

THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

[Podcast 6 of 50]

BOOK THIRD.

[continues]

15. What manner of life and death the Roman kings had. And what was the end of the kings themselves? Of Romulus, a flattering legend tells us that he was assumed into heaven. But certain Roman historians relate that he was torn in pieces by the senate for his ferocity, and that a man, Julius Proculus, was suborned to give out that Romulus had appeared to him, and through him commanded the Roman people to worship him as a god; and that in this way the people, who were beginning to resent the action of the senate, were quieted and pacified. For an eclipse of the sun had also happened; and this was attributed to the divine power of Romulus by the ignorant multitude, who did not know that it was brought about by the fixed laws of the sun's course: though this grief of the sun might rather have been considered proof that Romulus had been slain, and that the crime was indicated by this deprivation of the sun's light; as, in truth, was the case when the Lord was crucified through the cruelty and impiety of the Jews. For it is sufficiently demonstrated that this latter obscuration of the sun did not occur by

the natural laws of the heavenly bodies, because it was then the Jewish passover, which is held only at full moon, whereas natural eclipses of the sun happen only at the last quarter of the moon. Cicero, too, shows plainly enough that the apotheosis of Romulus was imaginary rather than real, when, even while he is praising him in one of Scipio's remarks in the *De Republica*, he says: "Such a reputation had he acquired, that when he suddenly disappeared during an eclipse of the sun, he was supposed to have been assumed into the number of the gods, which could be supposed of no mortal who had not the highest reputation for virtue." By these words, "he suddenly disappeared," we are to understand that he was mysteriously made away with by the violence either of the tempest or of a murderous assault. For their other writers speak not only of an eclipse, but of a sudden storm also, which certainly either afforded opportunity for the crime, or itself made an end of Romulus. And of Tullus Hostilius, who was the third king of Rome, and who was himself destroyed by lightning, Cicero in the same book says, that "he was not supposed to have been deified by this death, possibly because the Romans were unwilling to vulgarize the promotion they were assured or persuaded of in the case of Romulus, lest they should bring it into contempt by gratuitously assigning it to all and sundry." In one of his invectives, too, he says, in round terms, "The founder of this city, Romulus, we have raised to immortality and divinity by kindly celebrating his services;" implying that his deification was not real, but reputed, and called so by courtesy on account of his virtues. In the dialogue *Hortensius*, too, while speaking of the regular eclipses of the sun, he says that they "produce the same darkness as covered the death of Romulus, which happened during an eclipse of the sun." Here you see he does not at all

shrink from speaking of his “death,” for Cicero was more of a reasoner than an eulogist. The other kings of Rome, too, with the exception of Numa Pompilius and Ancus Marcius, who died natural deaths, what horrible ends they had! Tullus Hostilius, the conqueror and destroyer of Alba, was, as I said, himself and all his house consumed by lightning. Priscus Tarquinius was slain by his predecessor’s sons. Servius Tullius was foully murdered by his son-in-law Tarquinius Superbus, who succeeded him on the throne. Nor did so flagrant a parricide committed against Rome’s best king drive from their altars and shrines those gods who were said to have been moved by Paris’ adultery to treat poor Troy in this style, and abandon it to the fire and sword of the Greeks. Nay, the very Tarquin who had murdered, was allowed to succeed his father-in-law. And this infamous parricide, during the reign he had secured by murder, was allowed to triumph in many victorious wars, and to build the Capitol from their spoils; the gods meanwhile not departing, but abiding, and abetting, and suffering their king Jupiter to preside and reign over them in that very splendid Capitol, the work of a parricide. For he did not build the Capitol in the days of his innocence, and then suffer banishment for subsequent crimes; but to that reign during which he built the Capitol, he won his way by unnatural crime. And when he was afterwards banished by the Romans, and forbidden the city, it was not for his own but his son’s wickedness in the affair of Lucretia,—a crime perpetrated not only without his cognizance, but in his absence. For at that time he was besieging Ardea, and fighting Rome’s battles; and we cannot say what he would have done had he been aware of his son’s crime. Notwithstanding, though his opinion was neither inquired into nor ascertained, the people stripped him of royalty; and when he returned to Rome with his

army, it was admitted, but he was excluded, abandoned by his troops, and the gates shut in his face. And yet, after he had appealed to the neighbouring states, and tormented the Romans with calamitous but unsuccessful wars, and when he was deserted by the ally on whom he most depended, despairing of regaining the kingdom, he lived a retired and quiet life for fourteen years, as it is reported, in Tusculum, a Roman town; where he grew old in his wife's company, and at last terminated his days in a much more desirable fashion than his father-in-law, who had perished by the hand of his son-in-law; his own daughter abetting, if report be true. And this Tarquin the Romans called, not the Cruel, nor the Infamous, but the Proud; their own pride perhaps resenting his tyrannical airs. So little did they make of his murdering their best king, his own father-in-law, that they elected him their own king. I wonder if it was not even more criminal in them to reward so bountifully so great a criminal. And yet there was no word of the gods abandoning the altars; unless, perhaps, some one will say in defence of the gods, that they remained at Rome for the purpose of punishing the Romans, rather than of aiding and profiting them, seducing them by empty victories, and wearing them out by severe wars. Such was the life of the Romans under the kings during the much-praised epoch of the state which extends to the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus in the 243d year, during which all those victories, which were bought with so much blood and such disasters, hardly pushed Rome's dominion twenty miles from the city; a territory which would by no means bear comparison with that of any petty Gætulian state.

16. Of the first Roman consuls, the one of whom drove the other from the country, and shortly after perished at

Rome by the hand of a wounded enemy, and so ended a career of unnatural murders. To this epoch let us add also that of which Sallust says, that it was ordered with justice and moderation, while the fear of Tarquin and of a war with Etruria was impending. For so long as the Etrurians aided the efforts of Tarquin to regain the throne, Rome was convulsed with distressing war. And therefore he says that the state was ordered with justice and moderation, through the pressure of fear, not through the influence of equity. And in this very brief period, how calamitous a year was that in which consuls were first created, when the kingly power was abolished! They did not fulfil their term of office. For Junius Brutus deprived his colleague Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, and banished him from the city; and shortly after he himself fell in battle, at once slaying and slain, having formerly put to death his own sons and his brothers-in-law, because he had discovered that they were conspiring to restore Tarquin. It is this deed that Virgil shudders to record, even while he seems to praise it; for when he says, "And call his own rebellious seed For menaced liberty to bleed," he immediately exclaims, "Unhappy father! howsoe'er The deed be judged by after days;" that is to say, let posterity judge the deed as they please, let them praise and extol the father who slew his sons, he is unhappy. And then he adds, as if to console so unhappy a man: "His country's love shall all o'erbear, And unextinguished thirst of praise." In the tragic end of Brutus, who slew his own sons, and though he slew his enemy, Tarquin's son, yet could not survive him, but was survived by Tarquin the elder, does not the innocence of his colleague Collatinus seem to be vindicated, who, though a good citizen, suffered the same punishment as Tarquin himself, when that tyrant was banished? For Brutus himself is said to have been a relative of Tarquin. But

Collatinus had the misfortune to bear not only the blood, but the name of Tarquin. To change his name, then, not his country, would have been his fit penalty: to abridge his name by this word, and be called simply L. Collatinus. But he was not compelled to lose what he could lose without detriment, but was stripped of the honour of the first consulship, and was banished from the land he loved. Is this, then, the glory of Brutus—this injustice, alike detestable and profitless to the republic? Was it to this he was driven by “his country’s love, and unextinguished thirst of praise?” When Tarquin the tyrant was expelled, L. Tarquinius Collatinus, the husband of Lucretia, was created consul along with Brutus. How justly the people acted, in looking more to the character than the name of a citizen! How unjustly Brutus acted, in depriving of honour and country his colleague in that new office, whom he might have deprived of his name, if it were so offensive to him! Such were the ills, such the disasters, which fell out when the government was “ordered with justice and moderation.” Lucretius, too, who succeeded Brutus, was carried off by disease before the end of that same year. So P. Valerius, who succeeded Collatinus, and M. Horatius, who filled the vacancy occasioned by the death of Lucretius, completed that disastrous and funereal year, which had five consuls. Such was the year in which the Roman republic inaugurated the new honour and office of the consulship.

17. Of the disasters which vexed the Roman republic after the inauguration of the consulship, and of the non-intervention of the gods of Rome. After this, when their fears were gradually diminished,—not because the wars ceased, but because they were not so furious,—that period in which things were “ordered with justice and

moderation" drew to an end, and there followed that state of matters which Sallust thus briefly sketches: "Then began the patricians to oppress the people as slaves, to condemn them to death or scourging, as the kings had done, to drive them from their holdings, and to tyrannize over those who had no property to lose. The people, overwhelmed by these oppressive measures, and most of all by usury, and obliged to contribute both money and personal service to the constant wars, at length took arms and seceded to Mount Aventine and Mount Sacer, and thus secured for themselves tribunes and protective laws. But it was only the second Punic war that put an end on both sides to discord and strife." But why should I spend time in writing such things, or make others spend it in reading them? Let the terse summary of Sallust suffice to intimate the misery of the republic through all that long period till the second Punic war,—how it was distracted from without by unceasing wars, and torn with civil broils and dissensions. So that those victories they boast were not the substantial joys of the happy, but the empty comforts of wretched men, and seductive incitements to turbulent men to concoct disasters upon disasters. And let not the good and prudent Romans be angry at our saying this; and indeed we need neither deprecate nor denounce their anger, for we know they will harbour none. For we speak no more severely than their own authors, and much less elaborately and strikingly; yet they diligently read these authors, and compel their children to learn them. But they who are angry, what would they do to me were I to say what Sallust says? "Frequent mobs, seditions, and at last civil wars, became common, while a few leading men on whom the masses were dependent, affected supreme power under the seemingly pretence of seeking the good of senate and people; citizens were judged

good or bad, without reference to their loyalty to the republic (for all were equally corrupt); but the wealthy and dangerously powerful were esteemed good citizens, because they maintained the existing state of things." Now, if those historians judged that an honourable freedom of speech required that they should not be silent regarding the blemishes of their own state, which they have in many places loudly applauded in their ignorance of that other and true city in which citizenship is an everlasting dignity; what does it become us to do, whose liberty ought to be so much greater, as our hope in God is better and more assured, when they impute to our Christ the calamities of this age, in order that men of the less instructed and weaker sort may be alienated from that city in which alone eternal and blessed life can be enjoyed? Nor do we utter against their gods anything more horrible than their own authors do, whom they read and circulate. For, indeed, all that we have said we have derived from them, and there is much more to say of a worse kind which we are unable to say. Where, then, were those gods who are supposed to be justly worshipped for the slender and delusive prosperity of this world, when the Romans, who were seduced to their service by lying wiles, were harassed by such calamities? Where were they when Valerius the consul was killed while defending the Capitol, that had been fired by exiles and slaves? He was himself better able to defend the temple of Jupiter, than that crowd of divinities with their most high and mighty king, whose temple he came to the rescue of, were able to defend him. Where were they when the city, worn out with unceasing seditions, was waiting in some kind of calm for the return of the ambassadors who had been sent to Athens to borrow laws, and was desolated by dreadful famine and pestilence? Where were they when the people, again

distressed with famine, created for the first time a prefect of the market; and when Spurius Melius, who, as the famine increased, distributed corn to the famishing masses, was accused of aspiring to royalty, and at the instance of this same prefect, and on the authority of the superannuated dictator L. Quintius, was put to death by Quintus Servilius, master of the horse,—an event which occasioned a serious and dangerous riot? Where were they when that very severe pestilence visited Rome, on account of which the people, after long and wearisome and useless supplications of the helpless gods, conceived the idea of celebrating Lectisternia, which had never been done before; that is to say, they set couches in honour of the gods, which accounts for the name of this sacred rite, or rather sacrilege? Where were they when, during ten successive years of reverses, the Roman army suffered frequent and great losses among the Veians, and would have been destroyed but for the succour of Furius Camillus, who was afterwards banished by an ungrateful country? Where were they when the Gauls took, sacked, burned, and desolated Rome? Where were they when that memorable pestilence wrought such destruction, in which Furius Camillus too perished, who first defended the ungrateful republic from the Veians, and afterwards saved it from the Gauls? Nay, during this plague they introduced a new pestilence of scenic entertainments, which spread its more fatal contagion, not to the bodies, but the morals of the Romans? Where were they when another frightful pestilence visited the city—I mean the poisonings imputed to an incredible number of noble Roman matrons, whose characters were infected with a disease more fatal than any plague? Or when both consuls at the head of the army were beset by the Samnites in the Caudine Forks, and forced to strike a

shameful treaty, 600 Roman knights being kept as hostages; while the troops, having laid down their arms, and being stripped of everything, were made to pass under the yoke with one garment each? Or when, in the midst of a serious pestilence, lightning struck the Roman camp and killed many? Or when Rome was driven, by the violence of another intolerable plague, to send to Epidaurus for Æsculapius as a god of medicine; since the frequent adulteries of Jupiter in his youth had not perhaps left this king of all who so long reigned in the Capitol, any leisure for the study of medicine? Or when, at one time, the Lucanians, Brutians, Samnites, Tuscans, and Senonian Gauls conspired against Rome, and first slew her ambassadors, then overthrew an army under the prætor, putting to the sword 13,000 men, besides the commander and seven tribunes? Or when the people, after the serious and long-continued disturbances at Rome, at last plundered the city and withdrew to Janiculus; a danger so grave, that Hortensius was created dictator,—an office which they had recourse to only in extreme emergencies; and he, having brought back the people, died while yet he retained his office,—an event without precedent in the case of any dictator, and which was a shame to those gods who had now Æsculapius among them? At that time, indeed, so many wars were everywhere engaged in, that through scarcity of soldiers they enrolled for military service the proletarii, who received this name, because, being too poor to equip for military service, they had leisure to beget offspring. Pyrrhus, king of Greece, and at that time of wide-spread renown, was invited by the Tarentines to enlist himself against Rome. It was to him that Apollo, when consulted regarding the issue of his enterprise, uttered with some pleasantry so ambiguous an oracle, that whichever alternative happened, the god himself should be

counted divine. For he so worded the oracle, that whether Pyrrhus was conquered by the Romans, or the Romans by Pyrrhus, the soothsaying god would securely await the issue. And then what frightful massacres of both armies ensued! Yet Pyrrhus remained conqueror, and would have been able now to proclaim Apollo a true diviner, as he understood the oracle, had not the Romans been the conquerors in the next engagement. And while such disastrous wars were being waged, a terrible disease broke out among the women. For the pregnant women died before delivery. And Æsculapius, I fancy, excused himself in this matter on the ground that he professed to be arch-physician, not midwife. Cattle, too, similarly perished; so that it was believed that the whole race of animals was destined to become extinct. Then what shall I say of that memorable winter in which the weather was so incredibly severe, that in the Forum frightfully deep snow lay for forty days together, and the Tiber was frozen? Had such things happened in our time, what accusations we should have heard from our enemies! And that other great pestilence, which raged so long and carried off so many; what shall I say of it? Spite of all the drugs of Æsculapius, it only grew worse in its second year, till at last recourse was had to the Sibylline books,—a kind of oracle which, as Cicero says in his *De Divinatione*, owes significance to its interpreters, who make doubtful conjectures as they can or as they wish. In this instance, the cause of the plague was said to be that so many temples had been used as private residences. And thus Æsculapius for the present escaped the charge of either ignominious negligence or want of skill. But why were so many allowed to occupy sacred tenements without interference, unless because supplication had long been addressed in vain to such a crowd of gods, and so

by degrees the sacred places were deserted of worshippers, and being thus vacant, could without offence be put at least to some human uses? And the temples, which were at that time laboriously recognised and restored that the plague might be stayed, fell afterwards into disuse, and were again devoted to the same human uses. Had they not thus lapsed into obscurity, it could not have been pointed to as proof of Varro's great erudition, that in his work on sacred places he cites so many that were unknown. Meanwhile, the restoration of the temples procured no cure of the plague, but only a fine excuse for the gods.

18. The disasters suffered by the Romans in the Punic wars, which were not mitigated by the protection of the gods. In the Punic wars, again, when victory hung so long in the balance between the two kingdoms, when two powerful nations were straining every nerve and using all their resources against one another, how many smaller kingdoms were crushed, how many large and flourishing cities were demolished, how many states were overwhelmed and ruined, how many districts and lands far and near were desolated! How often were the victors on either side vanquished! What multitudes of men, both of those actually in arms and of others, were destroyed! What huge navies, too, were crippled in engagements, or were sunk by every kind of marine disaster! Were we to attempt to recount or mention these calamities, we should become writers of history. At that period Rome was mightily perturbed, and resorted to vain and ludicrous expedients. On the authority of the Sibylline books, the secular games were re-appointed, which had been inaugurated a century before, but had faded into oblivion in happier times. The games consecrated to the infernal gods were also renewed by the pontiffs; for they, too, had sunk

into disuse in the better times. And no wonder; for when they were renewed, the great abundance of dying men made all hell rejoice at its riches, and give itself up to sport: for certainly the ferocious wars, and disastrous quarrels, and bloody victories—now on one side, and now on the other—though most calamitous to men, afforded great sport and a rich banquet to the devils. But in the first Punic war there was no more disastrous event than the Roman defeat in which Regulus was taken. We made mention of him in the two former books as an incontestably great man, who had before conquered and subdued the Carthaginians, and who would have put an end to the first Punic war, had not an inordinate appetite for praise and glory prompted him to impose on the worn-out Carthaginians harder conditions than they could bear. If the unlooked-for captivity and unseemly bondage of this man, his fidelity to his oath, and his surpassingly cruel death, do not bring a blush to the face of the gods, it is true that they are brazen and bloodless. Nor were there wanting at that time very heavy disasters within the city itself. For the Tiber was extraordinarily flooded, and destroyed almost all the lower parts of the city; some buildings being carried away by the violence of the torrent, while others were soaked to rottenness by the water that stood round them even after the flood was gone. This visitation was followed by a fire which was still more destructive, for it consumed some of the loftier buildings round the Forum, and spared not even its own proper temple, that of Vesta, in which virgins chosen for this honour, or rather for this punishment, had been employed in conferring, as it were, everlasting life on fire, by ceaselessly feeding it with fresh fuel. But at the time we speak of, the fire in the temple was not content with being kept alive: it raged. And when the virgins, scared by its vehemence, were

unable to save those fatal images which had already brought destruction on three cities in which they had been received, Metellus the priest, forgetful of his own safety, rushed in and rescued the sacred things, though he was half roasted in doing so. For either the fire did not recognise even him, or else the goddess of fire was there,—a goddess who would not have fled from the fire supposing she had been there. But here you see how a man could be of greater service to Vesta than she could be to him. Now if these gods could not avert the fire from themselves, what help against flames or flood could they bring to the state of which they were the reputed guardians? Facts have shown that they were useless. These objections of ours would be idle if our adversaries maintained that their idols are consecrated rather as symbols of things eternal, than to secure the blessings of time; and that thus, though the symbols, like all material and visible things, might perish, no damage thereby resulted to the things for the sake of which they had been consecrated, while, as for the images themselves, they could be renewed again for the same purposes they had formerly served. But with lamentable blindness, they suppose that, through the intervention of perishable gods, the earthly well-being and temporal prosperity of the state can be preserved from perishing. And so, when they are reminded that even when the gods remained among them this well-being and prosperity were blighted, they blush to change the opinion they are unable to defend.

19. Of the calamity of the second Punic war, which consumed the strength of both parties. As to the second Punic war, it were tedious to recount the disasters it brought on both the nations engaged in so protracted and shifting a war, that (by the acknowledgment even of those writers who have made it their object not so

much to narrate the wars as to eulogize the dominion of Rome) the people who remained victorious were less like conquerors than conquered. For, when Hannibal poured out of Spain over the Pyrenees, and overran Gaul, and burst through the Alps, and during his whole course gathered strength by plundering and subduing as he went, and inundated Italy like a torrent, how bloody were the wars, and how continuous the engagements, that were fought! How often were the Romans vanquished! How many towns went over to the enemy, and how many were taken and subdued! What fearful battles there were, and how often did the defeat of the Romans shed lustre on the arms of Hannibal! And what shall I say of the wonderfully crushing defeat at Cannæ, where even Hannibal, cruel as he was, was yet sated with the blood of his bitterest enemies, and gave orders that they be spared? From this field of battle he sent to Carthage three bushels of gold rings, signifying that so much of the rank of Rome had that day fallen, that it was easier to give an idea of it by measure than by numbers; and that the frightful slaughter of the common rank and file whose bodies lay undistinguished by the ring, and who were numerous in proportion to their meanness, was rather to be conjectured than accurately reported. In fact, such was the scarcity of soldiers after this, that the Romans impressed their criminals on the promise of impunity, and their slaves by the bribe of liberty, and out of these infamous classes did not so much recruit as create an army. But these slaves, or, to give them all their titles, these freedmen who were enlisted to do battle for the republic of Rome, lacked arms. And so they took arms from the temples, as if the Romans were saying to their gods: Lay down those arms you have held so long in vain, if by chance our slaves may be able to use to purpose what you, our gods, have been impotent to use.

At that time, too, the public treasury was too low to pay the soldiers, and private resources were used for public purposes; and so generously did individuals contribute of their property, that, saving the gold ring and bulla which each wore, the pitiful mark of his rank, no senator, and much less any of the other orders and tribes, reserved any gold for his own use. But if in our day they were reduced to this poverty, who would be able to endure their reproaches, barely endurable as they are now, when more money is spent on actors for the sake of a superfluous gratification, than was then disbursed to the legions?

20. Of the destruction of the Saguntines, who received no help from the Roman gods, though perishing on account of their fidelity to Rome. But among all the disasters of the second Punic war, there occurred none more lamentable, or calculated to excite deeper complaint, than the fate of the Saguntines. This city of Spain, eminently friendly to Rome, was destroyed by its fidelity to the Roman people. For when Hannibal had broken treaty with the Romans, he sought occasion for provoking them to war, and accordingly made a fierce assault upon Saguntum. When this was reported at Rome, ambassadors were sent to Hannibal, urging him to raise the siege; and when this remonstrance was neglected, they proceeded to Carthage, lodged complaint against the breaking of the treaty, and returned to Rome without accomplishing their object. Meanwhile the siege went on; and in the eighth or ninth month, this opulent but ill-fated city, dear as it was to its own state and to Rome, was taken, and subjected to treatment which one cannot read, much less narrate, without horror. And yet, because it bears directly on the matter in hand, I will briefly touch upon it. First, then, famine wasted the Saguntines, so that

even human corpses were eaten by some: so at least it is recorded. Subsequently, when thoroughly worn out, that they might at least escape the ignominy of falling into the hands of Hannibal, they publicly erected a huge funeral pile, and cast themselves into its flames, while at the same time they slew their children and themselves with the sword. Could these gods, these debauchees and gourmands, whose mouths water for fat sacrifices, and whose lips utter lying divinations,—could they not do anything in a case like this? Could they not interfere for the preservation of a city closely allied to the Roman people, or prevent it perishing for its fidelity to that alliance of which they themselves had been the mediators? Saguntum, faithfully keeping the treaty it had entered into before these gods, and to which it had firmly bound itself by an oath, was besieged, taken, and destroyed by a perjured person. If afterwards, when Hannibal was close to the walls of Rome, it was the gods who terrified him with lightning and tempest, and drove him to a distance, why, I ask, did they not thus interfere before? For I make bold to say, that this demonstration with the tempest would have been more honourably made in defence of the allies of Rome—who were in danger on account of their reluctance to break faith with the Romans, and had no resources of their own—than in defence of the Romans themselves, who were fighting in their own cause, and had abundant resources to oppose Hannibal. If, then, they had been the guardians of Roman prosperity and glory, they would have preserved that glory from the stain of this Saguntine disaster; and how silly it is to believe that Rome was preserved from destruction at the hands of Hannibal by the guardian care of those gods who were unable to rescue the city of Saguntum from perishing through its fidelity to the alliance of Rome. If the population of Saguntum had been

Christian, and had suffered as it did for the Christian faith (though, of course, Christians would not have used fire and sword against their own persons), they would have suffered with that hope which springs from faith in Christ—the hope not of a brief temporal reward, but of unending and eternal bliss. What, then, will the advocates and apologists of these gods say in their defence, when charged with the blood of these Saguntines; for they are professedly worshipped and invoked for this very purpose of securing prosperity in this fleeting and transitory life? Can anything be said but what was alleged in the case of Regulus' death? For though there is a difference between the two cases, the one being an individual, the other a whole community, yet the cause of destruction was in both cases the keeping of their plighted troth. For it was this which made Regulus willing to return to his enemies, and this which made the Saguntines unwilling to revolt to their enemies. Does, then, the keeping of faith provoke the gods to anger? Or is it possible that not only individuals, but even entire communities, perish while the gods are propitious to them? Let our adversaries choose which alternative they will. If, on the one hand, those gods are enraged at the keeping of faith, let them enlist perjured persons as their worshippers. If, on the other hand, men and states can suffer great and terrible calamities, and at last perish while favoured by the gods, then does their worship not produce happiness as its fruit. Let those, therefore, who suppose that they have fallen into distress because their religious worship has been abolished, lay aside their anger; for it were quite possible that did the gods not only remain with them, but regard them with favour, they might yet be left to mourn an unhappy lot, or might, even like Regulus and the Saguntines, be horribly tormented, and at last perish miserably.

21. Of the ingratitude of Rome to Scipio, its deliverer, and of its manners during the period which Sallust describes as the best. Omitting many things, that I may not exceed the limits of the work I have proposed to myself, I come to the epoch between the second and last Punic wars, during which, according to Sallust, the Romans lived with the greatest virtue and concord. Now, in this period of virtue and harmony, the great Scipio, the liberator of Rome and Italy, who had with surprising ability brought to a close the second Punic war—that horrible, destructive, dangerous contest—who had defeated Hannibal and subdued Carthage, and whose whole life is said to have been dedicated to the gods, and cherished in their temples,—this Scipio, after such a triumph, was obliged to yield to the accusations of his enemies, and to leave his country, which his valour had saved and liberated, to spend the remainder of his days in the town of Liternum, so indifferent to a recall from exile, that he is said to have given orders that not even his remains should lie in his ungrateful country. It was at that time also that the proconsul Cn. Manlius, after subduing the Galatians, introduced into Rome the luxury of Asia, more destructive than all hostile armies. It was then that iron bedsteads and expensive carpets were first used; then, too, that female singers were admitted at banquets, and other licentious abominations were introduced. But at present I meant to speak, not of the evils men voluntarily practise, but of those they suffer in spite of themselves. So that the case of Scipio, who succumbed to his enemies, and died in exile from the country he had rescued, was mentioned by me as being pertinent to the present discussion; for this was the reward he received from those Roman gods whose temples he saved from Hannibal, and who are worshipped only for the sake of securing temporal happiness. But since

Sallust, as we have seen, declares that the manners of Rome were never better than at that time, I therefore judged it right to mention the Asiatic luxury then introduced, that it might be seen that what he says is true, only when that period is compared with the others, during which the morals were certainly worse, and the factions more violent. For at that time—I mean between the second and third Punic war—that notorious Lex Voconia was passed, which prohibited a man from making a woman, even an only daughter, his heir; than which law I am at a loss to conceive what could be more unjust. It is true that in the interval between these two Punic wars the misery of Rome was somewhat less. Abroad, indeed, their forces were consumed by wars, yet also consoled by victories; while at home there were not such disturbances as at other times. But when the last Punic war had terminated in the utter destruction of Rome's rival, which quickly succumbed to the other Scipio, who thus earned for himself the surname of Africanus, then the Roman republic was overwhelmed with such a host of ills, which sprang from the corrupt manners induced by prosperity and security, that the sudden overthrow of Carthage is seen to have injured Rome more seriously than her long-continued hostility. During the whole subsequent period down to the time of Cæsar Augustus, who seems to have entirely deprived the Romans of liberty,—a liberty, indeed, which in their own judgment was no longer glorious, but full of broils and dangers, and which now was quite enervated and languishing,—and who submitted all things again to the will of a monarch, and infused as it were a new life into the sickly old age of the republic, and inaugurated a fresh régime;—during this whole period, I say, many military disasters were sustained on a variety of occasions, all of which I here pass by. There was

specially the treaty of Numantia, blotted as it was with extreme disgrace; for the sacred chickens, they say, flew out of the coop, and thus augured disaster to Mancinus the consul; just as if, during all these years in which that little city of Numantia had withstood the besieging army of Rome, and had become a terror to the republic, the other generals had all marched against it under unfavourable auspices.

22. Of the edict of Mithridates, commanding that all Roman citizens found in Asia should be slain. These things, I say, I pass in silence; but I can by no means be silent regarding the order given by Mithridates, king of Asia, that on one day all Roman citizens residing anywhere in Asia (where great numbers of them were following their private business) should be put to death: and this order was executed. How miserable a spectacle was then presented, when each man was suddenly and treacherously murdered wherever he happened to be, in the field or on the road, in the town, in his own home, or in the street, in market or temple, in bed or at table! Think of the groans of the dying, the tears of the spectators, and even of the executioners themselves. For how cruel a necessity was it that compelled the hosts of these victims, not only to see these abominable butcheries in their own houses, but even to perpetrate them: to change their countenance suddenly from the bland kindness of friendship, and in the midst of peace set about the business of war; and, shall I say, give and receive wounds, the slain being pierced in body, the slayer in spirit! Had all these murdered persons, then, despised auguries? Had they neither public nor household gods to consult when they left their homes and set out on that fatal journey? If they had not, our adversaries have no reason to complain of these Christian times in this particular, since long ago the

Romans despised auguries as idle. If, on the other hand, they did consult omens, let them tell us what good they got thereby, even when such things were not prohibited, but authorized, by human, if not by divine law.

23. Of the internal disasters which vexed the Roman republic, and followed a portentous madness which seized all the domestic animals. But let us now mention, as succinctly as possible, those disasters which were still more vexing, because nearer home; I mean those discords which are erroneously called civil, since they destroy civil interests. The seditions had now become urban wars, in which blood was freely shed, and in which parties raged against one another, not with wrangling and verbal contention, but with physical force and arms. What a sea of Roman blood was shed, what desolations and devastations were occasioned in Italy by wars social, wars servile, wars civil! Before the Latins began the social war against Rome, all the animals used in the service of man—dogs, horses, asses, oxen, and all the rest that are subject to man—suddenly grew wild, and forgot their domesticated tameness, forsook their stalls and wandered at large, and could not be closely approached either by strangers or their own masters without danger. If this was a portent, how serious a calamity must have been portended by a plague which, whether portent or no, was in itself a serious calamity! Had it happened in our day, the heathen would have been more rabid against us than their animals were against them.
24. Of the civil dissension occasioned by the sedition of the Gracchi. The civil wars originated in the seditions which the Gracchi excited regarding the agrarian laws; for they were minded to divide among the people the

lands which were wrongfully possessed by the nobility. But to reform an abuse of so long standing was an enterprise full of peril, or rather, as the event proved, of destruction. For what disasters accompanied the death of the elder Gracchus! what slaughter ensued when, shortly after, the younger brother met the same fate! For noble and ignoble were indiscriminately massacred; and this not by legal authority and procedure, but by mobs and armed rioters. After the death of the younger Gracchus, the consul Lucius Opimius, who had given battle to him within the city, and had defeated and put to the sword both himself and his confederates, and had massacred many of the citizens, instituted a judicial examination of others, and is reported to have put to death as many as 3000 men. From this it may be gathered how many fell in the riotous encounters, when the result even of a judicial investigation was so bloody. The assassin of Gracchus himself sold his head to the consul for its weight in gold, such being the previous agreement. In this massacre, too, Marcus Fulvius, a man of consular rank, with all his children, was put to death.

25. Of the temple of Concord, which was erected by a decree of the senate on the scene of these seditions and massacres. A pretty decree of the senate it was, truly, by which the temple of Concord was built on the spot where that disastrous rising had taken place, and where so many citizens of every rank had fallen. I suppose it was that the monument of the Gracchi's punishment might strike the eye and affect the memory of the pleaders. But what was this but to deride the gods, by building a temple to that goddess who, had she been in the city, would not have suffered herself to be torn by such dissensions? Or was it that Concord was chargeable with that bloodshed because she had

deserted the minds of the citizens, and was therefore incarcerated in that temple? For if they had any regard to consistency, why did they not rather erect on that site a temple of Discord? Or is there a reason for Concord being a goddess while Discord is none? Does the distinction of Labeo hold here, who would have made the one a good, the other an evil deity?—a distinction which seems to have been suggested to him by the mere fact of his observing at Rome a temple to Fever as well as one to Health. But, on the same ground, Discord as well as Concord ought to be deified. A hazardous venture the Romans made in provoking so wicked a goddess, and in forgetting that the destruction of Troy had been occasioned by her taking offence. For, being indignant that she was not invited with the other gods [to the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis], she created dissension among the three goddesses by sending in the golden apple, which occasioned strife in heaven, victory to Venus, the rape of Helen, and the destruction of Troy. Wherefore, if she was perhaps offended that the Romans had not thought her worthy of a temple among the other gods in their city, and therefore disturbed the state with such tumults, to how much fiercer passion would she be roused when she saw the temple of her adversary erected on the scene of that massacre, or, in other words, on the scene of her own handiwork! Those wise and learned men are enraged at our laughing at these follies; and yet, being worshippers of good and bad divinities alike, they cannot escape this dilemma about Concord and Discord: either they have neglected the worship of these goddesses, and preferred Fever and War, to whom there are shrines erected of great antiquity, or they have worshipped them, and after all Concord has abandoned them, and Discord has tempestuously hurled them into civil wars.

26. Of the various kinds of wars which followed the building of the temple of Concord. But they supposed that, in erecting the temple of Concord within the view of the orators, as a memorial of the punishment and death of the Gracchi, they were raising an effectual obstacle to sedition. How much effect it had, is indicated by the still more deplorable wars that followed. For after this the orators endeavoured not to avoid the example of the Gracchi, but to surpass their projects; as did Lucius Saturninus, a tribune of the people, and Caius Servilius the prætor, and some time after Marcus Drusus, all of whom stirred seditions which first of all occasioned bloodshed, and then the social wars by which Italy was grievously injured, and reduced to a piteously desolate and wasted condition. Then followed the servile war and the civil wars; and in them what battles were fought, and what blood was shed, so that almost all the peoples of Italy, which formed the main strength of the Roman empire, were conquered as if they were barbarians! Then even historians themselves find it difficult to explain how the servile war was begun by a very few, certainly less than seventy gladiators, what numbers of fierce and cruel men attached themselves to these, how many of the Roman generals this band defeated, and how it laid waste many districts and cities. And that was not the only servile war: the province of Macedonia, and subsequently Sicily and the sea-coast, were also depopulated by bands of slaves. And who can adequately describe either the horrible atrocities which the pirates first committed, or the wars they afterwards maintained against Rome?

27. Of the civil war between Marius and Sylla. But when Marius, stained with the blood of his fellow-citizens, whom the rage of party had sacrificed, was in his turn

vanquished and driven from the city, it had scarcely time to breathe freely, when, to use the words of Cicero, "Cinna and Marius together returned and took possession of it. Then, indeed, the foremost men in the state were put to death, its lights quenched. Sylla afterwards avenged this cruel victory; but we need not say with what loss of life, and with what ruin to the republic." For of this vengeance, which was more destructive than if the crimes which it punished had been committed with impunity, Lucan says: "The cure was excessive, and too closely resembled the disease. The guilty perished, but when none but the guilty survived: and then private hatred and anger, unbridled by law, were allowed free indulgence." In that war between Marius and Sylla, besides those who fell in the field of battle, the city, too, was filled with corpses in its streets, squares, markets, theatres, and temples; so that it is not easy to reckon whether the victors slew more before or after victory, that they might be, or because they were, victors. As soon as Marius triumphed, and returned from exile, besides the butcheries everywhere perpetrated, the head of the consul Octavius was exposed on the rostrum; Cæsar and Fimbria were assassinated in their own houses; the two Crassi, father and son, were murdered in one another's sight; Bebius and Numitorius were disembowelled by being dragged with hooks; Catulus escaped the hands of his enemies by drinking poison; Merula, the flamen of Jupiter, cut his veins and made a libation of his own blood to his god. Moreover, every one whose salutation Marius did not answer by giving his hand, was at once cut down before his face.

28. Of the victory of Sylla, the avenger of the cruelties of Marius. Then followed the victory of Sylla, the so-called avenger of the cruelties of Marius. But not only was his

victory purchased with great bloodshed; but when hostilities were finished, hostility survived, and the subsequent peace was bloody as the war. To the former and still recent massacres of the elder Marius, the younger Marius and Carbo, who belonged to the same party, added greater atrocities. For when Sylla approached, and they despaired not only of victory, but of life itself, they made a promiscuous massacre of friends and foes. And, not satisfied with staining every corner of Rome with blood, they besieged the senate, and led forth the senators to death from the curia as from a prison. Mucius Scævola the pontiff was slain at the altar of Vesta, which he had clung to because no spot in Rome was more sacred than her temple; and his blood well-nigh extinguished the fire which was kept alive by the constant care of the virgins. Then Sylla entered the city victorious, after having slaughtered in the Villa Publica, not by combat, but by an order, 7000 men who had surrendered, and were therefore unarmed; so fierce was the rage of peace itself, even after the rage of war was extinct. Moreover, throughout the whole city every partisan of Sylla slew whom he pleased, so that the number of deaths went beyond computation, till it was suggested to Sylla that he should allow some to survive, that the victors might not be destitute of subjects. Then this furious and promiscuous licence to murder was checked, and much relief was expressed at the publication of the prescription list, containing though it did the death-warrant of two thousand men of the highest ranks, the senatorial and equestrian. The large number was indeed saddening, but it was consolatory that a limit was fixed; nor was the grief at the numbers slain so great as the joy that the rest were secure. But this very security, hard-hearted as it was, could not but bemoan the exquisite torture applied to some of those who had

been doomed to die. For one was torn to pieces by the unarmed hands of the executioners; men treating a living man more savagely than wild beasts are used to tear an abandoned corpse. Another had his eyes dug out, and his limbs cut away bit by bit, and was forced to live a long while, or rather to die a long while, in such torture. Some celebrated cities were put up to auction, like farms; and one was collectively condemned to slaughter, just as an individual criminal would be condemned to death. These things were done in peace when the war was over, not that victory might be more speedily obtained, but that, after being obtained, it might not be thought lightly of. Peace vied with war in cruelty, and surpassed it: for while war overthrew armed hosts, peace slew the defenceless. War gave liberty to him who was attacked, to strike if he could; peace granted to the survivors not life, but an unresisting death.

29. A comparison of the disasters which Rome experienced during the Gothic and Gallic invasions, with those occasioned by the authors of the civil wars. What fury of foreign nations, what barbarian ferocity, can compare with this victory of citizens over citizens? Which was more disastrous, more hideous, more bitter to Rome: the recent Gothic and the old Gallic invasion, or the cruelty displayed by Marius and Sylla and their partisans against men who were members of the same body as themselves? The Gauls, indeed, massacred all the senators they found in any part of the city except the Capitol, which alone was defended; but they at least sold life to those who were in the Capitol, though they might have starved them out if they could not have stormed it. The Goths, again, spared so many senators, that it is the more surprising that they killed any. But Sylla, while Marius was still living, established himself

as conqueror in the Capitol, which the Gauls had not violated, and thence issued his death-warrants; and when Marius had escaped by flight, though destined to return more fierce and bloodthirsty than ever, Sylla issued from the Capitol even decrees of the senate for the slaughter and confiscation of the property of many citizens. Then, when Sylla left, what did the Marian faction hold sacred or spare, when they gave no quarter even to Mucius, a citizen, a senator, a pontiff, and though clasping in piteous embrace the very altar in which, they say, reside the destinies of Rome? And that final proscription list of Sylla's, not to mention countless other massacres, despatched more senators than the Goths could even plunder.

30. Of the connection of the wars which with great severity and frequency followed one another before the advent of Christ. With what effrontery, then, with what assurance, with what impudence, with what folly, or rather insanity, do they refuse to impute these disasters to their own gods, and impute the present to our Christ! These bloody civil wars, more distressing, by the avowal of their own historians, than any foreign wars, and which were pronounced to be not merely calamitous, but absolutely ruinous to the republic, began long before the coming of Christ, and gave birth to one another; so that a concatenation of unjustifiable causes led from the wars of Marius and Sylla to those of Sertorius and Catiline, of whom the one was proscribed, the other brought up by Sylla; from this to the war of Lepidus and Catulus, of whom the one wished to rescind, the other to defend the acts of Sylla; from this to the war of Pompey and Cæsar, of whom Pompey had been a partisan of Sylla, whose power he equalled or even surpassed, while Cæsar condemned Pompey's power because it was not his own, and yet

exceeded it when Pompey was defeated and slain. From him the chain of civil wars extended to the second Cæsar, afterwards called Augustus, and in whose reign Christ was born. For even Augustus himself waged many civil wars; and in these wars many of the foremost men perished, among them that skilful manipulator of the republic, Cicero. Caius [Julius] Cæsar, when he had conquered Pompey, though he used his victory with clemency, and granted to men of the opposite faction both life and honours, was suspected of aiming at royalty, and was assassinated in the curia by a party of noble senators, who had conspired to defend the liberty of the republic. His power was then coveted by Antony, a man of very different character, polluted and debased by every kind of vice, who was strenuously resisted by Cicero on the same plea of defending the liberty of the republic. At this juncture that other Cæsar, the adopted son of Caius, and afterwards, as I said, known by the name of Augustus, had made his début as a young man of remarkable genius. This youthful Cæsar was favoured by Cicero, in order that his influence might counteract that of Antony; for he hoped that Cæsar would overthrow and blast the power of Antony, and establish a free state,—so blind and unaware of the future was he: for that very young man, whose advancement and influence he was fostering, allowed Cicero to be killed as the seal of an alliance with Antony, and subjected to his own rule the very liberty of the republic in defence of which he had made so many orations.

31. That it is effrontery to impute the present troubles to Christ and the prohibition of polytheistic worship, since even when the gods were worshipped such calamities befell the people. Let those who have no gratitude to Christ for His great benefits, blame their own gods for

these heavy disasters. For certainly when these occurred the altars of the gods were kept blazing, and there rose the mingled fragrance of "Sabæan incense and fresh garlands;" the priests were clothed with honour, the shrines were maintained in splendour; sacrifices, games, sacred ecstasies, were common in the temples; while the blood of the citizens was being so freely shed, not only in remote places, but among the very altars of the gods. Cicero did not choose to seek sanctuary in a temple, because Mucius had sought it there in vain. But they who most unpardonably calumniate this Christian era, are the very men who either themselves fled for asylum to the places specially dedicated to Christ, or were led there by the barbarians that they might be safe. In short, not to recapitulate the many instances I have cited, and not to add to their number others which it were tedious to enumerate, this one thing I am persuaded of, and this every impartial judgment will readily acknowledge, that if the human race had received Christianity before the Punic wars, and if the same desolating calamities which these wars brought upon Europe and Africa had followed the introduction of Christianity, there is no one of those who now accuse us who would not have attributed them to our religion. How intolerable would their accusations have been, at least so far as the Romans are concerned, if the Christian religion had been received and diffused prior to the invasion of the Gauls, or to the ruinous floods and fires which desolated Rome, or to those most calamitous of all events, the civil wars! And those other disasters, which were of so strange a nature that they were reckoned prodigies, had they happened since the Christian era, to whom but to the Christians would they have imputed these as crimes? I do not speak of those things which were rather surprising than hurtful,—oxen speaking, unborn

infants articulating some words in their mothers' wombs, serpents flying, hens and women being changed into the other sex; and other similar prodigies which, whether true or false, are recorded not in their imaginative, but in their historical works, and which do not injure, but only astonish men. But when it rained earth, when it rained chalk, when it rained stones—not hailstones, but real stones—this certainly was calculated to do serious damage. We have read in their books that the fires of Etna, pouring down from the top of the mountain to the neighbouring shore, caused the sea to boil, so that rocks were burnt up, and the pitch of ships began to run,—a phenomenon incredibly surprising, but at the same time no less hurtful. By the same violent heat, they relate that on another occasion Sicily was filled with cinders, so that the houses of the city Catina were destroyed and buried under them,—a calamity which moved the Romans to pity them, and remit their tribute for that year. One may also read that Africa, which had by that time become a province of Rome, was visited by a prodigious multitude of locusts, which, after consuming the fruit and foliage of the trees, were driven into the sea in one vast and measureless cloud; so that when they were drowned and cast upon the shore the air was polluted, and so serious a pestilence produced that in the kingdom of Masinissa alone they say there perished 800,000 persons, besides a much greater number in the neighbouring districts. At Utica they assure us that, of 30,000 soldiers then garrisoning it, there survived only ten. Yet which of these disasters, suppose they happened now, would not be attributed to the Christian religion by those who thus thoughtlessly accuse us, and whom we are compelled to answer? And yet to their own gods they attribute none of these things, though they worship them for the sake of escaping lesser

calamities of the same kind, and do not reflect that they who formerly worshipped them were not preserved from these serious disasters.

