

## THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

[Podcast 5 of 50]

BOOK THIRD. ARGUMENT. AS IN THE FOREGOING BOOK AUGUSTINE HAS PROVED REGARDING MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CALAMITIES, SO IN THIS BOOK HE PROVES REGARDING EXTERNAL AND BODILY DISASTERS, THAT SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE CITY THE ROMANS HAVE BEEN CONTINUALLY SUBJECT TO THEM; AND THAT EVEN WHEN THE FALSE GODS WERE WORSHIPPED WITHOUT A RIVAL, BEFORE THE ADVENT OF CHRIST, THEY AFFORDED NO RELIEF FROM SUCH CALAMITIES.

[End of Argument] 1. Of the ills which alone the wicked fear, and which the world continually suffered, even when the gods were worshipped. Of moral and spiritual evils, which are above all others to be deprecated, I think enough has already been said to show that the false gods took no steps to prevent the people who worshipped them from being overwhelmed by such calamities, but rather aggravated the ruin. I see I must now speak of those evils which alone are dreaded by the heathen—famine, pestilence, war, pillage, captivity, massacre, and the like calamities, already enumerated in the first book. For evil men account those things alone evil which do not make men evil; neither do they blush to praise good things, and yet to remain evil among the good things they praise. It

grieves them more to own a bad house than a bad life, as if it were man's greatest good to have everything good but himself. But not even such evils as were alone dreaded by the heathen were warded off by their gods, even when they were most unrestrictedly worshipped. For in various times and places before the advent of our Redeemer, the human race was crushed with numberless and sometimes incredible calamities; and at that time what gods but those did the world worship, if you except the one nation of the Hebrews, and, beyond them, such individuals as the most secret and most just judgment of God counted worthy of divine grace? But that I may not be prolix, I will be silent regarding the heavy calamities that have been suffered by any other nations, and will speak only of what happened to Rome and the Roman empire, by which I mean Rome properly so called, and those lands which already, before the coming of Christ, had by alliance or conquest become, as it were, members of the body of the state. 2. Whether the gods, whom the Greeks and Romans worshipped in common, were justified in permitting the destruction of Ilium. First, then, why was Troy or Ilium, the cradle of the Roman people (for I must not overlook nor disguise what I touched upon in the first book), conquered, taken, and destroyed by the Greeks, though it esteemed and worshipped the same gods as they? Priam, some answer, paid the penalty of the perjury of his father Laomedon. Then it is true that Laomedon hired Apollo and Neptune as his workmen. For the story goes that he promised them wages, and then broke his bargain. I wonder that famous diviner Apollo toiled at so huge a work, and never suspected Laomedon was going to cheat him of his pay. And Neptune too, his uncle, brother of Jupiter, king of the sea, it really was not seemly that he should be ignorant of what was to happen. For he is introduced by Homer (who lived and wrote before the building of Rome) as predicting something great of the posterity of Æneas, who in fact

founded Rome. And as Homer says, Neptune also rescued Æneas in a cloud from the wrath of Achilles, though (according to Virgil) "All his will was to destroy His own creation, perjured Troy." Gods, then, so great as Apollo and Neptune, in ignorance of the cheat that was to defraud them of their wages, built the walls of Troy for nothing but thanks and thankless people. There may be some doubt whether it is not a worse crime to believe such persons to be gods, than to cheat such gods. Even Homer himself did not give full credence to the story; for while he represents Neptune, indeed, as hostile to the Trojans, he introduces Apollo as their champion, though the story implies that both were offended by that fraud. If, therefore, they believe their fables, let them blush to worship such gods; if they discredit the fables, let no more be said of the "Trojan perjury;" or let them explain how the gods hated Trojan, but loved Roman perjury. For how did the conspiracy of Catiline, even in so large and corrupt a city, find so abundant a supply of men whose hands and tongues found them a living by perjury and civic broils? What else but perjury corrupted the judgments pronounced by so many of the senators? What else corrupted the people's votes and decisions of all causes tried before them? For it seems that the ancient practice of taking oaths has been preserved even in the midst of the greatest corruption, not for the sake of restraining wickedness by religious fear, but to complete the tale of crimes by adding that of perjury. 3. That the gods could not be offended by the adultery of Paris, this crime being so common among themselves. There is no ground, then, for representing the gods (by whom, as they say, that empire stood, though they are proved to have been conquered by the Greeks) as being enraged at the Trojan perjury. Neither, as others again plead in their defence, was it indignation at the adultery of Paris that caused them to withdraw their protection from Troy. For their habit is to be instigators and instructors in

vice, not its avengers. "The city of Rome," says Sallust, "was first built and inhabited, as I have heard, by the Trojans, who, flying their country, under the conduct of Æneas, wandered about without making any settlement." If, then, the gods were of opinion that the adultery of Paris should be punished, it was chiefly the Romans, or at least the Romans also, who should have suffered; for the adultery was brought about by Æneas' mother. But how could they hate in Paris a crime which they made no objection to in their own sister Venus, who (not to mention any other instance) committed adultery with Anchises, and so became the mother of Æneas? Is it because in the one case Menelaus was aggrieved, while in the other Vulcan connived at the crime? For the gods, I fancy, are so little jealous of their wives, that they make no scruple of sharing them with men. But perhaps I may be suspected of turning the myths into ridicule, and not handling so weighty a subject with sufficient gravity. Well, then, let us say that Æneas is not the son of Venus. I am willing to admit it; but is Romulus any more the son of Mars? For why not the one as well as the other? Or is it lawful for gods to have intercourse with women, unlawful for men to have intercourse with goddesses? A hard, or rather an incredible condition, that what was allowed to Mars by the law of Venus, should not be allowed to Venus herself by her own law. However, both cases have the authority of Rome; for Cæsar in modern times believed no less that he was descended from Venus, than the ancient Romulus believed himself the son of Mars. 4. Of Varro's opinion, that it is useful for men to feign themselves the offspring of the gods. Some one will say, But do you believe all this? Not I indeed. For even Varro, a very learned heathen, all but admits that these stories are false, though he does not boldly and confidently say so. But he maintains it is useful for states that brave men believe, though falsely, that they are descended from the gods; for that thus the human

spirit, cherishing the belief of its divine descent, will both more boldly venture into great enterprises, and will carry them out more energetically, and will therefore by its very confidence secure more abundant success. You see how wide a field is opened to falsehood by this opinion of Varro's, which I have expressed as well as I could in my own words; and how comprehensible it is, that many of the religions and sacred legends should be feigned in a community in which it was judged profitable for the citizens that lies should be told even about the gods themselves. 5. That it is not credible that the gods should have punished the adultery of Paris, seeing they showed no indignation at the adultery of the mother of Romulus. But whether Venus could bear Æneas to a human father Anchises, or Mars beget Romulus of the daughter of Numitor, we leave as unsettled questions. For our own Scriptures suggest the very similar question, whether the fallen angels had sexual intercourse with the daughters of men, by which the earth was at that time filled with giants, that is, with enormously large and strong men. At present, then, I will limit my discussion to this dilemma: If that which their books relate about the mother of Æneas and the father of Romulus be true, how can the gods be displeased with men for adulteries which, when committed by themselves, excite no displeasure? If it is false, not even in this case can the gods be angry that men should really commit adulteries, which, even when falsely attributed to the gods, they delight in. Moreover, if the adultery of Mars be discredited, that Venus also may be freed from the imputation, then the mother of Romulus is left unshielded by the pretext of a divine seduction. For Sylvia was a vestal priestess, and the gods ought to avenge this sacrilege on the Romans with greater severity than Paris' adultery on the Trojans. For even the Romans themselves in primitive times used to go so far as to bury alive any vestal who was detected in adultery, while women unconsecrated, though

they were punished, were never punished with death for that crime; and thus they more earnestly vindicated the purity of shrines they esteemed divine, than of the human bed. 6. That the gods exacted no penalty for the fratricidal act of Romulus. I add another instance: If the sins of men so greatly incensed those divinities, that they abandoned Troy to fire and sword to punish the crime of Paris, the murder of Romulus' brother ought to have incensed them more against the Romans than the cajoling of a Greek husband moved them against the Trojans: fratricide in a newly-born city should have provoked them more than adultery in a city already flourishing. It makes no difference to the question we now discuss, whether Romulus ordered his brother to be slain, or slew him with his own hand; a crime this latter which many shamelessly deny, many through shame doubt, many in grief disguise. And we shall not pause to examine and weigh the testimonies of historical writers on the subject. All agree that the brother of Romulus was slain, not by enemies, not by strangers. If it was Romulus who either commanded or perpetrated this crime; Romulus was more truly the head of the Romans than Paris of the Trojans; why then did he who carried off another man's wife bring down the anger of the gods on the Trojans, while he who took his brother's life obtained the guardianship of those same gods? If, on the other hand, that crime was not wrought either by the hand or will of Romulus, then the whole city is chargeable with it, because it did not see to its punishment, and thus committed, not fratricide, but parricide, which is worse. For both brothers were the founders of that city, of which the one was by villany prevented from being a ruler. So far as I see, then, no evil can be ascribed to Troy which warranted the gods in abandoning it to destruction, nor any good to Rome which accounts for the gods visiting it with prosperity; unless the truth be, that they fled from Troy because they were vanquished, and betook themselves to

Rome to practise their characteristic deceptions there. Nevertheless they kept a footing for themselves in Troy, that they might deceive future inhabitants who repeopled these lands; while at Rome, by a wider exercise of their malignant arts, they exulted in more abundant honours. 7. Of the destruction of Ilium by Fimbria, a lieutenant of Marius. And surely we may ask what wrong poor Ilium had done, that, in the first heat of the civil wars of Rome, it should suffer at the hand of Fimbria, the veriest villain among Marius' partisans, a more fierce and cruel destruction than the Grecian sack. For when the Greeks took it many escaped, and many who did not escape were suffered to live, though in captivity. But Fimbria from the first gave orders that not a life should be spared, and burnt up together the city and all its inhabitants. Thus was Ilium requited, not by the Greeks, whom she had provoked by wrong-doing; but by the Romans, who had been built out of her ruins; while the gods, adored alike of both sides, did simply nothing, or, to speak more correctly, could do nothing. Is it then true, that at this time also, after Troy had repaired the damage done by the Grecian fire, all the gods by whose help the kingdom stood, "forsook each fane, each sacred shrine?"

But if so, I ask the reason; for in my judgment, the conduct of the gods was as much to be reprobated as that of the townsmen to be applauded. For these closed their gates against Fimbria, that they might preserve the city for Sylla, and were therefore burnt and consumed by the enraged general. Now, up to this time, Sylla's cause was the more worthy of the two; for till now he used arms to restore the republic, and as yet his good intentions had met with no reverses. What better thing, then, could the Trojans have done? What more honourable, what more faithful to Rome, or more worthy of her relationship, than to preserve their city for the better part of the Romans, and to shut their

gates against a parricide of his country? It is for the defenders of the gods to consider the ruin which this conduct brought on Troy. The gods deserted an adulterous people, and abandoned Troy to the fires of the Greeks, that out of her ashes a chastest Rome might arise. But why did they a second time abandon this same town, allied now to Rome, and not making war upon her noble daughter, but preserving a most steadfast and pious fidelity to Rome's most justifiable faction? Why did they give her up to be destroyed, not by the Greek heroes, but by the basest of the Romans? Or, if the gods did not favour Sylla's cause, for which the unhappy Trojans maintained their city, why did they themselves predict and promise Sylla such successes? Must we call them flatterers of the fortunate, rather than helpers of the wretched? Troy was not destroyed, then, because the gods deserted it. For the demons, always watchful to deceive, did what they could. For, when all the statues were overthrown and burnt together with the town, Livy tells us that only the image of Minerva is said to have been found standing uninjured amidst the ruins of her temple; not that it might be said in their praise, "The gods who made this realm divine," but that it might not be said in their defence, They are "gone from each fane, each sacred shrine:" for that marvel was permitted to them, not that they might be proved to be powerful, but that they might be convicted of being present. 8. Whether Rome ought to have been entrusted to the Trojan gods? Where, then, was the wisdom of entrusting Rome to the Trojan gods, who had demonstrated their weakness in the loss of Troy? Will some one say that, when Fimbria stormed Troy, the gods were already resident in Rome? How, then, did the image of Minerva remain standing? Besides, if they were at Rome when Fimbria destroyed Troy, perhaps they were at Troy when Rome itself was taken and set on fire by the Gauls. But as they are very acute in hearing, and very swift in their movements, they came quickly at the cackling



of the goose to defend at least the Capitol, though to defend the rest of the city they were too long in being warned. 9. Whether it is credible that the peace during the reign of Numa was brought about by the gods. It is also believed that it was by the help of the gods that the successor of Romulus, Numa Pompilius, enjoyed peace during his entire reign, and shut the gates of Janus, which are customarily kept open during war. And it is supposed he was thus requited for appointing many religious observances among the Romans. Certainly that king would have commanded our congratulations for so rare a leisure, had he been wise enough to spend it on wholesome pursuits, and, subduing a pernicious curiosity, had sought out the true God with true piety. But as it was, the gods were not the authors of his leisure; but possibly they would have deceived him less had they found him busier. For the more disengaged they found him, the more they themselves occupied his attention. Varro informs us of all his efforts, and of the arts he employed to associate these gods with himself and the city; and in its own place, if God will, I shall discuss these matters. Meanwhile, as we are speaking of the benefits conferred by the gods, I readily admit that peace is a great benefit; but it is a benefit of the true God, which, like the sun, the rain, and other supports of life, is frequently conferred on the ungrateful and wicked. But if this great boon was conferred on Rome and Pompilius by their gods, why did they never afterwards grant it to the Roman empire during even more meritorious periods? Were the sacred rites more efficient at their first institution than during their subsequent celebration? But they had no existence in Numa's time, until he added them to the ritual; whereas afterwards they had already been celebrated and preserved, that benefit might arise from them. How, then, is it that those forty-three, or as others prefer it, thirty-nine years of Numa's reign, were passed in unbroken peace, and yet that afterwards, when the worship was established, and

the gods themselves, who were invoked by it, were the recognised guardians and patrons of the city, we can with difficulty find during the whole period, from the building of the city to the reign of Augustus, one year—that, viz., which followed the close of the first Punic war—in which, for a marvel, the Romans were able to shut the gates of war? 10. Whether it was desirable that the Roman empire should be increased by such a furious succession of wars, when it might have been quiet and safe by following in the peaceful ways of Numa. Do they reply that the Roman empire could never have been so widely extended, nor so glorious, save by constant and unintermitting wars? A fit argument, truly! Why must a kingdom be distracted in order to be great? In this little world of man's body, is it not better to have a moderate stature, and health with it, than to attain the huge dimensions of a giant by unnatural torments, and when you attain it to find no rest, but to be pained the more in proportion to the size of your members? What evil would have resulted, or rather what good would not have resulted, had those times continued which Sallust sketched, when he says, "At first the kings (for that was the first title of empire in the world) were divided in their sentiments: part cultivated the mind, others the body: at that time the life of men was led without covetousness; every one was sufficiently satisfied with his own!" Was it requisite, then, for Rome's prosperity, that the state of things which Virgil reprobates should succeed: "At length stole on a baser age, And war's indomitable rage, And greedy lust of gain?"

But obviously the Romans have a plausible defence for undertaking and carrying on such disastrous wars,—to wit, that the pressure of their enemies forced them to resist, so that they were compelled to fight, not by any greed of human applause, but by the necessity of protecting life and liberty. Well, let that pass. Here is Sallust's account of the matter: "For when their state, enriched with laws,

institutions, territory, seemed abundantly prosperous and sufficiently powerful, according to the ordinary law of human nature, opulence gave birth to envy. Accordingly, the neighbouring kings and states took arms and assaulted them. A few allies lent assistance; the rest, struck with fear, kept aloof from dangers. But the Romans, watchful at home and in war, were active, made preparations, encouraged one another, marched to meet their enemies,—protected by arms their liberty, country, parents. Afterwards, when they had repelled the dangers by their bravery, they carried help to their allies and friends, and procured alliances more by conferring than by receiving favours.” This was to build up Rome’s greatness by honourable means. But, in Numa’s reign, I would know whether the long peace was maintained in spite of the incursions of wicked neighbours, or if these incursions were discontinued that the peace might be maintained? For if even then Rome was harassed by wars, and yet did not meet force with force, the same means she then used to quiet her enemies without conquering them in war, or terrifying them with the onset of battle, she might have used always, and have reigned in peace with the gates of Janus shut. And if this was not in her power, then Rome enjoyed peace not at the will of her gods, but at the will of her neighbours round about, and only so long as they cared to provoke her with no war, unless perhaps these pitiful gods will dare to sell to one man as their favour what lies not in their power to bestow, but in the will of another man. These demons, indeed, in so far as they are permitted, can terrify or incite the minds of wicked men by their own peculiar wickedness. But if they always had this power, and if no action were taken against their efforts by a more secret and higher power, they would be supreme to give peace or the victories of war, which almost always fall out through some human emotion, and frequently in opposition to the will of the gods, as is proved not only by lying legends, which scarcely hint or signify any

grain of truth, but even by Roman history itself. 11. Of the statue of Apollo at Cumæ, whose tears are supposed to have portended disaster to the Greeks, whom the god was unable to succour. And it is still this weakness of the gods which is confessed in the story of the Cuman Apollo, who is said to have wept for four days during the war with the Achæans and King Aristonicus. And when the augurs were alarmed at the portent, and had determined to cast the statue into the sea, the old men of Cumæ interposed, and related that a similar prodigy had occurred to the same image during the wars against Antiochus and against Perseus, and that by a decree of the senate gifts had been presented to Apollo, because the event had proved favourable to the Romans. Then soothsayers were summoned who were supposed to have greater professional skill, and they pronounced that the weeping of Apollo's image was propitious to the Romans, because Cumæ was a Greek colony, and that Apollo was bewailing (and thereby presaging) the grief and calamity that was about to light upon his own land of Greece, from which he had been brought. Shortly afterwards it was reported that King Aristonicus was defeated and made prisoner,—a defeat certainly opposed to the will of Apollo; and this he indicated by even shedding tears from his marble image. And this shows us that, though the verses of the poets are mythical, they are not altogether devoid of truth, but describe the manners of the demons in a sufficiently fit style. For in Virgil Diana mourned for Camilla, and Hercules wept for Pallas doomed to die. This is perhaps the reason why Numa Pompilius, too, when, enjoying prolonged peace, but without knowing or inquiring from whom he received it, he began in his leisure to consider to what gods he should entrust the safe keeping and conduct of Rome, and not dreaming that the true, almighty, and most high God cares for earthly affairs, but recollecting only that the Trojan gods which Æneas had brought to Italy had been able to

preserve neither the Trojan nor Lavinian kingdom founded by Æneas himself, concluded that he must provide other gods as guardians of fugitives and helpers of the weak, and add them to those earlier divinities who had either come over to Rome with Romulus, or when Alba was destroyed.

12. That the Romans added a vast number of gods to those introduced by Numa, and that their numbers helped them not at all. But though Pompilius introduced so ample a ritual, yet did not Rome see fit to be content with it. For as yet Jupiter himself had not his chief temple,—it being King Tarquin who built the Capitol. And Æsculapius left Epidaurus for Rome, that in this foremost city he might have a finer field for the exercise of his great medical skill. The mother of the gods, too, came I know not whence from Pessinuns; it being unseemly that, while her son presided on the Capitoline hill, she herself should lie hid in obscurity. But if she is the mother of all the gods, she not only followed some of her children to Rome, but left others to follow her. I wonder, indeed, if she were the mother of Cynocephalus, who a long while afterwards came from Egypt. Whether also the goddess Fever was her offspring, is a matter for her grandson Æsculapius to decide. But of whatever breed she be, the foreign gods will not presume, I trust, to call a goddess base-born who is a Roman citizen. Who can number the deities to whom the guardianship of Rome was entrusted? Indigenous and imported, both of heaven, earth, hell, seas, fountains, rivers; and, as Varro says, gods certain and uncertain, male and female: for, as among animals, so among all kinds of gods are there these distinctions. Rome, then, enjoying the protection of such a cloud of deities, might surely have been preserved from some of those great and horrible calamities, of which I can mention but a few. For by the great smoke of her altars she summoned to her protection, as by a beacon-fire, a host of gods, for whom she appointed and maintained temples, altars, sacrifices, priests, and thus offended the true and

most high God, to whom alone all this ceremonial is lawfully due. And, indeed, she was more prosperous when she had fewer gods; but the greater she became, the more gods she thought she should have, as the larger ship needs to be manned by a larger crew. I suppose she despaired of the smaller number, under whose protection she had spent comparatively happy days, being able to defend her greatness. For even under the kings (with the exception of Numa Pompilius, of whom I have already spoken), how wicked a contentiousness must have existed to occasion the death of Romulus' brother! 13. By what right or agreement the Romans obtained their first wives. How is it that neither Juno, who with her husband Jupiter even then cherished "Rome's sons, the nation of the gown," nor Venus herself, could assist the children of the loved Æneas to find wives by some right and equitable means? For the lack of this entailed upon the Romans the lamentable necessity of stealing their wives, and then waging war with their fathers-in-law; so that the wretched women, before they had recovered from the wrong done them by their husbands, were dowried with the blood of their fathers. "But the Romans conquered their neighbours." Yes; but with what wounds on both sides, and with what sad slaughter of relatives and neighbours! The war of Cæsar and Pompey was the contest of only one father-in-law with one son-in-law; and before it began, the daughter of Cæsar, Pompey's wife, was already dead. But with how keen and just an accent of grief does Lucan exclaim: "I sing that worse than civil war waged in the plains of Emathia, and in which the crime was justified by the victory!" The Romans, then, conquered that they might, with hands stained in the blood of their fathers-in-law, wrench the miserable girls from their embrace,—girls who dared not weep for their slain parents, for fear of offending their victorious husbands; and while yet the battle was raging, stood with their prayers on their lips, and knew not for whom to utter

them. Such nuptials were certainly prepared for the Roman people not by Venus, but Bellona; or possibly that infernal fury Alecto had more liberty to injure them now that Juno was aiding them, than when the prayers of that goddess had excited her against Æneas. Andromache in captivity was happier than these Roman brides. For though she was a slave, yet, after she had become the wife of Pyrrhus, no more Trojans fell by his hand; but the Romans slew in battle the very fathers of the brides they fondled.

Andromache, the victor's captive, could only mourn, not fear, the death of her people. The Sabine women, related to men still combatants, feared the death of their fathers when their husbands went out to battle, and mourned their death as they returned, while neither their grief nor their fear could be freely expressed. For the victories of their husbands, involving the destruction of fellow-townsmen, relatives, brothers, fathers, caused either pious agony or cruel exultation. Moreover, as the fortune of war is capricious, some of them lost their husbands by the sword of their parents, while others lost husband and father together in mutual destruction. For the Romans by no means escaped with impunity, but they were driven back within their walls, and defended themselves behind closed gates; and when the gates were opened by guile, and the enemy admitted into the town, the Forum itself was the field of a hateful and fierce engagement of fathers-in-law and sons-in-law. The ravishers were indeed quite defeated, and, flying on all sides to their houses, sullied with new shame their original shameful and lamentable triumph. It was at this juncture that Romulus, hoping no more from the valour of his citizens, prayed Jupiter that they might stand their ground; and from this occasion the god gained the name of Stator. But not even thus would the mischief have been finished, had not the ravished women themselves flashed out with dishevelled hair, and cast themselves before their parents, and thus disarmed their just rage, not

with the arms of victory, but with the supplications of filial affection. Then Romulus, who could not brook his own brother as a colleague, was compelled to accept Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, as his partner on the throne. But how long would he who disliked the fellowship of his own twin-brother endure a stranger? So, Tatius being slain, Romulus remained sole king, that he might be the greater god. See what rights of marriage these were that fomented unnatural wars. These were the Roman leagues of kindred, relationship, alliance, religion. This was the life of the city so abundantly protected by the gods. You see how many severe things might be said on this theme; but our purpose carries us past them, and requires our discourse for other matters. 14. Of the wickedness of the war waged by the Romans against the Albans, and of the victories won by the lust of power. But what happened after Numa's reign, and under the other kings, when the Albans were provoked into war, with sad results not to themselves alone, but also to the Romans? The long peace of Numa had become tedious; and with what endless slaughter and detriment of both states did the Roman and Alban armies bring it to an end! For Alba, which had been founded by Ascanius, son of Æneas, and which was more properly the mother of Rome than Troy herself, was provoked to battle by Tullus Hostilius, king of Rome, and in the conflict both inflicted and received such damage, that at length both parties wearied of the struggle. It was then devised that the war should be decided by the combat of three twin-brothers from each army: from the Romans the three Horatii stood forward, from the Albans the three Curiatii. Two of the Horatii were overcome and disposed of by the Curiatii; but by the remaining Horatius the three Curiatii were slain. Thus Rome remained victorious, but with such a sacrifice that only one survivor returned to his home. Whose was the loss on both sides? Whose the grief, but of the offspring of Æneas, the descendants of Ascanius, the progeny of Venus,



the grandsons of Jupiter? For this, too, was a “worse than civil” war, in which the belligerent states were mother and daughter. And to this combat of the three twin-brothers there was added another atrocious and horrible catastrophe. For as the two nations had formerly been friendly (being related and neighbours), the sister of the Horatii had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii; and she, when she saw her brother wearing the spoils of her betrothed, burst into tears, and was slain by her own brother in his anger. To me, this one girl seems to have been more humane than the whole Roman people. I cannot think her to blame for lamenting the man to whom already she had plighted her troth, or, as perhaps she was doing, for grieving that her brother should have slain him to whom he had promised his sister. For why do we praise the grief of Æneas (in Virgil) over the enemy cut down even by his own hand? Why did Marcellus shed tears over the city of Syracuse, when he recollected, just before he destroyed, its magnificence and meridian glory, and thought upon the common lot of all things? I demand, in the name of humanity, that if men are praised for tears shed over enemies conquered by themselves, a weak girl should not be counted criminal for bewailing her lover slaughtered by the hand of her brother. While, then, that maiden was weeping for the death of her betrothed inflicted by her brother’s hand, Rome was rejoicing that such devastation had been wrought on her mother state, and that she had purchased a victory with such an expenditure of the common blood of herself and the Albans. Why allege to me the mere names and words of “glory” and “victory?” Tear off the disguise of wild delusion, and look at the naked deeds: weigh them naked, judge them naked. Let the charge be brought against Alba, as Troy was charged with adultery. There is no such charge, none like it found: the war was kindled only in order that there “Might sound in languid ears the cry Of Tullus and of victory.” This vice of

restless ambition was the sole motive to that social and parricidal war,—a vice which Sallust brands in passing; for when he has spoken with brief but hearty commendation of those primitive times in which life was spent without covetousness, and every one was sufficiently satisfied with what he had, he goes on: “But after Cyrus in Asia, and the Lacedemonians and Athenians in Greece, began to subdue cities and nations, and to account the lust of sovereignty a sufficient ground for war, and to reckon that the greatest glory consisted in the greatest empire;” and so on, as I need not now quote. This lust of sovereignty disturbs and consumes the human race with frightful ills. By this lust Rome was overcome when she triumphed over Alba, and praising her own crime, called it glory. For, as our Scriptures say, “the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.” Away, then, with these deceitful masks, these deluding whitewashes, that things may be truthfully seen and scrutinized. Let no man tell me that this and the other was a “great” man, because he fought and conquered so and so. Gladiators fight and conquer, and this barbarism has its meed of praise; but I think it were better to take the consequences of any sloth, than to seek the glory won by such arms. And if two gladiators entered the arena to fight, one being father, the other his son, who would endure such a spectacle? who would not be revolted by it? How, then, could that be a glorious war which a daughter-state waged against its mother? Or did it constitute a difference, that the battlefield was not an arena, and that the wide plains were filled with the carcasses not of two gladiators, but of many of the flower of two nations; and that those contests were viewed not by the amphitheatre, but by the whole world, and furnished a profane spectacle both to those alive at the time, and to their posterity, so long as the fame of it is handed down? Yet those gods, guardians of the Roman empire, and, as it were, theatric spectators of such contests

as these, were not satisfied until the sister of the Horatii was added by her brother's sword as a third victim from the Roman side, so that Rome herself, though she won the day, should have as many deaths to mourn. Afterwards, as a fruit of the victory, Alba was destroyed, though it was there the Trojan gods had formed a third asylum after Ilium had been sacked by the Greeks, and after they had left Lavinium, where Æneas had founded a kingdom in a land of banishment. But probably Alba was destroyed because from it too the gods had migrated, in their usual fashion, as Virgil says: "Gone from each fane, each sacred shrine, Are those who made this realm divine."

Gone, indeed, and from now their third asylum, that Rome might seem all the wiser in committing herself to them after they had deserted three other cities. Alba, whose king Amulius had banished his brother, displeased them; Rome, whose king Romulus had slain his brother, pleased them. But before Alba was destroyed, its population, they say, was amalgamated with the inhabitants of Rome, so that the two cities were one. Well, admitting it was so, yet the fact remains that the city of Ascanius, the third retreat of the Trojan gods, was destroyed by the daughter-city. Besides, to effect this pitiful conglomerate of the war's leavings, much blood was spilt on both sides. And how shall I speak in detail of the same wars, so often renewed in subsequent reigns, though they seemed to have been finished by great victories; and of wars that time after time were brought to an end by great slaughters, and which yet time after time were renewed by the posterity of those who had made peace and struck treaties? Of this calamitous history we have no small proof, in the fact that no subsequent king closed the gates of war; and therefore, with all their tutelary gods, no one of them reigned in peace.

