

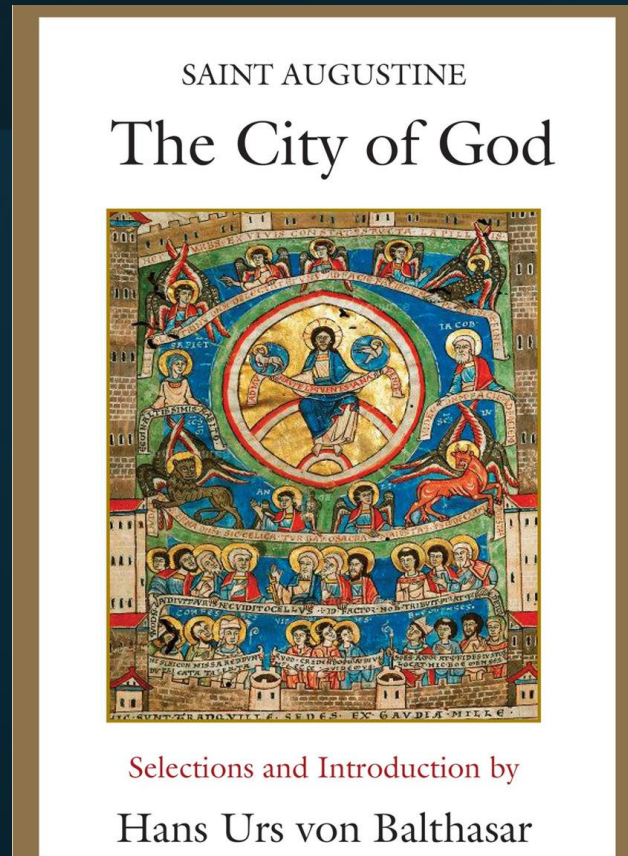
Influential Christian Literature

*Exploring Essential Works That Shaped
Christian Thought*

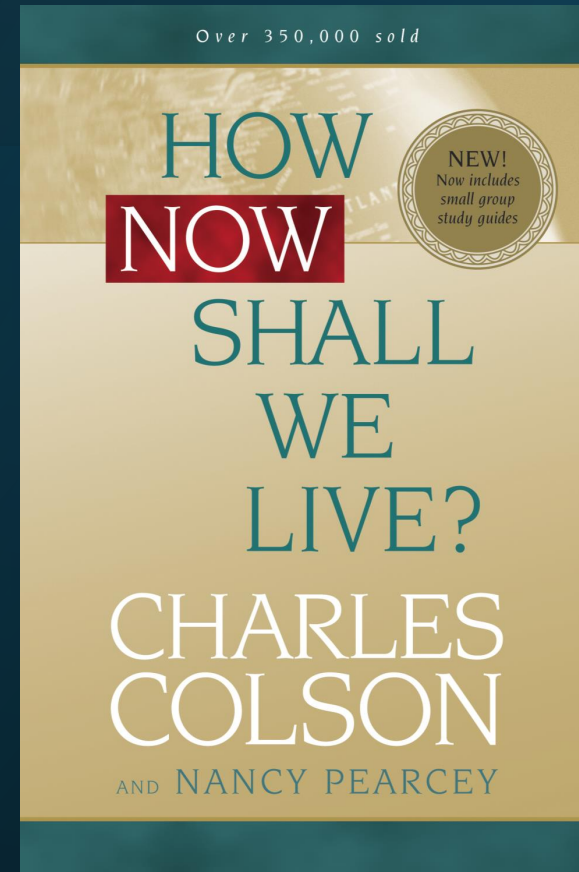
Wilbur Reid, summer of 2025



The Christian Worldview and Society in Civilizational Crisis



426



1999



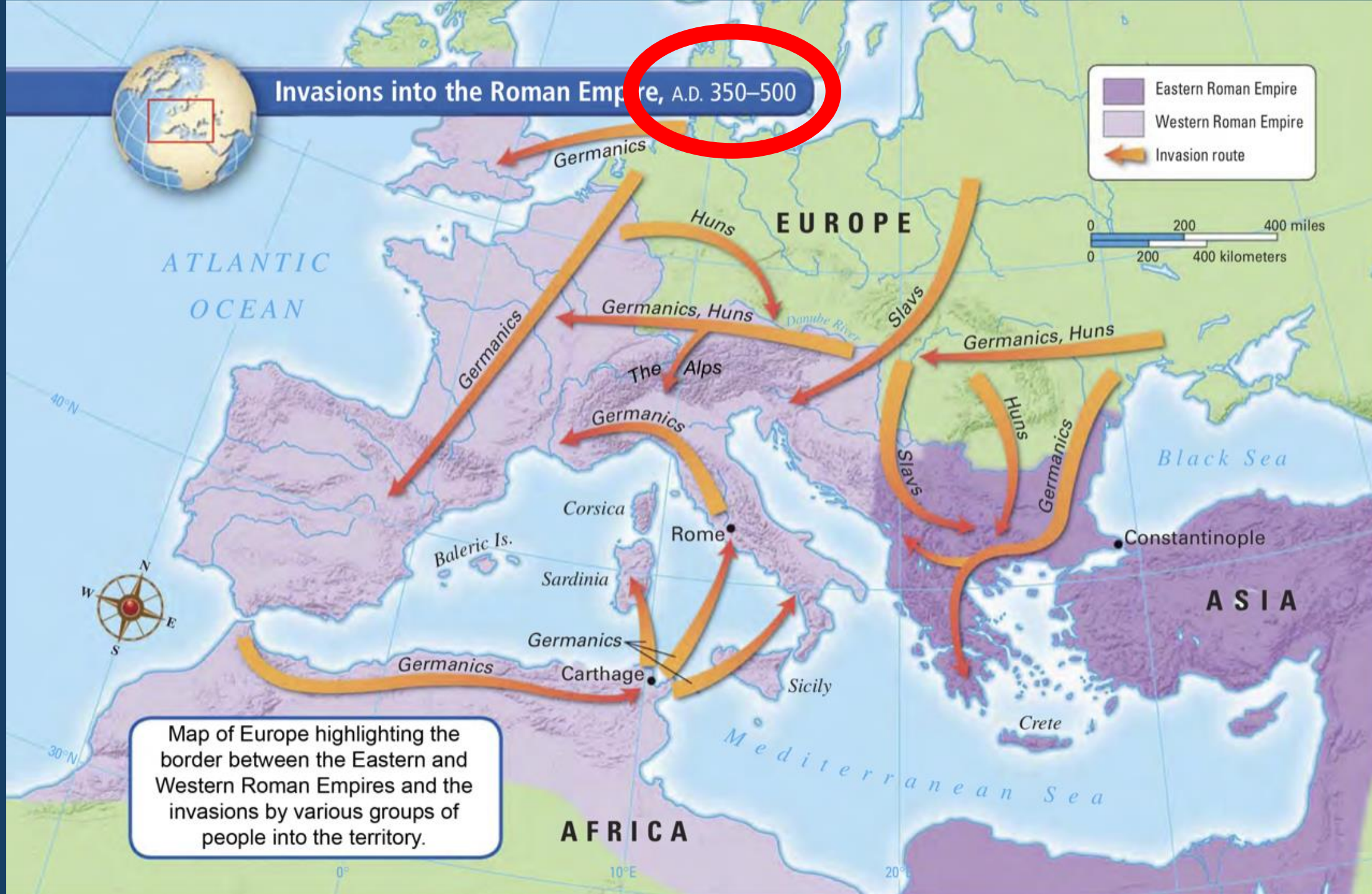
Invasions into the Roman Empire, A.D. 350–500



0 200 400 miles
0 200 400 kilometers



Map of Europe highlighting the border between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires and the invasions by various groups of people into the territory.







Key dates:

410: Fall of Rome

476: Collapse of the Roman Empire

The City of God (413-426)

- **Author:** Augustine of Hippo
 - Perhaps the greatest theologian in history – pioneering intellectual giant
 - Claimed by Catholics and Protestants
 - Founder of the Augustinian order (friars)
- 22 books/chapters, over 1,000 pages
- **Summary:** A defense of Christianity against pagan accusations and a vision of God's eternal kingdom versus earthly kingdoms.
- **Quote:** "Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, the heavenly by the love of God."

SAINT AUGUSTINE The City of God



Selections and Introduction by
Hans Urs von Balthasar

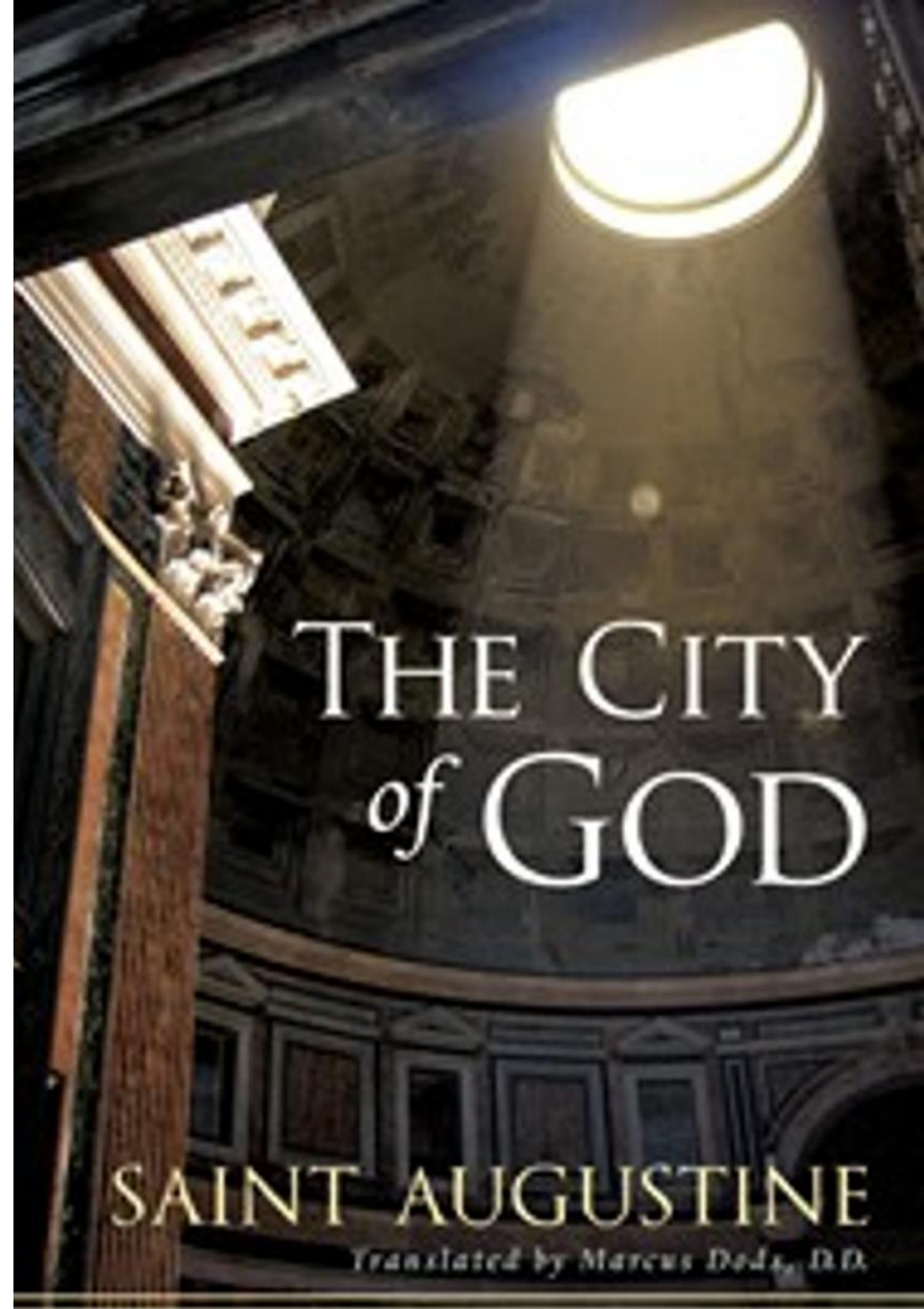
Map of the Church Fathers

Downpatrick



Structure of *The City of God*

- Books 1-10: Christian defense against pagan accusations
 - 1-5: Critique of pagan religion
 - 6-10: Critique of pagan philosophy
- Books 11-14: Origins of the City of God and City of Man
- Books 15-18: Histories of the City of God and City of Man
- Books 19-22: Destinies of the City of God and City of Man



The Fall of Rome (410 AD) and *The City of God*

- The Crisis:
 - Visigoths sack Rome
 - The empire is crumbling
 - Pagans blame Christianity
 - “The gods are angry”
- Augustine’s Response
 - Christianity didn’t weaken Rome
 - Rome fell due to moral decay
 - God’s purposes transcend earthly kingdoms



The Two Cities Framework

Earthly City

- Citizens love self above God
- Seeks temporal peace
- Governed by human will
- At home in this world

City of God

- Citizens love God above self
- Seeks eternal peace
- Governed by divine will
- Pilgrims in this world

Book 5: God's Providence in History

Earthly City

- Success due to fate, luck, or power
- Rome's rise attributed to ambition and military might.
- Earthly glory is fleeting

City of God

- God's providence rules over all events
- Empires rise and fall by God's plan.
- Christians live as citizens of both cities.

“The true God, the giver of kingdoms, grants earthly rule to whom He wills.”

Book 19: The Nature of Peace

Earthly City

- Seeks peace through domination and self-love.
- Peace is temporary, fragile, political.
- Defines happiness by earthly goods.
- Even war is waged for the

City of God

- Seek's eternal peace through God's love.
- True peace is the tranquility of order.
- Happiness found only in eternal life with God.
- Christians live as citizens of both cities.

“Peace is the calm that comes from order. The City of Man seeks it in vain; the City of God finds it in God alone.”

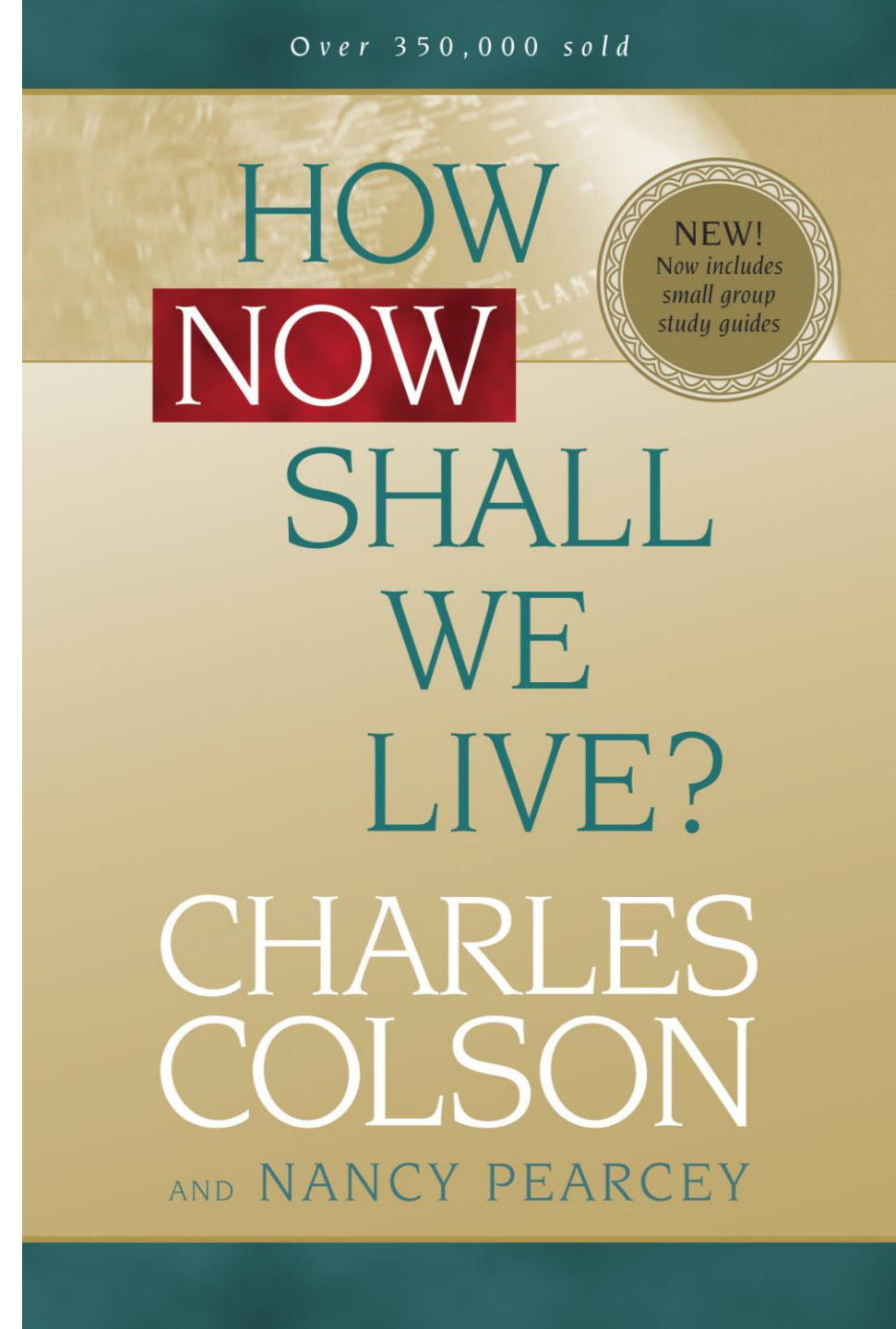
Relevance to Modern America

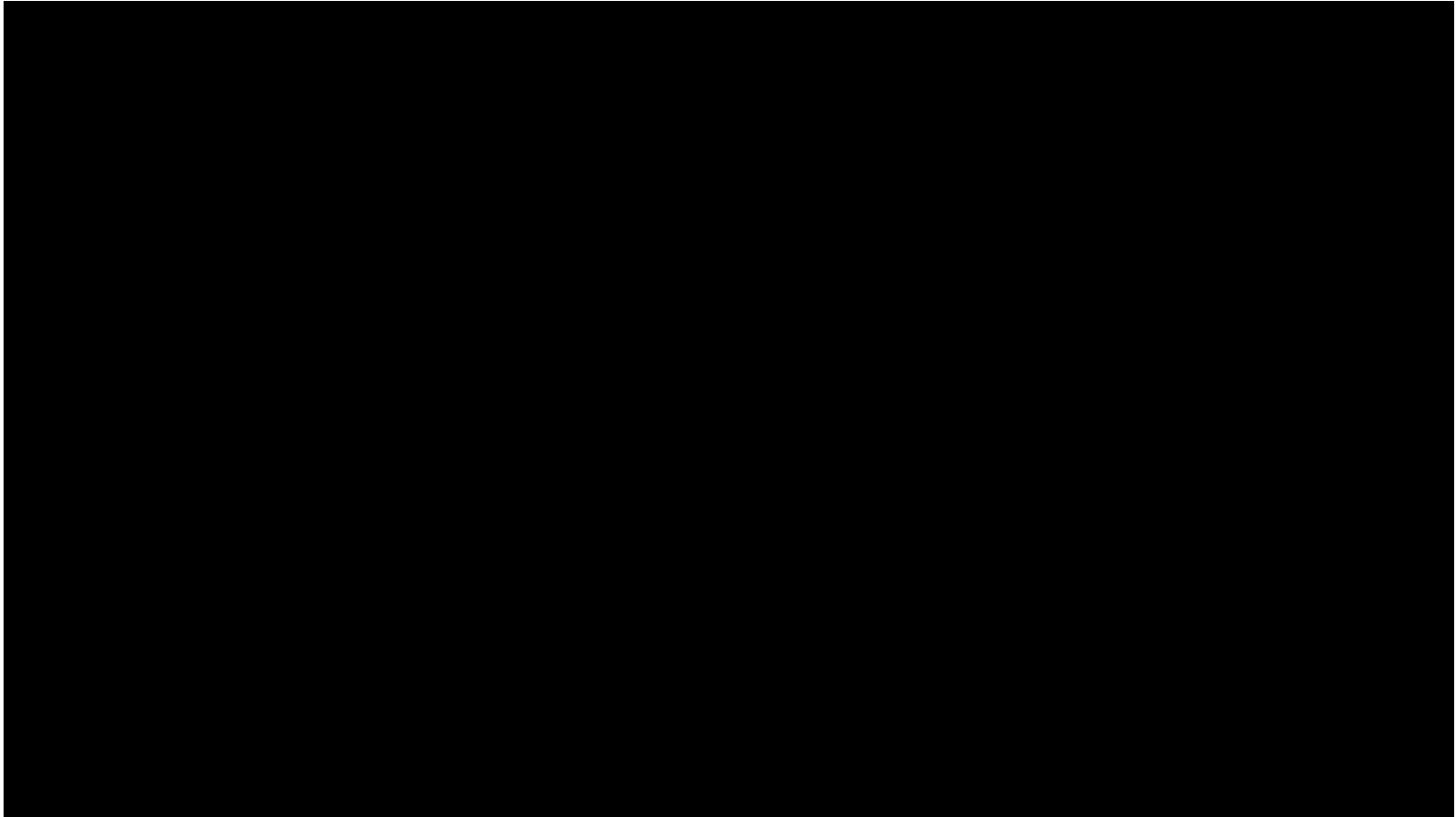
- Dual citizenship: Living in Two Cities
- Understanding history through God's providence
- Redefining peace and security
- Correcting misplaced hopes
- Equipping the church to engage culture



How Now Shall We Live (1999)

- **Author:** Chuck Colson
 - American attorney, political figure (Nixon's "hatchet man")
 - Dramatic prison conversion, founder of Prison Fellowship
- **Summary:** A challenge to Christians to adopt a comprehensive biblical worldview, arguing that faith must shape every aspect of life—from politics to culture to personal ethics—in contrast to the secularism of modern society.
- **Quote:** "The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence."





Worldview Thinking

- Lens through which we see reality
- Answers life's basic questions
- Shapes values and decisions
- Often unconscious assumptions



Three-part Framework for Christian Worldview

- **Creation**

- establishes that God made everything with purpose and design. This means objective truth exists, human life has inherent dignity, and there are moral absolutes.
- Against postmodern relativism, Colson argued that reality isn't socially constructed—it's God-constructed.

- **The Fall**

- explains why everything is broken. Sin affects not just individuals but institutions, cultures, and ways of thinking.
- This means Christians should expect resistance when they challenge secular assumptions. It also means we should approach cultural problems with both realism about human nature and hope for redemption.

- **Redemption**

- is God's work of restoring all things through Christ. This isn't just individual salvation—it's cosmic restoration.
- Christians are called to participate in this work by bringing biblical principles into every sphere of life.

Chuck Colson's Worldview Grid

(Based on How Now Shall We Live?)

Question	Christian Worldview	Secular/Naturalist Worldview
Where did we come from?	Created by God in His image	Random chance, natural processes
What went wrong?	Human sin and rebellion against God	Ignorance, environment, social structures
What is the solution?	Redemption through Christ, restoration	Education, technology, government reform
What is our purpose?	To glorify God and enjoy Him forever	Self-fulfillment, survival, progress

Worldview Grid

BREAKPO

	Where Did I Come From?	What's Wrong with the world?	Is There a Solution?	What's the Result?
Biblical Worldview	Creation Image of God	The Fall: Original sin Human responsibility	Atonement through Christ's death and resurrection	Resurrection
Secular Naturalism	Undirected evolution Time+Chance	NOT responsible •Genes •Society (Rousseau)	Worldly utopia Ideology	Self
Postmodernism	Pantheism(?) Eternal universe	Oppression Western Civilization	Deconstruct Personal Tolerance	
Islam	Creation NOT image of God (Image of God=Idolatry)	NO original sin •Deception •The Self	Salvation Transcendental Only	
Eastern Religions	World is an illusion Reincarnation	Bad karma •Ignorance •Desire		
New Age	Pantheism/God in us Biological evolution Spiritual evolution	Ignorance of own divinity		

ColsonCenter.org

Cultural Engagement Strategy

- Understand secular worldviews
- Expose their contradictions
- Present Christian alternative
- Live out biblical principles
- Transform institutions from within



Common Themes



- Christianity's relationship to culture
- The temporary nature of earthly kingdoms
- The need for Christian intellectual engagement
- The importance of a biblical worldview
- The church's prophetic role in society

Key Differences

Augustine

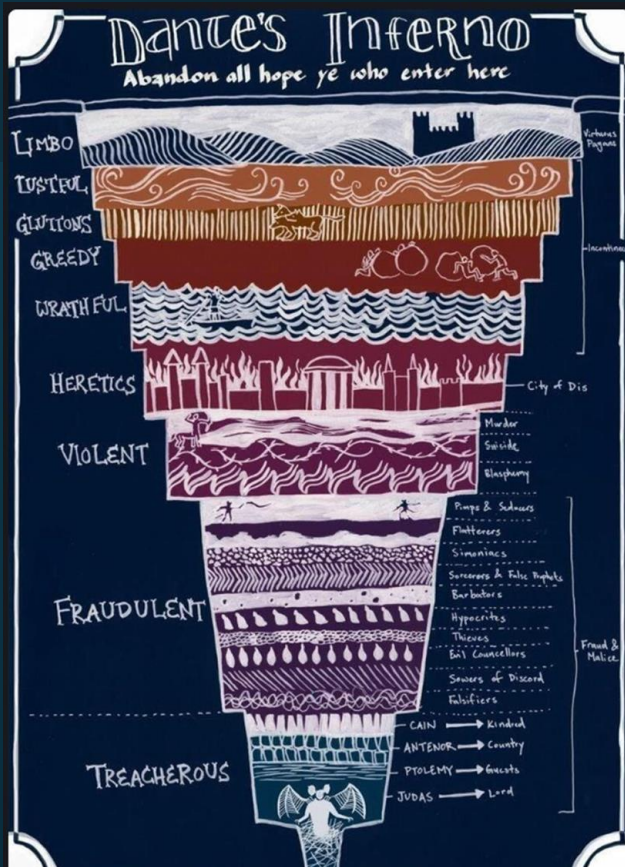
- Christendom emerging
- Focus on defending faith
- Emphasis on God's sovereignty
- Church as institution

Colson

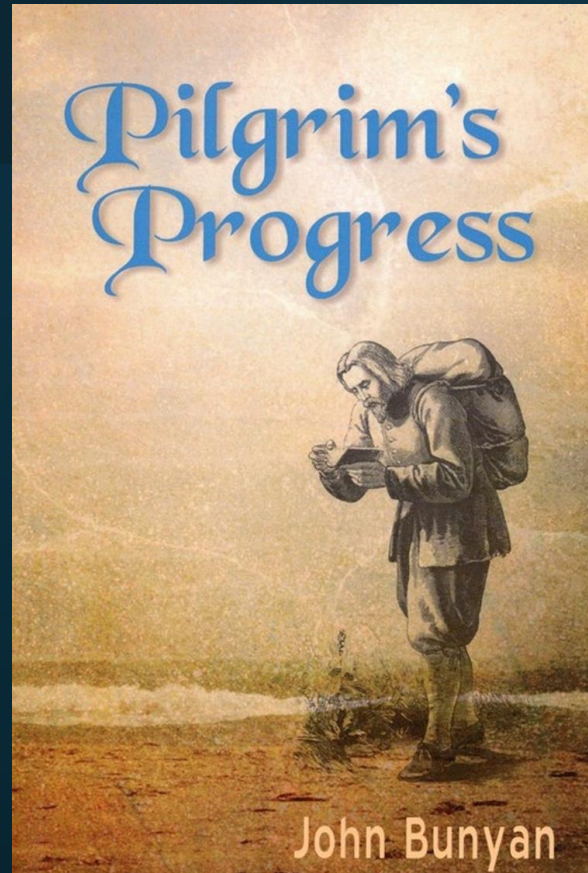
- Post-Christian culture
- Focus on engaging culture
- Emphasis on worldview thinking
- Church as transformation agent



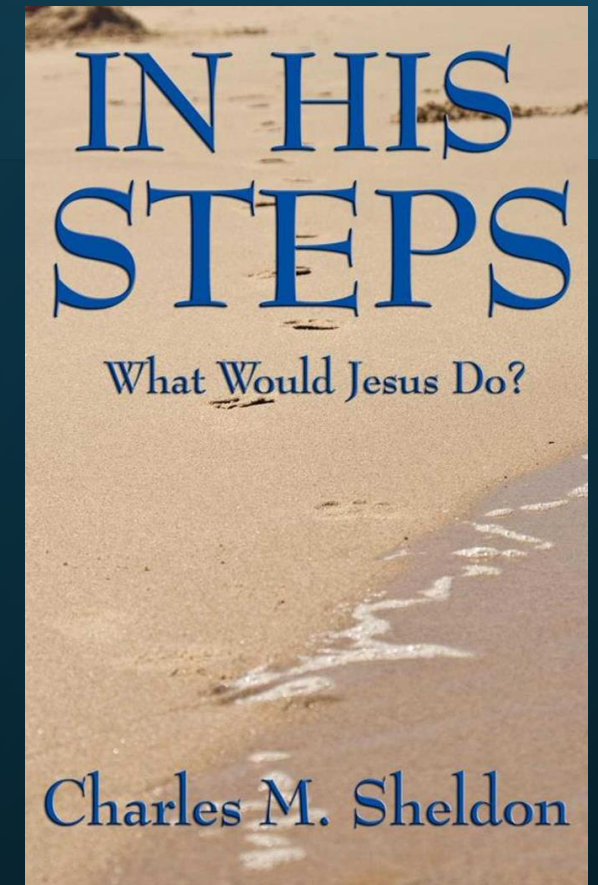
Next Week: The Pilgrim's Journey



1320



1678



1896

Colson, Nixon, Watergate



ALL THE NEWS
That's Fit to Print

The New York Times

VOL. CXXIII...No. 42,406 © 1974 The New York Times Company NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1974 15 CENTS

Weather: Chance of showers later today, tonight. Milder tomorrow. Temp. range: today 34-46; Friday 43-49. Additional details on Page 62.

FEDERAL GRAND JURY INDICTS 7 NIXON AIDES ON CHARGES OF CONSPIRACY ON WATERGATE; HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN, MITCHELL ON LIST

						
John N. Mitchell Former Attorney General	H. R. Haldeman Headed White House staff	John D. Ehrlichman Was Presidential adviser	Charles W. Colson Former Whitehouse lawyer	Robert C. Mardian 1972 campaign coordinator	Kenneth W. Parkinson Lawyer for campaign unit	Gordon C. Strachan Assisted Mr. Haldeman

COLSON IS NAMED

A Question of Veracity of the President Is Indirectly Raised

By ANTHONY RIPLEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 1—A Federal grand jury today indicted seven men, all former officials of President Nixon's Administration or of his 1972 re-election campaign, on charges of covering up the Watergate scandal.

Never before have so many close and trusted advisers of an American President faced criminal accusations in a single indictment.

All were charged with conspiracy — a conspiracy, the grand jury said, that continued

Heath, Trailing Labor Party In Britain, Declines to Resign

MITCHELL JUDGE HALTS TRIAL HERE

Nixon Urges Quick Trials, Cautions on Prejudgment

SIRICA SAID TO GET FINDINGS ON NIXON

By JOHN HERBERS

Twelve Unifying Themes

1. The Foundation of Faith

What we believe and why

Luther, Calvin, Campbell

2. Knowing God's Character

His attributes and nature

Aquinas, Tozer, Packer

3. Authentic Conversion

What real faith looks like

Augustine, Edwards

4. The Cost of Discipleship

Following Christ isn't easy

Bonhoeffer, Chan, Platt

5. Pursuing God's Presence

Intimacy with the Divine

Kempis, Lawrence, Tozer

6. Spiritual Warfare

The battle for our souls

Lewis, Edwards, Peretti, LaHaye/Jenkins

7. Defending the Faith

Christianity makes sense

Chesterton, Lewis

8. Christian Worldview and Society

Faith and public life

Augustine, Chesterton, Colson

9. The Pilgrim's Journey

Life as movement toward God

Bunyan, Dante, Sheldon

10. Faith, Reason, and Wonder

Christianity appeals to the whole person

Tolkien, Lewis, Aquinas

11. Life's Purpose

Why are we here?

Warren, Misc others

Books,
ranked
by
reading
level

Rank	Title	Author	Reading Grade Level	Difficulty	
1	Summa Theologica	Thomas Aquinas	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	The City of God	Augustine	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	Institutes of the Christian Religion	John Calvin	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
4	Divine Comedy	Dante Alighieri	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Christian System	Alexander Campbell	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Everlasting Man	G.K. Chesterton	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
7	Orthodoxy	G.K. Chesterton	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Religious Affections	Jonathan Edwards	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
9	Confessions	Augustine	College/12-14	Difficult	★★★☆☆
10	The Imitation of Christ	Thomas à Kempis	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	Jonathan Edwards	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
12	The Pilgrim's Progress	John Bunyan	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Luther's 95 Theses	Martin Luther	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
14	How Now Shall We Live	Chuck Colson	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	Knowing God	J.I. Packer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Knowledge of the Holy	A.W. Tozer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Cost of Discipleship	Dietrich Bonhoeffer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
18	Mere Christianity	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Screwtape Letters	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Lord of the Rings	J.R.R. Tolkien	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
21	The Pursuit of God	A.W. Tozer	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
	The Practice of the Presence of God	Brother Lawrence	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
23	Chronicles of Narnia	C.S. Lewis	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Radical	David Platt	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Crazy Love	Francis Chan	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	In His Steps	Charles Sheldon	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
27	The Purpose Driven Life	Rick Warren	Elementary/5-7	Easiest	★☆☆☆☆

Great Christian Literature Course Schedule

Woodlawn Christian Church - Fellowship in Christ Class

Week	Date	Theme	Description	Texts		
1	July 13	The Foundation of Faith	Explore how the Reformation's call back to Scripture laid the groundwork for returning to biblical simplicity.	<i>Luther's 95 Theses</i>	<i>Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>	<i>Campbell's The Christian System</i>
2	July 20	Knowing the Character of God	Discover God's attributes through three different eras showing He is both knowable and beyond full comprehension.	<i>Tozer's The Knowledge of the Holy</i>	<i>Packer's Knowing God</i>	<i>Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)</i>
3	July 27	The Journey of Conversion and Confession	Examine authentic spiritual experience from autobiography's father to America's greatest theologian.	<i>Augustine's Confessions</i>	<i>Edwards' Religious Affections</i>	
4	Aug. 3	The Cost of True Discipleship	Challenge comfortable Christianity through voices that demand everything in following Christ.	<i>Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship</i>	<i>Platt's Radical</i>	<i>Chan's Crazy Love</i>
5	Aug. 10	The Pursuit of God's Presence	Discover that God desires intimate fellowship with ordinary believers across three centuries of seeking.	<i>Tozer's The Pursuit of God</i>	<i>Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence of God</i>	<i>Thomas à Kempis' The Imitation of Christ</i>
6	Aug. 24	The Reality of Spiritual Warfare	Explore the spiritual battle for human souls through wit and fire-and-brimstone warnings.	<i>Lewis' The Screwtape Letters</i>	<i>Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God</i>	<i>Peretti's This Present Darkness</i>
7	Aug. 31	Defending the Faith	Witness the golden age of Christian apologetics demonstrating Christianity's intellectual credibility.	<i>Chesterton's Orthodoxy</i>	<i>Chesterton's The Everlasting Man</i>	<i>Lewis' Mere Christianity</i>
8	Sept. 7	The Christian Worldview and Society	Understand how Christians should engage the world through voices from Rome's fall to modernity's rise.	<i>Augustine's The City of God</i>	<i>Chesterton's Orthodoxy (selections)</i>	<i>Colson's How Now Shall We Live</i>
9	Sept. 14	The Pilgrim's Journey	Experience the Christian life as a journey toward God through cosmic vision, everyman allegory, and practical action.	<i>Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	<i>Dante's Divine Comedy (selections)</i>	<i>Sheldon's In His Steps</i>
10	Sept. 21	Faith, Reason, and Wonder	See how Christianity engages both mind and imagination through rational foundation and imaginative power.	<i>Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia (selections)</i>	<i>Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (selections)</i>	<i>Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)</i>
11	Sept. 28	Purpose and Meaning in Life	Compare contemporary approaches to purpose with insights from earlier authors on life's fundamental question.	<i>Warren's The Purpose Driven Life</i>	<i>Selections from various authors</i>	
12	Oct. 5	The Unity of Christian Truth	Demonstrate the remarkable unity of Christian truth across 1,600 years of faithful witnesses.	<i>Synthesis of major themes</i>	<i>Brief readings from multiple authors</i>	