

Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX:

Chapter 7.— Of the Diversity of Languages, by Which the Intercourse of Men is Prevented; And of the Misery of Wars, Even of Those Called Just.

After the state or city comes the world, the third circle of **human** society,— the first being the house, and the second the city. And the world, as it is larger, so it is fuller of dangers, as the greater sea is the more dangerous. And here, in the first place, man is separated from man by the difference of languages. For if two men, each **ignorant** of the other's language, meet, and are not compelled to pass, but, on the contrary, to remain in company, dumb animals, though of different species, would more easily hold intercourse than they, **human** beings though they be. For their common nature is no help to friendliness when they are prevented by diversity of language from conveying their sentiments to one another; so that a man would more readily hold intercourse with his dog than with a foreigner. But the imperial city has endeavored to impose on subject nations not only her yoke, but her language, as a bond of peace, so that interpreters, far from being scarce, are numberless. This is **true**; but how many great **wars**, how much slaughter and bloodshed, have provided this unity! And though these are past, the end of these miseries has not yet come. For though there have never been wanting, nor are yet wanting, hostile nations beyond the empire, against whom **wars** have been and are waged, yet, supposing there were no such nations, the very extent of the empire itself has produced **wars** of a more obnoxious description— social and civil **wars**— and with these the whole race has been agitated, either by the actual conflict or the **fear** of a renewed outbreak. If I attempted to give an adequate description of these manifold disasters, these stern and lasting necessities, though I am quite unequal to the task, what limit could I set? But, say they, the wise man will wage just **wars**. As if he would not all the rather lament the **necessity** of just **wars**, if he remembers that he is a man; for if they were not just he would not wage them, and would therefore be delivered from all **wars**. For it is the wrongdoing of the opposing party which compels the wise man to wage just **wars**; and this wrong-doing, even though it gave rise to no **war**, would still be matter of grief to man because it is man's wrong-doing. Let every one, then, who thinks with pain on all these great **evils**, so horrible, so ruthless, acknowledge that this is misery. And if any one either endures or thinks of them without mental pain, this is a more miserable plight still, for he thinks himself **happy** because he has lost **human** feeling.

Augustine, *Letter to Marcellinus* (Letter 138, 412 AD):

14. These precepts concerning patience ought to be always retained in the habitual discipline of the heart, and the benevolence which prevents the recompensing of [evil](#) for [evil](#) must be always fully cherished in the disposition. At the same time, many things must be done in correcting with a certain benevolent severity, even against their own wishes, men whose welfare rather than their wishes it is our duty to consult and the [Christian](#) Scriptures have most unambiguously commended this [virtue](#) in a magistrate. For in the correction of a son, even with some sternness, there is assuredly no diminution of a father's [love](#); yet, in the correction, that is done which is received with reluctance and pain by one whom it seems necessary to heal by pain. And on this principle, if the commonwealth observe the precepts of the [Christian religion](#), even its [wars](#) themselves will not be carried on without the benevolent design that, after the resisting nations have been conquered, provision may be more easily made for enjoying in peace the mutual bond of [piety](#) and [justice](#). For the person from whom is taken away the freedom which he abuses in doing wrong is vanquished with benefit to himself; since nothing is more [truly](#) a misfortune than that good fortune of offenders, by which pernicious impunity is maintained, and the [evil](#) disposition, like an enemy within the man, is strengthened. But the perverse and forward hearts of men think [human](#) affairs are prosperous when men are concerned about magnificent mansions, and indifferent to the ruin of [souls](#); when mighty theatres are built up, and the foundations of [virtue](#) are undermined; when the [madness](#) of extravagance is highly esteemed, and works of mercy are scorned; when, out of the [wealth](#) and affluence of rich men, luxurious provision is made for actors, and the poor are grudged the necessities of life; when that God who, by the public declarations of His doctrine, protests against public [vice](#), is [blasphemed](#) by impious communities, which demand gods of such character that even those theatrical representations which bring disgrace to both body and [soul](#) are fitly performed in [honour](#) of them. If God permit these things to prevail, He is in that permission showing more grievous displeasure: if He leave these crimes unpunished, such impunity is a more terrible judgment. When, on the other hand, He overthrows the props of [vice](#), and reduces to poverty those [lusts](#) which were nursed by plenty, He afflicts in mercy. And in mercy, also, if such a thing were possible, even [wars](#) might be waged by the good, in order that, by bringing under the yoke the unbridled [lusts](#) of [men](#), those [vices](#) might be abolished which ought, under a [just](#) government, to be either extirpated or suppressed.

15. For if the [Christian religion](#) condemned [wars](#) of every kind, the command given in the gospel to soldiers asking counsel as to [salvation](#) would rather be

to cast away their arms, and withdraw themselves wholly from military service; whereas the word spoken to such was, Do [violence](#) to no man, neither accuse any [falsely](#), and be content with your wages, [Luke 3:14](#) — the command to be content with their wages manifestly implying no prohibition to continue in the service. Wherefore, let those who say that the doctrine of Christ is incompatible with the State's well-being, give us an army composed of soldiers such as the doctrine of Christ requires them to be; let them give us such subjects, such husbands and wives, such [parents](#) and children, such masters and servants, such kings, such judges— in fine, even such taxpayers and tax-gatherers, as the [Christian religion](#) has taught that men should be, and then let them dare to say that it is adverse to the State's well-being; yea, rather, let them no longer hesitate to confess that this doctrine, if it were [obeyed](#), would be the [salvation](#) of the commonwealth.

Chapter 3

16. But what am I to answer to the assertion made that many calamities have befallen the Roman Empire through some [Christian](#) emperors? This sweeping accusation is a [calumny](#). For if they would more clearly quote some indisputable facts in support of it from the history of past emperors, I also could mention similar, perhaps even greater calamities in the reigns of other emperors who were not [Christians](#); so that men may understand that these were either faults in the men, not in their religion, or were due not to the emperors themselves, but to others without whom emperors can do nothing. As to the date of the commencement of the downfall of the Roman Republic, there is ample evidence; their own literature speaks plainly as to this. Long before the name of Christ had shone abroad on the earth, this was said of Rome: O venal city, and doomed to perish speedily, if only it could find a purchaser! In his book on the Catilinarian conspiracy, which was before the coming of [Christ](#), the same most illustrious Roman historian declares plainly the time when the army of the Roman people began to be wanton and drunken; to set a high value on [statues](#), paintings, and embossed vases; to take these by [violence](#) both from individuals and from the State; to [rob](#) temples and pollute everything, sacred and profane. When, therefore, the [avarice](#) and grasping [violence](#) of the corrupt and abandoned manners of the time spared neither men nor those whom they esteemed as gods, the famous [honour](#) and safety of the commonwealth began to decline. What progress the worst [vices](#) made from that time forward, and with how great mischief to the interests of [mankind](#) the [wickedness](#) of the Empire went on, it would take too long to rehearse. Let them hear their own satirist speaking playfully yet [truly](#) thus:—

Once poor, and therefore chaste, in former times
Our matrons were; no luxury found room
In low-roofed houses and bare walls of loam;
Their hands with labour burdened while 'tis light,
A frugal sleep supplied the quiet night;
While, pinched with want, their hunger held them strait,
When Hannibal was hovering at the gate;
But wanton now, and lolling at our ease,
We suffer all the inveterate ills of peace
And wasteful riot, whose destructive charms
Revenge the vanquished world of our victorious arms.
No crime, no lustful postures are unknown,
Since poverty, our guardian-god, is gone.

Why, then, do you expect me to multiply examples of the [evils](#) which were brought in by [wickedness](#) uplifted by prosperity, seeing that among themselves, those who observed events with somewhat closer attention discerned that Rome had more reason to regret the departure of its poverty than of its opulence; because in its poverty the integrity of its [virtue](#) was secured, but through its opulence, dire corruption, more terrible than any invader, had taken violent possession not of the walls of the city, but of the mind of the State?

17. Thanks be unto the Lord our [God](#), who has sent unto us unprecedented help in resisting these [evils](#). For whither might not men have been carried away by that flood of the appalling [wickedness](#) of the [human race](#), whom would it have spared, and in what depths would it not have engulfed its victims, had not the cross of [Christ](#), resting on such a solid rock of authority (so to speak), been planted too high and too strong for the flood to sweep it away? So that by laying hold of its strength we may become steadfast, and not be carried off our feet and overwhelmed in the mighty whirlpool of the [evil](#) counsels and [evil](#) impulses of this world. For when the empire was sinking in the vile abyss of utterly depraved manners, and of the effete ancient religion, it was signally important that heavenly authority should come to the rescue, persuading men to the practice of [voluntary](#) poverty, continence, benevolence, [justice](#), and concord among themselves, as well as [true piety](#) towards [God](#), and all the other bright and sterling [virtues](#) of life—not only with a view to the spending of this present life in the most [honourable](#) way, nor only with a view to secure the most perfect bond of concord in the earthly commonwealth, but also in order to the obtaining of [eternal salvation](#), and a place in the divine and celestial republic of a people which shall endure for ever— a republic to the citizenship of which [faith](#), hope, and charity admit us; so that, while absent from it on our pilgrimage here, we may patiently tolerate, if we cannot

correct, those who desire, by leaving [vices](#) unpunished, to give stability to that republic which the early Romans founded and enlarged by their [virtues](#), when, though they had not the [true piety](#) towards the [true](#) God which could bring them, by a religion of saving power, to the commonwealth which is [eternal](#), they did nevertheless observe a certain integrity of its own kind, which might suffice for founding, enlarging, and preserving an earthly commonwealth. For in the most opulent and illustrious Empire of Rome, God has shown how great is the influence of even civil [virtues](#) without [true](#) religion, in order that it might be understood that, when this is added to such [virtues](#), men are made citizens of another commonwealth, of which the king is Truth, the law is Love, and the duration is Eternity.