

A SHORT THESIS ON THE WORKS OF ST. AUGUSTINE,  
ESPECIALLY THE CITY OF GOD

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St. Augustine was the Father of the Western Church, the following <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ the circumstances which led to the production of the present work. The Goths, the greatest of the Teutonic races, began to harry the borders of the great Roman Empire in the third century, when the Empire was beginning to decline. The Emperor Aurelian gave them in the year 270 A.D. a piece of territory which is now called Roumania. Here they dwelt in peace for nearly a century. They learned the Latin language, imbibed the Roman civilisation and at the teaching of Ulfias, an Arian missionary from Constantinople, many of them embraced the Christian faith. This strong liking for Arianism prevented not only the complete civilisation of the Goths, but also their complete union with the Romans.

Pressed by a Tartar invasion they crossed the Danube, and with the consent of the Emperor, settled down on its Southern bank. In their new home they, however, suffered illtreatment at the hands of the Roman officers. Enraged by their continual outrages, they invaded and occupied Thrace and thus obtained a permanent footing in the Eastern Empire. The great Roman Empire was so far, free from them. Its great wealth, however, soon attracted their attention. There was considerable confusion at Rome. Weak Emperors succeeded one after another to the throne. Personal pleasure, and not good government, was the object of the Emperor, and consequently there was a great deal of misgovernment. Alaric, the King of the Visigoths, one of the three Gothic tribes took advantage of this unsettled condition of the Empire to pounce

upon it and make it his prey. His attempt was, however, for a time rendered futile by the diplomatic vigilance of Stilico, the skillful Western General. By the murder of Stilico, soon after, at the order of the Emperor Honorius, Alaric secured a nice opportunity. Thrice did he march against the great city and the mistress of the world was at last brought down to the dust. The fall of the great Capital drew forth bitter expressions of sorrow from writers, among whom may be mentioned St Augustine. From his own pen we have this masterly work, The City of God, which is the subject of the present enquiry. The work was begun in 412 and was completed only in 427.

In this work St. Augustine deals with a number of objections raised against Christianity. Traces of the great heathen superstition still remained among the people. At first they thought the acceptance of Christianity assured them of peace and prosperity. These disasters of Gothic invasion were taken to have been caused by the anger of the gods whom they had deserted. St. Augustine answers this in two ways. First in most eloquent terms he describes the Roman misfortunes in her pagan days, and then secondly he also points out the same fate for other nations who still had their pagan deities. He then concludes by a long comparison of the human and divine city, and by an expression of his firm conviction that a still more glorious destiny awaits the City of God.

Those who have escaped the sword of the barbarians and are now "most petulantly insulting our Christ's servants", must bear in mind that their escape from the general massacre was entirely due to their professing the name of Christ which they now hold in ridicule. To abuse that name which in the hour of need had been

only shield of defence, is nothing but "ingrate pride and ungodly madness".

In the second place, it should be borne in mind that the past history is altogether against the assertion that the gods of the nations protected in any way refugees in their temples.

Are not Aeneas, Diomedes and Ulysses and many others witnesses to this truth? Is it true to say that the destruction of Troy was due to the loss of Palladium? If it is answered because of the slaughter of the keepers, why is it then "that the image was adored as the preserver of the country and citizens, when it could not preserve its own keepers".

The most popular poet Virgil calls them "fallen gods and conquered gods" as needing protection from human beings. If such is the case, would it not be unwise to commend Rome to their protection or to assert that Rome would not have suffered had it been committed to them? Is it not madness to worship such overthrown deities? To inculcate such an idea by people who in the name of Christ found all the strength and protection from peril. What is it but inequitable ingratitude?

Or compare again the respective merits of the heathen temples and the church of the Apostles. The very best of the first, the temple of Juno, the Queen of all other gods, was the store of the spoils taken from the Greeks at the sack of the city, whereas the second, the church of the Apostles' liberty and safety was secured for the refugees.

There is no need seeking for examples from the heathen nations outside. The very Romans themselves, who are now maintaining the supremacy of their national gods, never spared the lives of those who fled for refuge into the temple precincts of the

conquered cities.

So whatever was happened to Rome was but the natural effects of war. Any mercy that was shown to the fugitives was the outcome of the spirit of Christ whom now they hold in ridicule.

Now may some ask, how is it, that the gracious God sends His blessings and also sufferings, alike to the good and to the wicked? The answer, says Augustine, is simple. God makes His sun to rise on the just and unjust alike, giving the latter the chance for repentance and escape from punishment which is awaiting them. The sufferings of the just, like fire to gold, only purifies them; while the unjust are consumed like chaff by the same fire. The same experience produces two altogether different effects, upon two classes, according to their natures.

"The causes of corrections that befall the good and bad together." The contamination by the general wickedness of the world to which even the good have succumbed. Secondly even if we kept ourselves free from taint of evil, we may have neglected to warn the wicked against his evil course. Such neglect, in God's sight is criminal. Thirdly, the suffering of the righteous may, like that of Job's, test the genuineness and reality of their piety and godly love, and confirm them in the same. Thus, may be verified, the dictum of the Apostle, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." In the loss of worldly possessions, the Christian does not lose his real riches; his faith in and zeal for God, things which actually enrich his soul. To those who are spiritually rich, such reverses of worldly fortune, is only another cause for blessing God. And to those weak souls, who love Christ and yet cling to their possessions with affection, the loss of such, will be but a discipline for a higher life. As for others, who had given

up their worldly goods for the sake of voluntary poverty, were in no way losers, because, by their "mammon of unrighteousness" they have made lasting riches. Not a few among them had been tortured to produce the gold they possessed not. Even such suffering only drew them nearer to the Master, and prepared them all the more, for the heavenly reward reserved for them.

Now, regarding the nature of death to be preferred; it matters not what kind of an end a man meets with, but how he meets it. All depends upon what follows, which again is the result of the preceding life.

About the burial of the dead, it may be said, that it does not affect the future of a Christian, even if he is not properly buried, as our own Lord has said "Those that kill the body and after they can do no more". This does not, however, take away from us the necessity of according for the bodies of <sup>decent burials</sup> saints, which the Holy Ghost has once used as instruments for the fulfilment of His purposes. We hold their bodies in respect by reason of their association with, or being part of, the men whom we loved. We have, to warrant us in this, the words of our own Lord who commended the woman who annointed Him against His death and burial.

As to the captivity, which has been the lot of some saints, it may be remarked that He will never allow His chosen ones to be without spiritual comfort, even, under the most trying circumstances of bondage. This is well exemplified in the cases of those children in Babylon or of Daniel in the lions' den.

Here again, we have a noble example of patient endurance of affliction, for the sake of maintaining an oath taken in the name

of a Pagan deity. Regulus, that indomitable general, true to his oath, handed himself back to the enemy to suffer, at their hands, bitter persecution. The Pagan god, evidently did not save his faithful devotee. What it could not do for one, it can never do for multitude and for the whole city.

The violence, which the virgins suffered, at the hands of the conquerors, does not in any way make them guilty, because, the real guilt lies in the consent of the will, rather than, in the abuse of one's members through external violence.

Is, "voluntary death before dishonour" justifiable? No, because, it involves the putting an end to the life of an individual without the warrant of the law. Secondly, the crime in this case is greater, because the individual suiciding is a righteous soul. If the suicide of Judas, a man who was already guilty, was mentioned as a crime, much more will be the penalty for putting an end to a soul that loves honour. Therefore, we see, that a man is not justified in taking away his own life for fear of violent lust of soldiers. 1. Such compelled prostitution is no sin, unless one's mind consents to it, and 2. in putting an end to a life one destroys an innocent soul.

Lucretia is, often, quoted by the opponents as a set off against Christianity, because, she stabbed herself after Tarquin's son had ravished her. Let us look, a little more closely into the case. First, suppose she was quite innocent and her chastity was violated by the brute force of Sextus. In that case her mind was pure and she herself committed no sin. And this is the verdict of many a great Roman. If this is true, in stabbing herself she unlawfully brought about the death of an innocent soul, for which she could not but be guilty. Suppose again,

on the other hand, along with the violence perpetrated on her she inwardly gave her consent, and afterwards remorse led her to suicide herself. Then she becomes an adultress though, her murder of herself may be justified as a self inflicted punishment. So in whatever way we look at it we will find it difficult to exculpate the much praised Lucretia. But as regards the Christian women who suffered patiently the violence of the brutal soldiers, but did not harm their own selves, there is nothing disparaging about their action. On the contrary this must be laid to their credit. For they are not carried away by a false idea of public opinion but stand true to their own conscience and God.

In view of the above, it becomes plain, that under no circumstances, is a man justified in putting an end to his own life. "Thou shalt not kill" forbids the taking away another's life as well as ones own.

Does this injunction apply to all cases of murder without exception? No. God does not hold a man guilty for putting a man to death if he does it in obedience to the general dictates of law and justice, or, under special injunction direct from Himself as in the case of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. These are indeed exceptions, being but the outcome of the public law of justice, or the command of the Fountain of all Justice.

The voluntary death can never be accounted magnanimous because it only betrays the lack of the moral endurance, on the part of the victim, either of physical misery or of public censure.

The case of Cato, who killed himself, because he could not endure Caesar's triumph, is an example. If to live at the mercy of Caesar, was an evil to be avoided at all costs, why should he



when he put an end to his own life advise his son to trust to Caesar and save his life? Again, remember the words of Christ, ~~he~~ He advised His disciples to flee in the face of persecution, even though great blessings were awaiting them in the life to come.

In this respect, we can<sup>not</sup> help feeling that Regulas excelled most of the heroes because, he suffered himself to be illtreated by the enemy rather than be his own executioner. More commendation is due to Christians, who are eagerly looking for a reward in the life to come, yet patiently await the God appointed time, instead of being muderers of their own lives.

If it is argued that the suicide is justifiable providing it was to prevent sin, to which probably our frail human nature might have taken an enticing delight in the presence of sin, it might be answered that in such a case we are committing a certain crime, murder, to prevent a future crime of impurity. By this act of murder we are forever putting an end to all opportunities for repentance on the part of the soul on whom the evil might have been thrust upon. Hence under no circumstances can be justified the committal of one crime for the prevention of another.

But at the same time we must beware of condemning those saints who might be thought of as having acted unwarrantably or unlawfully in this matter. If they had special divine command to put an end to their lives in the face of evil, they ought not to be held under any condemnation, whatever, for their acts. A soldier is justified in killing an enemy, in obedience to the instructions of his superior officer; while, the same act, apart from such instructions, would be criminal.

Voluntary death is no way of escaping the future evil. If it is, then the best advice would be that all who are converted,

to kill themselves soon after they obtain remission of their sins. This, one might say, is madness, and so is the other. The reason why innocents Saints were sometimes allowed of God to be maltreated by the lustful Pagan, might have been to teach them more humility, or to warn them lest they should pride in their own virtue. In neither case are they rejected in God's sight if they <sup>had</sup> remained pure in His eyes. The Christians are allowed by their God to suffer the fury of the enemy, either for trial of their perfections or the reform of their imperfect lives, and at the same time God reserves them a reward for their patient sufferings of temporal distresses. Those that find a sort of bondage in Christian life, do not fully realise how great help, and not a hindrance they have in Christianity. Scipio, the great Roman, pleaded for the preservation of the powerful enemy of Carthage, on the ground that her existence would be "both a convenient tutor and a necessary terror". So also does Christianity serve to many.

Step by step the Romans ambition grew to such a height . stage plays were first introduced as a result of this corruption in the name of gods.

Nothing but a world domination was her motive. Nor did she rest contented with with power when she gained it from time to time. The vices of the Metropolis became conspicuous as days went on. Not only did the citizens rejoice in immorality but even such came to be practised in the name of gods.

The stage became a common feature of Roman pasttime. Although Rome thus morally sunk lower and lower, yet the grace of God was manifested in the moderation of the sufferings and persecution in the City.

After attempting an answer to those who attribute the recent calamities of the invasion of Rome to the religion of Christ, in the second volume the author proceeds to answer every objection other than those of a frivolous nature, raised by the opponents of Christianity. He points out that there is no proof to show that the calamities of the invasion were due to the spread of Christianity. If it had been so, why were there so many worse miseries before the Christian religion received a public recognition,

To a casual observer of the method of some of the Pagan sacrifices, that for example for Berecynthia, the celestial virgin, will soon become clear the fact that these Pagan deities cannot in any way prosper the lives of their worshipers by giving good laws. How futile then must be the worship of such powers as take a pleasure in evil and that license all kinds of vices to be perpetuated in their names. Nor is it possible that such a well known goddess, who allows such filthy plays to be enacted in her name and honour, plays that would shock the modesty of any woman, is worthy to receive praise and adoration from any honest man or woman.

Or again notice the absence of any public worship where the true standard of morality are set forth to the people, where they are exhorted to pure living and upright lives. How unlike are the Pagan worship from that of the Christian, in this respect.

What about the moral precepts we sometimes come across in the writings of some of the Pagan Philosophers? Are they not a right code to live up to, and do they not commend to their followers the Pagan deities worshipped by these philosophers? These philosophers have some of them written excellent things regarding the morals

and life. But inasmuch as they have not divine authority and that some of the nobler teachings are often mixed with grossest vices, and that they often depict their deities devoid of any standard of morality, we are compelled to set a limit to their usefulness or even acceptance.

But, one may say, that these plays are <sup>the</sup> production of poetical fancy rather than sanctioned practices of their gods. We don't condemn it, if it is so, but only because "Gods themselves did so strictly command, yea, and even in some sort extort from them the public presenting and dedication of those plays unto their honours" Besides we find that stages were first ordered in Rome by the authorisation of the chief priests.

That, the Romans, like the Greeks, did not wish to check the liberties of their poets, and that the poets, therefore, wrote foul stories, uncondemned by the people is no argument; since the slander of the gods if unjustly made makes the act still more vulgar. There is no ground of truth, whatever, for these impure stories. They are all the work of that evil spirit,

who wants to induce people to all sorts of villany by stating such acts as proceeding from God and therefore of Divine approval.

Not only that, even, the national estimation of such plays was great, ~~but~~ important officers in the state were made the pri~~ests~~ of indecent statements. But Cipro, the one greatly esteem~~ed~~ among the Romans, refused to ~~players~~ permission to have the name and manners of the citizens, by any means to be abused in that way. What does it show? It shows that in a way he held the name and character of the Roman citizens to be above that of the gods.

The Romans refused to honour their actors with a place either in a plebian tribe or in the Senate. Why? If such actors are

doing wrong, the gods in whose honour these plays are acted should lawfully be condemned. Yet the strange Roman contradiction is this, they assume "that the actors are in no way to be held honourable", and yet the gods are worthy of all honour and worship. Further we read that Plato excluded the poets from a well governed city; whereas, the Roman gods required plays for the increase of their honour. Is it not then a legitimate conclusion that Plato is in point of morality higher than the Pagan gods?

Again, it is of a known fact, that the Romans borrowed their laws from other nations, more especially from the Greeks. If the Roman gods had any standard of justice, wherein lies the necessity of borrowing laws for their worshippers from other nations? It is sometimes said that the gods were unwilling to give Romans laws because, "justice and honesty prevailed as much with them by nature as by law". One has only to make a brief survey of the Roman history to see the absurdity of that assumption.

Most men of eminence including Tully, bear witness to the fact that there were in justice and corruption in the Roman Commonwealth. Besides, most of them maintain that it is difficult to carry on a Commonwealth without such drawbacks. But we find no regret of the kind expressed by the Roman gods of the corruption of the Commonwealth. To them such a state of things was but a natural consequence and they never attended to its betterment.

We find another class of people asking us the question, that if these gods are but evil spirits, how is it that they exercise so much power? It is a mistake to assume that the gifts of temporal blessings are in the power of these evil spirits. If they have any power at all, it is simply because, they are permitted

by the Almighty God to exert it. Like wicked men in authority they are sometimes used as ministers to His ordinance.

These devil gods, while they prosper their servants, never care to improve their moral character, or, check their villainies. This is well shown, in the case of Sylla, whom they encouraged with promises of victory, but never deterred from want<sup>on</sup> and cruelty. These devils show by their own examples what a privilege it is to be licensed to all sorts of wickedness.

But, here, says one, these devil gods have given noble precepts privately to some of their followers. What, of their teaching and sanction to public impurity? Granting that they have given such, then, are they <sup>not</sup> spreading the most vile impurities in public, whispering at the same time moral principles in private?

The introduction into the Roman society of such debasing plays in the name of gods, was one of the causes of the downfall of the Roman State. What a great difference from the nature of worship of the Christian religion, where the public are exhorted to turn from all wickedness and to lead a pure and holy lives, and are warned of the judgement to come. Here are God's precepts set forth, His acts recounted, and His mercy implored.

There are two kinds of evils that should be dreaded.- the moral and the temporal.- of these, the former is in every way more to be dreaded. And yet the Pagan people of Rome attribute all importance to the latter, Granting that they are right in their assumption, even then, it will be found impossible to maintain

that such adversities were due to the Christian religion, since we find such things had happened while the world was sunk in Paganism. The gods cannot blame the men as having brought about the temporal evil by their moral delinquences. For the gods

themselves are justly to be condemned for similar offences.

If the refusal of Varro of God's having raised up children is based on facts. then it must be allowed that many fictions found their way into religion, and had been for generations believed as true by the mass of the people. It is impossible to conceive that the gods punish certain offences and let similar ones go unnoticed. Romulus, for example, murdered his brother. No god seems to have inflicted any punishment. It is again said that Numa Pompilius had a continued peace in his reign because of the favour of his god. This cannot be. since the more earnest worship by frequent sacrifices, only came afterwards.

If these gods were powerful enough to bestow rewards and punishments upon the State, as they wished, how could we account for the fact that the statue of Apollo shed tears for night and day, showing that what he had wished he was unable to secure.

Nor does the multiplicity of gods seem to have safeguarded Rome from the impending dangers. The abolition of the monarchy, the succeeding history of the Consulate, all show very well the futility of reliance on the Roman gods. Also notice the misery that fell upon the Romans in their African wars. How much devastation, loss of lives, upsetting of small kingdoms, the hastened downfall of Rome, and the almost complete annihilation of the hosts of the two contending parties, the most lamentable disaster to the Roman Army, sustained at the hands of Hanibal, the dissolution of the Saguntines, the sworn friends of the Romans! - All these and a many other incidents might be quoted to show how futile has been the reliance put upon these Pagan gods. It is hardly necessary to touch upon the internal troubles which led to so much bloodshed and anarchy. Compared with these the horrors of the Gothic invasion are nothing. The gods spared so many of the Senators

The calamities that befell Rome, in years preceeding the advent of Christianity, are in every respect much more terrible; and the people, who after having seen and suffered from such tragedy venture to attribute the horrors of the present calamity to the name of Christ, show an utter disregard to truth and an oversight of fact which is nothing short of criminal.

Regarding the happiness of a man, does it consist in the possession of wealth? Wealth is often the cause of great anxiety and temptations; whereas, a contented and godly, poor man is a more enviable object. The case of power and regality is the same. To the good, such a possession is a means of doing good. but to the wicked, it is but a snare as affording wider scope for the desires of his lust and worldliness. The virtuous slave is God's free man; and the vicious wealthy is but the world's slave.

If justice is once set aside, the kingdom will become but a thief's purchase. What the pirate was doing, on a small scale in the sea, was but a portrait, in miniature, of Alexander's work in the wide world.

Among the gods whom Rome adored, Jove was the supreme, and he according to Varo, is the one god to be worshipped without a statue. If this is so, look at the degradation and corruption attributed by the creation of a multitude of gods. The contention, that these many and innumerable gods are but part and powers of one and the same god Jove, cannot stand to reason because 1. there will, then, be no need of worshipping the different parts. For, in adoring the whole, we are adoring the parts. 2. If all the parts are to be adored separately in order to please them all, it becomes plain, that they are not all one and the same god, but different ones who will be pleased or displeased by one and the



same act. 3. Further, it becomes impossible to worship all of them, as only a few of the stars have yet received any public recognition as deities. Thus in trying to please a few the others are displeased.

Regarding the Pantheistic idea that God is but the world soul, and the outward world is His body, it may be asked, how then can we degrade or destroy any object without thereby hurting God's body? If the plea is that only rational beings are part of God, then it will have to be granted that the whole world is not part of God. And again, in punishing a human being we are punishing God, and in the vice of man, we make God a partner. The justice of punishment for crimes will become impossible as God would be inflicting it on His own part.

It is noteworthy that even some of the most devoted worshipers of gods have received with contentment the superstitions believed by the contemporaries. The Kings of the world have encouraged the worship of a multitude of gods of the conquered peoples, in the hope that by so doing, they would bind the affections and loyalty of those peoples in their service and sovereignty. This was particularly true of Rome. Rome's deities increased as the number of nations she conquered increased.

This state of things in which both the good and bad hold sway, and in which one man reigns over another, is not to continue for all times. At an appointed time, which is hidden from our knowledge, shall usher in the fullness of His sovereignty, in which no man shall be in bondage to another, and that without the worship of these numberless deities, the one and true God shall be adored.

After having looked into the Polytheism and Pantheism of the Pagan world, let us look briefly into the science of astrology so firmly believed in, and stoutly maintained by the Roman world as well as by some of the modern nations. This belief may be either of two kinds. One that God has granted a power to the stars which they may exercise at will for the good or evil of humanity. And to prevent such evil consequences they are worshipped and appeased. This has the fallacy of first, admitting two independent wills that can act over human affairs, or, if one is subordinate to the other, does not the supreme one deserve our loyalty; and secondly, of attributing injustice to God in that He has allowed us to be committed to a Senate of His ordination, which might unwarrantedly act for our good or ill.

The second position is that these stars are not the causes but the signs of divine appointment of human destiny. How could you account for the different course of life of twins, whose origin is at the same time, or of two persons born simultaneously? (Note, the word "fate", if it means the will of God, there is no objection for it, except that the word is not popularly understood so. If, on the other hand, "fate" means, as is sometimes supposed, a power independent of God, then the term is objectionable for reasons mentioned above).

It has been pointed out, by Cicero, that two children, born of the same parents, exhibited symptoms of waxing and waning strength simultaneously, and that these according to the eminent astrologer, Posidonius, were due to their conception and birth under the influence of the constellation. Here, probably,

the antecedent facts were altogether ignored, and a quite different cause was attributed to the similarity of their conditions. The

same heredity, food, exercise, air, and other points of environment might bring about this similarity. On the contrary there are cases of children born of the same parents and under the same stellar influence, that have had diverse fortunes. If it is contented that the change of time, small though it was, between the birth of two twins, affected their subsequent fortunes, it may be asked, how is it that no two twins, and for the matter of that no two persons, born at the same time possess unity in all the vicissitudes of their future lives? How can we account, for example, for the disparity of natures, wills, actions, and fortunes between Esau and Jacob, who had been born so near together that the second held the first by the heel? If it is alleged that this diversity of fortunes was due to the slight difference in the times of their birth, it may again be asked, how is it that both conceived under the same star, came to be born at different times, ~~producing such~~ producing such vast difference in their fortunes? If simultaneous conception did not effect similar fortunes in their lives, what guarantee is there that simultaneous birth would? Or again still, if unity of conception under the same constellation has no power to bring about simultaneous birth, or a similarity of progeny (for, we often find, that twins are of opposite sex with divergent temperament and disposition), how can we argue that simultaneous birth under the same constellation will bring about a similarity of course and vicissitudes in the lives of the two individuals.

Granting that the destiny of a man is fixed by the influence of the constellation at his birth, another practice of the Pagan world seems to contradict this belief. Auspicious occasions are consulted of astrologers, before the performance of any important

duty. If the constellation, at ones own birth, has already fixed, once for all, the time and manner for a man's course of action, what need is there in consulting the most ~~consulting~~<sup>fortunate</sup> hour? Can he undo the influence of the original constellation? Take all these together, we may safely say that there is no method of finding out the horoscope. The astrologers sometimes speak many things wonderfully and truly. But this may be either a matter of chance or by the help of the evil spirits, which they worship.

Tully maintains that there is no prescience or foreknowledge either in God or man. For, he says, that if God knew beforehand the events and their courses, then must they come to pass. And, if they must come to pass, man has no free will to alter them. So, we will have to dispense with either God's foreknowledge or man's free will. For both cannot, according to Tully, exist side by side. To this is answered that our free will is among the causes which God knows so well. There are wills, good and bad. While, God is the creator of all natures, He is not the author of wicked wills. And when in their actions men follow the dictates of their wills, such a course not only becomes known to God, but was already foreseen by Him. ( The argument, one must confess, has not been clear or convincing. To my mind the will in itself is neither good or bad. Nonmoral, if that expression is correct, and assumes qualities by its exercise. God has given man free will, and a sphere in which to exercise this. Under influences man used his will in the wrong direction and his will thereby became tainted. Man sinned not because God foreknew that he would sin, but God foreknew because man exercised his will for wrong purposes).

Varro, the most acute and doubtless the most learned of his time has written so much absurdities about his religion, that an enemy could not have recorded more. Is it not right to surmise that he, under the show of allegiance to the popular belief, revealed to the world something of his private disregard for the superstitious customs of his day. For he first writes about men and then of God, giving as his reason that men are first to be described, as the painter is before the picture and the carpenter before the building. He categorises them under three heads, First fabulous gods, which are but mythical, with the most disgraceful stories attached to them regarding their origin and life. He, in a measure, condemns the injury done to the gods by such disgraceful stories. Secondly, physical gods, the outcome of philosophical superstition. These, he laments, do not find favour with the Roman public, whose perverted ears found satisfaction only in such sensual stories regarding their gods, and thirdly, the civil gods, which the men of the city, and chiefly the priests had devised and ordered. Of these, he prefers the second class, as most adapted for the world.

We cannot help saying that this learned theologian's position is untenable. His attempts to explain away the diversity of Gods by categorising them under heaven and earth, makes and females, seems incongruous and absurd. He makes Heaven male and earth the female; and yet does not acknowledge the necessity of the common origin from one and the same God.

While the naturalists describe the world in parts, the Christians worship the one God, who is the creator and sustainer of all the several parts. And the powers that are manifested in diverse ways, proceed from one and the same First Cause, who is

therefore, the only God worthy to be worshipped. He has not only vouchsafed to us the temporal blessings, but has given us a way of escape from sin and guilt in the death of His Son, and an incentive to virtue and holiness in the gift of His Holy Spirit.

This redemption through Christ, was, by signs and symbols, precepts and prophecies, made known to the people of pre-Christian times. The way of discovering and escaping from the corrupting influences of the Pagan deities, is belief in the Son of God.

Now let us for a moment consider the attitude taken by the Pagan philosophers, especially those of the Platonic school, they, while acknowledging the One Supreme Being, as the Cause of all animal and inanimate world, still maintain, " that the adoration of one unchangeable God, suffices not unto eternal life, but that many such are made and ordained by Him to be adored also for this respect".

There are two schools of thought regarding the above point of speculation - the Italian and the Ionian, both in some measure shared the same view that these natural substances were the cause of all things, and they were aided by "the divine essence".

Socrates, the master of Plato, was the first one who, instead of being content with natural speculation, began to urge the moral disputations and emphasised the development of character.

He had to pay for this innovation by the sacrifice of his own life.

His scholars were, however, so divided in their speculation that some made pleasure, and others virtue. the ultimate goal of life. Instead of these two fold divisions named above, the Platonists emphasised chiefly the theological aspect, and in this they showed a decided superiority to other schools in their mode of thinking.

Their conception of God is that He is a Being, Creator of all things

visible and invisible, & eternal without body. In this they excelled the schools that preceded them. Not only in their theology, but even in their logic and morality, they, more than any other school, came near to Christianity. They unlike other Pagan schools, held one God, the creator of all Universe, incorruptable, and our beginning, our light and our goodness. The source of this knowledge in which he excels all those before him, is to be found, perhaps, in Plato's acquaintance with certain portions of the Old Testament, and the visible things of nature.

Yet, even this great scholar and philosopher, held it fit to adore many gods. As for the objection that some of the gods are immoral, Plato finds refutation in the argument that no god can be immoral, and any god associated with such shameful actions should be excluded from the category of deities. But at the same time some of these spirits which are credited with evil should be considered as mediators between God and man, a supposition equally absurd as deifying them. These airy spirits cannot help a man in the attainment of blessedness. For such can come only from the true God. If the mediation be held necessary, to make the mortal man happy, such a mediation will be found not in these airy spirits who are themselves wretched in their mortality, but in a being who is born mortal but does not continue so. That is, a Being who is both God and man. This requirement is satisfied not in the airy spirits of Plato, but in Christ Jesus. He, although God, assumed mortality once for the sake of man, and now liveth again as the immortal God man, mediator between God and man.

The next question is, granting that the source of all blessedness was the one and only true God, are we not even then

justified in worshipping those good and immortal spirits? If the worship, that we offer, is divine worship, it is plain that it is due only to Him whom we call God. If those heavenly hosts are not interested in our happiness, there is no reason why we should serve them. But, if on the contrary, they sincerely wish us happiness, then "they wish it from the fount whence they have it". And He, whom they worship, will be the object of our worship as well. For, those spirits of Heaven if they are so good, they will desire us not to worship them but only God as they themselves are doing.

Before passing on it is important that we should note an assertion that was often made by a certain Platonist, and strongly maintained even today by some philosophical schools in non-Christian lands, viz: "that the soul is co-eternal with the Eternal". They base their argument on the assumption, "that which has not been for ever, cannot be for ever". Plato himself permits that both the world and gods are made by the one great God and had hence a beginning, but are without any end. To this view of Plato, our opponents adduce the following explanation. The foot that stands eternally in the dust had also the eternal footsteps. None can therefore say that the one was before the other, though one is certainly the cause of the other. Similarly God and the world are two objects co-eternal with each other, though the former is the Cause of the latter. Our author meets the above argument by asking another question. Granting that the soul is co-eternal with God, what about the soul's misery? Has it also been eternal? If we grant that something in the soul had a beginning, what objection is there in granting that the soul had a beginning? Or again, the happiness of the soul, which becomes firmer



and more pronounced on account of the trials it undergoes from time to time, doubtless, had a beginning though it is everlasting. We see therefore that the dictum, "that nothing can be eternal which has not been for ever", cannot be true. Hence it is not logically true to say that the soul is co-eternal with the Eternal on the ground that nothing can be endless which had a beginning.

After dealing with the question connected with the origin of the world and man, St Augustine here takes up the discussion of man's fall and punishment. Man became subject to death owing to sin, yet he is immortal in the sense that he can never fail to be living and be sensitive. The body dies when the soul leaves it, and the soul dies, when God who is its life, becomes separated from it. This latter condition is spoken of in scripture of as second death.

It is often asked that if the first death is the result of the first man's sin, how can that be accounted good to the upright? That which was penal in the first man becomes natural in those who follow him. For from him did his descendants inherit what he became by his fall, viz the depravity of his nature which brought with it, as it's punishment, death and the tendency to transmit to his offspring the "same conditions that his crime deserved". Hence we find this first death, the fate of also innocent infants, while from the second they are altogether free by <sup>the</sup> grace of the Mediator. Again if it is asked, why we are not liberated from this death soon after our regeneration, the answer will be found in the fact that such a privilege will leave no room for the exercise of our faith, as the Christian would then be "walking by sight", and not "by faith". For faith has no place where it immediately perceives and obtains the reward. This death

which is evil, becomes good to the righteous, in the same way as good things prove ill to the wicked. Whereas death is the just reward of sin, it becomes by the infinite mercy of God the instrument of virtue to the just, and a crown of glory to the martyr. For this separation of the soul from the body, so far as the saints are concerned, is only temporary one. and the change brought about by the incident is all the better for them because it gives them a body superior to the one they had already possessed. For this body is transformed, in resurrection into a spiritual body, that is, a body which is entirely under the control of higher spiritual faculties. The first body was corruptable. The second body is incorruptable. The first man was made into a living creature, who became "dead because of sin", but was again quickened by "His Spirit dwelling in us".

Through the disobedience of the first man came about the depravity of nature involving punishment of the whole human race. Yet, God in His mercy, has made many free from it. This depravity of man is due, not to the flesh but to the sinfulness of the soul. The sinning is the cause and not the result of a corruptable body. Hence the right way of living is to live according to God and not according to man. While the Platonists do not go to the same extreme as the Manicheans in hating the carnal body as the seat of all sin, yet they hold that the mortal members are the causes of passions which bring about sin in man. But in this, they overlook the place of human will. For there can be no evil work apart from an evil will. Take, for example, pride. What is it but a desire to place "self" in other than its right place? Instead of remaining firmly in dependence and love of that "Stronger Good", our first parents voluntarily yielded to the suggestion

of the serpent, and tried set themselves equal to God, and were justly punished for their offences. Therefore through pride, the will refusing to accept the rightful subjection, caused their downfall. If it is then asked, why did God, who knew man's fall before hand, permit him to be tempted by the evil power? <sup>The answer is that</sup> It is true that God both knew beforehand and could have prevented man's fall. Yet, He, in His mercy and wisdom, would not take away the freedom of their wills, but showed, thereby, the wickedness of their pride and the goodness of His grace".

After thus briefly discussing some of the objections raised by the opponents regarding the origin of the world, the soul and mankind, St. Augustine divides the last subject into two parts - man that lives according to his inherited nature, and he that would live according to God - mystically naming them "The Two Cities or Societies. The former of the two, being composed of those who, like Cain, belonged to the corrupt society, which was condemned from the beginning. While the latter is composed of those who, like Abel are pilgrims on earth, having their "citizenship in Heaven". The first who are the sons of the flesh, he calls The City of Man, and the second formed of "The Sons of the Promise" forming the City of God.

Our author, here, takes up the Old Testament narrative and shows in detail, one after another, how the difficulties, which a certain class of people find in it, are only seeming but not real. Take, for example, the length of life and bigness of body of men of those early days, which far exceed anything we see in modern days. This, says St. Augustine, is neither impossible nor unlikely in the presence of allusions in authors of repute, or the entombed remains of ancients. "If we believe", asks he

"that the length of life which we have not known is yet extant in some unknown countries (as Pliny asserts) why may we not believe that it has been general in ancient times?" Also the laws of marriage implied in some of those relationships in primitive times of Christian Scriptures, and to which some take objection; the peculiar circumstances under which they lived, justified the marriage of those who were closely related by blood, which neither prudence nor enlightened conscience would warrant today. The great city which is said to have been built in defiance of God's judgment, and which brought about the confusion of tongues is, according to St. Augustine, the great city of Babylon, whose magnificent structure has attracted admiration of even the secular historians.

To those who find it difficult to account for the existence in remote islands of animals in the presence of the statement that only a few were saved at the flood through the Ark. Our author points out the possibility of man or angels transporting them at God's command (?), or, of their being produced from the earth, as at first, in obedience to God's command, "let the earth bring forth living soul".

It may be remarked here as a matter of interest, in spite of his wonderful logical faculty and theological knowledge, is still a son of his own time. He considers it incredible that people should inhabit that land "where the sun rises when it sets with us". He also affirms that Hebrew was the first language that existed before the confusion of tongues occurred.

He then reviews the history of Abraham and deals with the prophetic significance and order of the various incidents in the lives of the patriarchs.

He traces the line of prophecy in the old Testament and finds its beginning even with the patriarchs, though with Samuel the place of prophecy <sup>is</sup> ~~and~~ the development of the nation received public recognition. The promises which God had made to David concerning his son, were not realised in any of his sons, but only in Christ, whose "kingdom is eternal and whose throne shall be established for ever". He makes special references to a number of Psalms in which he finds various phases of our Lord's life, sufferings death and resurrection foretold. He also finds similar unmistakable prophetic utterances, in books attributed to

Soloman, During the varying history of <sup>Israel.</sup> ~~his reign~~, at the time of their prosperity and adversity, the prophets are said to have kept alive by prediction and precepts, that hope of the redemption of Israel. Thus does he trace from the beginning the "City of God" throughout the centuries, manifesting "the descent of those great and manifold promises of God from the beginning, until He in whom they all were bounded and to be fulfilled was come to be born of the Virgin". After having done this without any interruption in his narrative, he now begins to describe the earthly city from the time of Abraham.

St. Augustine places the the zenith of the Assyrian power at the time of Abraham, the Grecian and Egyptian in the time of the succeeding generations. He tries to fix landmarks in the secular history, <sup>+</sup> ~~contemporary~~ ~~with~~ scriptural incidents. In the profane history, either in Assyria or in Egypt, in Greece or in Rome, he finds the gradual development throughout the succeeding centuries of that City of Man in which all things "devilish" and "ungodly" prevailed, and which in every respect formed <sup>a</sup> direct contrast to the incidents in the history of the chosen race.

There has been considerable antagonism between the worldly City and the City of God all through the ages. The members of the latter were often brutally treated and put to death by the former. The blood of the martyrs only set the seal to the truth of their faith, and even the so called schisms of the Church had been overruled of God for the establishment of His City on a firmer basis

The philosophers, in their search after the final good, have formed themselves into diverse and conflicting schools of thought. Some, for example, set bodily pleasure as inferior to virtue, others again as equal to it, and still a third party considered bodily pleasure to be aimed at in preference to virtue. Speculation has found expressions in numerous ways. Varro, however, for convenience reduces them into three, according as "whether natures first positive desire ought to be desired for virtues sake, or virtue for others, or both for themselves".

Where speculation finds itself unable to come to a unanimity of opinion. the City of God affords a definite explanation; it explains that "eternal life is the perfection of good, and eternal death is the consumation of evil, and that the aim of our life must be to avoid this and attain the other". This beatitude is secured by faith, as it is written, "the just shall live by faith". According to this view, perfection of felicity is not to be obtained in this life, as some of the philosophers have endeavoured to find, but only in the life to come, for which the citizens of the Holy City are looking forward in faith and hope. In that life, shall God bestow all the good and lasting gifts, not only to the renewed soul, but to the resurrected body. There shall cease all conflicts between virtue and vice and the saints will have for their blessed portion the

enjoyment of undisturbed peace. What we call happiness here, is but a foretaste of that everlasting peace which will be ours hereafter. It is this peace which is the aim of the human mind. It is to achieve this peace that the fiercest wars are waged. While this is often so the external world, the peace of the inner man with his Creator is secured only by "orderly obedience unto His eternal law through faith".

It is by this obedience that man can free himself from the bondage caused by sin; a bondage in which he has become a slave to his own passions, if not to any other powers outside. This bondage, which became man's lot at his fall, is the cause of man's change from sovereignty "over the fishes of the sea .....", the earth<sup>"</sup> to the sovereignty<sup>over</sup> and subjection to his fellow man. Even although this domination of man over man is the result of sin, yet God in His wisdom overruled this state of things for the good of His friends "as long as their earthly pilgrimage lasts". This is the reason why the apostle exhorts us to pray for kings and rulers of the earthly City "that we may lead a quiet life in godliness and charity". For in the peace of our earthly kingdom, which is the common blessing of the good and the wicked, is involved the present peace of the heavenly citizens. But, at the same time, it should be noted that this happiness which we enjoy, on account of the peace of the earthly kingdom, is nothing, in comparison with, "that final peace, and to which all man's peace and righteousness on earth has reference, and yet in it there shall be no sin, but God shall rule man and the soul, the body". This state of things shall continue to all eternity in the fullness of perfect peace.

As for the wicked, the members of that human City, eternal misery

says St Augustine, shall be their portion. And their souls deprived of God, shall undergo everlasting torments. Here, St, Augustine deals with the question of final judgment. The source of his knowledge is Holy Scripture, In it he finds clear statement regarding Christ coming on the last day from Heaven "to judge the quick and the dead". The judgment is universal including both the good and the wicked. He tries to prove the above facts by various quotations from the Old and New Testaments. Of the two resurrections mentioned in the New Testament, he identifies the first with the "regeneration", at which the dead souls are quickened, and the second death, with the resurrection of the body from corruption, sending some into second death and others into everlasting life. The belief entertained by some, that the first resurrection occurs immediately before what they call "a thousand years' reign", is in the opinion of our theologian, but a misapprehension on their part. For he quotes the passage, "This is the first resurrection. Blessed is he that hath a part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power", and argues that the first resurrection here referred to cannot be anything other than the real, reviving of the souls dead in sin, which happens at the time of the conversion. Briefly then the different ways of interpretation by the different writers is treated by St, Augustine.

Objections are sometimes taken by sceptics to the mode and duration of punishments occurring in scripture, firstly that no creature can live in the fire without being consumed. The answer to <sup>this</sup> is found in the existence, in certain kinds, of ~~worms~~ "worms that live in the fervent springs of hot baths



without being hurt". The fire nourishes rather than destroys them. If this is possible, and St. Augustine finds on good authority that it is so, there is no difficulty in believing that these objects of punishments do live in the fire and are tormented by it. secondly about eternal suffering. Is it possible asks the sceptic, that the flesh can suffer always and never die? In the first, death forces the soul from the body against its will. If so what difficulty is there in thinking that in the second death, that the soul is held in the body against its will? By resurrection the body undergoes a change, that whereas the original body could not have suffered all pain without dying, it assumes a different nature that death itself shall take a different aspect.

It is perhaps unnecessary to argue such particular cases. The omnipotence of God, says St. Augustine, is our ground in the belief in miracles. If God has "filled Heaven, earth, air and water, so full of innumerable miracles, and <sup>if</sup> the world which He made is a greater miracle than any it contains", why is it strange to believe that God can raise the dead or condemn those that despise His mercies to suffer torment without being consumed?

It should, however, be remembered that certain Christians out of the tenderness of their hearts, brought forward a theory that the wicked, after a certain period of suffering, will be purged of their sins and received up into the Heavenly bliss. Origen shared in this belief. The difficulty of the acceptance of such a theory is, that if deliverance be just and merciful why not extend it to the devils as well? Others again cherish the false belief that the intercession of Saints would effect deliverance for the condemned, or, that all those who are partakers

of the body of Christ and baptised in His name, are eligible for the reward of the just, no matter what they believed or how they lived.

In his last book our author speaks particularly of the eternal blessings of the City of God. He defines the City of God as the holy and united society of those sensible intelligent and spiritual beings, endowed with freedom of will, and whose life, nutriment and beatitude is God Himself. To such is promised salvation through Jesus Christ, and for such awaits the privilege of membership in that New Kingdom, where eternal righteousness and peace dwell. These are they that do not fashion themselves like unto the world, but are changed by the renewing of their mind. At the resurrection shall they change their corruptible bodies for the incorruptable, and the carnal for the spiritual. And though we know but "in part" of the future beatitude that awaits His Saints, yet we may very well say that they shall live in that peace "which passeth all understanding". Then, in a manner, we cannot quite understand now, shall we be transformed to be like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is", and we shall be living in perfect felicity in the City of God, where no evil thing exists, and where there shall be no sloth nor irksome labour, but joyful service which is but the continual praise of "Him" for ever and ever".