

the Gods in words, and destroys them in fact; and if the Deity is truly such a being that he shows no favor, no benevolence to mankind, away with him! For why should I entreat him to be propitious? He can be propitious to none, since, as you say, all his favor and benevolence are the effects of imbecility.

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## BOOK II.

I. WHEN Cotta had thus concluded, Velleius replied: I certainly was inconsiderate to engage in argument with an Academician who is likewise a rhetorician. I should not have feared an Academician without eloquence, nor a rhetorician without that philosophy, however eloquent he might be; for I am never puzzled by an empty flow of words, nor by the most subtle reasonings delivered without any grace of oratory. But you, Cotta, have excelled in both. You only wanted the assembly and the judges. However, enough of this at present. Now, let us hear what Lucilius has to say, if it is agreeable to him.

I had much rather, says Balbus, hear Cotta resume his discourse, and demonstrate the true Gods with the same eloquence which he made use of to explode the false; for, on such a subject, the loose, unsettled doctrine of the Academy does not become a philosopher, a priest, a Cotta, whose opinions should be, like those we hold, firm and certain. Epicurus has been more than sufficiently refuted; but I would willingly hear your own sentiments, Cotta.

Do you forget, replies Cotta, what I at first said—that it is easier for me, especially on this point, to explain what opinions those are which I do not hold, rather than what those are which I do? Nay, even if I did feel some certainty on any particular point, yet, after having been so diffuse myself already, I would prefer now hearing you speak in your turn. I submit, says Balbus, and will be as brief as I possibly can; for as you have confuted the errors of Epicurus, my part in the dispute will be the short-

er. Our sect divide the whole question concerning the immortal Gods into four parts. First, they prove that there are Gods; secondly, of what character and nature they are; thirdly, that the universe is governed by them; and, lastly, that they exercise a superintendence over human affairs. But in this present discussion let us confine ourselves to the first two articles, and defer the third and fourth till another opportunity, as they require more time to discuss. By no means, says Cotta, for we have time enough on our hands; besides that, we are now discussing a subject which should be preferred even to serious business.

II. The first point, then, says Lucilius, I think needs no discourse to prove it; for what can be so plain and evident, when we behold the heavens and contemplate the celestial bodies, as the existence of some supreme, divine intelligence, by which all these things are governed? Were it otherwise, Ennius would not, with a universal approbation, have said,

Look up to the refulgent heaven above,  
Which all men call, unanimously, Jove.

This is Jupiter, the governor of the world, who rules all things with his nod, and is, as the same Ennius adds,

— of Gods and men the sire,<sup>1</sup>

an omnipresent and omnipotent God. And if any one doubts this, I really do not understand why the same man may not also doubt whether there is a sun or not. For what can possibly be more evident than this? And if it were not a truth universally impressed on the minds of men, the belief in it would never have been so firm; nor would it have been, as it is, increased by length of years, nor would it have gathered strength and stability through every age. And, in truth, we see that other opinions, being false and groundless, have already fallen into oblivion by lapse of time. Who now believes in Hippocentaurs and

<sup>1</sup> This manner of speaking of Jupiter frequently occurs in Homer,

— πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε,

and has been used by Virgil and other poets since Ennius.

Chimæras? Or what old woman is now to be found so weak and ignorant as to stand in fear of those infernal monsters which once so terrified mankind? For time destroys the fictions of error and opinion, while it confirms the determinations of nature and of truth. And therefore it is that, both among us and among other nations, sacred institutions and the divine worship of the Gods have been strengthened and improved from time to time. And this is not to be imputed to chance or folly, but to the frequent appearance of the Gods themselves. In the war with the Latins, when A. Posthumius, the dictator, attacked Octavius Mamilius, the Tusculan, at Regillus, Castor and Pollux were seen fighting in our army on horseback; and since that the same offspring of Tyndarus gave notice of the defeat of Perses; for as P. Vatienus, the grandfather of the present young man of that name, was coming in the night to Rome from his government of Reate, two young men on white horses appeared to him, and told him that King<sup>1</sup> Perses was that day taken prisoner. This news he carried to the senate, who immediately threw him into prison for speaking inconsiderately on a state affair; but when it was confirmed by letters from Paullus, he was recompensed by the senate with land and immunities.<sup>2</sup> Nor do we forget when the Locrians defeated the people of Crotone, in a great battle on the banks of the river Sagra, that it was known the same day at the Olympic Games. The voices of the Fauns have been often heard, and Deities have appeared in forms so visible that they have compelled every one who is not senseless, or hardened in impiety, to confess the presence of the Gods.

III. What do predictions and foreknowledge of future events indicate, but that such future events are shown, pointed out, portended, and foretold to men? From whence they are called omens, signs, portents, prodigies. But though we should esteem fabulous what is said of

<sup>1</sup> Perses, or Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, was taken by Cnaeus Octavius, the prætor, and brought as prisoner to Paullus Æmilius, 167 B.C.

<sup>2</sup> An exemption from serving in the wars, and from paying public taxes.

Mopsus,<sup>1</sup> Tiresias,<sup>2</sup> Amphiaraus,<sup>3</sup> Calchas,<sup>4</sup> and Helenus<sup>5</sup> (who would not have been delivered down to us as augurs even in fable if their art had been despised), may we not be sufficiently apprised of the power of the Gods by domestic examples? Will not the temerity of P. Claudius, in the first Punic war, affect us? who, when the poultry were let out of the coop and would not feed, ordered them to be thrown into the water, and, joking even upon the Gods, said, with a sneer, "Let them drink, since they will not eat;" which piece of ridicule, being followed by a victory over his fleet, cost him many tears, and brought great calamity on the Roman people. Did not his colleague Junius, in the same war, lose his fleet in a tempest by disregarding the auspices? Claudius, therefore, was condemned by the people, and Junius killed himself. Cælius says that P. Flaminius, from his neglect of religion, fell at Thrasimenus; a loss which the public severely felt. By these instances of calamity we may be assured that Rome owes her grandeur and success to the conduct of those who were tenacious of their religious duties; and if we compare ourselves to our neighbors, we shall find that we are infinitely distinguished above foreign nations by our zeal for religious ceremonies, though in other things we may be only equal to them, and in other respects even inferior to them.

Ought we to contemn Attius Navius's staff, with which

<sup>1</sup> Mopsus. There were two soothsayers of this name: the first was one of the Lapithæ, son of Ampycus and Chloris, called also the son of Apollo and Hienantis; the other a son of Apollo and Manto, who is said to have founded Mallus, in Asia Minor, where his oracle existed as late as the time of Strabo.

<sup>2</sup> Tiresias was the great Theban prophet at the time of the war of the Seven against Thebes.

<sup>3</sup> Amphiaraus was King of Argos (he had been one of the Argonauts also). He was killed after the war of the Seven against Thebes, which he was compelled to join in by the treachery of his wife Eriphyle, by the earth opening and swallowing him up as he was fleeing from Perilymenus.

<sup>4</sup> Calchas was the prophet of the Grecian army at the siege of Troy.

<sup>5</sup> Helenus was a son of Priam and Hecuba. He is represented as a prophet in the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles. And in the *Æneid* he is also represented as king of part of Epirus, and as predicting to Æneas the dangers and fortunes which awaited him.

he divided the regions of the vine to find his sow?<sup>1</sup> I should despise it, if I were not aware that King Hostilius had carried on most important wars in deference to his auguries; but by the negligence of our nobility the discipline of the augury is now omitted, the truth of the auspices despised, and only a mere form observed; so that the most important affairs of the commonwealth, even the wars, on which the public safety depends, are conducted without any auspices; the Peremnia<sup>2</sup> are discussed; no part of the Acumina<sup>3</sup> performed; no select men are called to witness to the military testaments;<sup>4</sup> our generals now begin their wars as soon as they have arranged the Auspicia. The force of religion was so great among our ancestors that some of their commanders have, with their faces veiled, and with the solemn, formal expressions of religion, sacrificed themselves to the immortal Gods to save their country.<sup>5</sup> I could mention many of the Sibylline prophecies, and many answers of the haruspices, to confirm those things, which ought not to be doubted.

IV. For example: our augurs and the Etrurian haruspices saw the truth of their art established when P. Scipio and C. Figulus were consuls; for as Tiberius Gracchus, who was a second time consul, wished to proceed to a

<sup>1</sup> This short passage would be very obscure to the reader without an explanation from another of Cicero's treatises. The expression here, *ad investigandum suam regiones vineæ terminavit*, which is a metaphor too bold, if it was not a sort of augural language, seems to me to have been the effect of carelessness in our great author; for Navius did not divide the regions, as he calls them, of the vine to find his sow, but to find a grape.

<sup>2</sup> The Peremnia were a sort of auspices performed just before the passing a river.

<sup>3</sup> The Acumina were a military auspices, and were partly performed on the point of a spear, from which they were called Acumina.

<sup>4</sup> Those were called *testamenta in procinctu*, which were made by soldiers just before an engagement, in the presence of men called as witnesses.

<sup>5</sup> This especially refers to the Decii, one of whom devoted himself for his country in the war with the Latins, 340 B.C., and his son imitated the action in the war with the Samnites, 295 B.C. Cicero (Tusc. i. 37) says that his son did the same thing in the war with Pyrrhus at the battle of Asculum, though in other places (De Off. iii. 4) he speaks of only two Decii as having *signalized themselves in this manner*.

fresh election, the first Rogator,<sup>1</sup> as he was collecting the suffrages, fell down dead on the spot. Gracchus nevertheless went on with the assembly, but perceiving that this accident had a religious influence on the people, he brought the affair before the senate. The senate thought fit to refer it to those who usually took cognizance of such things. The haruspices were called, and declared that the man who had acted as Rogator of the assembly had no right to do so; to which, as I have heard my father say, he replied with great warmth, Have I no right, who am consul, and augur, and favored by the Auspicia? And shall you, who are Tuscans and Barbarians, pretend that you have authority over the Roman Auspicia, and a right to give judgment in matters respecting the formality of our assemblies? Therefore, he then commanded them to withdraw; but not long afterward he wrote from his province<sup>2</sup> to the college of augurs, acknowledging that in reading the books<sup>3</sup> he remembered that he had illegally chosen a place for his tent in the gardens of Scipio, and had afterward entered the Pomœrium, in order to hold a senate, but that in repassing the same Pomœrium he had forgotten to take the auspices; and that, therefore, the consuls had been created informally. The augurs laid the case before the senate. The senate decreed that they should resign their charge, and so they accordingly abdicated. What greater example need we seek for? The wisest, perhaps the most excellent of men, chose to confess his fault, which he might have concealed, rather than leave the public the least atom of religious guilt; and the consuls chose to quit the highest office in the State, rather than fill it for a moment in defiance of religion. How great is the reputation of the augurs!

And is not the art of the soothsayers divine? And must not every one who sees what innumerable instances of the same kind there are confess the existence of the

<sup>1</sup> The Rogator, who collected the votes, and pronounced who was the person chosen. There were two sorts of Rogators; one was the officer here mentioned, and the other was the Rogator, or speaker of the whole assembly.

<sup>2</sup> Which was Sardinia, as appears from one of Cicero's epistles to his brother Quintus.

<sup>3</sup> Their sacred books of ceremonies.

Gods? For they who have interpreters must certainly exist themselves; now, there are interpreters of the Gods; therefore we must allow there are Gods. But it may be said, perhaps, that all predictions are not accomplished. We may as well conclude there is no art of physic, because all sick persons do not recover. The Gods show us signs of future events; if we are occasionally deceived in the results, it is not to be imputed to the nature of the Gods, but to the conjectures of men. All nations agree that there are Gods; the opinion is innate, and, as it were, engraved in the minds of all men. The only point in dispute among us is, what they are.

V. Their existence no one denies. Cleanthes, one of our sect, imputes the way in which the idea of the Gods is implanted in the minds of men to four causes. The first is that which I just now mentioned—the foreknowledge of future things. The second is the great advantages which we enjoy from the temperature of the air, the fertility of the earth, and the abundance of various benefits of other kinds. The third cause is deduced from the terror with which the mind is affected by thunder, tempests, storms, snow, hail, devastation, pestilence, earthquakes often attended with hideous noises, showers of stones, and rain like drops of blood; by rocks and sudden openings of the earth; by monstrous births of men and beasts; by meteors in the air, and blazing stars, by the Greeks called *cometæ*, by us *crinitæ*, the appearance of which, in the late Octavian war,<sup>1</sup> were foreboders of great calamities; by two suns, which, as I have heard my father say, happened in the consulate of Tuditanus and Aquillius, and in which year also another sun (P. Africanus) was extinguished. These things terrified mankind, and raised in them a firm belief of the existence of some celestial and divine power.

His fourth cause, and that the strongest, is drawn from the regularity of the motion and revolution of the heavens, the distinctness, variety, beauty, and order of the sun, moon, and all the stars, the appearance only of which is sufficient to convince us they are not the effects of chance; as when we enter into a house, or school, or court, and observe the exact order, discipline, and method of it, we cannot sup-

<sup>1</sup> The war between Octavius and Cinna, the consuls.

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