

# The City of God, Volume I



**Bishop of Hippo Saint  
Augustine**

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# The City of God, Volume I

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

"Rome having been stormed and sacked by the Goths under Alaric their king,<sup>[1]</sup> the worshippers of false gods, or pagans, as we commonly call them, made an attempt to attribute this calamity to the Christian religion, and began to blaspheme the true God with even more than their wonted bitterness and acerbity. It was this which kindled my zeal for the house of God, and prompted me to undertake the defence of the city of God against the charges and misrepresentations of its assailants. This work was in my hands for several years, owing to the interruptions occasioned by many other affairs which had a prior claim on my attention, and which I could not defer. However, this great undertaking was at last completed in twenty-two books. Of these, the first five refute those who fancy that the polytheistic worship is necessary in order to secure worldly prosperity, and that all these overwhelming calamities have befallen us in consequence of its prohibition. In the following five books I address myself to those who admit that such calamities have at all times attended, and will at all times attend, the human race, and that they constantly recur in forms more or less disastrous, varying only in the scenes, occasions, and persons on whom they light, but, while admitting this, maintain that the worship of the gods is advantageous for the life to come. In these ten books, then, I refute these two opinions, which are as groundless as they are antagonistic to the Christian religion.

"But that no one might have occasion to say, that though I had refuted the tenets of other men, I had omitted to establish my own, I devote to this object the second part of this work, which comprises twelve books, although I have not scrupled, as occasion offered, either to advance my own opinions in the first ten books, or to demolish the arguments of my opponents in the last twelve. Of these twelve books, the first four contain an account of the origin of these two cities—the city of God, and the city of the world. The second four treat of their history or progress; the third and last four, of their deserved destinies. And so, though all these twenty-two books refer to both cities, yet I have named them after the better city, and called them The City of God."

Such is the account given by Augustine himself<sup>[2]</sup> of the occasion and plan of this his greatest work. But in addition to this explicit information, we learn from the correspondence<sup>[3]</sup> of Augustine, that it was due to the importunity of his friend Marcellinus that this defence of Christianity extended beyond the limits of a few letters. Shortly before the fall of Rome, Marcellinus had been sent to Africa by the Emperor Honorius to arrange a settlement of the differences between the Donatists and the Catholics. This brought him into contact not only with Augustine, but with Volusian, the proconsul of Africa, and a man of rare intelligence and candour. Finding that Volusian, though as yet a pagan, took an interest in the Christian religion, Marcellinus set his heart on converting him to the true faith. The details of the subsequent significant intercourse between the learned and courtly bishop and the two imperial statesmen, are unfortunately almost entirely lost to us; but the impression conveyed by the extant correspondence is, that Marcellinus was the means of bringing his two friends into communication with one another. The first overture was on Augustine's part, in the shape of a simple and manly request that Volusian would carefully peruse the Scriptures, accompanied by a frank offer to do his

best to solve any difficulties that might arise in such a course of inquiry. Volusian accordingly enters into correspondence with Augustine; and in order to illustrate the kind of difficulties experienced by men in his position, he gives some graphic notes of a conversation in which he had recently taken part at a gathering of some of his friends. The difficulty to which most weight is attached in this letter, is the apparent impossibility of believing in the Incarnation. But a letter which Marcellinus immediately despatched to Augustine, urging him to reply to Volusian at large, brought the intelligence that the difficulties and objections to Christianity were thus limited merely out of a courteous regard to the preciousness of the bishop's time, and the vast number of his engagements. This letter, in short, brought out the important fact, that a removal of speculative doubts would not suffice for the conversion of such men as Volusian, whose life was one with the life of the empire. Their difficulties were rather political, historical, and social. They could not see how the reception of the Christian rule of life was compatible with the interests of Rome as the mistress of the world.<sup>[4]</sup> And thus Augustine was led to take a more distinct and wider view of the whole relation which Christianity bore to the old state of things,—moral, political, philosophical, and religious,—and was gradually drawn on to undertake the elaborate work now presented to the English reader, and which may more appropriately than any other of his writings be called his masterpiece<sup>[5]</sup> or life-work. It was begun the very year of Marcellinus' death, A.D. 413, and was issued in detached portions from time to time, until its completion in the year 426. It thus occupied the maturest years of Augustine's life—from his fifty-ninth to his seventy-second year.<sup>[6]</sup>

From this brief sketch, it will be seen that though the accompanying work is essentially an Apology, the Apologetic of Augustine can be no

mere rehabilitation of the somewhat threadbare, if not effete, arguments of Justin and Tertullian.<sup>[7]</sup> In fact, as Augustine considered what was required of him,—to expound the Christian faith, and justify it to enlightened men; to distinguish it from, and show its superiority to, all those forms of truth, philosophical or popular, which were then striving for the mastery, or at least for standing-room; to set before the world's eye a vision of glory that might win the regard even of men who were dazzled by the fascinating splendour of a world-wide empire,—he recognised that a task was laid before him to which even his powers might prove unequal,—a task certainly which would afford ample scope for his learning, dialectic, philosophical grasp and acumen, eloquence, and faculty of exposition.

But it is the occasion of this great Apology which invests it at once with grandeur and vitality. After more than eleven hundred years of steady and triumphant progress, Rome had been taken and sacked. It is difficult for us to appreciate, impossible to overestimate, the shock which was thus communicated from centre to circumference of the whole known world. It was generally believed, not only by the heathen, but also by many of the most liberal-minded of the Christians, that the destruction of Rome would be the prelude to the destruction of the world.<sup>[8]</sup> Even Jerome, who might have been supposed to be embittered against the proud mistress of the world by her inhospitality to himself, cannot conceal his profound emotion on hearing of her fall. "A terrible rumour," he says, "reaches me from the West, telling of Rome besieged, bought for gold, besieged again, life and property perishing together. My voice falters, sobs stifle the words I dictate; for she is a captive, that city which enthralled the world."<sup>[9]</sup> Augustine is never so theatrical as Jerome in the expression of his feeling, but he is equally explicit in lamenting the fall of Rome as a great calamity; and while he does not

scruple to ascribe her recent disgrace to the profligate manners, the effeminacy, and the pride of her citizens, he is not without hope that, by a return to the simple, hardy, and honourable mode of life which characterized the early Romans, she may still be restored to much of her former prosperity.<sup>[10]</sup> But as Augustine contemplates the ruins of Rome's greatness, and feels, in common with all the world at this crisis, the instability of the strongest governments, the insufficiency of the most authoritative statesmanship, there hovers over these ruins the splendid vision of the city of God "coming down out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband." The old social system is crumbling away on all sides, but in its place he seems to see a pure Christendom arising. He sees that human history and human destiny are not wholly identified with the history of any earthly power—not though it be as cosmopolitan as the empire of Rome.<sup>[11]</sup> He directs the attention of men to the fact that there is another kingdom on earth,—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He teaches men to take profounder views of history, and shows them how from the first the city of God, or community of God's people, has lived alongside of the kingdoms of this world and their glory, and has been silently increasing, "*crescit occulto velut arbor ævo.*" He demonstrates that the superior morality, the true doctrine, the heavenly origin of this city, ensure its success; and over against this, he depicts the silly or contradictory theorizings of the pagan philosophers, and the unhinged morals of the people, and puts it to all candid men to say, whether in the presence of so manifestly sufficient a cause for Rome's downfall, there is room for imputing it to the spread of Christianity. He traces the antagonism of these two grand communities of rational creatures, back to their first divergence in the fall of the angels, and down to the consummation of all things in the last judgment and eternal destination of the good and evil. In other words,

the city of God is "the first real effort to produce a philosophy of history,"<sup>[12]</sup> to exhibit historical events in connection with their true causes, and in their real sequence. This plan of the work is not only a great conception, but it is accompanied with many practical advantages; the chief of which is, that it admits, and even requires, a full treatment of those doctrines of our faith that are more directly historical,—the doctrines of creation, the fall, the incarnation, the connection between the Old and New Testaments, and the doctrine of "the last things."<sup>[13]</sup>

The effect produced by this great work it is impossible to determine with accuracy. Beugnot, with an absoluteness which we should condemn as presumption in any less competent authority, declares that its effect can only have been very slight.<sup>[14]</sup> Probably its effect would be silent and slow; telling first upon cultivated minds, and only indirectly upon the people. Certainly its effect must have been weakened by the interrupted manner of its publication. It is an easier task to estimate its intrinsic value. But on this also patristic and literary authorities widely differ. Dupin admits that it is very pleasant reading, owing to the surprising variety of matters which are introduced to illustrate and forward the argument, but censures the author for discussing very useless questions, and for adducing reasons which could satisfy no one who was not already convinced.<sup>[15]</sup> Huet also speaks of the book as "un amas confus d'excellents materiaux; c'est de l'or en barre et en lingots."<sup>[16]</sup> L'Abbé Flottes censures these opinions as unjust, and cites with approbation the unqualified eulogy of Pressensé.<sup>[17]</sup> But probably the popularity of the book is its best justification. This popularity may be measured by the circumstance that, between the year 1467 and the end of the fifteenth century, no fewer than twenty editions were called for, that is to say, a fresh edition every eighteen months.<sup>[18]</sup> And in the interesting series of letters that passed between Ludovicus Vives and Erasmus, who had



engaged him to write a commentary on the *City of God* for his edition of Augustine's works, we find Vives pleading for a separate edition of this work, on the plea that, of all the writings of Augustine, it was almost the only one read by patristic students, and might therefore naturally be expected to have a much wider circulation.<sup>[19]</sup>

If it were asked to what this popularity is due, we should be disposed to attribute it mainly to the great variety of ideas, opinions, and facts that are here brought before the reader's mind. Its importance as a contribution to the history of opinion cannot be overrated. We find in it not only indications or explicit enunciation of the author's own views upon almost every important topic which occupied his thoughts, but also a compendious exhibition of the ideas which most powerfully influenced the life of that age. It thus becomes, as Poujoulat says, "comme l'encyclopédie du cinquième siècle." All that is valuable, together with much indeed that is not so, in the religion and philosophy of the classical nations of antiquity, is reviewed. And on some branches of these subjects it has, in the judgment of one well qualified to judge, "preserved more than the whole surviving Latin literature." It is true we are sometimes wearied by the too elaborate refutation of opinions which to a modern mind seem self-evident absurdities; but if these opinions were actually prevalent in the fifth century, the historical inquirer will not quarrel with the form in which his information is conveyed, nor will commit the absurdity of attributing to Augustine the foolishness of these opinions, but rather the credit of exploding them. That Augustine is a well-informed and impartial critic, is evinced by the courteousness and candour which he uniformly displays to his opponents, by the respect he won from the heathen themselves, and by his own early life. The most rigorous criticism has found him at fault regarding matters of fact only in some very rare instances, which can be easily accounted for.

His learning would not indeed stand comparison with what is accounted such in our day: his life was too busy, and too devoted to the poor and to the spiritually necessitous, to admit of any extraordinary acquisition. He had access to no literature but the Latin; or at least he had only sufficient Greek to enable him to refer to Greek authors on points of importance, and not enough to enable him to read their writings with ease and pleasure.<sup>[20]</sup> But he had a profound knowledge of his own time, and a familiar acquaintance not only with the Latin poets, but with many other authors, some of whose writings are now lost to us, save the fragments preserved through his quotations.

But the interest attaching to the *City of God* is not merely historical. It is the earnestness and ability with which he develops his own philosophical and theological views which gradually fascinate the reader, and make him see why the world has set this among the few greatest books of all time. The fundamental lines of the Augustinian theology are here laid down in a comprehensive and interesting form. Never was thought so abstract expressed in language so popular. He handles metaphysical problems with the unembarrassed ease of Plato, with all Cicero's accuracy and acuteness, and more than Cicero's profundity. He is never more at home than when exposing the incompetency of Neoplatonism, or demonstrating the harmony of Christian doctrine and true philosophy. And though there are in the *City of God*, as in all ancient books, things that seem to us childish and barren, there are also the most surprising anticipations of modern speculation. There is an earnest grappling with those problems which are continually re-opened because they underlie man's relation to God and the spiritual world,—the problems which are not peculiar to any one century. As we read these animated discussions,

"The fourteen centuries fall away  
Between us and the Afric saint,  
And at his side we urge, to-day,  
The immemorial quest and old complaint.  
No outward sign to us is given,  
From sea or earth comes no reply;  
Hushed as the warm Numidian heaven  
He vainly questioned bends our frozen sky."

It is true, the style of the book is not all that could be desired: there are passages which can possess an interest only to the antiquarian; there are

others with nothing to redeem them but the glow of their eloquence; there are many repetitions; there is an occasional use of arguments "plus ingenieux que solides," as M. Saisset says. Augustine's great admirer, Erasmus, does not scruple to call him a writer "obscuræ subtilitatis et parum amœnæ prolixitatis;"<sup>[21]</sup> but "the toil of penetrating the apparent obscurities will be rewarded by finding a real wealth of insight and enlightenment." Some who have read the opening chapters of the *City of God*, may have considered it would be a waste of time to proceed; but no one, we are persuaded, ever regretted reading it all. The book has its faults; but it effectually introduces us to the most influential of theologians, and the greatest popular teacher; to a genius that cannot nod for many lines together; to a reasoner whose dialectic is more formidable, more keen and sifting, than that of Socrates or Aquinas; to a saint whose ardent and genuine devotional feeling bursts up through the severest argumentation; to a man whose kindness and wit, universal sympathies and breadth of intelligence, lend piquancy and vitality to the most abstract dissertation.

The propriety of publishing a translation of so choice a specimen of ancient literature needs no defence. As Poujoulat very sensibly remarks, there are not a great many men now-a-days who will read a work in Latin of twenty-two books. Perhaps there are fewer still who ought to do so. With our busy neighbours in France, this work has been a prime favourite for 400 years. There may be said to be eight independent translations of it into the French tongue, though some of these are *in part* merely revisions. One of these translations has gone through as many as four editions. The most recent is that which forms part of the Nisard series; but the best, so far as we have seen, is that of the accomplished Professor of Philosophy in the College of France, Emile Saisset. This translation is indeed all that can be desired: here and there

an omission occurs, and about one or two renderings a difference of opinion may exist; but the exceeding felicity and spirit of the whole show it to have been a labour of love, the fond homage of a disciple proud of his master. The preface of M. Saisset is one of the most valuable contributions ever made to the understanding of Augustine's philosophy.<sup>[22]</sup>

Of English translations there has been an unaccountable poverty. Only one exists,<sup>[23]</sup> and this so exceptionally bad, so unlike the racy translations of the seventeenth century in general, so inaccurate, and so frequently unintelligible, that it is not impossible it may have done something towards giving the English public a distaste for the book itself. That the present translation also might be improved, we know; that many men were fitter for the task, on the score of scholarship, we are very sensible; but that any one would have executed it with intenser affection and veneration for the author, we are not prepared to admit. A few notes have been added where it appeared to be necessary. Some are original, some from the Benedictine Augustine, and the rest from the elaborate commentary of Vives.<sup>[24]</sup>

THE EDITOR.

GLASGOW, 1871.

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# **THE CITY OF GOD.**

## BOOK FIRST.

### ARGUMENT.

AUGUSTINE CENSURES THE PAGANS, WHO ATTRIBUTED THE CALAMITIES OF THE WORLD, AND ESPECIALLY THE RECENT SACK OF ROME BY THE GOTHs, TO THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND ITS PROHIBITION OF THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS. HE SPEAKS OF THE BLESSINGS AND ILLS OF LIFE, WHICH THEN, AS ALWAYS, HAPPENED TO GOOD AND BAD MEN ALIKE. FINALLY, HE REBUKES THE SHAMELESSNESS OF THOSE WHO CAST UP TO THE CHRISTIANS THAT THEIR WOMEN HAD BEEN VIOLATED BY THE SOLDIERS.

PREFACE, EXPLAINING HIS DESIGN IN UNDERTAKING THIS WORK.

The glorious city of God is my theme in this work, which you, my dearest son Marcellinus,<sup>[25]</sup> suggested, and which is due to you by my promise. I have undertaken its defence against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city,—a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until "righteousness shall return unto judgment,"<sup>[26]</sup> and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace. A great work this, and an arduous; but God is my helper. For I am aware what ability is requisite to persuade the proud how great is the virtue of humility, which raises us, not by a quite human arrogance, but by a divine grace, above all earthly dignities that totter on this shifting scene. For the King and Founder of this city of which we speak, has in Scripture uttered to His people a dictum of the divine law in these words: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."<sup>[27]</sup> But this, which is God's prerogative, the inflated ambition of a proud spirit also affects, and dearly loves that this be numbered among its attributes, to

"Show pity to the humbled soul,  
And crush the sons of pride."[\[28\]](#)

And therefore, as the plan of this work we have undertaken requires, and as occasion offers, we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule.

1. *Of the adversaries of the name of Christ, whom the barbarians for Christ's sake spared when they stormed the city.*

For to this earthly city belong the enemies against whom I have to defend the city of God. Many of them, indeed, being reclaimed from their ungodly error, have become sufficiently creditable citizens of this city; but many are so inflamed with hatred against it, and are so ungrateful to its Redeemer for His signal benefits, as to forget that they would now be unable to utter a single word to its prejudice, had they not found in its sacred places, as they fled from the enemy's steel, that life in which they now boast themselves. Are not those very Romans, who were spared by the barbarians through their respect for Christ, become enemies to the name of Christ? The reliquaries of the martyrs and the churches of the apostles bear witness to this; for in the sack of the city they were open sanctuary for all who fled to them, whether Christian or Pagan. To their very threshold the bloodthirsty enemy raged; there his murderous fury owned a limit. Thither did such of the enemy as had any pity convey those to whom they had given quarter, lest any less mercifully disposed might fall upon them. And, indeed, when even those murderers who everywhere else showed themselves pitiless came to these spots where that was forbidden which the licence of war permitted in every other place, their furious rage for slaughter was bridled, and their eagerness to take prisoners was quenched. Thus escaped multitudes who now reproach the Christian religion, and impute to Christ the ills that have befallen their city; but the preservation of their own life—a boon which they owe to the respect entertained for Christ by the barbarians—they attribute not to our Christ, but to their own good luck. They ought rather, had they any right perceptions, to attribute the severities and hardships inflicted by their enemies, to that divine providence which is wont to reform the depraved manners of men by chastisement, and which exercises with similar afflictions the righteous and praiseworthy,—either translating them, when they have passed through the trial, to a better world, or detaining them still on earth for ulterior purposes. And they ought to

attribute it to the spirit of these Christian times, that, contrary to the custom of war, these bloodthirsty barbarians spared them, and spared them for Christ's sake, whether this mercy was actually shown in promiscuous places, or in those places specially dedicated to Christ's name, and of which the very largest were selected as sanctuaries, that full scope might thus be given to the expansive compassion which desired that a large multitude might find shelter there. Therefore ought they to give God thanks, and with sincere confession flee for refuge to His name, that so they may escape the punishment of eternal fire—they who with lying lips took upon them this name, that they might escape the punishment of present destruction. For of those whom you see insolently and shamelessly insulting the servants of Christ, there are numbers who would not have escaped that destruction and slaughter had they not pretended that they themselves were Christ's servants. Yet now, in ungrateful pride and most impious madness, and at the risk of being punished in everlasting darkness, they perversely oppose that name under which they fraudulently protected themselves for the sake of enjoying the light of this brief life.

*2. That it is quite contrary to the usage of war, that the victors should spare the vanquished for the sake of their gods.*

There are histories of numberless wars, both before the building of Rome and since its rise and the extension of its dominion: let these be read, and let one instance be cited in which, when a city had been taken by foreigners, the victors spared those who were found to have fled for sanctuary to the temples of their gods;<sup>[29]</sup> or one instance in which a barbarian general gave orders that none should be put to the sword who had been found in this or that temple. Did not Æneas see

"Dying Priam at the shrine,

Staining the hearth he made divine?"<sup>[30]</sup>

Did not Diomedes and Ulysses



"Drag with red hands, the sentry slain,  
Her fateful image from your fane,  
Her chaste locks touch, and stain with gore  
The virgin coronal she wore?"<sup>[31]</sup>

Neither is that true which follows, that  
"Thenceforth the tide of fortune changed,  
And Greece grew weak."<sup>[32]</sup>

For after this they conquered and destroyed Troy with fire and sword; after this they beheaded Priam as he fled to the altars. Neither did Troy perish because it lost Minerva. For what had Minerva herself first lost, that she should perish? Her guards perhaps? No doubt; just her guards. For as soon as they were slain, she could be stolen. It was not, in fact, the men who were preserved by the image, but the image by the men. How, then, was she invoked to defend the city and the citizens, she who could not defend her own defenders?

3. *That the Romans did not show their usual sagacity when they trusted that they would be benefited by the gods who had been unable to defend Troy.*

And these be the gods to whose protecting care the Romans were delighted to entrust their city! O too, too piteous mistake! And they are enraged at us when we speak thus about their gods, though, so far from being enraged at their own writers, they part with money to learn what they say; and, indeed, the very teachers of these authors are reckoned worthy of a salary from the public purse, and of other honours. There is Virgil, who is read by boys, in order that this great poet, this most famous and approved of all poets, may impregnate their virgin minds, and may not readily be forgotten by them, according to that saying of Horace,

"The fresh cask long keeps its first tang."<sup>[33]</sup>

Well, in this Virgil, I say, Juno is introduced as hostile to the Trojans, and stirring up Æolus, the king of the winds, against them in the words,  
"A race I hate now ploughs the sea,  
Transporting Troy to Italy,  
And home-gods conquered."<sup>[34]</sup>...

And ought prudent men to have entrusted the defence of Rome to these conquered gods? But it will be said, this was only the saying of Juno, who, like an angry woman, did not know what she was saying. What, then, says Æneas himself,—Æneas who is so often designated "pious?" Does he not say,

"Lo! Panthus, 'scaped from death by flight,  
Priest of Apollo on the height,  
His conquered gods with trembling hands

He bears, and shelter swift demands?"<sup>[35]</sup>

Is it not clear that the gods (whom he does not scruple to call "conquered") were rather entrusted to Æneas than he to them, when it is said to him,

"The gods of her domestic shrines

Your country to your care consigns?"<sup>[36]</sup>

If, then, Virgil says that the gods were such as these, and were conquered, and that when conquered they could not escape except under the protection of a man, what madness is it to suppose that Rome had been wisely entrusted to these guardians, and could not have been taken unless it had lost them! Indeed, to worship conquered gods as protectors and champions, what is this but to worship, not good divinities, but evil omens?<sup>[37]</sup> Would it not be wiser to believe, not that Rome would never have fallen into so great a calamity had not they first perished, but rather that they would have perished long since had not Rome preserved them as long as she could? For who does not see, when he thinks of it, what a foolish assumption it is that they could not be vanquished under vanquished defenders, and that they only perished because they had lost their guardian gods, when, indeed, the only cause of their perishing was that they chose for their protectors gods condemned to perish? The poets, therefore, when they composed and sang these things about the conquered gods, had no intention to invent falsehoods, but uttered, as honest men, what the truth extorted from them. This, however, will be carefully and copiously discussed in another and more fitting place. Meanwhile I will briefly, and to the best of my ability, explain what I meant to say about these ungrateful men who blasphemously impute to Christ the calamities which they deservedly suffer in consequence of their own wicked ways, while that which is for Christ's sake spared them in spite of their wickedness they do not even take the trouble to notice; and in their mad and blasphemous insolence, they use against His name those very lips

wherewith they falsely claimed that same name that their lives might be spared. In the places consecrated to Christ, where for His sake no enemy would injure them, they restrained their tongues that they might be safe and protected; but no sooner do they emerge from these sanctuaries, than they unbridle these tongues to hurl against Him curses full of hate.

4. *Of the asylum of Juno in Troy, which saved no one from the Greeks; and of the churches of the apostles, which protected from the barbarians all who fled to them.*

Troy itself, the mother of the Roman people, was not able, as I have said, to protect its own citizens in the sacred places of their gods from the fire and sword of the Greeks, though the Greeks worshipped the same gods. Not only so, but

"Phœnix and Ulysses fell  
In the void courts by Juno's cell  
Were set the spoil to keep;  
Snatched from the burning shrines away,  
There Ilium's mighty treasure lay,  
Rich altars, bowls of massy gold,  
And captive raiment, rudely rolled  
In one promiscuous heap;  
While boys and matrons, wild with fear,  
In long array were standing near."<sup>[38]</sup>

In other words, the place consecrated to so great a goddess was chosen, not that from it none might be led out a captive, but that in it all the captives might be immured. Compare now this "asylum"—the asylum not of an ordinary god, not of one of the rank and file of gods, but of Jove's own sister and wife, the queen of all the gods—with the churches built in memory of the apostles. Into it were collected the spoils rescued from the blazing temples and snatched from the gods, not that they might be restored to the vanquished, but divided among the victors; while into these was carried back, with the most religious observance and respect, everything which belonged to them, even though found elsewhere. There liberty was lost; here preserved. There bondage was strict; here strictly excluded. Into that temple men were driven to become the chattels of their enemies, now lording it over them; into these churches men were led by their relenting foes, that they might be at liberty. In fine, the gentle<sup>[39]</sup> Greeks appropriated that temple of Juno to the purposes of their own avarice and pride; while these churches of Christ were chosen even by the savage barbarians as the fit scenes for humility and mercy. But perhaps, after all, the Greeks did in that victory of theirs spare the temples of those gods whom they worshipped in common with the Trojans, and did not dare to put to the sword or make captive the wretched and vanquished Trojans who fled thither; and perhaps Virgil, in the manner of poets, has depicted what never really

happened? But there is no question that he depicted the usual custom of an enemy when sacking a city.

5. *Cæsar's statement regarding the universal custom of an enemy when sacking a city.*

Even Cæsar himself gives us positive testimony regarding this custom; for, in his deliverance in the senate about the conspirators, he says (as Sallust, a historian of distinguished veracity, writes<sup>[40]</sup>) "that virgins and boys are violated, children torn from the embrace of their parents, matrons subjected to whatever should be the pleasure of the conquerors, temples and houses plundered, slaughter and burning rife; in fine, all things filled with arms, corpses, blood, and wailing." If he had not mentioned temples here, we might suppose that enemies were in the habit of sparing the dwellings of the gods. And the Roman temples were in danger of these disasters, not from foreign foes, but from Catiline and his associates, the most noble senators and citizens of Rome. But these, it may be said, were abandoned men, and the parricides of their fatherland.

6. *That not even the Romans, when they took cities, spared the conquered in their temples.*

Why, then, need our argument take note of the many nations who have waged wars with one another, and have nowhere spared the conquered in the temples of their gods? Let us look at the practice of the Romans themselves: let us, I say, recall and review the Romans, whose chief praise it has been "to spare the vanquished and subdue the proud," and that they preferred "rather to forgive than to revenge an injury;"<sup>[41]</sup> and among so many and great cities which they have stormed, taken, and overthrown for the extension of their dominion, let us be told what temples they were accustomed to exempt, so that whoever took refuge in them was free. Or have they really done this, and has the fact been suppressed by the historians of these events? Is it to be believed, that men who sought out with the greatest eagerness points they could

praise, would omit those which, in their own estimation, are the most signal proofs of piety? Marcus Marcellus, a distinguished Roman, who took Syracuse, a most splendidly adorned city, is reported to have bewailed its coming ruin, and to have shed his own tears over it before he spilt its blood. He took steps also to preserve the chastity even of his enemy. For before he gave orders for the storming of the city, he issued an edict forbidding the violation of any free person. Yet the city was sacked according to the custom of war; nor do we anywhere read, that even by so chaste and gentle a commander orders were given that no one should be injured who had fled to this or that temple. And this certainly would by no means have been omitted, when neither his weeping nor his edict preservative of chastity could be passed in silence. Fabius, the conqueror of the city of Tarentum, is praised for abstaining from making booty of the images. For when his secretary proposed the question to him, what he wished done with the statues of the gods, which had been taken in large numbers, he veiled his moderation under a joke. For he asked of what sort they were; and when they reported to him that there were not only many large images, but some of them armed, "Oh," says he, "let us leave with the Tarentines their angry gods." Seeing, then, that the writers of Roman history could not pass in silence, neither the weeping of the one general nor the laughing of the other, neither the chaste pity of the one nor the facetious moderation of the other, on what occasion would it be omitted, if, for the honour of any of their enemy's gods, they had shown this particular form of leniency, that in any temple slaughter or captivity was prohibited?

7. *That the cruelties which occurred in the sack of Rome were in accordance with the custom of war, whereas the acts of clemency resulted from the influence of Christ's name.*

All the spoiling, then, which Rome was exposed to in the recent calamity—all the slaughter, plundering, burning, and misery—was the result of

the custom of war. But what was novel, was that savage barbarians showed themselves in so gentle a guise, that the largest churches were chosen and set apart for the purpose of being filled with the people to whom quarter was given, and that in them none were slain, from them none forcibly dragged; that into them many were led by their relenting enemies to be set at liberty, and that from them none were led into slavery by merciless foes. Whoever does not see that this is to be attributed to the name of Christ, and to the Christian temper, is blind; whoever sees this, and gives no praise, is ungrateful; whoever hinders any one from praising it, is mad. Far be it from any prudent man to impute this clemency to the barbarians. Their fierce and bloody minds were awed, and bridled, and marvellously tempered by Him who so long before said by His prophet, "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them."<sup>[42]</sup>

*8. Of the advantages and disadvantages which often indiscriminately accrue to good and wicked men.*

Will some one say, Why, then, was this divine compassion extended even to the ungodly and ungrateful? Why, but because it was the mercy of Him who daily "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."<sup>[43]</sup> For though some of these men, taking thought of this, repent of their wickedness and reform, some, as the apostle says, "despising the riches of His goodness and long-suffering, after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds:"<sup>[44]</sup> nevertheless does the patience of God still invite the wicked to repentance, even as the scourge of God educates the good to patience. And so, too, does the mercy of God embrace the good that it may cherish them, as the severity of God arrests the wicked to punish

them. To the divine providence it has seemed good to prepare in the world to come for the righteous good things, which the unrighteous shall not enjoy; and for the wicked evil things, by which the good shall not be tormented. But as for the good things of this life, and its ills, God has willed that these should be common to both; that we might not too eagerly covet the things which wicked men are seen equally to enjoy, nor shrink with an unseemly fear from the ills which even good men often suffer.

There is, too, a very great difference in the purpose served both by those events which we call adverse and those called prosperous. For the good man is neither uplifted with the good things of time, nor broken by its ills; but the wicked man, because he is corrupted by this world's happiness, feels himself punished by its unhappiness.<sup>[45]</sup> Yet often, even in the present distribution of temporal things, does God plainly evince His own interference. For if every sin were now visited with manifest punishment, nothing would seem to be reserved for the final judgment; on the other hand, if no sin received now a plainly divine punishment, it would be concluded that there is no divine providence at all. And so of the good things of this life: if God did not by a very visible liberality confer these on some of those persons who ask for them, we should say that these good things were not at His disposal; and if He gave them to all who sought them, we should suppose that such were the only rewards of His service; and such a service would make us not godly, but greedy rather, and covetous. Wherefore, though good and bad men suffer alike, we must not suppose that there is no difference between the men themselves, because there is no difference in what they both suffer. For even in the likeness of the sufferings, there remains an unlikeness in the sufferers; and though exposed to the same anguish, virtue and vice are not the same thing. For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly,



and chaff to smoke; and under the same flail the straw is beaten small, while the grain is cleansed; and as the lees are not mixed with the oil, though squeezed out of the vat by the same pressure, so the same violence of affliction proves, purges, clarifies the good, but damns, ruins, exterminates the wicked. And thus it is that in the same affliction the wicked detest God and blaspheme, while the good pray and praise. So material a difference does it make, not what ills are suffered, but what kind of man suffers them. For, stirred up with the same movement, mud exhales a horrible stench, and ointment emits a fragrant odour.

9. *Of the reasons for administering correction to bad and good together.*  
What, then, have the Christians suffered in that calamitous period, which would not profit every one who duly and faithfully considered the following circumstances? First of all, they must humbly consider those very sins which have provoked God to fill the world with such terrible disasters; for although they be far from the excesses of wicked, immoral, and ungodly men, yet they do not judge themselves so clean removed from all faults as to be too good to suffer for these even temporal ills. For every man, however laudably he lives, yet yields in some points to the lust of the flesh. Though he do not fall into gross enormity of wickedness, and abandoned viciousness, and abominable profanity, yet he slips into some sins, either rarely or so much the more frequently as the sins seem of less account. But not to mention this, where can we readily find a man who holds in fit and just estimation those persons on account of whose revolting pride, luxury, and avarice, and cursed iniquities and impiety, God now smites the earth as His predictions threatened? Where is the man who lives with them in the style in which it becomes us to live with them? For often we wickedly blind ourselves to the occasions of teaching and admonishing them, sometimes even of reprimanding and chiding them, either because we shrink from the labour or are ashamed to offend them, or because we fear to lose good friendships, lest this should stand in the way of our advancement, or injure us in some worldly matter, which either our covetous disposition

desires to obtain, or our weakness shrinks from losing. So that, although the conduct of wicked men is distasteful to the good, and therefore they do not fall with them into that damnation which in the next life awaits such persons, yet, because they spare their damnable sins through fear, therefore, even though their own sins be slight and venial, they are justly scourged with the wicked in this world, though in eternity they quite escape punishment. Justly, when God afflicts them in common with the wicked, do they find this life bitter, through love of whose sweetness they declined to be bitter to these sinners.

If any one forbears to reprove and find fault with those who are doing wrong, because he seeks a more seasonable opportunity, or because he fears they may be made worse by his rebuke, or that other weak persons may be disheartened from endeavouring to lead a good and pious life, and may be driven from the faith; this man's omission seems to be occasioned not by covetousness, but by a charitable consideration. But what is blameworthy is, that they who themselves revolt from the conduct of the wicked, and live in quite another fashion, yet spare those faults in other men which they ought to reprehend and wean them from; and spare them because they fear to give offence, lest they should injure their interests in those things which good men may innocently and legitimately use,—though they use them more greedily than becomes persons who are strangers in this world, and profess the hope of a heavenly country. For not only the weaker brethren, who enjoy married life, and have children (or desire to have them), and own houses and establishments, whom the apostle addresses in the churches, warning and instructing them how they should live, both the wives with their husbands, and the husbands with their wives, the children with their parents, and parents with their children, and servants with their masters, and masters with their servants,—not only do these weaker brethren gladly obtain and grudgingly lose many earthly and temporal things on account of which they dare not offend men whose polluted and wicked life greatly displeases them; but those also who live at a

higher level, who are not entangled in the meshes of married life, but use meagre food and raiment, do often take thought of their own safety and good name, and abstain from finding fault with the wicked, because they fear their wiles and violence. And although they do not fear them to such an extent as to be drawn to the commission of like iniquities, nay, not by any threats or violence soever; yet those very deeds which they refuse to share in the commission of, they often decline to find fault with, when possibly they might by finding fault prevent their commission. They abstain from interference, because they fear that, if it fail of good effect, their own safety or reputation may be damaged or destroyed; not because they see that their preservation and good name are needful, that they may be able to influence those who need their instruction, but rather because they weakly relish the flattery and respect of men, and fear the judgments of the people, and the pain or death of the body; that is to say, their non-intervention is the result of selfishness, and not of love.

Accordingly, this seems to me to be one principal reason why the good are chastised along with the wicked, when God is pleased to visit with temporal punishments the profligate manners of a community. They are punished together, not because they have spent an equally corrupt life, but because the good as well as the wicked, though not equally with them, love this present life; while they ought to hold it cheap, that the wicked, being admonished and reformed by their example, might lay hold of life eternal. And if they will not be the companions of the good in seeking life everlasting, they should be loved as enemies, and be dealt with patiently. For so long as they live, it remains uncertain whether they may not come to a better mind. These selfish persons have more cause to fear than those to whom it was said through the prophet, "He is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's

hand."<sup>[46]</sup> For watchmen or overseers of the people are appointed in churches, that they may unsparingly rebuke sin. Nor is that man guiltless of the sin we speak of, who, though he be not a watchman, yet sees in the conduct of those with whom the relationships of this life bring him into contact, many things that should be blamed, and yet overlooks them, fearing to give offence, and lose such worldly blessings as may legitimately be desired, but which he too eagerly grasps. Then, lastly, there is another reason why the good are afflicted with temporal calamities—the reason which Job's case exemplifies: that the human spirit may be proved, and that it may be manifested with what fortitude of pious trust, and with how unmercenary a love, it cleaves to God.<sup>[47]</sup>

10. *That the saints lose nothing in losing temporal goods.*

These are the considerations which one must keep in view, that he may answer the question whether any evil happens to the faithful and godly which cannot be turned to profit. Or shall we say that the question is needless, and that the apostle is vapouring when he says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God?"<sup>[48]</sup>

They lost all they had. Their faith? Their godliness? The possessions of the hidden man of the heart, which in the sight of God are of great price?<sup>[49]</sup> Did they lose these? For these are the wealth of Christians, to whom the wealthy apostle said, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."<sup>[50]</sup>

They, then, who lost their worldly all in the sack of Rome, if they owned their possessions as they had been taught by the apostle, who himself

was poor without, but rich within,—that is to say, if they used the world as not using it,—could say in the words of Job, heavily tried, but not overcome: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it pleased the Lord, so has it come to pass: blessed be the name of the Lord."<sup>[51]</sup> Like a good servant, Job counted the will of his Lord his great possession, by obedience to which his soul was enriched; nor did it grieve him to lose, while yet living, those goods which he must shortly leave at his death. But as to those feebler spirits who, though they cannot be said to prefer earthly possessions to Christ, do yet cleave to them with a somewhat immoderate attachment, they have discovered by the pain of losing these things how much they were sinning in loving them. For their grief is of their own making; in the words of the apostle quoted above, "they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." For it was well that they who had so long despised these verbal admonitions should receive the teaching of experience. For when the apostle says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation," and so on, what he blames in riches is not the possession of them, but the desire of them. For elsewhere he says, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."<sup>[52]</sup> They who were making such a use of their property have been consoled for light losses by great gains, and have had more pleasure in those possessions which they have securely laid past, by freely giving them away, than grief in those which they entirely lost by an anxious and selfish hoarding of them. For nothing could perish on earth save what

they would be ashamed to carry away from earth. Our Lord's injunction runs, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."<sup>[53]</sup> And they who have listened to this injunction have proved in the time of tribulation how well they were advised in not despising this most trustworthy teacher, and most faithful and mighty guardian of their treasure. For if many were glad that their treasure was stored in places which the enemy chanced not to light upon, how much better founded was the joy of those who, by the counsel of their God, had fled with their treasure to a citadel which no enemy can possibly reach! Thus our Paulinus, bishop of Nola,<sup>[54]</sup> who voluntarily abandoned vast wealth and became quite poor, though abundantly rich in holiness, when the barbarians sacked Nola, and took him prisoner, used silently to pray, as he afterwards told me, "O Lord, let me not be troubled for gold and silver, for where all my treasure is Thou knowest." For all his treasure was where he had been taught to hide and store it by Him who had also foretold that these calamities would happen in the world. Consequently those persons who obeyed their Lord when He warned them where and how to lay up treasure, did not lose even their earthly possessions in the invasion of the barbarians; while those who are now repenting that they did not obey Him have learnt the right use of earthly goods, if not by the wisdom which would have prevented their loss, at least by the experience which follows it.

But some good and Christian men have been put to the torture, that they might be forced to deliver up their goods to the enemy. They could indeed neither deliver nor lose that good which made themselves good. If, however, they preferred torture to the surrender of the mammon of iniquity, then I say they were not good men. Rather they should have