

"No Abiding City - The Challenge of St Augustine"

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On the City of God Against the Pagans was written in response to the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410. It is hard to grasp the scale of the catastrophe represented by this event. A century earlier Constantine the Great saw the vision in the sky of a cross of light that led to his conversion to Christianity.¹ Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea applied to the new Christian Emperor the words of the prophet Daniel ‘the saints of the Most High shall inherit the kingdom’.² He considered this their literal sense i.e. that Christians would inherit the Roman Empire. The sovereignty of Constantine and his successors would be different in kind, Eusebius insisted, from that of his predecessors “For how should he whose soul is impressed with a thousand absurd images of false deities, be able to exhibit a counterpart of the true and heavenly sovereignty?”³ But for Constantine the conversion of the Emperor was not the repudiation but the climax of Roman history. The emperor himself perceived a prophecy of the birth of Christ in the writings of Virgil – Rome’s greatest poet – transferring, by implication, the ecstatic hope invested by the pagans of the first century in the person and line of Augustus, the first emperor, to the true Son of God and universal ruler, Christ.⁴

The history of Rome and its universal claims harmonised perfectly – so it seemed – with the triumph of Christ and His Church.

¹ Probably in 310. The impression is often given by Lactantius and Eusebius that the vision of the cross occurred soon before the dream of Christ that Constantine had the night before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in October 312 but they never actually say this. On the other hand we have a pagan account of what seems to be the cross vision (seen by the army as well as Constantine) shortly after Constantine’s final conflict with his father-in-law Maximian in 310. R.A.B. Mynors (trans.), *XII Pangyrici Latini* (Oxford : OUP, 1964) 201-202.

² Eusebius of Caesarea, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 3.2. in (E.C. Richardson trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890). PG 20.

³ Eusebius, *Oration*, 5.3.

⁴ Constantine I, *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*, 20 in (E.C. Richardson trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890). PG 20.

The two last bastions of ancient paganism were the Roman Senate and the Academy of Athens. The latter would endure for another century after Augustine's time but the crucial fight for the soul of the Senate came four years before his conversion in 382 when the Altar of the goddess Victory was removed from the Senate House. Shortly after this trial of strength between the new religion and the pagan aristocracy the last ruler of the undivided Empire Theodosius (who formally adopted Catholicism as the religion of the empire in 380) extinguished the vestal fire, hearth of the city. The dying of this flame had long been thought to portend disaster. The vestal priestesses were also the guardians of the Palladium traditionally brought by Aeneas himself from Troy. Constantine had already removed this totemic object from Rome some sixty years earlier and taken it to Constantinople. The morning of the One True God had dawned upon the Roman Empire and from their last refuges the shadows of superstition were driven and exposed.

The remote causes of Rome's fall from greatness are rooted deep in military and political developments stretching back many centuries. Even before Theodosius's campaign against idolatry the empire had barely survived a mass armed migration of Goths across the Danube in 376. Order had never entirely been restored, nor, in fact, would it ever be. As Christopher Dawson observed "the storm was only beginning. It was to last, not for decades, but for generations, until the very memory of peace was gone. It was no ordinary political catastrophe, but 'a day of the Lord' such as the Hebrew prophets describe, a judgement of the nations in which a whole civilization and social order which had failed to justify their existence were rooted up and thrown into the fire."⁵ The fatal blow would be a natural disaster. On 31st December 406 the other great European frontier of the Empire, the Rhine, froze solid and Vandals, Alans and Suebi swarmed across. It was a blow from which the people of the ancient world would never recover. Centuries of anarchy stretched before them.

Civilisation itself would in time be raised upon new foundations and, in large part, these would be the foundations to which Augustine pointed in the City of God but first he must turn the sword of blame from the Church for the temporal ruin which engulfed his flock.

⁵ M.C. D'Arcy et al., *A Monument to Saint Augustine* (London : Sheed & Ward, 1930) 37-38.

The actual words of the pagan reproaches have not survived but we can well imagine what they said. Immortal Rome had flourished for more than a thousand years tending the altars of her gods. Even in her darkest hours the capitol itself had never fallen. Now eighty years after the Palladium was removed, fewer than thirty after the altar of victory was destroyed and a mere twelve years from the extinction of the Vestal fire the greatest city on earth had been put to the sword. Already the pagans charged that the virtues admired by Christians were inimical to the qualities that sustained the civic culture of antiquity. Now the consequences of that conflict and the vanity of the Judean superstition were plain for all to see.

How would the bishop of Hippo in North Africa respond to these charges? Celebrated convert from Paganism, baptised by St Ambrose himself the man who secured the removal of the Altar of Victory, Augustine had turned from a career as a statesman to the cloister and then (under protest) the cathedra. He was precisely the sort of person whose talents had been wasted by this new Christian age and might have prevented the fall of Rome.

Augustine's response came in the form of the twenty-two books of the *City of God*. His defence of the Church against her critics was so profound and radical that it defined the Christian vision of history and society in the Latin West for a thousand years. Augustine completely rejected the priorities and assumptions of his pagan critics. He put their ideals on trial and cast them aside. As *Das Kapital* was to the Soviet Union so was the *City of God* to Mediaeval Christendom with dramatically different results. Charlemagne considered it his favourite book and St Thomas More lectured on it to the Carthusians of London (with whom he would later give his life for Christ) while he discerned his vocation as young man. At the beginning and the end of the ages of Faith Augustine was there guiding the thoughts and actions of the Church's children.

About ten years ago a public debate was held in England between some Catholics and some opponents of the Church. The Catholics were generally not considered to have had the best of it (to put it mildly). The event triggered some trauma. An organisation was even founded to ensure that in any similar contest the Catholics would hold their own. What no one seemed to notice was the erroneous nature of the proposition the Catholic speakers were defending: that

The Catholic Church is a force for good in the world. This is the error into which too many of the faithful had fallen in the century of their triumph from 310 to 410. It is the assumption the pagans thought had been refuted by the sack of Rome. It is the presupposition Augustine ignored and rejected in the City of God.

There are two senses of 'the world' in the New Testament. There is the sense used in John 3:16 "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting." In this sense the world is good. God loves it and has saved it. Then there is the sense of the world used in John 17:9 "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me: because they are thine." In this sense the world is not good. Not at all. The Catholic Church is either the only force for good in the world or she is the world's implacable enemy. She is never **a** force for good in this world. As Bl. John Henry Newman put it,

Is not the world in itself evil? Is it an accident, is it an occasion, is it but an excess, or a crisis, or a complication of circumstances, which constitutes its sinfulness? or, rather, is it not one of our three great spiritual enemies, at all times, and under all circumstances and all changes, ungodly, unbelieving, seducing, and anti-christian? Surely we must grant it to be so. Why else in Baptism do we vow to wage war against it? Why else does Scripture speak of it in the terms which we know so well, if we will but attend to them? St. James says, that 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God,' (James 4:4) so that 'whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.' And St. Paul speaks of 'walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' (Eph. 2:2) and exhorts us not to be 'conformed to this world,' but to be 'transformed by the renewing of our mind;' (Rom. 12:2) and he says that Christ 'gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world.' (Gal. 1:4) In like manner St John says, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' (1 John 2:15) Let us be quite sure, then, that that confederacy of evil which Scripture calls the world, that conspiracy against Almighty God of which Satan is the secret instigator, is

something wider, and more subtle, and more ordinary, than mere cruelty, or craft, or profligacy; it is that very world in which we are; it is not a certain body or party of men, but it is human society itself. This it is which is our greatest enemy.⁶

This is a fundamental insight of the *City of God*. Christ's Church is first and foremost the Church Triumphant in Heaven with which we are associated through baptism. The faithful of the Church Militant here below have no abiding City. Happiness cannot be found in this life. Those who seek it here below share in the rebellion of Lucifer who imagined he could make himself like the Most High (Isaiah 14:14). There is no common project to which the Catholic Church might contribute. No neutral space in which the brethren of Christ and the slaves of the evil one might labour in common. No end sought by humanity as a whole in this fallen state. There is indeed a natural unity to man but all who sin put themselves at enmity with this unity and all sin. We are reincorporated into it in so far as we are redeemed and the minority who accept and seek to live by the grace of redemption may form the true human city but insofar as they do they also put themselves at odds with the rest, with the vast bulk of mankind.

First of all Augustine refutes the pagan's arguments. If the Roman gods would have preserved the city why did they not preserve Troy? The Palladium was only in Rome in the first place because it had to be rescued from Troy and taken to Italy by Aeneas. Virgil himself even helpfully refers to the Trojan's 'vanquished gods'. What use are deities who need to be guarded by their own worshipers? The claim that the Roman dominions would never decrease was refuted long ago in 117 when Hadrian abandoned many of the conquests of Trajan.

What is the temporal happiness for which the pagans claim they impetrate their pantheon, Augustine asks? According to respectable authors it is the life of virtue but the pagan gods showed precious little interest in this. The myths of the gods imbedded in the images and rites of pagan worship are a catalogue of crimes and abominations. If the Romans of the early Republic were virtuous it was despite and not because of their 'religion'. Even this was no

⁶ John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* (Longmans, Green & Co. : London, 1902) 79-80.

true virtue but custom animated by pride or a thirst for glory and honour that is: human praise. But Christ is as good as His word. Three times in the Sermon on the Mount He declares of those who simulate virtue for human respect “Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.” Accordingly, the ancient Romans receive human glory, wide dominion, and the wonder of the ages. But such glory is transitory and as the splendid vices of the Romans faded so did the conquests dry up and the qualified reality of their commonwealth dissipated. Even their own authors treat the Republic as a vanished age by the time of the Incarnation. The pagan philosophers purport to seek happiness in the next life by the worship of their gods but the fables they defend expose these beings for the noxious demons they are while the philosophy itself purged of these fables would lead an honest man to the Church not the heathen temple.

In fact, the republican nostalgists are too generous. Truth be told the republic didn't perish in the vices of the first century BC – it never existed. Taking the unimpeachable Roman authority Marcus Tullius Cicero, Augustine defines the people of a republic as ‘a multitude united in association by a community of interest and a common sense of right (or *ius*)’. But there can be no *ius* without *iustitia* no right without righteousness. Unless it is animated by the perpetual resolve to render unto each that which is his due there can be no republic and to whom is more due than God the creator and sustainer and perfecter of all things? By refusing to worship the one true God in the manner He has appointed the Romans evacuated their city of justice. But there is only one way of approaching the Living One: through the Cross – the one acceptable sacrifice foreshadowed by Abel and made present daily on the Catholic altar. And so, Augustine concludes, “there is no justice save in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ”. As the first of all deceivers rebelled against God by claiming a right to the godhead; so his followers, in denying the due of the Almighty, usurp the right to all other things. As the Catholic Church is constituted by Christ's sacrifice so the rebellion of Satan stands behind every alliance of men and angels separate from her. The acceptable worship of Abel manifested the Heavenly City and the rejected offering of Cain the earthly. “Jerusalem received beginning through Abel, Babylon through Cain”.⁷ “[T]his is the characteristic of the earthly city, that it worships God or gods who may aid it in reigning victoriously and

⁷ St Augustine, *Exposition on Psalm 65*, 2 in (J.E. Tweed trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888).

peacefully on earth not through love of doing good, but through lust of rule. The good use the world that they may enjoy God: the wicked, on the contrary, that they may enjoy the world would fain use God — those of them, at least, who have attained to the belief that He is and takes an interest in human affairs.”⁸

Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity. Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, *What you mean by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, while you who does it with a great fleet are styled emperor.*⁹

One of the great instruments in clouding Augustine’s doctrine from later ages is the modern concept of ‘the state’. Augustine has no place for ‘the state’ in his vision. There is, in the first place, the Republic or City which Cicero correctly defined but which nowhere exists outside the Catholic Church. Secondly there are the multitude of brigandages the earthly confederacies that have no true right to exist but prey upon mankind. Finally, there is the grand confederacy of all those implicated in the rebellion against God. It is in this sense that there are two cities two multitudes united in association by a common agreement on the

⁸ St Augustine, *On the City of God*, 15.7 in (M. Dods trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

⁹ St Augustine, *On the City of God*, 4.4 in (M. Dods trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

object of their love. "Two loves formed two cities: the love of self, reaching even to contempt of God, an earthly city; and the love of God, reaching to contempt of self, a heavenly one."¹⁰

Newman breathes the true doctrine of the great African when he considers the true nature of the so-called state:

Earthly kingdoms are founded, not in justice, but in injustice. They are created by the sword, by robbery, cruelty, perjury, craft, and fraud. There never was a kingdom, except Christ's, which was not conceived and born, nurtured and educated, in sin. There never was a state but was committed to acts and maxims which it is its crime to maintain, and its ruin to abandon. What monarchy is there but began in invasion or usurpation? What revolution has been effected without self-will, violence, or hypocrisy? What popular government but is blown about by every wind, as if it had no conscience and no responsibilities? What dominion of the few but is selfish and unscrupulous? Where is military strength without the passion for war? Where is trade without the love of filthy lucre, which is the root of all evil?¹¹

The idea of a neutral city has no place in Augustine's analysis nor should it in ours. It is a mirage – worse than that – a lie designed to win us away from our true loyalty to the city which is above.

Where then does the temporal polity that submits to Christ's kingship fall in Augustine's taxonomy? There seems no place for it.

A few years before the calamity of 410 Augustine became involved in another much more local conflict between Christian and pagan in the city of Calama near to his own see of Hippo. The local pagans were outraged by a recent Imperial law forbidding idolatrous festivals. The pagans celebrated their festival anyway, rioted, killed a number of Christians,

¹⁰ "fecerunt civitates duas amores duo: terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei: caelestem vero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui" *De civitate Dei*, 14, 28 (PL 41, 436). See: Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus* (Rome, 1884) §1.

¹¹ John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* (Longmans, Green & Co. : London, 1902) 242.

destroyed the cathedral and drove the Christians out of the City. A local pagan magistrate, Nectarius, appealed to Augustine to dissuade the authorities from severe reprisals. As it happened Augustine was willing to try to prevent the use of lethal force or torture (of which he disapproved) by the authorities but he would not seek a general clemency that might encourage future outrages of this kind, nor plead on behalf of the property of the offending pagans. More fundamentally Augustine rejects Nectarius's argument (taken from Cicero) that 'there is no limit either in measure or in time to the claims which their country has upon the care and service of right-hearted men'. For Augustine there is no value to the service of any temporal city unless and until it is incorporated into the heavenly one. Or rather, the only true service one can do the temporal city outside the Church is that which furthers this incorporation. Nectarius, imagining that nature has concrete value apart from the question of true worship, falsely supposes Augustine and he could share some perspective on the good for his city.

These things I have said, [Augustine corrects him] because of your having written that the nearer you come to the end of life, the greater is your desire to leave your country in a safe and flourishing condition. Away with all these vanities and follies, and let men be converted to the true worship of God, and to chaste and pious manners: then will you see your country flourishing, not in the vain opinion of fools, but in the sound judgment of the wise; when your fatherland here on earth shall have become a portion of that Fatherland into which we are born not by the flesh, but by faith, and in which all the holy and faithful servants of God shall bloom in the eternal summer, when their labours in the winter of time are done.¹²

This is the logic from which the institutions of Christendom would grow. The concept of 'Church and State' with which we are so familiar in the modern age had no place in the Augustinian centuries. As Pope Boniface VIII defined in 1302 in the "Church and in its power are two swords; namely, the spiritual and the temporal". There is no salvation for the temporal community other than, as Augustine puts it, "a portion of that Fatherland into which we are born not by the flesh, but by faith". This is why mediaeval kings and emperors were

¹² St Augustine, *Letter 91*, 6. in J.G. Cunningham (trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

deemed deposed by the ban of excommunication. Outside the church they were mere brigands once again. But there is another side to this truth. Just as there is no state, no neutral polity for which Christian and pagan can toil together, so too the concept of the Church which identifies her with the clergy is a distortion that obscures her true nature and the role of the lay faithful. As the last Council observed “the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others.”¹³ But that community, once it has been so transformed, is not external to the Church but merely a temporal province of Christ’s kingdom on earth. Newman again:

...it is only in proportion as things that be are brought into this kingdom, and made subservient to it; it is only as kings and princes, nobles and rulers, men of business and men of letters, the craftsman, and the trader, and the labourer, humble themselves to Christ's Church, and (in the language of the prophet Isaiah) 'bow down to her with their faces toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet,' that the world becomes living and spiritual, and a fit object of love and a resting-place to the Christian.¹⁴

If man’s end in this world were merely proportionate to his nature then the aptitudes and qualities that fit a man to be a statesman would be virtue simply speaking and the very fact that one man exercised civil authority over another would establish a strong presumption that he was fit to do so and exceeded his subjects in goodness. But the gift of God far exceeds the goods of nature and since the fall there has been a tension between the pursuit of temporal and spiritual goods. The temporal polity is not the visible manifestation of the damned city as the Church is of the elect but it forever tends in this direction. As Pope Gelasius I explained,

Christ, mindful of human frailty, regulated with an excellent disposition what pertained to the salvation of his people. Thus he distinguished between the offices of both powers according to their own proper activities and separate dignities, wanting

¹³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Decree on The Apostolate of The Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Rome, 1965) §13.

¹⁴ John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* (Longmans, Green & Co. : London, 1902) 106.

his people to be saved by healthful humility and not carried away again by human pride, so that Christian emperors would need priests for attaining eternal life, and priests would avail themselves of imperial regulations in the conduct of temporal affairs.¹⁵

In this order of providence the aptitudes necessary for the government of temporal affairs are skills not virtues. It is no more impossible for a man to be a good statesman and a bad man as it is for him to be a good chemist and a bad man. Only in the heavenly city do rank and virtue coincide. In fact, it is worse than that. The temporal commonwealth is precisely the community constituted by the end proportionate to man's nature and Satan's rebellion consisted precisely in the claim that the absolutely final end is proportionate to the nature of every intellectual creature, that created persons are owed beatitude by God, and should not have to receive it as a gift on God's terms.¹⁶ For all those united by the love of self to the point of contempt for God the very existence of the Church is an affront to the dignity of man, of the intellectual creature. The temporal commonwealth is the object of their hopes and aspirations or their worship indeed. As the Catechism explains,

Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognized man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer. The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man: Societies not recognizing this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to

¹⁵ St Gelasius I, *Tractate IV* in B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300* (University of Toronto Press : Toronto, 1988) 15. Even our contemporaries dimly sense this need for a non-political higher and universal tribunal capable of striking down temporal laws and executive measures when these diverge from the moral law as witnessed by their futile enthusiasm for judicial supremacy and 'human rights' tribunals.

¹⁶ See: Pius X, *Pascendi* (Rome, 1907) §37 and Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (Rome, 1950) §26.

themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows.¹⁷

Contingent factors undoubtedly played a decisive role in the rise of the hereditary principle and the concept of representative democracy in mediaeval Christendom but they both have a fitting place there. For a healthy and natural (or rather supernatural) suspicion must always attend those drawn to temporal statesmanship. It is a worthy and honourable task but, as with the episcopate, just because a man who desires the office of a statesman, desires a noble task does not mean the one who desires it or the desire itself is always or even often noble. It was natural that Christian man during the Augustinian centuries should, while desiring competence in the ministers of temporal power, have placed checks upon these men from those who either did not seek or did not hold such power.

The City of God is the Catholic Church.¹⁸ Many among the baptised (all those in mortal sin) are not citizens of that city but no one who is wholly outside her pale belongs to it. Many who lack a living faith will one day enter her gates and some who possess such faith will depart from her before they die. But the Church is a city built upon a hilltop that cannot be hidden. There are not many ways to heaven. As the Doctor of Grace warned Nectarius,

you said that all religions by diverse roads and pathways aspire to that one dwelling-place, I fear lest, perchance, while supposing that the way in which you are now found tends there, you should be somewhat reluctant to embrace the way which alone leads men to heaven. Observing, however, more carefully the word which you used, I think that it is not presumptuous for me to expound its meaning somewhat differently; for you did not say that all religions by diverse roads and pathways **reach** heaven, **or reveal, or find, or enter, or secure** that blessed land, but by saying in a phrase deliberately weighed and chosen that all religions **aspire** to it, you have indicated, not the fruition, but the desire of heaven as common to all religions. You have in these words neither shut out the one religion which is true, nor admitted other religions

¹⁷ St John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997) §2244.

¹⁸ *De civitate Dei*, 13, 16.

which are false; for certainly the way which brings us to the goal aspires thitherward, but not every way which aspires thitherward brings us to the place wherein all who are brought there are unquestionably blessed. Now we all wish, that is, we aspire, to be blessed; but we cannot all achieve what we wish, that is, we do not all obtain what we aspire to. That man, therefore, obtains heaven who walks in the way which not only aspires thitherward, but actually brings him there, separating himself from others who keep to the ways which aspire heavenward without finally reaching heaven. For there would be no wandering if men were content to aspire to nothing, or if the truth which men aspire to were obtained ... Christ has said, I am the way, [John 14:6] it is in Him that mercy and truth are to be sought: if we seek these in any other way, we must go astray, following a path which aspires to the true goal, but does not lead men there.¹⁹

If there is so stark a gulf between the one and only human community – God’s City – how can we give any loyalty to the latrocinium in which we are born especially in an age when scarcely a temporal polity on earth submits to the Kingship of Christ? Did not St Paul say in the days of Nero ‘the powers that be are ordained of God’? Nero was no Christian how then could he command obedience as St Paul assures us he could. A useful analogy can be found here, I believe, with the authority of parents. Failure to baptise one’s children, though a grave fault in parents, does not (because a failure to meet a positive rather than a negative precept) take away obedience still less the loyalty and love owed by children to those who begot them and licences a stranger to baptise an infant only in the imminent danger of death. So long as our temporal homeland does not *require* of us any violation of natural or divine law (even while it permits such violations to others) we owe it our obedience. But our estimation of all that true loyalty and love demand of us in its regard cannot but diverge from that of its rulers so long as they remain in the service of the enemy. There will be some overlap, as Our Lord Himself observes “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”²⁰ but the fundamental motivations and intentions remain utterly opposed. If we forget this we

¹⁹ St Augustine, *Letter 104*, 4.12 in J.G. Cunningham (trans.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

²⁰ Matthew 7:11 (ESV).

do our God, our temporal homeland and ourselves no good service. Indeed, we depart entirely from the service of God. Permit me to close with another, shocking, observation by Bl. John Henry Newman. Shocking especially for those seduced by the siren voices who insist that the Catholic Church is a force for good in the world.

"Nature is one with nature, grace with grace; the world then witnesses against you by being good friends with you; you could not have got on with the world so well, without surrendering something which was precious and sacred. The world likes you, all but your professed creed; distinguishes you from your creed in its judgment of you, and would fain separate you from it in fact. Men say, 'These persons are better than their Church; we have not a word to say for their Church; but Catholics are not what they were, they are very much like other men now. Their Creed certainly is bigoted and cruel, but what would you have of them? You cannot expect them to confess this; let them change quietly, no one changes in public,—be satisfied that they are changed. They are as fond of the world as we are; they take up political objects as warmly; they like their own way just as well; they do not like strictness a whit better; they hate spiritual thralldom, and they are half ashamed of the Pope and his Councils. They hardly believe any miracles now, and are annoyed when their own brethren confess that there are such; they never speak of purgatory; they are sore about images; they avoid the subject of Indulgences; and they will not commit themselves to the doctrine of exclusive salvation. The Catholic doctrines are now mere badges of party. Catholics think for themselves and judge for themselves, just as we do; they are kept in their Church by a point of honour, and a reluctance at seeming to abandon a fallen cause.' Such is the judgment of the world, and you, my brethren, are shocked to hear it;—but may it not be, that the world knows more about you than you know about yourselves? 'If ye had been of the world,' says Christ, 'the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' So speaks Christ of His Apostles. How run His words when applied to you? 'If ye be of the world, the world will love its own; therefore ye are of the world, and I have not chosen you out of the world, because the world doth love you.' Do not complain of the world's imputing to you more than is true; those who

live as the world lives give countenance to those who think them of the world, and seem to form but one party with them. In proportion as you put off the yoke of Christ, so does the world by a sort of instinct recognise you, and think well of you accordingly. Its highest compliment is to tell you that you disbelieve. O my brethren, there is an eternal enmity between the world and the Church. The Church declares by the mouth of an Apostle, 'Whoso will be a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God;' and the world retorts, and calls the Church apostate, sorceress, Beelzebub, and Antichrist. She is the image and the mother of the predestinate, and, if you would be found among her children when you die, you must have part in her reproach while you live."²¹

²¹ John Henry Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (Longmans, Green & Co. : London, 1906) 165-167.