

The motive of peace in "the city of god"



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BUSTER**

In his book, "The City of God," Saint Augustine of Hippo writes to defend Christianity against pagan claims of abandonment from God. When the city of Rome fell in 410, many citizens argued that it was Christianity's fault, but Augustine says that the blood was on the hands of those who oppose God by searching for peace in earthly things. He also puts the city of Rome in a comparison with the heavenly City to show the differences of true happiness through peace between the two cities.

Augustine begins his writing by expressing his response to the people's claim of God being at fault. Augustine says that the pagan believers "were more attached to the seductions of foul spirits" which is the reason that they "take no blame for the evil they do, but blame Christianity for the evil they suffer" (208). This quote explains the reason the city becomes corrupt. Because of the citizens sinful ways, the joy of the city is crushed by the enemy. The absence of joy emphasizes the search for joy which- when not focused on God- causes that search to be in earthly things. This also explains Augustine's response to the pagans when he tells them that they "still wallow in sin even in the depths of sorrows" (208). The sin becomes stuck in a cycle when the unjust search for happiness causes more sin which causes more searching and so on. Augustine says that in God, that search is unnecessary.

As Augustine continues, he describes the only way that one can find the sufficient source of happiness: peace with God. He begins by explaining that, even when Rome was under the praise of the pagan gods, the one true God was always in control. The old pagan heroes of Rome were moral, and Augustine says that the "splendid of the Empire" was a small reward of "

temporal glory" for the " praiseworthy efforts of virtue by which they strove to attain" (212). This reward was from God, but because they praised others, the glory was only short-term. The pagans received their reward and basked in it, so they now " have no right to complain of the justice of the true and supreme God," Augustine says (212). On the other hand, " the reward of the saints is altogether different" (212). While on earth, they suffered hatred and afflictions by standing for God and loving him supremely. This love and admiration was rewarded with citizenship in the City of God, something much more lasting than the pagan's reward. Resisting the search for happiness in earthly substances pays off for the righteous. Augustine says that in God's City, " there reigns that true and perfect happiness" and it can only be explained as a " gift of God" (212). This becomes the basis of Augustine's comparisons between earth and Heaven.

One of Augustine's main objectives in " The City of God" is to not only display the differences between Rome and the heavenly City but also to show how Rome should have mimicked the heavenly City. Augustine first describes how the earthly citizens use perishable means to ease the pain of the " supreme evil" (214). There is no reason to ease the pain when one can eradicate it altogether. The earthly city seeks a limited amount of happiness and digs deeper and deeper in the wrong direction for the true treasured goal. The heavenly citizens morally use the happiness of earth as a stepping stone to the promised peace of God. Earth's city " has flowered from a selfish love" and from a " lust for domination" while God's City is " rooted in the love of God" and in " service to one another in charity" (209). Shaping the earthly city of Rome after the holy City of God makes sense to Augustine.

He says that “ the only real peace is for those who find their joy in God” and reaching this peace leaves man “ perpetually endowed with life” (216). It is pointless to continue to tire one’s self by chasing after the very thing that God is offering him or her. In God’s City, peace is fully sufficient. All things chase after this peace so it makes sense to Augustine to strive to be like the holy City. The only way this can be done is “ by religious faith where citizens adore one God alone and serve him with complete dedication,” Augustine says (215). The earthly city must let go of its boasting acts and “ refer every good act done” to God (216).

“ The City of God” is a platform for Augustine that he uses to stand for, defend, and proclaim God. Throughout his work, Augustine shows that peace apart from God has many shortcomings. The only way to obtain true peace is to be in God’s presence. The fall of Rome is just the ending consequences of the temporal glory given to the moral heroes of the earthly empire of Rome. The only indestructible, eternal reign is that of God in his heavenly City. This City holds the “ supreme good of eternal life” and fulfilling peace which, according to Augustine, can only be found in God (214).

Works Cited ·

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