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IS WORLD WAR III BEGINNING?

As Tucker Carlson recently lamented following his parting of the ways with American news outlet Fox News, the media is in a lamentable state, with the real news largely hidden behind the frivolous, and, we opine, the irrational.

IN THE FRONT OF THE NEWS

Concerning the frivolous, generations reared on endless rounds of game shows, reality TV, and gossip columns, now eat up the real-time soap operas playing out before our eyes. In a post-truth world, news is for entertainment.

Note when scanning the headlines and scrolling social media how much focus is now given to the personal and the scandalous. At the time of writing, Harry is the talk of the moment. Will he attend the coronation of his father, King Charles III, and if so how many rows back will he be distanced from the relatives he has betrayed for money; yes, the ones carrying out his duties. (Photo: www.littlebrown.co.uk.)



Of course, the desire of the masses for escapism is not new. What *is* new is the sheer amount of chatter available across an unrivalled number of platforms, to consumers addicted to their devices. Attention spans are diminishing, thinking is shallower, and morality is vanishing.

Also in the front of the news is the irrational. Our race, which boasted of getting into space and has turned science into a religion (Scientism), now struggles to count how many genders there are, to identify what a woman is, to know which pronouns to use, and to see what is wrong with physiologically incompatible “sex” and sanctioned butchery (abortions, sex changes, and the like).

Obviously, these rapid societal downturns into amorality are vital to discuss, but only because there are those foolish, rebellious, and blinded enough to think that the new normal is in any sense normal. Lurking behind it is a force for evil, who, fixating us on the frivolous and the insane, would have us ignore what looms large in our day.

IN THE REAR OF THE NEWS

Not since the Cold War has the possibility of World War

III seemed so pressing. Over the last decades, our race has gladly taken a breather from threats of what was called in the U.K. “the four-minute warning” (the time it would take for Russian rockets to hit the mainland). Even the war on terror, shocking in its brutality and global in its inconvenience, was regional in its epicenter. Thus, we raise the question of a third world war (likely nuclearized) neither lightly nor irresponsibly. The masses may ignore the prospect, and the diplomats and statesmen play it down, yet militaries are increasing their war readiness while military attachés seek to keep key nations “on side,” or neutral. (Image: Greatlakesledger.com.)



Theories abound as to the threat of war. Australian cypherpunk activist Julian Assange says the West aims, for financial reasons, to make war the norm, pursuing endless rather than successful war. Geopolitical analysts view Russia as threatened by NATO expansion into Eastern Europe. Others consider Russia a serial aggressor, poisoning dissidents, sabotaging pipelines, and invading nations.

Less debatable is the situation on the ground. Behind the bloodshed in East Ukraine there has developed a proxy war, so much so that we may ask at what point does Western support for Ukraine constitute a counteractive declaration of war on Russia. Have we already entered, in effect, the equivalent of World War II's phony war (Oct. 1939–Mar. 1940), with open hostilities a matter of time.

Proxy or phony, the war in Ukraine is set amid emerging competition between the BRICS forum (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the G7 (Germany, France, U.K., Italy, Japan, Canada, and the U.S.). While tensions exist within each network (notably the border dispute between India and China), the omission of the U.S.A. from BRICS is telling, for President Putin's declared aim is to end U.S. dominance around the world.

Add to the mix perennial Middle Eastern tensions, the converging of U.S. and Chinese naval vessels in the waters off Taiwan, Kim Jong Un's return to the testing of North Korean rockets, and we cannot but ponder the future.

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IF GOD EXISTS WHY IS THERE WAR?

There is no doubt that God's ways are mysterious. Not only has he left much of his thinking unrevealed (Deuteronomy 29:29), our human minds struggle to grasp what he has made known. Nevertheless, we discern several principles from God's Word to explain war. Consider—

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Were we created as inanimate machines, the entire weight of responsibility for war would rest with our Maker. Yet, God created man with a power of choice. We label this free agency, and consider it to be part of the magnificence of our creation. Were God to take it away so as to prevent us going to war against one another, then the ensuing peace would be at the expense of our glory as a creation of God.

THE COST OF SIN

Tragically, our first parents, Adam and Eve, used their power of choice to sin. While they remained free agents, capable of making personal decisions, their fall revealed that what they decided was disastrous, resulting in a loss of fellowship with God and enslavement to sin. While they were physically able not to kill, they became capable of doing so, for their new inclination was toward evil.

Unsurprisingly, then, after the Fall Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, killed Abel his younger brother (Genesis 4:1-16). As the generations passed, humanity deteriorated still further. Lamech typifies this, boasting to his wives of the disproportionate killing of a young man for wounding him (Genesis 4:23). Thus, by Genesis 14 we read of the first war, between the kings of Ellasar, Elam, and Goiim and those of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim.

THE NECESSITY OF WAR

To prevent a proverbial "Hell on earth" it is sometimes necessary to go to war against an aggressor. In his *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon*, Augustine of Hippo became the first of whom we know to expound the theory of the just war: the cause must be just, undertaken by legitimate authority, and with a view to peace and safety. Under such criteria, argued Augustine, war is obedience to God, for he uses it to rebuke and to humble man.

As much, then, as we find disgrace in war, we also find great bravery and heroism. Naturally, we think of those soldiers who give their lives on the front lines, but there are also the medics scarred by responding to the carnage. And then there are those men and women unable to fight

who man the factories back home, and the resistance fighters who, in circumstances of invasion, risk life and limb.

Jesus was thinking of his impending death on the cross when he declared that "*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Nevertheless, he prefaced his words with his command that his disciples love one another. Some are found in militaries laying down their lives in battle, yet wars supply many instances of non-Christians, impacted by God's common grace or providence, doing so, too.

THE CALL OF GRACE

Even in just wars soldiers die in their masses and brutally, and civilians and cultures are damaged beyond recognition. Families are broken up and agriculture and civilian industries are crippled. War, in short, is devastating.

Such features of war are temporal judgments from God. Indeed, in the later first century A.D., John, the apostle of love, saw a vision of these last days. In it a bright red horse and its rider were sent forth from heaven "to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another" (Rev. 6:3-4).

To a world that has lost its fear of God and is in full and unashamed rebellion against God, this blows the mind and greatly offends. Yet, to the one whose eyes have been opened to both God's glory and the appalling chaos of man, such temporal judgments, severe though they be, are God's call to man to seek his grace. There's an urgency in doing so, for God's temporal judgments warn the persistently rebellious of eternal judgments to come.

THE VINDICATION OF GOD'S WRATH

When on the Judgment Day (which we each know is coming, Romans 1:32), we realize God's justice and holiness, we'll be amazed not that he allowed war, but that he was so long-suffering with us amid our readiness to wage it, by how graciously he has prevented more of it, and by his wisdom in using what he permits.

All criticism of God will be gone. We'll observe him hold to account the impenitent politician for stoking the fires of war regardless of its human cost; industrial magnates who, for wealth creation, fed the military complex instead of promoting peace; the rotten apples in the military who used war to rape, to torture, and to pillage; and those who used war to prey on the poor.

Given all this, we revise the question. If man is so good, why is there war? But that's not the question we like to ask.



"Oh Lord, in a world so rich and lovely, why can your children not find anything better to do than to dig iron from the ground and work them into vast grotesque engines to blow each other up. Is it because Abel's next door neighbor was Cain? Is it because if my enemies make deadly engines that I must do it better, or die? Maybe the vicious circle will end this time, maybe not. Maybe it will take Christ's Second Coming to end it." (Herman Wouk, *The Winds of War* (1971), a closing prayer by Victor Henry, played by Robert Mitchum).

WHERE IS GOD IN WARTIME?

Since there are solid reasons why God permits war in our fallen world, are we then to conclude that he is aloof from the conflicts which rage? Certainly, he remains high above us (transcendent), but is nevertheless at hand. It is because of this that we hear amid the turmoil of war of sightings of God's love and his call to another way, another life. Consider, the selfless ministry of the ten Boom family.

GOD'S LOVE THROUGH HIS PEOPLE

In 1837, Dutchman Willem ten Boom opened a watchmaker's shop in Haarlem, the Netherlands. Yet, ten Boom was a Christian, and aside from making watches he was concerned to pray for Jews, for they were already being discriminated against in Europe. Willem's son Casper, who inherited the business, continued the tradition.



Along the way, Casper and his wife Cornelia had four children. The youngest, Cornelia (or "Corrie") was born in 1892. Corrie went on

to become the first woman in Holland licensed as a watchmaker. All the while, the family practiced their Christian faith, teaching Bible studies and ministering to orphans and refugees.

When, then, the Germans invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, the home became a place of refuge. Cleverly, the Dutch resistance carried into the shop Grandfather clocks in which were hidden bricks for building upstairs a hideout in Corrie's bedroom—enough to conceal six or seven Jews or members of the resistance. Downstairs a buzzer was fitted to warn when the Nazis were patrolling the neighborhood.

The covert operation worked well for four years until the ten Boom's were betrayed by two fellow Dutchman. Thirty were arrested, including the ten Boom family, and yet six hideaways were rescued two days latter by the resistance.

GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Caspar ten Boom, 84 years old by this time, was taken to Scheveningen Prison only to die ten days later. Corrie's brother, a minister, was released by a sympathetic judge, as was her sister Nollie. However, Corrie and her sister Betsie were shunted around different concentration camps over the next ten months until they were settled in Ravensbrück, near Berlin. Known as "the concentration camp of no return" it was the largest camp for women in German-controlled territories.

Although subjected to forced labor on farms and in

munitions factories with meagre food and harsh discipline, and thousands around them executed, their faith in Christ held firm. Together, they held secret prayer services using a Dutch Bible smuggled in, whispering their hymns of praise. Sadly, on December 16, 1944, Betsie died of malnutrition following insufficient medical care. Corrie recorded her last words: "[we] must tell them what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He [God] is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been here." Corrie took Betsie's words to heart. Two weeks later, she was miraculously released due to a clerical error, while women her age were executed.

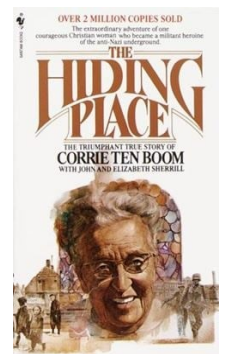
Following convalescence in a home in Groningen and a reunion with her brother Willem, Corrie rented a house in Bloemendaal in May 1945 for ministry to survivors of the concentration camps, to wartime resistance fighters, and to the disabled.

With the home established as a nonprofit ministry, Corrie set off to America (1946) and around Europe (1947) to teach the Bible and to share her wartime experiences. Becoming an affiliate of Youth for Christ (YFC), she met Billy Graham at the YFC Congress in 1948. Through him her history of faith under duress and her ministry became well known. Thus, between the 1950s and 1970s Corrie traveled to 64 countries to testify of forgiveness in Christ.

In 1971 Corrie's best-selling book *The Hiding Place* was published. Four years later it was turned into a film by the Billy Graham Association. The royalties went to fund multiracial missionaries.

Along the way, Corrie picked up a number of awards, being made a knight by Queen Julianna of the Netherlands (1962), receiving an invitation in 1968 to plant a tree in Jerusalem in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations. She also received an honorary Doctorate from Gordon College in America (1976).

The next year, with failing health, Corrie settled in Placentia, California, eventually dying on her 91st birthday, on April 15, 1983. God had shown himself to be real in and through the life of this courageous believer in Christ. In the midst of war and against a backdrop of great sorrow, she had displayed the love of her Savior. And when World War II ended she spent her life proclaiming to millions forgiveness through trust in Christ for atonement for sin. To this day, the testimony of Corrie and her faithful family is remembered in their home in Haarlem, which remains a museum for remembering the Holocaust. *(This article has drawn largely from the details found at www.learnreligions.com.)*



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MAKING GOD YOUR HIDING PLACE

The great intent of the ten Booms in finding a hiding place for Jews and resistance fighters is explained by the way that God had become a refuge for them. He has become that for us, too. Thus, we close in these uncertain times by commending God to you for *your* hiding place,



It doesn't come naturally to us to run to God. Some scoff at the idea, others bury their heads in the sand, reflecting the World War II slogan, "Keep Calm and Carry On." But the slogan was shelved, unused, and shredded, and we ought to shred it, too. Ignoring the realism of our world and of ourselves never ends well.

The wonderful news is that God warmly welcomes us back. This is what encourages the troubled to turn to God. Three thousand years ago, young David, a man already exposed to war and running from King Saul, cried out: *"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by"* (Psalm 57:1). God heard him, and can hear us, too.

Our need of returning to God is not just individual but communal. With the entire British Army cornered on the beach at Dunkirk, King George VI called for a National Day of Prayer (May 26, 1940). He envisioned his people imploring God for his help in a spirit of repentance. It was no coincidence that Hitler, with victory in his grasp, chose instead to invade Russia, emulating Napoleon's folly a century earlier. By June 4, 338,000 Allied troops were evacuated in what is still called the "Miracle of Dunkirk."

Whether the need be personal or societal, we must look to Jesus when approaching God. God gave him to our race to grant us access to him and promises that through him he'll send us help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). Do turn to God, then. Christ has opened the way to him!

WHEN WILL GOD END WAR ?

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