

Augustine frequently met their leaders in public debate, discussing at great length the differences between their views and those of his own people. Generally he took two secretaries with him, so as to keep a record of what he said.

In the year 410, Rome was attacked by barbarians and pillaged for ten days. This was the first time in seven hundred years that the city of Rome had been taken by an army of outsiders. The wreck of the former mistress of the world made a great impression. Thousands of refugees from Rome fled to North Africa and everyone heard of the sufferings and misery of the fallen city. Pagans began to say that this was because the people had turned to Christianity, and to blame all their woes on this defection from the ancient gods. Augustine wrote a book to show that Rome had represented the earthly city with its power built upon oppression and cruelty, but that God is building a heavenly city made up of those who become new creatures through the Lord Jesus Christ. His great work, "The City of God", on which he labored for twelve years, was one of the moulding influences of the Middle Ages.

Unfortunately this book has worked in two ways. On the one hand the stress on the spiritual values of Christianity and the importance of following Christ rather than seeking earthly power was a great help in the thinking of Christians ever since that time. On the other hand the very name of the book, and the comparison of old Rome, the oppressor, with the new spiritual City of God, through superficial thinking on the part of many people, helped in the establishment of the idea of a spiritual control to come from Rome, which would eventually rule over the entire world.

It is safe to say that no such thought as this was in Augustine's mind. In one of his great controversies - that with Pelagius - he wrote the Bishop of Rome to ask his agreement with his condemnation of Pelagius' unChristian views. Receiving favorable answer, he read it to his congregation and declared that the voice of this learned Bishop of Rome should help men to see the folly of Pelagius' views. However, even before he received the letter, the Bishop of Rome had died and a new man had