themselves to doom." But this case of Lucretia is in such a dilemma, that if you extenuate the homicide, you confirm the adultery: if you acquit her of adultery, you make the charge of homicide heavier; and there is no way out of the dilemma, when one asks, If she was adulterous, why praise her? if chaste, why slay her? Nevertheless, for our purpose of refuting those who are unable to comprehend what true sanctity is, and who therefore insult over our outraged Christian women, it is enough that in the instance of this noble Roman matron it was said in her praise, "There were two, but the adultery was the crime of only one." For Lucretia was confidently believed to be superior to the contamination of any consenting thought to the adultery. And accordingly, since she killed herself for being subjected to an outrage in which she had no guilty part, it is obvious that this act of hers was prompted not by the love of purity, but by the overwhelming burden of her shame. She was ashamed that so foul a crime had been perpetrated upon her, though without her abetting; and this matron, with the Roman love of glory in her veins, was seized with a proud dread that, if she continued to live, it would be supposed she willingly did not resent the wrong that had been done her. She could not exhibit to men her conscience, but she judged that her self-inflicted punishment would testify her state of mind; and she burned with shame at the thought that her patient endurance of the foul affront that another had done her, should be construed into complicity with him. Not such was the decision of the Christian women who

suffered as she did, and yet survive. They declined to avenge upon themselves the guilt of others, and so add crimes of their own to those crimes in which they had no share. For this they would have done had their shame driven them to homicide, as the lust of their enemies had driven them to adultery. Within their own souls, in the witness of their own conscience, they enjoy the glory of chastity. In the sight of God, too, they are esteemed pure, and this contents them; they ask no more: it suffices them to have opportunity of doing good, and they decline to evade the distress of human suspicion, lest they thereby deviate from the divine law.

20. That Christians have no authority for committing suicide in any circumstances whatever. It is not without significance, that in no passage of the holy canonical books there can be found either divine precept or permission to take away our own life, whether for the sake of entering on the enjoyment of immortality, or of shunning, or ridding ourselves of anything whatever. Nay, the law, rightly interpreted, even prohibits suicide, where it says, "Thou shalt not kill." This is proved specially by the omission of the words "thy neighbour," which are inserted when false witness is forbidden: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Nor yet should any one on this account suppose he has not broken this commandment if he has borne false witness only against himself. For the love of our neighbour is regulated by the love of ourselves, as it is written, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If, then, he who makes false statements about himself is not less guilty of bearing false witness than if he had made them to the injury of his neighbour; although in the commandment prohibiting false witness only his neighbour is mentioned, and persons taking no pains to understand it might suppose that a man was allowed to

be a false witness to his own hurt; how much greater reason have we to understand that a man may not kill himself, since in the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," there is no limitation added nor any exception made in favour of any one, and least of all in favour of him on whom the command is laid! And so some attempt to extend this command even to beasts and cattle, as if it forbade us to take life from any creature. But if so, why not extend it also to the plants, and all that is rooted in and nourished by the earth? For though this class of creatures have no sensation, yet they also are said to live, and consequently they can die; and therefore, if violence be done them, can be killed. So, too, the apostle, when speaking of the seeds of such things as these, says, "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;" and in the Psalm it is said, "He killed their vines with hail." Must we therefore reckon it a breaking of this commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," to pull a flower? Are we thus insanelly to countenance the foolish error of the Manichæans? Putting aside, then, these ravings, if, when we say, Thou shalt not kill, we do not understand this of the plants, since they have no sensation, nor of the irrational animals that fly, swim, walk, or creep, since they are dissociated from us by their want of reason, and are therefore by the just appointment of the Creator subjected to us to kill or keep alive for our own uses; if so, then it remains that we understand that commandment simply of man. The commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill man;" therefore neither another nor yourself, for he who kills himself still kills nothing else than man.

21. Of the cases in which we may put men to death without incurring the guilt of murder. However, there are some exceptions made by the divine authority to its own law,

that men may not be put to death. These exceptions are of two kinds, being justified either by a general law, or by a special commission granted for a time to some individual. And in this latter case, he to whom authority is delegated, and who is but the sword in the hand of him who uses it, is not himself responsible for the death he deals. And, accordingly, they who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Abraham indeed was not merely deemed guiltless of cruelty, but was even applauded for his piety, because he was ready to slay his son in obedience to God, not to his own passion. And it is reasonably enough made a question, whether we are to esteem it to have been in compliance with a command of God that Jephthah killed his daughter, because she met him when he had vowed that he would sacrifice to God whatever first met him as he returned victorious from battle. Samson, too, who drew down the house on himself and his foes together, is justified only on this ground, that the Spirit who wrought wonders by him had given him secret instructions to do this. With the exception, then, of these two classes of cases, which are justified either by a just law that applies generally, or by a special intimation from God Himself, the fountain of all justice, whoever kills a man, either himself or another, is implicated in the guilt of murder.

22. That suicide can never be prompted by magnanimity. But they who have laid violent hands on themselves are perhaps to be admired for their greatness of soul, though they cannot be applauded for the soundness of their judgment. However, if you look at the matter

more closely, you will scarcely call it greatness of soul, which prompts a man to kill himself rather than bear up against some hardships of fortune, or sins in which he is not implicated. Is it not rather proof of a feeble mind, to be unable to bear either the pains of bodily servitude or the foolish opinion of the vulgar? And is not that to be pronounced the greater mind, which rather faces than flees the ills of life, and which, in comparison of the light and purity of conscience, holds in small esteem the judgment of men, and specially of the vulgar, which is frequently involved in a mist of error? And, therefore, if suicide is to be esteemed a magnanimous act, none can take higher rank for magnanimity than that Cleombrotus, who (as the story goes), when he had read Plato's book in which he treats of the immortality of the soul, threw himself from a wall, and so passed from this life to that which he believed to be better. For he was not hard pressed by calamity, nor by any accusation, false or true, which he could not very well have lived down: there was, in short, no motive but only magnanimity urging him to seek death, and break away from the sweet detention of this life. And yet that this was a magnanimous rather than a justifiable action, Plato himself, whom he had read, would have told him; for he would certainly have been forward to commit, or at least to recommend suicide, had not the same bright intellect which saw that the soul was immortal, discerned also that to seek immortality by suicide was to be prohibited rather than encouraged. Again, it is said many have killed themselves to prevent an enemy doing so. But we are not inquiring whether it has been done, but whether it ought to have been done. Sound judgment is to be preferred even to examples, and indeed examples harmonize with the voice of reason; but not all examples, but those only which are distinguished by

their piety, and are proportionately worthy of imitation. For suicide we cannot cite the example of patriarchs, prophets, or apostles; though our Lord Jesus Christ, when He admonished them to flee from city to city if they were persecuted, might very well have taken that occasion to advise them to lay violent hands on themselves, and so escape their persecutors. But seeing He did not do this, nor proposed this mode of departing this life, though He were addressing His own friends for whom He had promised to prepare everlasting mansions, it is obvious that such examples as are produced from the “nations that forget God,” give no warrant of imitation to the worshippers of the one true God.

23. What we are to think of the example of Cato, who slew himself because unable to endure Cæsar’s victory. Besides Lucretia, of whom enough has already been said, our advocates of suicide have some difficulty in finding any other prescriptive example, unless it be that of Cato, who killed himself at Utica. His example is appealed to, not because he was the only man who did so, but because he was so esteemed as a learned and excellent man, that it could plausibly be maintained that what he did was and is a good thing to do. But of this action of his, what can I say but that his own friends, enlightened men as he, prudently dissuaded him, and therefore judged his act to be that of a feeble rather than a strong spirit, and dictated not by honourable feeling forestalling shame, but by weakness shrinking from hardships? Indeed, Cato condemns himself by the advice he gave to his dearly loved son. For if it was a disgrace to live under Cæsar’s rule, why did the father urge the son to this disgrace, by encouraging him to trust absolutely to Cæsar’s generosity? Why did he not persuade him to die along

with himself? If Torquatus was applauded for putting his son to death, when contrary to orders he had engaged, and engaged successfully, with the enemy, why did conquered Cato spare his conquered son, though he did not spare himself? Was it more disgraceful to be a victor contrary to orders, than to submit to a victor contrary to the received ideas of honour? Cato, then, cannot have deemed it to be shameful to live under Cæsar's rule, for had he done so, the father's sword would have delivered his son from this disgrace. The truth is, that his son, whom he both hoped and desired would be spared by Cæsar, was not more loved by him than Cæsar was envied the glory of pardoning him (as indeed Cæsar himself is reported to have said); or if envy is too strong a word, let us say he was ashamed that this glory should be his.

24. That in that virtue in which Regulus excels Cato, Christians are pre-eminently distinguished. Our opponents are offended at our preferring to Cato the saintly Job, who endured dreadful evils in his body rather than deliver himself from all torment by self-inflicted death; or other saints, of whom it is recorded in our authoritative and trustworthy books that they bore captivity and the oppression of their enemies rather than commit suicide. But their own books authorize us to prefer to Marcus Cato, Marcus Regulus. For Cato had never conquered Cæsar; and when conquered by him, disdained to submit himself to him, and that he might escape this submission put himself to death. Regulus, on the contrary, had formerly conquered the Carthaginians, and in command of the army of Rome had won for the Roman republic a victory which no citizen could bewail, and which the enemy himself was constrained to admire; yet afterwards, when he in his turn was defeated by them, he preferred

to be their captive rather than to put himself beyond their reach by suicide. Patient under the domination of the Carthaginians, and constant in his love of the Romans, he neither deprived the one of his conquered body, nor the other of his unconquered spirit. Neither was it love of life that prevented him from killing himself. This was plainly enough indicated by his unhesitatingly returning, on account of his promise and oath, to the same enemies whom he had more grievously provoked by his words in the senate than even by his arms in battle. Having such a contempt of life, and preferring to end it by whatever torments excited enemies might contrive, rather than terminate it by his own hand, he could not more distinctly have declared how great a crime he judged suicide to be. Among all their famous and remarkable citizens, the Romans have no better man to boast of than this, who was neither corrupted by prosperity, for he remained a very poor man after winning such victories; nor broken by adversity, for he returned intrepidly to the most miserable end. But if the bravest and most renowned heroes, who had but an earthly country to defend, and who, though they had but false gods, yet rendered them a true worship, and carefully kept their oath to them; if these men, who by the custom and right of war put conquered enemies to the sword, yet shrank from putting an end to their own lives even when conquered by their enemies; if, though they had no fear at all of death, they would yet rather suffer slavery than commit suicide, how much rather must Christians, the worshippers of the true God, the aspirants to a heavenly citizenship, shrink from this act, if in God's providence they have been for a season delivered into the hands of their enemies to prove or to correct them! And, certainly, Christians subjected to this humiliating condition will not be deserted by the Most High, who

for their sakes humbled Himself. Neither should they forget that they are bound by no laws of war, nor military orders, to put even a conquered enemy to the sword; and if a man may not put to death the enemy who has sinned, or may yet sin against him, who is so infatuated as to maintain that he may kill himself because an enemy has sinned, or is going to sin, against him?

25. That we should not endeavour by sin to obviate sin. But, we are told, there is ground to fear that, when the body is subjected to the enemy's lust, the insidious pleasure of sense may entice the soul to consent to the sin, and steps must be taken to prevent so disastrous a result. And is not suicide the proper mode of preventing not only the enemy's sin, but the sin of the Christian so allured? Now, in the first place, the soul which is led by God and His wisdom, rather than by bodily concupiscence, will certainly never consent to the desire aroused in its own flesh by another's lust. And, at all events, if it be true, as the truth plainly declares, that suicide is a detestable and damnable wickedness, who is such a fool as to say, Let us sin now, that we may obviate a possible future sin; let us now commit murder, lest we perhaps afterwards should commit adultery? If we are so controlled by iniquity that innocence is out of the question, and we can at best but make a choice of sins, is not a future and uncertain adultery preferable to a present and certain murder? Is it not better to commit a wickedness which penitence may heal, than a crime which leaves no place for healing contrition? I say this for the sake of those men or women who fear they may be enticed into consenting to their violator's lust, and think they should lay violent hands on themselves, and so prevent, not another's sin, but their own. But far be it from the mind of a Christian

confiding in God, and resting in the hope of His aid; far be it, I say, from such a mind to yield a shameful consent to pleasures of the flesh, howsoever presented. And if that lustful disobedience, which still dwells in our mortal members, follows its own law irrespective of our will, surely its motions in the body of one who rebels against them are as blameless as its motions in the body of one who sleeps.

26. That in certain peculiar cases the examples of the saints are not to be followed. But, they say, in the time of persecution some holy women escaped those who menaced them with outrage, by casting themselves into rivers which they knew would drown them; and having died in this manner, they are venerated in the church catholic as martyrs. Of such persons I do not presume to speak rashly. I cannot tell whether there may not have been vouchsafed to the church some divine authority, proved by trustworthy evidences, for so honouring their memory: it may be that it is so. It may be they were not deceived by human judgment, but prompted by divine wisdom, to their act of self-destruction. We know that this was the case with Samson. And when God enjoins any act, and intimates by plain evidence that He has enjoined it, who will call obedience criminal? Who will accuse so religious a submission? But then every man is not justified in sacrificing his son to God, because Abraham was commendable in so doing. The soldier who has slain a man in obedience to the authority under which he is lawfully commissioned, is not accused of murder by any law of his state; nay, if he has not slain him, it is then he is accused of treason to the state, and of despising the law. But if he has been acting on his own authority, and at his own impulse, he has in this case incurred the crime of shedding human blood. And thus he is

punished for doing without orders the very thing he is punished for neglecting to do when he has been ordered. If the commands of a general make so great a difference, shall the commands of God make none? He, then, who knows it is unlawful to kill himself, may nevertheless do so if he is ordered by Him whose commands we may not neglect. Only let him be very sure that the divine command has been signified. As for us, we can become privy to the secrets of conscience only in so far as these are disclosed to us, and so far only do we judge: "No one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him." But this we affirm, this we maintain, this we every way pronounce to be right, that no man ought to inflict on himself voluntary death, for this is to escape the ills of time by plunging into those of eternity; that no man ought to do so on account of another man's sins, for this were to escape a guilt which could not pollute him, by incurring great guilt of his own; that no man ought to do so on account of his own past sins, for he has all the more need of this life that these sins may be healed by repentance; that no man should put an end to this life to obtain that better life we look for after death, for those who die by their own hand have no better life after death.

27. Whether voluntary death should be sought in order to avoid sin. There remains one reason for suicide which I mentioned before, and which is thought a sound one,—namely, to prevent one's falling into sin either through the blandishments of pleasure or the violence of pain. If this reason were a good one, then we should be impelled to exhort men at once to destroy themselves, as soon as they have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and have received the forgiveness of all sin. Then is the time to escape all future sin, when all

past sin is blotted out. And if this escape be lawfully secured by suicide, why not then specially? Why does any baptized person hold his hand from taking his own life? Why does any person who is freed from the hazards of this life again expose himself to them, when he has power so easily to rid himself of them all, and when it is written, "He who loveth danger shall fall into it?" Why does he love, or at least face, so many serious dangers, by remaining in this life from which he may legitimately depart? But is any one so blinded and twisted in his moral nature, and so far astray from the truth, as to think that, though a man ought to make away with himself for fear of being led into sin by the oppression of one man, his master, he ought yet to live, and so expose himself to the hourly temptations of this world, both to all those evils which the oppression of one master involves, and to numberless other miseries in which this life inevitably implicates us? What reason, then, is there for our consuming time in those exhortations by which we seek to animate the baptized, either to virginal chastity, or vidual continence, or matrimonial fidelity, when we have so much more simple and compendious a method of deliverance from sin, by persuading those who are fresh from baptism to put an end to their lives, and so pass to their Lord pure and well-conditioned? If any one thinks that such persuasion should be attempted, I say not he is foolish, but mad. With what face, then, can he say to any man, "Kill yourself, lest to your small sins you add a heinous sin, while you live under an unchaste master, whose conduct is that of a barbarian?" How can he say this, if he cannot without wickedness say, "Kill yourself, now that you are washed from all your sins, lest you fall again into similar or even aggravated sins, while you live in a world which has such power to allure by its unclean pleasures, to torment by its horrible cruelties,

to overcome by its errors and terrors?" It is wicked to say this; it is therefore wicked to kill oneself. For if there could be any just cause of suicide, this were so. And since not even this is so, there is none.

28. By what judgment of God the enemy was permitted to indulge his lust on the bodies of continent Christians. Let not your life, then, be a burden to you, ye faithful servants of Christ, though your chastity was made the sport of your enemies. You have a grand and true consolation, if you maintain a good conscience, and know that you did not consent to the sins of those who were permitted to commit sinful outrage upon you. And if you should ask why this permission was granted, indeed it is a deep providence of the Creator and Governor of the world; and "unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." Nevertheless, faithfully interrogate your own souls, whether ye have not been unduly puffed up by your integrity, and continence, and chastity; and whether ye have not been so desirous of the human praise that is accorded to these virtues, that ye have envied some who possessed them. I, for my part, do not know your hearts, and therefore I make no accusation; I do not even hear what your hearts answer when you question them. And yet, if they answer that it is as I have supposed it might be, do not marvel that you have lost that by which you can win men's praise, and retain that which cannot be exhibited to men. If you did not consent to sin, it was because God added His aid to His grace that it might not be lost, and because shame before men succeeded to human glory that it might not be loved. But in both respects even the fainthearted among you have a consolation, approved by the one experience, chastened by the other; justified by the one, corrected by the other. As to those whose hearts,

when interrogated, reply that they have never been proud of the virtue of virginity, widowhood, or matrimonial chastity, but, condescending to those of low estate, rejoiced with trembling in these gifts of God, and that they have never envied any one the like excellences of sanctity and purity, but rose superior to human applause, which is wont to be abundant in proportion to the rarity of the virtue applauded, and rather desired that their own number be increased, than that by the smallness of their numbers each of them should be conspicuous;—even such faithful women, I say, must not complain that permission was given to the barbarians so grossly to outrage them; nor must they allow themselves to believe that God overlooked their character when He permitted acts which no one with impunity commits. For some most flagrant and wicked desires are allowed free play at present by the secret judgment of God, and are reserved to the public and final judgment. Moreover, it is possible that those Christian women, who are unconscious of any undue pride on account of their virtuous chastity, whereby they sinlessly suffered the violence of their captors, had yet some lurking infirmity which might have betrayed them into a proud and contemptuous bearing, had they not been subjected to the humiliation that befell them in the taking of the city. As, therefore, some men were removed by death, that no wickedness might change their disposition, so these women were outraged lest prosperity should corrupt their modesty. Neither those women, then, who were already puffed up by the circumstance that they were still virgins, nor those who might have been so puffed up had they not been exposed to the violence of the enemy, lost their chastity, but rather gained humility: the former were saved from pride already cherished, the latter from pride that would shortly have

grown upon them. We must further notice that some of those sufferers may have conceived that continence is a bodily good, and abides so long as the body is inviolate, and did not understand that the purity both of the body and the soul rests on the steadfastness of the will strengthened by God's grace, and cannot be forcibly taken from an unwilling person. From this error they are probably now delivered. For when they reflect how conscientiously they served God, and when they settle again to the firm persuasion that He can in nowise desert those who so serve Him, and so invoke His aid; and when they consider, what they cannot doubt, how pleasing to Him is chastity, they are shut up to the conclusion that He could never have permitted these disasters to befall His saints, if by them that saintliness could be destroyed which He Himself had bestowed upon them, and delights to see in them.

29. What the servants of Christ should say in reply to the unbelievers who cast in their teeth that Christ did not rescue them from the fury of their enemies. The whole family of God, most high and most true, has therefore a consolation of its own,—a consolation which cannot deceive, and which has in it a surer hope than the tottering and falling affairs of earth can afford. They will not refuse the discipline of this temporal life, in which they are schooled for life eternal; nor will they lament their experience of it, for the good things of earth they use as pilgrims who are not detained by them, and its ills either prove or improve them. As for those who insult over them in their trials, and when ills befall them say, "Where is thy God?" we may ask them where their gods are when they suffer the very calamities for the sake of avoiding which they worship their gods, or maintain they ought to be worshipped; for the family of Christ is furnished with its reply: our

God is everywhere present, wholly everywhere; not confined to any place. He can be present unperceived, and be absent without moving; when He exposes us to adversities, it is either to prove our perfections or correct our imperfections; and in return for our patient endurance of the sufferings of time, He reserves for us an everlasting reward. But who are you, that we should deign to speak with you even about your own gods, much less about our God, who is "to be feared above all gods? For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens."

30. That those who complain of Christianity really desire to live without restraint in shameful luxury. If the famous Scipio Nasica were now alive, who was once your pontiff, and was unanimously chosen by the senate, when, in the panic created by the Punic war, they sought for the best citizen to entertain the Phrygian goddess, he would curb this shamelessness of yours, though you would perhaps scarcely dare to look upon the countenance of such a man. For why in your calamities do you complain of Christianity, unless because you desire to enjoy your luxurious licence unrestrained, and to lead an abandoned and profligate life without the interruption of any uneasiness or disaster? For certainly your desire for peace, and prosperity, and plenty is not prompted by any purpose of using these blessings honestly, that is to say, with moderation, sobriety, temperance, and piety; for your purpose rather is to run riot in an endless variety of sottish pleasures, and thus to generate from your prosperity a moral pestilence which will prove a thousand-fold more disastrous than the fiercest enemies. It was such a calamity as this that Scipio, your chief pontiff, your best man in the judgment of the whole senate, feared when he refused to agree to the

destruction of Carthage, Rome's rival; and opposed Cato, who advised its destruction. He feared security, that enemy of weak minds, and he perceived that a wholesome fear would be a fit guardian for the citizens. And he was not mistaken: the event proved how wisely he had spoken. For when Carthage was destroyed, and the Roman republic delivered from its great cause of anxiety, a crowd of disastrous evils forthwith resulted from the prosperous condition of things. First concord was weakened, and destroyed by fierce and bloody seditions; then followed, by a concatenation of baleful causes, civil wars, which brought in their train such massacres, such bloodshed, such lawless and cruel proscription and plunder, that those Romans who, in the days of their virtue, had expected injury only at the hands of their enemies, now that their virtue was lost, suffered greater cruelties at the hands of their fellow-citizens. The lust of rule, which with other vices existed among the Romans in more unmitigated intensity than among any other people, after it had taken possession of the more powerful few, subdued under its yoke the rest, worn and wearied.

31. By what steps the passion for governing increased among the Romans. For at what stage would that passion rest when once it has lodged in a proud spirit, until by a succession of advances it has reached even the throne? And to obtain such advances nothing avails but unscrupulous ambition. But unscrupulous ambition has nothing to work upon, save in a nation corrupted by avarice and luxury. Moreover, a people becomes avaricious and luxurious by prosperity; and it was this which that very prudent man Nasica was endeavouring to avoid when he opposed the destruction of the greatest, strongest, wealthiest city of Rome's enemy. He thought that thus fear would act as a curb on lust,

and that lust being curbed would not run riot in luxury, and that luxury being prevented avarice would be at an end; and that these vices being banished, virtue would flourish and increase, to the great profit of the state; and liberty, the fit companion of virtue, would abide unfettered. For similar reasons, and animated by the same considerate patriotism, that same chief pontiff of yours—I still refer to him who was adjudged Rome's best man without one dissentient voice—threw cold water on the proposal of the senate to build a circle of seats round the theatre, and in a very weighty speech warned them against allowing the luxurious manners of Greece to sap the Roman manliness, and persuaded them not to yield to the enervating and emasculating influence of foreign licentiousness. So authoritative and forcible were his words, that the senate was moved to prohibit the use even of those benches which hitherto had been customarily brought to the theatre for the temporary use of the citizens. How eagerly would such a man as this have banished from Rome the scenic exhibitions themselves, had he dared to oppose the authority of those whom he supposed to be gods! For he did not know that they were malicious devils; or if he did, he supposed they should rather be propitiated than despised. For there had not yet been revealed to the Gentiles the heavenly doctrine which should purify their hearts by faith, and transform their natural disposition by humble godliness, and turn them from the service of proud devils to seek the things that are in heaven, or even above the heavens.

32. Of the establishment of scenic entertainments. Know then, ye who are ignorant of this, and ye who feign ignorance be reminded, while you murmur against Him who has freed you from such rulers, that the scenic games, exhibitions of shameless folly and licence, were

established at Rome, not by men's vicious cravings, but by the appointment of your gods. Much more pardonably might you have rendered divine honours to Scipio than to such gods as these. The gods were not so moral as their pontiff. But give me now your attention, if your mind, inebriated by its deep potations of error, can take in any sober truth. The gods enjoined that games be exhibited in their honour to stay a physical pestilence; their pontiff prohibited the theatre from being constructed, to prevent a moral pestilence. If, then, there remains in you sufficient mental enlightenment to prefer the soul to the body, choose whom you will worship. Besides, though the pestilence was stayed, this was not because the voluptuous madness of stage-plays had taken possession of a warlike people hitherto accustomed only to the games of the circus; but these astute and wicked spirits, foreseeing that in due course the pestilence would shortly cease, took occasion to infect, not the bodies, but the morals of their worshippers, with a far more serious disease. And in this pestilence these gods find great enjoyment, because it benighted the minds of men with so gross a darkness, and dishonoured them with so foul a deformity, that even quite recently (will posterity be able to credit it?) some of those who fled from the sack of Rome and found refuge in Carthage, were so infected with this disease, that day after day they seemed to contend with one another who should most madly run after the actors in the theatres.

33. That the overthrow of Rome has not corrected the vices of the Romans. Oh infatuated men, what is this blindness, or rather madness, which possesses you? How is it that while, as we hear, even the eastern nations are bewailing your ruin, and while powerful states in the most remote parts of the earth are

mourning your fall as a public calamity, ye yourselves should be crowding to the theatres, should be pouring into them and filling them; and, in short, be playing a madder part now than ever before? This was the foul plague-spot, this the wreck of virtue and honour that Scipio sought to preserve you from when he prohibited the construction of theatres; this was his reason for desiring that you might still have an enemy to fear, seeing as he did how easily prosperity would corrupt and destroy you. He did not consider that republic flourishing whose walls stand, but whose morals are in ruins. But the seductions of evil-minded devils had more influence with you than the precautions of prudent men. Hence the injuries you do, you will not permit to be imputed to you; but the injuries you suffer, you impute to Christianity. Depraved by good fortune, and not chastened by adversity, what you desire in the restoration of a peaceful and secure state, is not the tranquillity of the commonwealth, but the impunity of your own vicious luxury. Scipio wished you to be hard pressed by an enemy, that you might not abandon yourselves to luxurious manners; but so abandoned are you, that not even when crushed by the enemy is your luxury repressed. You have missed the profit of your calamity; you have been made most wretched, and have remained most profligate.

34. Of God's clemency in moderating the ruin of the city. And that you are yet alive is due to God, who spares you that you may be admonished to repent and reform your lives. It is He who has permitted you, ungrateful as you are, to escape the sword of the enemy, by calling yourselves His servants, or by finding asylum in the sacred places of the martyrs. It is said that Romulus and Remus, in order to increase the population of the city they founded, opened a sanctuary in which every

man might find asylum and absolution of all crime,—a remarkable foreshadowing of what has recently occurred in honour of Christ. The destroyers of Rome followed the example of its founders. But it was not greatly to their credit that the latter, for the sake of increasing the number of their citizens, did that which the former have done, lest the number of their enemies should be diminished.

35. Of the sons of the church who are hidden among the wicked, and of false Christians within the church. Let these and similar answers (if any fuller and fitter answers can be found) be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by the pilgrim city of King Christ. But let this city bear in mind, that among her enemies lie hid those who are destined to be fellow-citizens, that she may not think it a fruitless labour to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith. So, too, as long as she is a stranger in the world, the city of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the lot of the saints. Of these, some are not now recognised; others declare themselves, and do not hesitate to make common cause with our enemies in murmuring against God, whose sacramental badge they wear. These men you may to-day see thronging the churches with us, to-morrow crowding the theatres with the godless. But we have the less reason to despair of the reclamation even of such persons, if among our most declared enemies there are now some, unknown to themselves, who are destined to become our friends. In truth, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and intermixed until the last judgment effect their separation. I now proceed to speak, as God shall help me, of the rise, progress, and end of these two cities;

and what I write, I write for the glory of the city of God, that, being placed in comparison with the other, it may shine with a brighter lustre.

36. What subjects are to be handled in the following discourse. But I have still some things to say in confutation of those who refer the disasters of the Roman republic to our religion, because it prohibits the offering of sacrifices to the gods. For this end I must recount all, or as many as may seem sufficient, of the disasters which befell that city and its subject provinces, before these sacrifices were prohibited; for all these disasters they would doubtless have attributed to us, if at that time our religion had shed its light upon them, and had prohibited their sacrifices. I must then go on to show what social well-being the true God, in whose hand are all kingdoms, vouchsafed to grant to them that their empire might increase. I must show why He did so, and how their false gods, instead of at all aiding them, greatly injured them by guile and deceit. And, lastly, I must meet those who, when on this point convinced and confuted by irrefragable proofs, endeavour to maintain that they worship the gods, not hoping for the present advantages of this life, but for those which are to be enjoyed after death. And this, if I am not mistaken, will be the most difficult part of my task, and will be worthy of the loftiest argument; for we must then enter the lists with the philosophers, not the mere common herd of philosophers, but the most renowned, who in many points agree with ourselves, as regarding the immortality of the soul, and that the true God created the world, and by His providence rules all He has created. But as they differ from us on other points, we must not shrink from the task of exposing their errors, that, having refuted the gainsaying of the wicked with such ability as God may vouchsafe, we may

assert the city of God, and true piety, and the worship of God, to which alone the promise of true and everlasting felicity is attached. Here, then, let us conclude, that we may enter on these subjects in a fresh book.

