

GUEST EDITORIAL

WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP WAR?

by Paul S. Rees

The ancient Psalmist, evidently amid the clash and carnage of destructive forces, asked "Why?" Many people, contemplating the actual horrors and the terrors of this hour are likewise asking "Why?" It is when situations like this develop in life and in the world that men cry out their queries: If there is a loving and powerful God, why does he not do something about it? Why does he not intervene? Why does he seem so aloof instead of stepping in, and swiftly, dramatically, setting the oppressor aside in one way or another?

Now this sermon, I can assure you, is not to be a hymn of hate against any one. Please God, I want to keep out of my heart all hatred for any man or woman, however far gone in the ways of folly and sin such an individual may be. To be sure there are some things I hate—"Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good," is the word of the New Testament to us.

This question that I have chosen to frame in terms that are up to the minute as to the world situation, is after all a problem of deep-running meaning and wide application to life. Why doesn't God stop war? Before passing to attempt any answer, let me sound this challenge: Where in the Bible has God promised that wars would be, or could be, stopped as long as world affairs are in the hands of men who do not recognize and follow the lordship and leadership of Jesus Christ? You cannot find such promise. Upon the contrary, you will find numerous warnings to the effect that these things will continue until a new order of things is set up by a still future revelation of God in Christ.

Now that we have raised the question, Why doesn't God stop war? let us further expand the circle of our inquiry. Why doesn't God stop sin, and the suffering that sin brings in its wake? After all, there is no particular reason why we should single out war, as distinguished from other human iniquities, and say, God ought to stop that. War is at once a symbol and a symptom of man's tragic sinfulness. Listen to the New Testament: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4:1,2) In other words, you will not take God's way of conducting your affairs and settling your differences.

Why doesn't God stop war?

Why doesn't God stop sin and suffering?

God does not stop war and sin in general, **because he respects man's freedom.**

The Bible and life agree in treating man as a being, within limits, a creature of will and of free initiative. God could have made

man differently. God could have made him a machine—what the philosophers call an automation. In that case man could have naturally and inevitably obeyed powers that he did not understand and could not resist. There would then have been no vice but, by the same token, there would have been no virtue. There would have been no suffering, as we know it; but for the same reason, there would have been no sympathy. There would have been no hatred; on the other hand, there would have been no love. There would have been no sorrow; on the other hand, there would have been neither comfort nor joy. There would have been no ungodliness; at the same time, there would have been no worship, no prayer, no communion with the Eternal. There would have been no worship, no prayer; same time, there would have been neither moral values nor moral character.

WHAT GOD SEEKS

It is evident from the Holy Scriptures and from the constitution of man that God, in creating the human family, desired beings with whom he could have communion on the moral and spiritual level. Both creation and redemption are the enterprise of a moral God by which he seeks the development and realization of moral character in his creatures. To secure this end it is necessary—absolutely necessary—that the power of choice shall be vested in the creature.

God does not stop war and sin in general, **because, in the present stage of his dealings with men, his activity is not that of public judgment but of redemptive love and grace.** Let me recall for you an incident in the life of our Lord recorded by St. Luke and given in these words: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things . . . Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5).

Our third suggestion follows closely. It is that God does not stop war and sin in general, **because he desires man's love and not simply his fear.** I am not forgetting what the Bible says about the "fear of the Lord" being "the beginning of wisdom." The fear of which I am speaking is something greatly inferior to that. It is the terror that merely submits, grudgingly, even resentfully. Dictators may be satisfied with such an attitude in their subjects, but the Eternal God who has revealed himself in Jesus cannot be.

A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

This leads me to say a very personal thing. You ask, "Why didn't God stop Hitler? Why didn't he suddenly smite him and put him out of the way?" I now ask

you this question: Are you willing for God to deal with you and your sins on the same basis? When through the medium of your eyes you commit the sin of lustful thinking, would you have God strike you with blindness on the spot? And what about your trifling with truth? When you tell a lie, would you have God immediately paralyze your tongue? So one might go on. We may well be grateful that we are for the present the subjects of the Almighty's mercy and not of his wrath.

Let no one miss the point that is being urged. It is not that God winks tolerantly at our evil ways. Our sins, if they be not repented of and divinely pardoned, are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." Sin carries in itself the seeds of doom. But the redeeming God would have it otherwise. Not to condemn but to save is the mission of Christ. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And the cost to God is humanly beyond calculation. The symbol of that cost is the Cross of Calvary. It is the divine heart-break over man's sinful and stupid ways. It is the Lover's wooing. It is the Father's yearning. The sheer wonder of it is that God's patience is not exhausted. The sheer tragedy of it is that man's indifference is so great and persistent.

"Why doesn't God stop War?" may easily carry a false suggestion. It may be taken to imply that God is entirely inactive in a world crisis such as we face. Be assured of this: **God is neither idle nor unconcerned; he is at work in his world.** One of the laws of life which he is actively sustaining is that expressed so vividly by St. Paul: "Be not deceived; God is mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal.6:7) See if this is not applicable to the present situation. You were horrified, and rightly so, at the savage aggressions of Nazi Germany. But I ask you: How much are France and England, and even our nation, entitled to peace? How much do we deserve exemption from the harvest of our own ungodliness and corruption and materialism and indifference to spiritual values?

It was a distinguished French atheist that dominated the Peace Conference of Versailles in 1919. It was a notorious, atheistic college professor of our own land who applauded the diplomats gathered at Versailles because they did not open the Peace Conference with prayer. The shortsightedness and vindictiveness of much that was built into the Treaty of Versailles have been recognized for years by informed minds. Are the records of Britain, France, Belgium and the United States free from the stains of aggressions, oppressions and broken promises? Have these nations put God first—or gold? Have they, in their recent history, tended more and more to en-throne the things of the Spirit—or those of the flesh? To ask such questions is enough. We all know the answers. Having sown to the wind, we are reaping the whirlwind!

WEDDING

Edward Lawrence Knight and Mary Blanche Morse were united in marriage in the Baptist Church White Head, Grand Manan on June 5th. The ceremony was performed by Rev. S. W. Steeves assisted by pastor Lic. Howard Richardson.

Laagland-Schatanus. On May 15th at the Reformed Baptist Church, Marysville, N. B. Gerard Laagland and Attie Schatanus were united in marriage by Rev. G. R. Symonds.

WANTED FOR BEULAH HOTEL

1. Cereal bowls
2. Dessert dishes
3. Dish towels and dish cloths
4. Center Pieces for tables in dining hall. (One from each preacher's wife would do the trick)

Rev. H. B. Ricker

CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Peter Alan Emmett, a brother of Dr. Storer Emmett was recently graduated from McGill University School of Medicine with the degrees of M. D., C. M. Congratulations from the Highway Family.

NOTICES

A special meeting of the Alumni Association of Bethany Bible College will be held on Saturday, July 10th at Beulah Camp Ground. This is an important meeting, and all members are urged to attend.

Mrs. Kay Morehouse

Secretary-Treasurer

Pro Tem