



# THE CITY OF GOD

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## PART I

BY L. CARLOS LARA



WHAT IS TRUTH? WOULD WE RECOGNIZE it if we saw it, heard it or experienced it? Can we actually know the reality of the world? Would it be reasonable to say that if we could possess such knowledge that we would be in the possession of a great power? But where can this knowledge be found and if we should find, it how can we be sure, without a shadow of a doubt, that it is authentic? That it is the real truth.

To actually probe this subject and write on it is an undertaking that I have often considered but until now had no meaningful way to properly introduce it to *LMR* read-

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ers. Besides, who am I to think that I could with any significant meaning unravel such a deep mystery? The fact is that I can't. Even to attempt such a project would require reliance on preeminent sources that have actually plumbed the depths of this theme.

But two surprising events occurred this year that provided me the opportunity and impetus to finally take the plunge. One of these events was Brexit, which occurred earlier this year. The other occurred just a few short weeks ago with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States.



What happened in the case of these two events underscored for me just how uncertain and unpredictable the future really is. Everything in life is guesswork. Even the losers in the Brexit vote and in the Presidential election were shocked and bewildered, never dreaming this outcome would actually happen.

Yet it did happen and remarkably we all witnessed in astonishment as international organizations that have for decades towered as great emblems of global unity had their foundations shaken to the core. It's as though the so-called smart guys who were in control of globalization have been suddenly thrown out of control and now they're scrambling, wondering what can possibly come around the next corner. In effect we experienced to our own amazement the average person repudiate the whole idea of a "New World Order."

These events were so uniquely rare and unexpected that they forced me to think deeply

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about the power of the human will. Upon reflection I was able to catch sight of three shining examples of what the 10% movement that we often speak and write about might actually look like in real life when it suddenly explodes into a reality. I caught the vision of how the minority—represented in the form of the “little guy”—suddenly morphs into the powerful majority by holding fast to unshakable beliefs.

In the second example, my observation confirmed the main point in Mises’ argument about the power vested in the nature of the masses. He is right. The masses are the ones who ultimately determine the course of public opinion and when they make their choice in unison their choice becomes final.



In my third illustration I recognized the relevance of *The Politics of Obedience*,<sup>1</sup> that 16th century document written by Étienne De La Boetie, one of our most favored heroes from the past. Often we have spoken and written about Étienne’s insight in this masterful discourse where he answers the mysterious question of why it is that people obey the government. The astonishing answer he gives us is that they enslave themselves by letting themselves be governed by tyrants. But the way to freedom, he says, is that these tyrants fall when the people simply withdraw their support.

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These lessons learned from real life experiences and from history often confirm that ultimate power rests in the individual—or more accurately—the people. But the real question at hand and the one in particular for the theme of this article is, who in the final analysis, is behind the human will? Expressed in a different way: Can we know who is really in charge? In the broader context, who is ultimately responsible for the founding and maintaining of world powers? Is it the will of man or is it the omniscient power of God?



## THE HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

To attempt to answer some of these profound questions I began exploring *The City of God*,<sup>2</sup> a one thousand-page manuscript written in 426 A.D. by Augustine of Hippo, a philosopher-genius and theologian who is said to have written the only philosophy of the history of the world known throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. It has been a dominant force in Christian thinking ever since its publication. Written over a period of thirteen years it occupied Augustine's senior years—from his fifty-ninth to his seventy-second year. It is his most celebrated book and treasured by those that seek to explore the realm of the supernatural.

It was Dr. David Lawrence, a retired history professor from David Lipscomb University, who directed me toward this book and its great variety of ideas. In addition,

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a close personal friend, Dr. Andrew Burton, who had been reading the book with much enthusiasm, also recommended it to me.



Both men assured me I would not regret the experience. Although I will admit that it's an awfully big and intimidating volume, ever since I picked it up and began reading it I have remained spellbound by its contents.

It's important to note that Augustine is not only held in great esteem by the Roman Catholic Church, but also by the great church reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. But before you quickly dismiss this book as simply being nothing more than Christian theology and therefore a biased study on my part, let me assure you that it is anything but that. Surprisingly, Augustine's knowledge of Roman literature and the systems of Greek philosophy is extensive and is expressed quite liberally throughout this great masterpiece. All that is valuable in the moral, political, philosophical, and religious expanse of the classical nations of antiquity can be found here expressed brilliantly in easy to understand English—(a tribute to its translator from the Latin, Reverend Marcus Dods, D.D. 1871).

Augustine portrays all Greek philosophers who wrote six centuries before Christ as respected thinkers and educators with his attention to the teachings of Plato in particular as the closest approximation to Christian truths. He was convinced that Plato had read Genesis in order to arrive at his own interpretations of the world's creation.

After all, Genesis was written long before any of the Greek philosophers came into existence.

But it was the book's purpose and the time when it was written that most captivated my attention and made me want to read it. I could not overlook the striking relevance to that particular period in time and compare it the events and circumstances of our own day. The book allowed me to experience a more profound view of history that I hope to share with you.

### A CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS, WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD

In his own words, Augustine describes the occasion and plan for his endeavor.

*“Rome having been stormed and sacked by the Goths under Alaric their king, the worshippers of false gods, or pagans, as we commonly call them, made an attempt to attri-*



*bute this calamity to the Christian religion, and began to blaspheme the true God with even more than their wonted bitterness and acerbity. It was this which kindled my zeal for the house of God and prompted me to undertake the defense of the city of God against the charges and misrepresentations of its assailants.”<sup>3</sup>*

Right here, before going any further, it’s important to step back and recall that after more than a thousand years of steady and triumphant progress Rome—“the mistress of the world,” as she was often called—had been defeated and plundered. It is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of the shock that reverberated throughout the known world upon hearing this frightening news. It was generally believed that Rome was indestructible in the same way we often think about

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our own United States. Both Christian and pagan alike believed that the destruction of Rome would inevitably mean the end of the known world.

Even Augustine laments the fall of Rome, calling it one of the greatest of all calamities. But he was not without hope of her future claiming that she could return to her former



glory if she would just return to the simple, robust and noble mode of life, which characterized the early Romans. The problem as he saw it was her outrageous extravagance, effeminacy, and the pride of her citizens that had corrupted her from within. But the more he thought about Rome’s destroyed greatness and at the sudden awareness of the instability of all powerful world governments, even the likes of Rome, he begins to direct his readers to the fact that there is another kingdom on earth—“a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

What Augustine sets out to demonstrate is that human history and human destiny are not wholly identified with any earthly power. He teaches his readers a different and deeper view of history by demonstrating that from the very beginning God’s people have lived alongside the kingdoms of this world and have been silently growing in numbers. The heavenly origin of this city ensures its everlasting success. He even went as far as to say that the fall of Rome may actually cause

the spread of Christianity to increase all the more, a fact that actually came to pass.

## IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED...

Christians even to this day are ridiculed for their audacious attempt to integrate an unseen and unbelievable God, who resides in eternity and outside of time, with the natural world, which is in time. This is what we are grappling with here in reading this profound text in which Augustine's thoughts are so abstract that they utterly fascinate us and holds us captive. *The City of God* more than succeeds in its ability to trace and describe God's direct role in human affairs with unequivocal ease and piercing accuracy. We see in reading it why the world has set this among the few greatest books of all time. He carries us into the world of the occult and convinces us that it is more real than the world we see with our own eyes.



But he doesn't stop there. Augustine goes on to explain how this eternal God actually comes into time, and even more incredible than that, he describes how God comes in the form of a man and dwells among us. To fully appreciate what Augustine was up against in attempting to explain all of this, consider that what he was actually doing is expounding and justifying the entirety of the Christian faith to enlightened men who

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were dazzled by the splendor of world empires. His goal was to distinguish Christianity and show its superiority to all other forms of truth that were competing for supremacy during this time. This was a task even he recognized might be beyond his ability—a feeling most Christians struggle with all the time.

Christians today actually have more to work with than what he did. This was a time when written texts were rare. Most knowledge was shared through oration. He knew Roman literature, he understood the systems of Greek philosophy, and he had the Old and New Testaments. Yet he knew very little Greek and no Hebrew at all, therefore, he could not decipher the special nuances in



scriptural texts that these languages could afford him. Still we owe to Augustine one of the most comprehensive systematic expositions of the triune God—one of the most debated features of Christian thought because at the center of it is Jesus—the son of God.

To thread the proverbial needle Augustine started at the very beginning. He went straight to the account in Genesis and dismantled it word for word expounding on each event in connection with its true cause and in real time sequence. For this reason he begins with the fall of the angels in a manner I had never in my life heard or read before.

## AND GOD SAID, “LET THERE BE LIGHT”...

Augustine’s exhaustive search of the scriptures allows him to declare that the angels did not reside with God in eternity. They are created creatures, as we are created and that they were created in time during the six

days of creation. The word “light” in the scripture text says *“And God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.”* This Augustine says is the creation of the angels!

*“—And then when all things, which are recorded to have been completed in six days, were created and arranged, how should the angels be omitted, as if they were not among the works of God, from which on the seventh day He rested? Yet, though the fact that the*

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*angels are the work of God is not omitted here, it is indeed not explicitly mentioned; but elsewhere Holy Scripture asserts it in the clearest manner.”<sup>4</sup>*

The scriptural texts in the book of Genesis that immediately follow this particular passage states *“...and He separated the light from the darkness.”<sup>5</sup>* Augustine interprets this as the separation of the good angels from those that had been given the will to fall away. This





important part of creation occurred by the end of the first day. If we read the account for ourselves in our own Bibles we discover that the stars, the sun, and the moon (the other forms of visible, natural “light”) were not created until the fourth day. Man was created on the sixth day.

If you have ever wondered, as I have for as long as I can remember, how the speaking serpent suddenly appears out of nowhere in the garden narrative to tempt Eve, Augustine’s analysis of creation makes perfect sense. For even if we had not known of

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the serpent’s origin, (a fallen angel), before reading Augustine’s account, we are never in doubt of the serpent’s motive and that he is an enemy of God.

Hence, beginning with the account of the creation of the world in Genesis, Augustine begins with the holy angels simply because they constitute a large part of *The City of God*. The fall from holiness of part of the angels and subsequently the fall of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) set into motion the destinies of these two cities—the earthly and the heavenly. Mankind contains

both the children of the “flesh” and the children of the “promise” in every man, woman, and child born into the world since then.

Augustine, in these twenty-two books, traces the growth of these two cities before and after the fall, continuing with Cain and Abel, the first children of Adam and Eve. From there he moves to Noah and the flood, to Abraham, and to the Kings of Israel. He connects the Old and New Testaments to Christ the Messiah, and on to the end of the world as described in the last book of the canonical Bible. Is it any wonder that Augustine has been proclaimed as the preeminent expounder of the doctrine of *Original Sin*?

## CONCLUSION AND RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

Aside from the quick parallels we can each draw between the Roman Empire before its collapse and the United States, there is one other relevant concern we should consider. Only a few short weeks ago, Bob and I produced a video to assist individuals in weathering the coming economic storms we foresee heading our way. We have also given live public presentations and have written articles on the subject. In order to make better decisions on how best to insulate ourselves from these storms we categorized them into three broad classifications, which we referred to as storm “A,” storm “B” and storm “C.” (See my article in the September 2016 *LMR* entitled “Man Made Earthquakes,” and “How To Weather The Coming

Financial Storms,” Parts II, in the 2015 & I May and June issues.)

In a “C” type storm, the descriptions grow much more dreadful because they move beyond the economic and into the domain of civil unrest. The potential for a world war

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becomes more heightened. Who among us can overlook the fact that we now have the weaponry to literally incinerate the entire planet? If we seriously ponder it, our dilemma is much more serious than Rome’s ever was. The end times as portrayed in sacred wittings place our generation a lot closer to “the last days” than they were.

Even agnostics should pay heed to the ominous signs to which sacred writings point us, for the simple reason that billions of people support these theological analyses with a fervor that includes for many the giving up of one’s life for the cause of God. Unfortu-



nately, religious advocates are not always all on the same side and are in fact many times in direct opposition to each other. Here is where the will of any one human being can become lethal if religious differences get out of control.

*The City of God* is a profound book. There is so much we can all learn from it. Of course the search for truth remains an on-going struggle. The fact that we know only in part keeps every human in a state of perpetual anxiety until the day he draws his last breath. We ask our Higher Power to be able to know all of the details in every life situation, but the simple reply we often may receive is that we should only have faith and believe.

*Next month using the book, City of God, the LMR will explore the nature of evil and whether or not God created it in **THE CITY OF GOD—PART II.***




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