

Two Cities, Two Loves

**Christian Responsibility
in a Crumbling Culture**

James Montgomery Boice



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*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place
he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went,
even though he did not know where he was going. . . .
For he was looking forward to the city with foundations,
whose architect and builder is God. (Heb. 11:8, 10)*

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Preface to the New Edition

In the last decade of the twentieth century, Jim Boice became more and more burdened and preoccupied by the state of the evangelical church in the United States. In earlier decades, he had been primarily engaged in theological battles involving the defense of the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, crucial issues within the Presbyterian Church (USA), the ecclesiastical body to which Jim and Tenth Presbyterian Church belonged. These struggles eventually led to the departure of Tenth Presbyterian Church from that denomination in 1980.

In the 1990s, however, Jim became concerned with the “caving in,” as he called it, of evangelicals of Reformed and non-Reformed persuasions to the increasingly secular and nonbiblical worldview that—with the pervasive presence of television—was saturating our culture. He found others, in Reformed and Lutheran circles in particular, who shared his awareness and were seeking to call those claiming belief in the gospel of grace to recognize the dangers of submitting to such a culture and to live, rather, as members of God’s kingdom—to be salt and light in a very secular, broken world. David Wells’s books, especially *No Place for Truth*, and Michael Horton’s culture critiques, based on his strong Reformed perspective, were some of the major influences that strengthened Jim’s insights and focus.

Several efforts developed out of that growing, shared recognition of the desperate need for a vibrant, truly biblical Christian presence in American life. As Jim states in his preface to this book, his goal was “to study the

problem we face, to think through the options we have, to evaluate these by biblical teaching and to consider what concerned believers might do in our time.”

In April 1996, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, of which Jim was president, called a meeting that brought together one hundred twenty evangelical scholars and church leaders, representing a variety of denominational affiliations, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Four days of reading papers and engaging in discussion brought several specific results.

One result was the writing of the Cambridge Declaration, a succinct statement of the need “to call the church, amidst our dying culture, to repent of its worldliness, to recover and confess the truth of God’s Word as did the Reformers, and to see that truth embodied in doctrine, worship and life.” Most of this short document consists of a rehearsal of the foundational biblical truths as summarized in the five solas and a commitment to stand on these truths as the foundation for any work of reformation today.

A second result of the Cambridge meeting was the publication in late 1996 of *Here We Stand*, a volume edited by Jim Boice and Ben Sasse, that presented the key papers delivered at the Cambridge meeting. The authors—David F. Wells, Ervin S. Duggan, R. Albert Mohler, Gene Edward Veith, Michael S. Horton, Sinclair B. Ferguson, W. Robert Godfrey, and James M. Boice—tackle such topics as “Our Dying Culture,” “Contending for the Truth in an Age of Anti-Truth,” “The Solas of the Reformation,” and “Reformation in Doctrine, Worship, and Life.”

A third result of the conference was the publication, also in 1996, of *Two Cities, Two Loves*. The subtitle makes the theme of all these efforts very clear: *Christian Responsibility in a Crumbling Culture*.

It needs only to be added that the editors at P&R Publishing have found that *Two Cities, Two Loves* continues to speak with clarity and relevance to our broken and “crumbling culture.” These chapters are surely relevant today as we live amid the overwhelming havoc produced when a culture deliberately turns away from a recognition of biblical, objective truth. Clearly, “chaos is come again.”

In preparing the book for reprinting, there has been a limited need for correction and editing. Our most significant change has been to drop two tangential chapters that focused on the leadership skills of Nehemiah—

Preface to the New Edition

a full treatment is available in Jim's commentary *Nehemiah: Learning to Lead* (Fleming H. Revell, 1990) and may be read as a complement to this book. Michael Roberts has given his wise and careful suggestions, always with a strong sense of "the fewer changes, the better." I am indeed thankful for his balance, skills, excellent memory, and friendship.

Deepest thanks to Robert Brady, executive director of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals; to Amanda Martin, editorial director of P&R Publishing; and to her colleagues in the editorial department, all who continue to see the value and relevance of Jim Boice's ministry and especially of his written materials. May this new edition of *Two Cities, Two Loves* be useful to God's people as they seek to live in the city of man, yet as citizens of the eternal and heavenly city of God.

Linda M. Boice

Preface to the First Edition

The City of God was the first serious attempt to develop a Christian philosophy of history and was probably the Middle Ages' single most influential volume. The work I am presenting here is my attempt to bring the themes of Augustine's *City of God* up to date. There are several reasons I think this is important.

First, American culture is declining rapidly and, many would say, at an accelerating pace. The United States was never a "Christian nation." No nation is ever that. Only individuals are Christians. But at one time the country was at least permeated by a Christian ethos so that religion was encouraged, moral values were affirmed, families were intact, authority was respected, schools had wholesome environments, cities were safe, local communities flourished, and people were proud to be Americans. In the eyes of many from abroad, the United States was a "shining city on a hill." They wanted to come here. Today internationals still come, but it is usually only for educational and financial reasons, and it is with fear and trembling. They have a right to be fearful. Some of them get killed here.

Second, evangelicals have not done a very good job recently of relating to our culture. The United States is very religious by some measures. But the influence of this on the country's values is almost negligible.

In recent years, many Christians have engaged in what has been called the "culture wars." These are described, on the one side, as trying to "take back America" or "reclaim America's soul" and, on the other side, as trying

to keep the religious right from imposing its values on everyone else. What should be done? Should we intensify the battles, raise money, get out the vote, support Christian lobbying groups in Washington, DC, and try to mandate by legislation the kind of country we believe we should have?

What I say in this book is that what Christians need to do above all is to be Christians—that is, to be God’s people in the midst of this world’s culture. And one thing that will help us to do that is to take a new look at what Augustine of Hippo argued long ago. Augustine distinguished between two entirely different societies: the city of man, which is characterized by self-love, and the city of God, composed of those who love God and want to serve him. The city of man will never be God’s city. It has a different origin, progresses along a separate path, and is moving to a radically different end. Yet those who are members of God’s city are nevertheless in the world and need to conduct themselves as a renewing force within it.

In this book, I explore how we might go about doing that today. This is not a “how-to” book, preparing people to picket abortion clinics, lobby legislators, or whatever. It is an attempt to study the problems we face, to think through the options we have, to evaluate these by biblical teaching, and to consider what concerned believers might do in our time.

May the Lord help us all to be genuine people of God in the midst of a perishing generation.

Introduction

The Barbarians Are Coming

The Roman Empire had collapsed. Its capital city, great Rome, had been besieged for months by the Visigoth king Alaric, but at last it had been overrun and ruthlessly sacked by his barbarian hordes. The year was AD 410.

The city had been besieged by barbarians before. Parts of the empire had already been overrun by foreign armies. But the sack of Rome was politically and psychologically devastating in a way those other defeats were not. Rome had been master of the world. The empire had stood for a thousand years and was the very essence of civilization—at least to all who lived in the west. But suddenly it was gone, swept away by the advancing armies of these wild Germanic tribes. When Rome fell to Alaric, the citizens of the empire could hardly assimilate the scope of this unmitigated tragedy and quite naturally searched about for someone or something to blame.

It was not long before blame fell on the Christians, as it had nearly four hundred years before, under Nero. The pagans charged that the fall of Rome had resulted from the neglect of the worship of the old gods under whose benevolent protection Rome had grown great. The cause of this neglect, they said, was Christianity.

The Christians were shocked by Rome's fall too. Saint Jerome, the great Latin father of the church and translator of the Vulgate, wrung his hands, crying, "What is to become of the church now that Rome has fallen?" It was a natural question, since Rome had embraced Christianity under the

influence of Emperor Constantine almost one hundred years before and had been the church's benefactor, friend, and protector for most of the succeeding decades. Constantine had converted to Christianity after his victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 BC.

In God's providence, there was a man perfectly suited for the challenges of this great watershed era in world history: Augustine of Hippo, a town in North Africa.

Early Life

Augustine's first name was Aurelius, though he himself never used it. He was born on November 13, 354, of mixed pagan and Christian parentage—his mother was a Christian, his father was not—in Tagaste, a small provincial town in North Africa.

His mother's name was Monica, and the passion of her life was that her son might become a Christian. His father wanted him to have a superior liberal education and by this means eventually to become a great and wealthy man. Augustine was educated first in his hometown, then in the renowned but notoriously corrupt city of Carthage. He was trained as a rhetorician, that is, one who made his living by arguing cases of law or giving speeches. He succeeded so well that he moved from Carthage to Rome and later, in 384, from Rome to Milan, where he was appointed the government professor of rhetoric. This post gave him high standing and brought him into contact with the most influential people in Italy, even members of the court.

In the year 400, fourteen years after his conversion, Augustine published his *Confessions*. This is a book of thirteen relatively short chapters in which he tells of the grace of God in his early life and how God led him to faith in Jesus Christ. On the very first page, he wrote something that almost every Christian has heard at one time or another: "Thou hast formed us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in thee."¹ He meant

1. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:45.

that of everyone, of course. But it was especially true of himself and is the major testimony of his life. Augustine had tried everything the world had to offer, but he found it empty.

Youthful Pleasures

To many people, one of the most fascinating parts of *Confessions* is Augustine's description of his early life. Due to what he says, some have thought of him as having been something of a libertine or rake. But there are two things wrong with this way of thinking.

First, he was not as depraved as some suppose. By the age of seventeen, he had formed a long-lasting relationship with a woman whom he did not marry—his parents did not want him to marry, supposing that marriage at an early age would be an obstacle to his career—and Augustine and this woman were faithful to each other until they were eventually forced apart to make way for a “proper” legal marriage some fourteen years later. Augustine wrote that while they were together he was faithful to her. His *Confessions* contain a tragic passage describing his personal heartbreak when they were forced apart.²

The second thing wrong with this thinking is that it makes Augustine seem worse than we are, and that is just not true. Augustine was no better but also not much worse than anyone else in his time, and the way he lived is all too common today. We too live in an age of so-called sexual liberation, and the pattern of Augustine's early years is duplicated many times over in our culture. The only difference is that he confessed his sins, while we usually do not.

Quest for Truth

Augustine did not only have a strong sexual nature. He also had a driving restless mind, and his *Confessions* tell how he journeyed from one

2. “My mistress being torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, my heart, which clave to her, was racked, and wounded, and bleeding. And she went back to Africa, making a vow unto thee never to know another man, leaving with me my natural son by her,” Augustine, 1:100.

popular philosophical system to another to try to discover truth. He was attracted to the thought of the Manichaeans. The Manichaeans were dualists: they believed in an eternity of good and evil.

They were also the rationalists of their age. They expressed reverence for Jesus Christ, but their religion was naturalistic, anti-supernatural. They were critical of the Bible and had developed a way of looking at life that relieved human beings of responsibility for their failures. This appealed to Augustine. It bolstered his pride, allowed him to speak well of his mother's religion, excused his failings, and freed him to live in any manner he desired.

In time Augustine drifted away from the Manichaeans and was introduced to the later Platonists. Augustine was deeply affected by their writings. They seemed to have some knowledge of God in the form of an immaterial, eternal, unchangeable mind or *logos*. Yet this system proved unsatisfactory too. Augustine was restless, and he had not yet come to rest in Jesus Christ. In a wonderfully perceptive passage in his *Confessions*, he compares the books of the Platonists with what he later found in Scripture:

I read [in the books of the Platonists], not indeed in the same words, but to the selfsame effect, . . . that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." . . . But [I did not see anywhere in the books of Platonists] that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

In like manner, I read there that God the Word was born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. But that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," I read not there. . . . That before all times, and above all times, Thy only-begotten Son remaineth unchangeably co-eternal with Thee; and that of "His fulness" souls receive, that they may be blessed; and that by participation of the wisdom remaining in them they are renewed, that they may be wise, is there. But that "in due time Christ died for the

ungodly,” and that Thou sparedst not Thine only Son, but deliveredst Him up for us all, is not there.³

Fame

When Augustine arrived in Milan as government professor of rhetoric, he was at the apex of his profession. His mother came over from Africa. Wealthy and influential friends sought him out. But, as often happens when we achieve the thing we have been fervently seeking, Augustine discovered that his goal was unsatisfying. This became the most miserable time of his life. He even became sick with a chest or lung infection, and it was doubtful whether he would be able to continue his career in oratory.

Exposure to Religion

While we are reviewing those elements in his life that Augustine later confessed left him unfulfilled and restless, we ought not to forget religion. Augustine was always somewhat religious, and his religion was never very far from the true evangelical faith of his mother. Augustine had almost always believed in God, and in these early days he would probably have said that in one way or another he was always striving to know him.

In Milan, Augustine came under the influence of Ambrose, the bishop of that city. Ambrose was a man of towering intellect, massive learning, and great godliness. Moreover, he was an outstanding preacher. So Augustine went to hear him. At first Augustine was only interested in his homiletical style. But Ambrose was really an expositor of the Bible and thus also an outstanding teacher of Christian doctrine. Augustine began to read the Bible. In spite of himself, he was led deeper into understanding what the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ was all about, though he had not yet come to trust Christ.

Augustine wrote perceptively of what he was like in those days:

To thee, showing me on every side that what thou saidst was true, I, convicted by the truth, had nothing at all to reply, but the drawing

3. Augustine, 1:107–8.

and drowsy words: “Presently, lo, presently”; “leave me a little while.” But “presently, presently,” had no present; and my “leave me a little while” went on for a long while.⁴

I, miserable young man, supremely miserable even in the very outset of my youth, had entreated chastity of thee, and said, “Grant me chastity and continency, but not yet.” For I was afraid lest thou shouldst hear me soon, and soon deliver me.⁵

Augustine asked his friend Alypius, “What is wrong with us? . . . The unlearned start up and ‘take’ heaven, but we, with our learning, but wanting heart, see where we wallow in flesh and blood! Because others have preceded us, are we ashamed to follow, and not rather ashamed at not following?”⁶

The Scene in the Garden

At last there came the well-known scene in the garden where Augustine was converted. He had been reading the Bible, and he became so distressed at his own lack of spiritual resolution that he withdrew to a distant part of the garden so he could give vent to his emotion and so Alypius, who was with him, would not see his tears. Here is what he says happened:

I flung myself down, how, I know not, under a certain fig tree, giving free course to my tears . . . And, not indeed in these words, yet to this effect, spake I much unto Thee,—“But Thou, O Lord, how long?” “How long, Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Oh, remember not against us former iniquities;” for I felt that I was enthralled by them. . . . “Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?”

I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighbouring house, chanting, and oft repeating,

4. Augustine, 1:121.

5. Augustine, 1:124.

6. Augustine, 1:124.

“Take up and read; take up and read.” Immediately my countenance was changed, and I began most earnestly to consider whether it was usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, restraining the torrent of my tears, I rose up, interpreting it no other way than as a command to me from Heaven to open the book, and to read the first chapter I should light upon. For I had heard of Antony, that, accidentally coming in whilst the gospel was being read, he received the admonition as if what was read were addressed to him, “Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.” And by such oracle was he forthwith converted unto Thee. So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I put down the volume of the apostles, when I rose thence. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell,—“Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended,—by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart,—all the gloom of doubt vanished away.⁷

Alypius was also converted at this time, and both of them went to tell Augustine’s mother, Monica. It was not long after this that Monica died, as she and Augustine were on their way back to North Africa, where Augustine eventually became a presbyter and then bishop of Hippo Regius. He served there for more than forty years until his death on August 28, AD 430, at the age of seventy-six.

Augustine’s Later Life

It is hard to overestimate the importance of Augustine’s contribution to Christian theology and the church. Hippo was a second-rate diocese, having no special prominence in itself. Besides, it was overrun by Vandals

7. Augustine, 1:127–28.

at the very time Augustine was dying, and the bishopric, school, and clergy that Augustine had established and trained were all either widely scattered or destroyed. Nevertheless, Augustine's influence lived on through his writings, perhaps more than any other nonbiblical figure. Adolf Harnack called Augustine the greatest man whom, "between Paul the Apostle and Luther the Reformer, the Christian Church has possessed."⁸ Will Durant said of his residence in Hippo, "From this foot of earth he moved the world."⁹

After his conversion, Augustine produced polemical works against the Manichaeans, Donatists, and Pelagians, interspersed with Bible expositions, theological studies, and sermons. He is best known for four works that crown his intellectual achievement: *The Confessions*, written about AD 400; *On Christian Doctrine*, written from 397 to 426; *On the Holy Trinity*, written from 395 to 420; and above all *The City of God*, written from 413 to 426.

The City of God

Augustine began *The City of God* in AD 413, three years after Rome fell to Alaric, and he labored on it for thirteen years. It was the first attempt by any Christian writer to produce what we would call a philosophy of history. Almost instantly it became a Christian classic.

The work itself is divided into two main parts. The first part (books 1–10) was Augustine's answer to the charge that Rome had been destroyed for forsaking the ancient gods and embracing Christianity. He argued, on the contrary, that the city had been punished for its sins. In its early centuries, Rome had been a nation of stoics. It had strong families and honest governors. It had almost created civil law and had given order and peace to the world. But the seeds of decay lay within its debased religions, which encouraged rather than restrained the corrupt sexual nature of human beings. Augustine described the indecency of the Roman stage, which he

8. Adolf Harnack in "Monasticism and the Confessions of St. Augustine," quoted by B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1956), 306.

9. Will Durant, *The Age of Faith: The Story of Civilization* (1950; repr., Norwalk, CT: Easton, 1992), 4:67.

knew well from his own experience, and he quoted Roman writers such as Sallust and Cicero on the corruption of Roman politics.

As far as the pagan gods were concerned, they had not protected Rome in earlier times—there had been many military and other disasters—nor had they protected other cities or cultures. All they had done was to plunge Rome into increasing vice, for which the gods were notorious.

In the second part of the work (books 11–22), Augustine explained history as the working out of one great universal principle—that of two rival cities or societies. Augustine argued that from the first rebellion of the fallen angels against God, “two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.”¹⁰ In this work, the city of God is the church, composed of God’s elect. It is destined to rule the world. The earthly city is the earthly society, having as its representatives the city cultures of Babylon in ancient times and Rome in what was for him immediate past history. The earthly city is destined to pass away.

In this second part of his work, Augustine traced the origins of the two cities (books 11–14), their progress (books 15–18), and their ends (books 19–22). It was a masterful way of analyzing history. Durant rightly observed, “With this book paganism as a philosophy ceased to be, and Christianity as a philosophy began. It was the first definitive formulation of the medieval mind.”¹¹

The central thesis of *The City of God* is one that needs rehearing. It was influential at the time of the Reformation, forming the basis of Martin Luther’s and John Calvin’s doctrine of the two kingdoms. It needs to be influential again, particularly in our own age in which the line between the sacred and the secular has been so systematically rubbed out. In particular, Christians must discover what it means to be the city of God, to know what it is to be “blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation” (Phil. 2:15).

10. Augustine, *The City of God*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 2:282–83.

11. Durant, *Age of Faith*, 4:73.

The Barbarians Are Coming

A person might argue that ours is an entirely different age from that in which Augustine wrote and that we need a new approach today, not something that is so old or outmoded. Augustine lived when the culture of the age was collapsing. Ours is not collapsing, we suppose. Our Rome is intact. The barbarians are not knocking at the gates. But is that so? Is it true that the barbarians are not knocking at our gates? Today more than one observer argues that the barbarians are not only coming but are over the drawbridge, across the moat, and in the city. They have occupied every one of our contemporary citadels. The signs of the collapse of Western culture are on every hand.

Charles Colson, who served as special counsel to President Richard M. Nixon from 1969 to 1973 and who was chairman of Prison Fellowship as well as a prolific and popular author, argued this point explicitly:

Today in the West, and particularly in America, the new barbarians are all around us. They are not hairy Goths and Vandals swilling fermented brew and ravishing maidens; they are not Huns and Visigoths storming our borders or scaling our city walls. No, this time the invaders have come from within. We have bred them in our families and trained them in our classrooms. They inhabit our legislatures, our courts, our film studios, and our churches. Most of them are attractive and pleasant; their ideas are persuasive and subtle. Yet these men and women threaten our most cherished institutions and our very character as a people.¹²

Let me share some of Colson's evidence for the presence of these very cultured "barbarians" in the circles he mentions: our families, classrooms, government, and churches.

12. Charles Colson with Elen Santilli Vaughn, *Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1989), 23–24.

Barbarians in the Parlor

Hardly any observer of American society today is not painfully aware of the collapse of the family. The statistics alone are frightening.¹³ Since 1970 the marriage rate has fallen 30 percent while the divorce rate has climbed to 50 percent. Each year more than one million children live through the breakup of their families. Ten million children now live in single-parent homes. The rate of illegitimate births has doubled. Over half of today's inner-city children are born out of wedlock. Even more frightening than mere statistics is the growth of children from broken families who have no respect for any adult authority, use vile language, possess no skills and have no wish to acquire any, and increasingly commit the most horrible of "adult" crimes: raping, robbing, and killing each other as well as anyone else for no more apparent reason than the pleasure of watching another person die.

What is wrong? Why are American families self-destructing? "Government policies must bear some of the blame," writes Colson. "Welfare programs subsidize illegitimacy by making it more profitable for a mother to live alone than with her husband. Liberal divorce laws make changing spouses a tempting convenience when times get tough."¹⁴

But government policies are not the entire problem or even the chief cause of our families' self-destruction, since well-to-do families are also breaking up in increasing numbers and children of privileged suburban homes are becoming increasingly corrupt, criminal, and disrespectful. What lies at the heart of family breakdown is the same sad philosophy that lies at the heart of the breakdown of American society generally, namely, the cult of self and self-fulfillment to be achieved at the cost of nearly everything else. In other words, the problem is unbridled individualism, which is individualism in the most radical sense ("me alone; no one else matters"), utterly untempered, constrained by not a single moral absolute.

This is the exact opposite of what should be happening in our nation's families. Colson writes, "Ordained by God as the basic unit of human organization, the family is not only necessary for propagating the race, but is the

13. These statistics reflect poll results from 1996.

14. Colson and Vaughn, *Against the Night*, 75.

first school of human instruction. Parents take small self-centered monsters who spent much of their time screaming defiantly and hurling peas on the carpet and teach them to share, to wait their turn, to respect others' property. These lessons translate into respect for others, self-restraint, obedience to law—in short, into the virtues of individual character that are vital to a society's survival."¹⁵ But when families break down, as is happening nearly everywhere today and at every level of society, these social virtues break down too, and the domestic product becomes the next generation of self-centered, self-seeking, self-serving barbarians.

Surely the barbarians are no longer merely storming at our walls. They are through the front door and in our parlors.

Barbarians in the Classroom

They are also in our classrooms. For years, by any objective measurement, the quality of American education has declined. Test scores have plunged. American students now rank below those of most other developed nations in most subjects. Today's students enter undergraduate and college programs with no goals, exercise no academic or personal disciplines, and scorn education.

Some of this decline might be explained by the deterioration of the American family, which I have just mentioned. But the problem is deeper than this. It concerns the educational establishment itself. In 1987, University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom published a book in which he exposed the demise of education at the university level as a result of the relativism that now dominates virtually all education.¹⁶ Historically the goal of education has been the pursuit of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Plato argued that its purpose is to produce good men who will act nobly. But, wrote Bloom, that goal is impossible today, because in a culture dominated by relativism, belief in absolutes like the good, the true, and the beautiful no longer exists. Relativism and individualism have "extinguished the real

15. Colson and Vaughn, 76–77.

16. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

motive for education.”¹⁷ Since it is useless to pursue these goals, education has degenerated into mere pragmatic concerns such as how to operate a computer, keep an accurate ledger, or manage an assembly line. No one wants to explore what goals should be pursued or with what moral and not merely expedient means we ought to get there.

Lest someone dismiss this as mere highbrow stuff, the discussion of which is best left to academics like Bloom, we must remind ourselves that among the values being discarded by today’s relativism are such things as honesty, respect for other people, and even the value of human life. Cheating has become an accepted way of life in most schools. Teachers are no longer respected. As for life itself, well, thousands of students are now using guns and knives to threaten and even kill the classmates and teachers they no longer honor.¹⁸

Colson says we are left with a disturbing paradox: “Higher education . . . has nothing left worth teaching. . . . Each spring these ivy halls graduate a new generation of leaders—doctors, lawyers, politicians, and MBAs—for many of whom personal advancement and ‘personal truth’ are the only guiding principles. Shaped by the forces of individualism, these men and women without ethics go on to mold in their own image the business ethics, legal ethics, and medical ethics of our society. And some of them end up charting the course of our nation on Capitol Hill.”¹⁹

Surely the barbarians are in our classrooms and are moving out from them to infect the entire country.

Barbarians in Power

Americans looked on in wonder and millions rejoiced when the Soviet empire collapsed from within in the last months of the watershed year of 1989. The American way of life seemed to have been vindicated. “God and our country” seemed to have won out over “no God and their country.” The

17. Bloom, 34.

18. Since this section was written in 1996, the United States has suffered a series of devastating mass shootings in elementary and secondary schools. There has been great disagreement over how such violence might be prevented.

19. Colson and Vaughn, *Against the Night*, 85.

Russian barbarians were not going to overthrow the capitalistic Western system after all. True. But neither did we overthrow them. Their “evil empire,” as Ronald Reagan called it, collapsed from within, not because of us. It collapsed under its own inherent weaknesses. And is not ours likewise capsizing?

It is pointless here to rehearse the growing avalanche of personal and political corruption that has pushed presidential hopefuls out of politics, caused scores of White House aides into premature retirement, and relentlessly dogged the footsteps of our most recent presidents. What is most frightening is that our nation hardly seems to care and that millions have simply lost interest in the political process. There is a deep and growing disillusionment with politics, reflected in the steady decline of voter turnout even for presidential elections. In response to the 1988 presidential campaign, which was characterized by vapid television ads and meaningless words about nonissues, nearly half of the eligible electorate did not vote.

In the 1994 midterm elections, to most people’s surprise, Republicans managed to reverse Democratic control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate with the promise of fulfilling a “Contract with America,” in which the federal budget would be balanced by eliminating wasteful federal spending, and other radical changes in government would take place. But “wasteful government programs” soon began to look like “the other party’s programs,” and pork-barrel politics continued.

Does no one in Washington have a true guiding sense of right and wrong and the courage to take the right path regardless of the consequences? It is hard to find many.

In the February 13, 1995, issue of *Newsweek*, columnist Meg Greenfield wrote an article titled “Right and Wrong in Washington: Why Do Our Officials Need Specialists to Tell the Difference?” She was mocking the so-called ethics committees and ethics offices that are springing up all over Washington as convenient escapes for politicians who are either unable or unwilling to act morally, and she was asking why they are necessary when most issues of right and wrong should be easy to discern.

People in Washington don’t say “the devil made me do it” anymore. They say, “I asked the ethics office and they said it didn’t fall within the category of impermissible activity.” Or, more frequently, when there is a flap about something that has already occurred, they say, “We have directed the

ethics office to look into it and report back to us in sixty days.” Good old “sixty days”—for something that your ordinary, morally sentient person wouldn’t need sixty seconds to figure out.²⁰

Referring to the congressional page scandal from a few years back, Greenfield wrote, “I remember thinking then that if congressmen having sex with underage children who are in their custody as junior employees is not where you draw the line, then there really is no line.”²¹

Yet the problem is not just with government officials. True, it is strikingly visible among those with high-profile positions. But the problem is with the character of the electorate itself, with the people who elect such leaders and then keep them in office because of promises to provide what they want even if someone else has to pay for it.

Colson, who knew government from the inside as well as any contemporary critic, once said, “American politics simply mirrors the loss of character in the American people. If citizens are not willing to put the civic good above their own, they can’t expect their leaders to do it for them. In this way, by eroding our sense of societal responsibility, radical individualism paves the way for the death of community.”²²

Surely the barbarians are in the House of Representatives, in the Senate, and on Capitol Hill. We have put them there.

Barbarians in the Pews

A final area of national life that Colson sees the new barbarians invading is the church. In a chapter called “Barbarians in the Pews,” he notes what pollsters around the country have been noting for years, namely, that interest in religion remains high but that the morality that ought to accompany it is down. Nearly half of all Americans go to church or a synagogue regularly, but the differences between the moral behaviors and ways of life of these people and those who show no religious inclinations whatever are nearly unmeasurable. What is the explanation?

20. Meg Greenfield, “Right and Wrong in Washington: Why Do Our Officials Need Specialists to Tell the Difference?” *Newsweek*, February 13, 1995, 88.

21. Greenfield, 88.

22. Colson and Vaughn, *Against the Night*, 94.

Colson says, “The key to the paradox is the fact that those who claim to be Christians are arriving at faith on their own terms—terms that make no demands on behavior. . . . When the not-so-still small voice of self becomes the highest authority, religious belief requires commitment to no authority beyond oneself. Then religious groups become merely communities of autonomous beings yoked together solely by self-interest or emotion.”²³ Evangelicals will try to view other religious bodies in this category, but the sad truth is that they perhaps even more than others have sold out to individualism, relativism, materialism, and emotionalism, all of which are the norm for the majority of evangelical church services today. Evangelicals may be the most worldly people in America.

We live in bad days for the evangelical church, despite the false sense of security caused by increasing numbers of church members and escalating budgets. In the last few years, writers such as David F. Wells (*No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology and God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*), Os Guinness (*Dining with the Devil*), John MacArthur (*Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* and *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern*), Michael Horton (*Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*), and others have pointed out that evangelicals are being swallowed up by today’s secular culture, all because they have abandoned confidence in the power of God through the Bible to convert sinful, secular people and to train, establish, and strengthen believers in godliness. They seek to grow worldly programs by worldly methods instead.

To put it another way, evangelicals have abandoned a proper commitment to revealed truth and have become mere pragmatists. Instead of proclaiming and teaching God’s Word, the Bible, they are resorting to sermonettes of pop psychology, entertainment-style services, and technological approaches to church growth, which is a formula not for the increase of true religion but for the end of it. Evangelical churches are growing, but they no longer have anything distinct to offer. They are popular in many places, but the prophetic, challenging voice of the Christian preacher and teacher, which has been the glory and strength of the church in all past ages, has been lost.

23. Colson and Vaughn, 98.

If this is so, then what is called for today is a new generation of people who are confident that the Bible speaks the truth of God and who are not afraid to believe what it teaches, build their lives on its doctrines, and proclaim it without compromise to others. What is needed is a generation of Christians who know the Bible well enough and obey it radically enough to be a new people or new society to stand over against the world and its system. To recall Augustine, they must become a people who “love God, even to the contempt of self.”

Behold the Hun!

It is time to sum up this introduction by answering in the clearest possible way the question “What is a barbarian?” The Greeks, who invented the word, used it to describe anyone who could not speak their language. All such people seemed to be saying was “bar, bar, bar,” which is what gave the Greeks the word *barbaros* or barbarian. Dictionaries define *barbarian* as a person who lacks artistic or literary culture or, in adjective form, as uncivilized. But what is civilization? Is a barbarian simply a person who has not been exposed to highbrow art or literature?

Let me suggest this definition: *A barbarian is a person who lives by power and for pleasure rather than by and for principle.* If this is right, then we are describing the modern barbarians who live for power and pleasure as well as the older ones who laid siege to and eventually destroyed the Roman Empire.

Think of it in the categories I have been discussing: the home, the school, the government, and the church.

If parents live for their own personal fulfillment without a higher concern for the well-being and happiness of their families, if there are no principles to keep them at home doing the right things and living for them even when the going gets tough, are these adults not barbarians? And are they not raising the next generation of barbarians when they fail to teach them that loving God is the first of all human duties and that loving our neighbors, beginning with members of our own families, is next to it?

We call many of our worst schools jungles, since that is what they really are. But is not any school a jungle if it fails to inculcate love of the good, the true, and the beautiful as the goal of learning, so that the educated man

or woman might act nobly? If all we are teaching is technical skills so that people can get better jobs, make more money, and indulge themselves with pleasures that would have been impossible for nearly everyone as little as a generation ago, is that not barbarism? And are our schools not training centers for barbarism in which old barbarians teach young barbarians to be even more barbarous than those who preceded them?

Politics used to be the arena in which philosophies engaged each other in an effort to find common ground for those actions which most people agreed were right and beneficial to the greatest number. But government is far from that today. The political arena is a place of struggle, all right, but the struggle is not over principle. It is over power. There are no standards, no absolutes for assessing priorities, only a fierce battle for individual “rights” or “felt needs.” In the absence of absolutes, every “right” becomes an absolute to be won by power at all costs. Then the will of the majority or of those clever enough to win a majority becomes a new despotism.

If churches are abandoning the teaching of truth for pragmatism, offering entertainment, self-help programs, and soporific pep talks in order to keep people coming and giving with little thought for the ultimate well-being of their souls, is that not a sellout to the pleasure-only principle? And if competition drives leaders to enact only those programs that will bring greater numbers of people to the church and so enhance their personal prestige, is that not a sellout to power religion, as Michael Horton claims it is?²⁴ We should remind ourselves that barbarians of other ages have also had religion, and theirs was not always very different from our own. Is the church not barbaric when it forgets its unique message and identifies with the aspirations and values of the world culture instead?

We are all a part of this in one way or another. In one of the best known of all the Pogo cartoons, that wise old philosopher Opossum Pogo said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” Where is the Hun? He is in each of us. We are all barbarians until God removes our proud self-centeredness and enables us to trust and learn from him who alone is good, absolutely true, and exquisitely beautiful in Jesus Christ.

24. See Michael Scott Horton, ed., *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992).

PART ONE

The Biblical Basis for the Two Cities

Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:4

Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?

Daniel 4:30

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them."

Revelation 21:2–3

1

The Two Humanities

The distinction between the city of God and the city of man is based on the difference between what Francis Schaeffer accurately called “the two humanities,”¹ the origin of which is found in Genesis 3 through 5.

According to Augustine, this contrast is traceable throughout the Bible. In *The City of God*, he taught that Scripture unfolds the history of two distinct groups of people, each having distinct origin, development, characteristics, and destiny. These are two cities or societies. The earthly society has as its highest expression the city cultures of Babylon and, in Augustine’s time, Rome. The other is the church, composed of God’s elect. The former is destined to pass away. The latter is blessed by God and is to last forever.

The Two Offsprings

The absolute origin of the two humanities is in the words of God to the serpent following the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, recorded in Genesis 3. God told the serpent as decree and prophecy, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (v. 15).

1. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time: The Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 103–18.

Here are three sets of antagonists: the serpent and the woman, the descendants of the serpent and the descendants of the woman, and Satan himself and the ultimate descendant of the woman, Jesus Christ. These are to be engaged in an age-long conflict, but the point of the prophecy is that the victory of the godly seed will be assured by the ultimate victory of Eve's specific descendant, Jesus Christ.

The Serpent and the Woman

One immediately striking thing about this prophecy is that God presents himself as the author of the strife, or "enmity," involved. We might ask how strife can be good or how God can be the author of enmity in any form, but the Bible explains this. It says that Satan is a fallen angel whose first sin consisted in trying to gather the worship of the other creatures about himself rather than about God. His original attempt to seduce the angels was only partially successful. But he appeared on earth to try to do among the new race of human beings what he had failed to do completely earlier.

Undoubtedly Satan's temptation of Eve and Adam had two goals: seducing our first parents away from the worship of God and winning their allegiance and worship for himself. He succeeded in the first objective. He did destroy the fellowship of the man and the woman with God. But he did not succeed in his second objective precisely because of what God says here. For in this first announcement of the gospel, God said that he would put enmity between Satan and the woman.

This is significant. The new thing was not Satan's hatred of Eve. Satan had hated Eve from the moment of her creation, even when he was pretending to be her friend and tempting her to eat of the forbidden tree. The new thing was Eve's (and Adam's and all their true offspring's) hatred of Satan as one aspect of God's gracious preservation of and provision for the race.

This is a great blessing, though we may not think so at times. When we sin, we often find that we like sin and would like to continue in it, merely escaping sin's consequences. We would like to destroy ourselves in comfort, like drug addicts who destroy themselves in the dreamlike stupor of their drugs or booze, or sensualists who destroy themselves by the sin of debauchery. We would like to go to hell happy. But it is one aspect of grace

that God does not allow this to happen. God makes sin miserable and sets up an antagonism between ourselves and Satan that modifies the hold of sin on humanity and makes it possible for fallen men and women to hear God's voice, even in their misery.

The Descendants of the Serpent and the Descendants of the Woman

The enmity established by God was not only to be between the woman and Satan, however—that is, an enmity merely on the personal or individual level. It was also to be an enmity between her offspring and his. This could mean between human beings and the demons, but it is unlikely that it does. For one thing, Satan does not really have offspring. He is not engendering little devils. The demons were created once by God, before their fall, and they are not now increasing in number. For another thing, the passage moves in the direction of one specific descendant of the woman, who shall defeat Satan. That is, it is moving from the general to the specific. In view of these factors, the verse probably refers to the godly descendants of the man and woman, influenced by God himself, and the ungodly descendants of the man and woman, influenced by Satan. This distinction is carried forward forcefully in Genesis 4 and 5.

If this is the meaning of “your offspring and hers,” then it is a message for the godly in every age. It teaches that there is a God-given animosity between the people of God and those who are not God's people, and that this is for our good. It is to sharpen our minds and wills to serve God. One of Isaac Watts's great hymns, “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” (1724), asks,

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend of grace,
To help me on to God?

In the context of Watts's hymn, the answer clearly is no. The world is no friend of ours. It is an enemy. Watts wants us to fight against the world for Christ's sake, which we must certainly do. But there is also a sense in which the world is a “friend of grace,” because its animosity toward us pushes us to a greater measure of dependence on God.

There is also a more specific meaning to this verse. As the book of Genesis unfolds, we see God call out a specific nation, the nation of Israel, through whom he will specifically work, and we see the animosity of Satan (who understood the import of this prophecy) directed particularly against the Jews. His hatred began with attacks on Abraham and the other patriarchs, particularly Joseph, who is a type of the Messiah who was to come, and it extends throughout the entire Bible, even to the book of Revelation. In Revelation we read,

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. (12:1-6)

In this passage the dragon is Satan, the woman Israel, and her child the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan's strategy has been to destroy Israel in order to destroy Christ. This is the most basic reason for antisemitism. It is also one reason why no Christian should ever have a part in it.

Satan and the Ultimate Descendant of the Woman

The third antagonism in Genesis 3:15 is even more beneficial than the others. The first two give us hope; the third assures us of victory. This prediction of antagonism between Satan and the ultimate descendant of the woman, who is Jesus Christ, was to result in the bruising of Jesus on the cross but also in the crushing of Satan and his power.

If we turn to the gospel accounts and look behind the visible unfolding of events to the spiritual antagonism behind them, we see the hatred of

Satan for Jesus Christ at every turn. Satan moved Herod to kill the babies of Bethlehem two years of age and under in a futile attempt to destroy the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:16–18). But God had arranged the escape of the family in advance, having sent the magi with their valuable gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh, which would have paid for the family's flight to Egypt and their maintenance while there. As soon as Jesus began his public ministry, the devil was immediately present to tempt him to turn away from the path that had been set down for him by the Father, even promising him the kingdoms of this world if he would only fall down and worship Satan (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). It must have been Satan who stirred up the people of Nazareth to take Jesus to the brow of a hill in order to throw him to his death after rejecting his first public sermon (Luke 4:28–30).

Again and again Satan plotted to destroy Jesus Christ. Sometimes he moved people to pick up stones to try to stone him (John 8:59; 10:31). He caused the leaders of the people to send soldiers to arrest him (John 7:30, 32, 45–46). Always his plots were paralyzed. Jesus described what was happening through the parable of the wicked tenant farmers who beat the servants sent by the owner of the vineyard and eventually plotted to destroy the heir when he was also sent: "They said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him" (Matt. 21:38–39).

On another occasion, Satan tried to destroy Jesus by a sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee, but Jesus rebuked the storm, leaving the disciples to ask in awed wonder, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:41).

Finally Satan saw what he thought was his great opportunity. Judas, one of the Twelve, was disaffected with Jesus, and Satan moved Judas to betray his Master. The leaders of the people sent their temple guards to the garden, Jesus was arrested, and Satan's hatred of Christ, which had been frustrated, now burst forth with vengeance. The Lord was spit on, mocked, beaten, and eventually crucified in great anguish. This was a terrible "strike," but it was only a strike, not a defeat. For on the third day after the crucifixion, Jesus rose from the tomb triumphantly, assuring forgiveness and life to all who believe on him.

As for Satan, the victory he believed he had achieved turned out to be a Pyrrhic one. He had been instrumental in killing God's Christ. But the death of Christ was God's atonement for sin, which Satan surely had not fully comprehended. Thus it was that even while he was celebrating his apparent victory, the full weight of the atonement, accomplished by the death of Christ, came down on him and his power was broken. His head was crushed, and he discovered that far from being able to contend successfully with the Almighty God, he had only been instrumental in advancing the purposes of him who alone is all-wise.²

The Two Sons

If Genesis 3:15 were the only text to go on, we might suppose that its second contrast is between the demons, conceived as the seed of the serpent and humankind in general. But this is not the case, as I indicated earlier. Genesis 4 and 5 make plain that the conflict is between the followers of God, who are believing men and women, and those human beings who do not believe God and who follow Satan and his ways instead.

The Birth of Cain

The first illustration is the conflict between Cain and Abel, the first children born to Eve and Adam. Cain was the firstborn, and the meaning of his name is "acquisition." It might be rendered colloquially, "Here he is!" The significance of this is that Adam and Eve believed the promise God had given in Genesis 3:15 and were waiting for the Savior God had promised. This was why Adam named his wife Eve—"because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20). Eve means "life giver," and this was Adam's way of saying, "I believe God when he says he is going to send a child who will be born of you and who will one day crush the head of our great adversary Satan." And Eve believed too, because the text says that she called her firstborn son Cain (Gen. 4:1).

2. See my development of this theme in James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1:1–11:32*, vol. 1, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 162–65.

The text is even stronger than that, however. We need to notice two things. First, in the Hebrew text of Genesis 4:1, Eve does not actually say, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” The words “with the help of” are not in the Hebrew but have been added by the translators to explain in good English what they believe the text means. The actual words are: “The Lord I have brought forth a man.”

Second, the name of Jehovah (“the Lord”) is preceded by the Hebrew particle *’et*, as is the word *man* at the end of the sentence. The particle can mean “with,” which is what the translators assume when they add the full expression “with the help of.” But it usually marks something in the accusative case, which then becomes the object of the sentence. If that is the case here, what Eve actually said was, “I have brought forth a man, even Jehovah.”

This is all the more probable because the particle *’et* occurs earlier in the verse before the word *Cain*, which puts the two parts of the sentence in parallel construction. The expanded text would read, “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to *’et* Cain.” Then, explaining why this was the name chosen, she said, “I have brought forth [that is the meaning of the word *Cain*] a man, *’et* Jehovah.”

The obvious objection to this is that Eve could hardly have thought that she was giving birth to God, at least so early in the history of God’s revelation. But the difficulty vanishes when we remember that this was early and that God had not yet made himself known to anyone by the name *Jehovah*. In Exodus 6:3, God told Moses, to whom he did reveal himself as Jehovah, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD [Jehovah] I did not make myself known to them.” The revelation of the names of God was something that happened over a long period of time, and it may well be that at this stage *Jehovah* only meant something like “advocate” or “divine deliverer” to Eve and Adam.

Unfortunately, the beautiful baby that Eve held in her arms and beheld with thankful, wondering eyes was not Jesus Christ. Thousands of years would pass before the promise of Genesis 3:15 would be fulfilled. What Eve actually held in her arms was the world’s first murderer, the father of the race of human beings that was to love self, as Augustine writes, “even to the contempt of God.” True. But very soon she would hold the father of the godly also! For the next verse says, “Later she gave birth to his brother Abel” (Gen. 4:2).

The Offerings of Cain and Abel

The story that follows gives the first clear insights into the nature of the two humanities. Cain and Abel, now fully grown, came to present their offerings to God. The story is brief at this point and omits much that we might like to know. But it suggests that God must have given considerable instruction to Adam and Eve and their descendants as to how they were to approach him in faith by the offering of sacrifices. This is nearly indisputable in light of the emphasis on the approach to God by blood sacrifice that we find in the Bible from beginning to end.

This is not how Cain approached God, however. Cain brought “some of the fruits of the soil” as his offering (4:3) and was rejected. By contrast, Abel brought a sacrifice of some of “the firstborn of his flock” (v. 4) and was accepted.

This troubles some people, who would object strongly, “But why should Cain be rejected? He did the best he could. He brought the best he had.” True! But the first great lesson the Bible has to teach about approaching God is that our sinful “good” is not good enough. The best we can do is not sufficient. What we need is a blood sacrifice, the point being that an innocent victim must die in place of the one who has sinned. The sacrifices pointed to the coming of the Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ. So to offer something to God other than a blood sacrifice is actually to reject Jesus. It is unbelief, which is the first sad, reprehensible characteristic of this ungodly race of people.

I should add that there is a proper place for offering to God the works of our hands. But it is after we have come on the basis of the sacrifice. If Cain had come as God had told him to come, presenting his sacrifice that would have testified to his trust in God’s promise to send the Redeemer, and then had offered his first fruits, God would have accepted the offering without question. God accepts what we may offer in the same spirit today, whether it be the fruits of our art or music or intellectual endeavors or whatever. But when Cain refused to come with the blood offering, God was obliged to reject both him and anything else he might offer. The Bible says, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22).

Yet here is a point in the story that is very significant. Although Cain’s offering was rejected, God did not simply walk away from him, as it were,

but rather approached him and reasoned with him about his sacrifice and what he needed to do to be accepted. “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it” (Gen. 4:6–7). So also does God reason with us. “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’” (Isa. 1:18).

This reasoning has several important parts.

First, there is an indication that God saw Cain in whatever state he was in. Cain may be downcast and angry and turn away from God. He may withdraw from Abel’s society and reject his parents too. He may move to a far country and establish a new city and enter into a new way of life there, but he is unable to get away from God. God sees him regardless, just as God sees you. Ultimately it is God whom we each have to deal with.

Second, Cain need not have been angry. The fault was not outside himself, as if it were something that could not be changed. It *could* be changed, and the one to change it was Cain. So also with us. We tend to blame others for our troubles. Or our environment. Or our genes. But although these may be factors in our psychological and emotional makeup, the true cause is seldom outside us. It is within.

Third, there is a reminder of the right course of action: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” This is another indication that the way of approach to God by sacrifice had been made clear to these first human beings. If not, how could God call one course “right” as opposed to another? Cain was encouraged to do the “right” thing. In other words, although he had sinned in willful unbelief, refusing to come to God in the way appointed, he still had opportunity to come, if he would humble himself and obey God. Unfortunately, he refused to do that, just as many people today have heard the Word of God and the gospel yet refuse to obey the call.

Fourth, God gave Cain a warning, telling him that sin was crouching at his door and that it wanted to master him. Is that true of sin today? It is for many people. Indeed, it is even worse than that. In many cases, sin has crossed the threshold and has taken up residence within. What can be done in such cases? We cannot drive out the demons of sin. If we try to do that

in our own strength, the demon will only come back with seven demons even more terrible than himself, and our final state will be worse than our first (Matt. 12:43–45). If we would master sin, we must first be mastered by him who has mastered it. We must belong to Jesus.

The Way of Cain

Cain did not allow himself to be mastered by God, and so he became enslaved to sin and the devil, choosing a path that Jude later called “the way of Cain” (Jude 11). Allowing jealousy and resentment of his brother to build within him, the day came when he found Abel alone in the field and killed him. He must have looked around first to see if anyone was watching, and when he saw no one, he did the heinous act. Yet there was One who was watching, One who sees everything. God was watching.

“Where is your brother Abel?” asked God.

“I don’t know,” Cain answered. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

How evil this reply was. He was his brother’s keeper, of course, just as we all have responsibility for one another. But that was not the worst part of his reply. The worst thing was that he was lying, and he was lying to God. So much had sin mastered him by this point that he believed he could escape the consequences of his sin by lying. Thus far had sin progressed in just one generation! “Am I my brother’s keeper?” We hear the voice of modern man in Cain’s cruel question.

Cain is mentioned three times in the New Testament: in Hebrews 11:4, which affirms our interpretation of these verses by asserting, “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did”; in 1 John 3:12, which warns us, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother”; and in Jude 11, which I have already mentioned. Jude expands Cain’s actions to what he calls “the way of Cain” in which the wicked walk.

What does this mean? It means that although Cain’s case is a sorry one, it is even sorer than this in that it has become a pattern for many persons who have followed in his wake. If you have rejected God’s way of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ for your sin, you are in that way and sin is mastering you. This part of the story warns you of what is happening and calls you to repent of your sin and reject Cain’s way. It points you to the way of Abel who, though he was killed, nevertheless has this testimony

that “he was . . . a righteous man.” The author of Hebrews says, “By faith [Abel] still speaks, even though he is dead” (11:4). Let him speak to you, and follow his example.

The Two Genealogies

The remainder of Genesis 4 and all of Genesis 5 show how Cain and Abel gave birth to two radically different societies. Cain is driven away to be a wanderer in the earth, and his descendants are listed: Enoch, whose name Cain gave to the city he was building; Irad, the son of Enoch; Mehujael; and finally Methushael, the father of Lamech. Lamech receives special mention as an illustration of what was happening in the line of those who walked in Cain’s way. He had three sons: Jabal, who “was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock”; Jubal, “the father of all who play the harp and flute”; and Tubal-Cain, “who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron” (Gen. 4:20, 21, 22). These descriptions speak of a well-developed culture, but it was a cruel culture, as Lamech’s boast to his two wives shows:

Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
wives of Lamech, hear my words.
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for injuring me.
If Cain is avenged seven times,
then Lamech seventy-seven times. (vv. 23–24)

This is the story of a man boasting about murder and, since his boasting seems to be in poetry, actually writing a song about it. Francis Schaeffer wrote of this incident, “Here is humanistic culture without God. It is egotism and pride centered in man; this culture has lost the concept not only of God but of man as one who loves his brother.”³

At this point Genesis introduces the godly family line, which continues through Seth to Noah. The names in this line are Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalelel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. Two of these are

3. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*, 114.

mentioned in Hebrews 11 as examples of those whose lives were marked by faith: Enoch, who is said to have “pleased God” (v. 5), and Noah, of whom it is written, “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (v. 7).

These lines may be traced throughout history, as Augustine does in *The City of God*, and as I will also begin to do in chapters 3 and 4 when I focus on the two cities. The godless line is traceable in the world’s cities, states, and cultures. The godly line moves forward through Abraham and his descendants, the faithful within Israel, and the church. As far as the cities go, the major contrast is between Babylon, the representative city of the world, and Jerusalem, which is God’s city. Here we will need to think not only of historical Jerusalem but of the Jerusalem that is above.

At the very end of Genesis 4, in verses that should really be with those of Genesis 5 (vv. 25–26), the essential characteristics of the godly line are spelled out. We need to look at them closely.

A Proper View of God and His Preeminence

The first characteristic is seen in Eve’s comment at the time of Seth’s birth: “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him” (v. 23). Even on the surface, it is plain that Eve (and Adam too) was ascribing the birth of Seth to God, acknowledging that God is the source of life, something no one in Cain’s line is said to have done. But this obvious meaning of Eve’s words becomes even stronger when contrasted with what she had said earlier when Cain was born. She said, “I have brought forth a man” (Gen. 4:1). That was a statement of her faith in God’s promise, as I pointed out earlier. It was commendable. But it was nevertheless weak in one sense, which we see as soon as we contrast it with what she says now. It was human-centered. When Cain was born, Eve said, “I have brought forth a man.” But now she changes that to a deeper and nobler confession, saying, “God has granted me another child.”

Nothing is so characteristic of the diverse natures of the world and Christians as that contrast. The godless culture begins with man—the very essence of what we call secular humanism. The people of God begin with God, though sometimes even the godly have to learn the hard way, as Eve did.

A Proper View of Man and His Frailty

The second characteristic of Seth's line is its right view of man—particularly its awareness of his frailty. This is not particularly evident in the English translation of these verses, but it emerges in Hebrew because of the meaning of the name of Seth's son Enosh. *Seth* means “set in place of,” because he was given in place of Abel, as Eve said. But *Enosh* means “frail one” or “mortal.” It would seem that Seth, who is a part of the godly line, was so impressed with the frailty of man that he gave his son a name intended to preserve and communicate that truth. Instead of boasting about his strength, as Lamech did, Seth confessed his deep and continuing need of God.

These two doctrines, the doctrine of man and the doctrine of God, go together and are related in a manner that has sometimes been called the seesaw in theology. The basic idea of a seesaw is that when one end is up, the other is down. You can never have both ends up or both ends down at the same time. So it is with the doctrines of God and man. If a person exalts man in his or her theology—if man is thought to be strong and good and well able to take care of his own spiritual needs—then God is inevitably lowered in that theological system, for there is no great need of him. In fact, man becomes equal or even superior to God and eventually imagines that he can do without him. However, if God is up, then man is down and is perceived to be the weak and needy creature Seth saw him to be.

The ungodly object to this conclusion, of course, for they think that lifting up God debases man. But the case is actually the reverse. This is clear in Genesis 4. The godless culture of Cain runs on through his godless generations and eventually produces Lamech, the original self-made and self-sufficient man. Lamech does not need God. He can take care of himself. But what is his attitude toward other human beings? Parallel with Lamech's exaltation of himself (at the expense of God) is his lowering of the value of others so that at last he is ready to kill them for so small an offense as wounding him, perhaps only by words.

We see this devaluing of man everywhere today, and it is a result of the humanistic philosophy that was supposed to exalt him. People with no regard for either God or other human beings are attacking and even killing people every single hour in our country, often for nothing, frequently for as little as a pair of sneakers or a necklace.

The godly do not have a low view of man, though they have a realistic view and rightly lower him in comparison to the powerful and only holy God. They do not exalt man to an absolute position in the universe. They know his corruption. They speak of his fall. But at the same time they love their fellow human beings as creatures made in the image of God and thus of inestimable worth. Enoch (Gen. 5:21–24) became a preacher who warned his generation of the judgment to come. Noah, another in this line, likewise became “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5) who tried to turn back some of his acquaintances before they perished in the flood. The godly care for others so much that they are willing to endure hardship and even suffer personal abuse so that those perishing might hear the gospel and respond by believing on Jesus Christ.

Dependence on God

The final and very important characteristic of the godly line is its dependence on God for salvation and for all other things besides. We have already seen this in Adam, who named his wife Eve because she would become, as he thought, the mother of the Messiah. We have seen it in Eve, in the way she named her firstborn Cain (“here he is”), believing that the Redeemer had arrived. Now we see it at the end of the chapter, where we are told, “At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD” (4:26). The godly knew they were not self-sufficient, so they threw themselves on God, trusting him for their salvation.

The Reformers were very impressed by this text and saw it as an illustration of that utter dependence on God that they had come to value highly. Martin Luther spoke of Genesis 4:26 as the foundation of “a small church . . . in which Adam, as high priest, rules everything by the Word and sound doctrine.”⁴ John Calvin saw it as “a restoration of religion” such as had been effected in his day. He called it “a miracle, that there was at that time a single family in which the worship of God arose.”⁵ He was right. It was a miracle. And Luther was right too; it was a small church. It was the new humanity.

4. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5*, vol. 1, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 327.

5. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 224.

The Two Enochs

In the midst of the long genealogy of the godly in Genesis, there is a most interesting man: Enoch. When we discover all there is to know about him, we learn that he is an example and a summary of all I have been saying in this chapter. Enoch walked with God in an age when practically no one else did, and so he became an outstanding illustration of the nature of the new humanity in every age.

An interesting feature of the biblical references to Enoch is that more is said about him in the New Testament than in the Old. In the whole of the Bible, only five passages refer to Enoch. Two are genealogies in which only his name is mentioned (1 Chron. 1:3 and Luke 3:37), so nothing much is learned there. That leaves three key passages:

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. (Gen. 5:21–24)

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; “he could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. (Heb. 11:5)

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” (Jude 14–15)

The Seventh from Adam

Jude introduces Enoch as “the seventh from Adam.” It is a curious phrase, and at first it seems unnecessary. No other Bible character is introduced by such terms. However, it is explained when we turn back to Genesis 4 and 5

and recognize that two Enochs were living at this time. One was the seventh descendant from Adam through the line of Seth. He is mentioned in Genesis 5. The other was the third descendant from Adam through the line of Cain. He is mentioned in Genesis 4. The Enoch who descended from Adam through the line of Seth was godly. He is our Enoch, the seventh. The one who descended from Adam through the line of Cain was godless. He is the devil's Enoch, the third. So Jude's identification of Enoch as "the seventh from Adam" is a way of distinguishing the two, as if God is saying, "I want you to follow Enoch and be like him. But I don't want you to get the two Enochs confused. I am talking about the Enoch of Genesis 5, not the ungodly Enoch of Genesis 4."

This has practical considerations, for it suggests that there is a parallel between those who are God's people and those who are the devil's, and it encourages us to imitate the godly only. I spell it out like this: God has his people, and the devil has his. The devil has his doctors; God has his doctors. The devil has his lawyers; God has his lawyers. The devil has his teachers; God has his teachers. The devil has his convicts and housewives and even preachers, who tell lies. God has his convicts and housewives and preachers, who speak God's truth. Those who are the devil's people live for themselves and by their own rules, "even to the contempt of God." Those who are God's live for him, "even to the contempt of self," and are a blessing to others in countless ways. In other words, the existence of the two Enochs is the very essence of the two humanities.

This is at least part of the answer to the problem of the continuing existence of evil in the world. For God is using it to demonstrate the difference between the lives of those who go their own way, sin, and bear the consequences and those who seek to obey and serve God. The former are miserable and bring misery in their wake. They follow the devil, and all the devil can create is misery and confusion. Even the very word *devil* (*diabolos* in Greek) means "disrupter." God's people glorify God, and God uses them to bless others. The devil cannot do that with his children and, in fact, does not even want to.

A Preacher of Righteousness

The book of Jude tells us something else about this important antediluvian: he was a preacher. And it tells us something about the content

of his preaching. Enoch's message had two essential parts: first, a proclamation of the Lord's coming in judgment, and second, a denunciation of the ungodliness that was all too visible in the degenerate culture of those days. "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (vv. 14–15).

When we read those words today, we understand that they refer to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the final judgment. But when Enoch spoke those words, as the Holy Spirit led him to do, he must have been looking ahead to the pending destruction of the race (Noah and his family excepted) by the flood and must have been warning his contemporaries about it. In fact, we can recall how the apostle Peter joins the two together, using the first as a warning of the second.

By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.
By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire,
being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.
(2 Peter 3:6–7)

Enoch was warning of the first judgment, just as Peter did (and we should) warn others of the second.

But isn't the preaching of the gospel to be positive and hopeful? Yes, it is. It was positive to Adam and Eve, who heard it and believed in God's promise of a Redeemer to come. The gospel is a hopeful proclamation of salvation. But it is also negative in the sense that God warns of judgment for those who will not receive Christ. If we are to walk in Enoch's steps, we must be faithful to proclaim the judgment side of the gospel message too.

The second part of Enoch's preaching concerned the ungodliness of his age. He preached that the Lord was coming "to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." This is only part of one sentence from this great man's preaching, but it is significant that in it the word *ungodly* appears four times. In other words, it was the burden of his preaching. What do you suppose is the most-used word in preaching

today? *Love? Involvement? Fulfillment?* I do not know, but I am sure it is not *sin* or *judgment* or *ungodliness*.

Enoch lived in the age just before the flood, and it was a very sinful time. There is a brief description of it in Genesis 6:1–7, in which God says that “man’s wickedness on the earth” had become very great and that “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (v. 5). We are appalled at the wickedness of that age. But it was not essentially different from our own. We too have sexual promiscuity, materialism, spiritualism, and the occult, which are implied in Genesis 6. Moreover, we have rape and murder and drug addiction and prostitution and the killing of the unborn and other evils that are not even mentioned in Genesis in connection with the race before the flood. How can we point our fingers at the antediluvian culture and cry, “Ungodly,” when we are so manifestly ungodly ourselves? What would Enoch say if he were here today? Would he not say what he said so many thousands of years ago to the people of his time: “Ungodly . . . ungodly . . . ungodly . . . ungodly”? And would he not be right? Ungodliness is the single most characteristic feature of our own decadent civilization.

Enoch Walked with God

From what we are told about Enoch in Jude, we turn back to the original mention of Enoch in Scripture, the text in Genesis. This passage does not mention his preaching at all, but in its short fifty-one words, much as Jude 14 and 15 repeat the word *ungodly* four times, Genesis 5:21–24 repeats the words “Enoch walked with God” twice. The full text says,

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

What does it mean to walk with God? It means a number of things. It means to believe in God, to obey God, to stay close to God, to seek the way in which God would have us live and the things he would have us do.

It has to do with godliness. If Enoch walked with God, clearly he was not fighting against God or resisting him but was delighting to walk as God directed him.

Moreover, the text tells us that he did this for a long time. The first use of these words is in connection with the birth of Enoch's son Methuselah, when Enoch was sixty-five years old. The second time is at the end of his life when he was three hundred sixty-five years old. So Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. That is no casual stroll. It was the walk of a lifetime. Moreover, it was a walk and not a sprint or a run. Nearly anyone can sprint for a short time or distance, but no one can sprint for long. For the long haul you need to walk, and that is what Enoch did. That is what we need today too. We need people who will walk with God year in and year out. Not flashes in the pan. Not shooting stars who attract for an instant by their sudden flashing brilliance but soon burn out. We need steady, faithful people who know God and are coming to know him better day by day.

Enoch Pleased God

I turn finally to the third of the three texts that tell us about Enoch: Hebrews 11:5, which says that "Enoch . . . pleased God." This is the obvious culmination of the account of Enoch's life, for having walked with God and having thereby come to recognize sin as sin and to have turned his back on it, Enoch inevitably pleased God in what he did. What could be a better testimony for any human life? What could be a better achievement than to have it said that you or I pleased God?

If we please God, however, we will not be in a position to please most other men and women, because the new humanity is abhorred by the old humanity and vice versa. By the time Enoch died, by the sheer mathematics of birth and reproduction, given their long-recorded lifetimes, there were probably several million of Adam's descendants on earth. These were Enoch's relatives, mostly cousins. It was these whom Enoch called "ungodly." Do you think that would have made Enoch popular? Hardly! We can be certain that he was not popular with his many ungodly cousins. But although Enoch may not have pleased his cousins, he had this testimony—that he pleased God. And that is what counted!

May it also be true of us. If possible, we want to please people too, like Jesus of whom it was said that in his youth he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). But it is not always possible. Sometimes a determined choice is necessary. And when that is the case, may it never be said of us that we chose to please other people rather than God, but that we pleased God regardless of the consequences. When we stand before our Maker in heaven, may we hear him say to us, as he did to the faithful servants in the Lord’s parable, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matt. 25:21, 23).