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PROVIDENCE

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REINHOLD NIEBUHR & THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX

By MARC LiVECCHÉ

THE GREAT WAR & THE DAWN OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

By JOSEPH LOCONTE

WILL CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST? A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

By KENT R. HILL

ALSO: ROBERT NICHOLSON LOOKS EAST TOWARD THE SYRIAN CRISIS • MARK TOOLEY CONSIDERS CHRISTIANS & EMPIRE • LUBO ONDRASEK PAYS TRIBUTE TO JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN • MICHAEL NOVAK IS COMMEMORATED • WAYNE SCHROEDER CALLS CHRISTIANS TO PEACE WORK • THORIN OAKENSHIELD MAKES A DEATHBED CONFESSION • DOUGLAS BURTON REPORTS ON MOSUL • AMITAI ETZIONI PRESCRIBES MORAL TRIAGE • HERMAN MELVILLE REMEMBERS THE BATTLE OF SHILOH • & ALAN DOWD REFLECTS ON AMERICA'S LONG DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE



Portrait of Reinhold Niebuhr by Hannah Strauss, original commission, 2017. A pensive Reinhold Niebuhr considers the scene before him, surrounded by iconic images from the Second World War. While referencing historical events, horrific locations, and the machinery of warfare, these images also suggest the focal points of Niebuhr's internal conflicts as he wrestled with his own theological and ethical conceptual dilemmas. Immediately behind Niebuhr is an amphibious assault, with warfighters disembarking a landing craft and wading toward a shoreline already engaged with the fire, smoke, and din of battle. Above him, bombers swarm in deadly formation. Below are rendered scenes depicting the hated guard towers and dreaded gate of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Taken together, these scenes begin to describe the reach, the moral and political complexity, and the devastation of human conflict.

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Man Protected by the Shield of Faith, by Maarten van Heemskerck, 1559. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: metmuseum.org. Satan sits atop the globe on a rug, embellished with the seven deadly sins, hurling burning arrows at a praying man. The man is protected by a shield held by the personification of Faith, who also bears a Bible and cross. The favor must be continually returned: Faith herself needs a champion.

A SHIELD FOR FAITH

ALAN W. DOWD

With just 1.3 million active-duty troops and about 800,000 reserve forces defending this nation of 320 million, fewer of us than at any time since World War II know someone who serves as a soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine. Sure, most of us know *about* America's military. It fights terrorism, rescues people after disasters, and does other stuff the media reports and Hollywood portrays. But knowing *about* something is different than knowing something. As such, most Americans are so disconnected from their military that it's an abstraction.

For anyone who cares about freedom—especially freedom of conscience, the freedom to worship or not worship—the U.S. military should be anything but an abstraction. In a world where might makes right, it is the U.S. military—not international treaties, presidential speeches, UN resolutions, protest marches, Wall Street, or Wal-Mart—that protects us from enemies who would either stamp out all faiths or force submission to one faith. We dare not think about it, but the line separating us from such a dark age is terrifyingly thin. Those 2.1 million citizen-soldiers not only stand on that line; they are that line.

EVERYWHERE

Eleven months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, in a speech detailing “unprecedented” threats to “American security,” President Franklin Roosevelt shared his vision of “a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.” FDR's Four Freedoms included freedom of speech, freedom from fear,

freedom from want, and “freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.”

FDR spoke during the high noon of godless tyrannies.

Nazi Germany exterminated Jews, waged war on the Church, and turned its leader into a messiah. As historian Gerhard Weinberg observes, Christianity and Judaism “were removed simultaneously” by the Nazis.¹

In 1938, the Nazis destroyed 300 synagogues and arrested 25,000 Jews. A year later, Hitler began to deport Germany's Jewish population to Eastern Europe, where his war on religion would crescendo. By the end of the war, Hitler had murdered 6 million Jews.

“The destruction of Christianity was explicitly recognized as a purpose of the National Socialist movement,” Nazi leader Baldur von Schirach explained. The Nazi regime desired “a complete extirpation of Christianity,” as

the U.S. government concluded after combing through Nazi records, but “considerations of expediency made it impossible” to do so in one fell swoop. Instead, Hitler employed a policy of gradualism—lying to church leaders about the Nazi program and then lying about church leaders to the German people; abrogating laws protecting religious independence; seizing control of church institutions; declaring certain denominations illegal; fomenting violence against church leaders; sending anti-Nazi church leaders to concentration camps; murdering church leaders.²

Imperial Japan, too, elevated its emperor into a god, making it easier for his high command to justify anything and everything.

By the late 1930s, as Princeton University's Sheldon Garon details, the regime was regulating religious activity; ordering religious groups to correct “discrepancies between their teachings and the imperial myth”; and subordinating all faiths to the

cult of the emperor.³ As Paul Johnson adds in *Modern Times*, Japan's masters turned Shinto into a state religion that encompassed emperor worship in the military and in schools. Shinto was thus transformed into "an endorsement of a modern, totalitarian state," and "religion, which should have served to resist the secular horrors of the age, was used to sanctify them."⁴

Put it all together, and it's no surprise that FDR called on the American people to come to the defense of something they took for granted: religious freedom.

ENEMIES

"Every major war the United States has fought over the past 70 years has been against an enemy that also severely violated religious freedom," University of Texas professor William Inboden observes.⁵ Indeed, the one common denominator between the fascists of the Axis Powers and the communists of the Soviet bloc, between North Korea and North Vietnam, between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran, between Moammar Qaddafi's Libya and Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, between Hezbollah and the Taliban, Islamic State (ISIS), and al Qaeda, is that all of them were (or are) violently opposed to religious freedom.

While yesterday's enemies generally forced their subjects to stop believing in God—or accept some human substitute for God—today's envision a world where everyone either submits to their version of God or dies. ISIS is the most extreme and brutal embodiment of this:

- ISIS has orchestrated mass-beheadings of

Egyptian Christians; razed, desecrated, and plundered ancient Christian churches; shelled Christian homes; targeted Assyrian Christians for abduction; and crucified Christian children as young as 12.

- ISIS has given Christians a choice to convert to Islam, make payments to remain Christian, or face execution. In a haunting echo of how the Nazis branded Jews, the ISIS death cult marks Christian-owned properties with the Arabic equivalent of the letter "N" (ن) for "Nazarene."
- The European Union reports that Christians and Yazidis (a Kurdish religious tradition that blends aspects of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam) "have been killed, slaughtered, beaten, subjected to extortion, abducted and tortured" by the Islamic State's coordinated campaign of brutality. As proof of its savage piety, ISIS has murdered thousands of Yazidis; forced 2,000 Yazidi women into sex slavery; conducted a systematic campaign of rape against Christian and Yazidi women; imprisoned Christian and Yazidi children as young as eight; sold children into slavery; and perhaps most shocking of all, used "mentally challenged" children as suicide bombers.⁶

These are just some of the reasons the U.S. military is at war with the Islamic State. However, the U.S. military is not at war with Islam. After all, in the past quarter-century, U.S. troops have rescued Muslims in Kosovo and Kurdistan, Somalia and



Sumatra, Kuwait and Kabul. Yet they are at war with those who would force people to submit to Islam, with mass-murderers masquerading as holy men, with those who, in Osama bin Laden's words, "do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians."

Calling the Islamic State's footsoldiers "unique in their brutality," President Barack Obama dispatched U.S. troops and warplanes to Iraq in 2014 to protect thousands of Yazidis from extermination.⁷ Thus began America's third war in Iraq in less than a quarter-century.

Hunted down and trapped on Mt. Sinjar, the Yazidis faced what Obama called "a terrible choice: starve on the mountain or be slaughtered on the ground. That's when America came to help."⁸ U.S. Marines and Special Operations forces landed on Mt. Sinjar to coordinate air drops and airstrikes. The Marines were planning and prepared "to pick everyone off the mountain," General James



Amos later confirmed, in what would have been perhaps the largest humanitarian evacuation in history. But that turned out to be unnecessary: U.S. C-17 and C-130 cargo planes dropped pallets of food for the Yazidi people, while F-16s and F-18s dropped ordnance that ended the ISIS assault. In the span of seven days, U.S. air power delivered 114,000 meals and 35,000 gallons of fresh water to the Yazidis. America's military saved an estimated 40,000 Yazidis, who were attacked simply because of their religious beliefs.⁹

The operation to protect the Yazidis is only the latest example of the U.S. military's role in defending religious freedom. To see others, we can look back to World War II.

Postwar Germany

Following victory, the U.S. military and its closest allies were deeply involved in rebuilding German society by addressing the causes—religious, cultural, political, institutional,

economic, educational—of Nazism.

To prevent the rise of another manmade messiah, General Lucius Clay (military governor of the U.S. sector of Germany) and other Allied military leaders worked with handpicked Germans to ensure that the postwar constitution guaranteed and protected religious freedom: "Freedom of the person shall be inviolable... Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, shall be inviolable. The undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed," the Basic Law declared.¹⁰

Postwar Japan

Similarly, Japan's post-imperial constitution, which guaranteed equal rights, education reform, free speech, and religious liberty, bore the unmistakable fingerprints of an American general: Douglas MacArthur. "Within his first weeks in Japan," Ray Salvatore Jennings of the United States Institute of Peace writes, "MacArthur ordered and then delivered on an impressive array of reforms," including a ban on the "government-sanctioned religious cult of Shinto." James Dobbins notes that the U.S. military government "focused on removal of all traces of emperor worship (State Shinto) and militarism from the classrooms and curriculum." In pursuit of that goal, the U.S. Army sent teams to school districts to ensure that emperor worship was no longer a state-enforced practice.¹¹

MacArthur then formed what Jennings calls "a constitutional convention" of U.S. military officers and civilians that delivered a new constitution to the Japanese people. "Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated," MacArthur's constitution declared. "Freedom of religion is

guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice."¹²

Johnson observes that MacArthur's constitution triggered "a revolution from above" and broke the "mesmeric hold the state had hitherto exercised over the Japanese people."¹³

The Cold War

The Cold War was often cast as a struggle between godless communists and defenders of religious freedom—and understandably so. On one side of the Iron Curtain, there was religious liberty, freedom of conscience, individual expression; on the other, total control of thought and expression and belief, the obliteration of the individual.

Consider the Soviet Union's approach to, and treatment of, religion. An enemy-of-my-enemy ally during World War II, the Soviet Union rejected religion altogether, purged those who refused to genuflect to the state, and elevated government above all else. Lenin, founding father of the Soviet Union, viewed religion as "a powerful and ubiquitous enemy," Johnson writes.¹⁴ By the end of 1918, the government had nationalized all church property. By 1926, the Soviet state had murdered 1,200 bishops and priests; shuttered most seminaries; closed down all but a handful of parishes; and banned the publication of religious material.¹⁵ Virtually the entire clergy corps of the Russian Orthodox Church was liquidated or sent to labor camps in the 1920s and 1930s. "By 1939 only about 500 of over 50,000 churches remained open," according to the Library of Congress (LOC).

Although Stalin, in the grimmest days of World War II, permitted the practice of religion in order to rally the Russian people, the post-war era quickly proved this openness to faith was a merely a short-lived, expedient response to an existential threat. As evidence, consider that in 1953, Stalin ordered more than a million Soviet Jews deported to Siberia. They were spared only by his death.¹⁶ After Stalin, the Khrushchev regime carried out “a violent six-year campaign against all forms of religious practice,” the LOC adds.

Moreover, Moscow’s war on religion moved beyond Russian borders and into occupied Eastern Europe. In Soviet-dominated Poland, priests were under constant surveillance; many were beaten. Religious holidays were abolished. Children from church-going families were denied acceptance into colleges.¹⁷ In Hungary, as Baylor University’s Philip Jenkins writes, “Christian clergy and laity were murdered in the thousands.” All across communist Europe, he writes, “Christians suffered horrific persecutions”—forced labor, torture, concentration camps—under Soviet-backed communist regimes.¹⁸

Washington had wanted to bring America’s troops home after the defeat of Hitler, but they stayed behind as America extended its security umbrella across the Atlantic, thus preventing Moscow from dominating the whole of Europe. What Churchill said in the first decade of the Cold War would be true until the end. “But for American nuclear superiority,” he sighed, “Europe would already have been reduced to satellite status and the Iron Curtain would have reached the Atlantic and the Channel.”

Indeed, how America handled the awesome power of the atom spoke volumes about America. Thanks to the U.S. nuclear monopoly in the first several years of the Cold War, the only thing preventing America from erasing the USSR was America’s conscience. That was enough. As President Ronald Reagan observed decades later, “Had that nuclear monopoly been in the hands of the communist world, the map of Europe—indeed, the world—would look very different today.”

Only after Lenin’s regime had fallen could Russian leader Boris Yeltsin declare, “The world can sigh in relief. The idol of communism, which spread everywhere social strife, animosity and unparalleled brutality, which instilled fear in humanity, has collapsed.”

The Former Yugoslavia

There were many dimensions to the civil war that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s—and there were villains and victims on all sides—but a primary cause was the ethno-religious campaign originating from Slobodan Milosevic and his henchmen targeting Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims.

When Yugoslavia began to descend into the abyss in 1991, a European diplomat declared it “the hour of Europe.” Washington took the hint. It would be a fateful decision. As historian William Pfaff notes, “In the Bosnian crisis, the United States didn’t act, so everyone failed to act.”¹⁹

Relying on diplomacy, words, and sanctions, the Europeans were unable to protect the innocents. In that long hour when Europe tested its soft power against Milosevic’s hard power, some 200,000 people were

erased and another 2 million were displaced—most of them Bosnian Muslims. The low point came when Dutch peacekeepers in the laughably misnamed UN Protection Force stood aside, Pilate-like, as Serb militias surrounded the so-called safe haven of Srebrenica and liquidated 7,000 Muslim men.

Only after Washington asserted itself in late 1995, by bringing American military might to bear, did Milosevic’s war come to an end. A U.S.-led peacekeeping force then entered Bosnia to enforce a partition, protect and separate different ethnic-religious groups, and monitor postwar borders.

A similar formula worked in Kosovo, an Albanian-Muslim enclave formerly in southern Serbia. Milosevic’s terror squads rampaged through Kosovo in late 1998 and early 1999, purging 850,000 Kosovar Muslims and killing thousands more. Again, it wasn’t diplomatic communiqués or UN sanctions that changed Belgrade’s behavior and protected the Kosovars, but rather a U.S.-led air armada. After Milosevic came to the peace table, U.S. and other NATO peacekeepers flowed into Kosovo.

In both Bosnia and Kosovo, American troops protected churches and mosques alike. They escorted Serbian Christian kids to school in the morning and Albanian Muslim kids to the same school in the afternoon.²⁰

The Taliban’s Afghanistan

After it came to power in 1996, the Taliban ordered Hindus to wear special identity labels, destroyed ancient statues of Buddha, summarily executed those belonging to opposing sects of Islam, depopulated areas controlled by ethnic

minority groups, turned soccer stadiums into mass-execution chambers, burned people alive, killed and jailed aid workers, banished girls from schools and women from public places, and dispatched their religious police to hunt down and imprison foreigners who talked about Christianity. Afghans who helped Christian missionaries faced the death penalty.²¹ It's no surprise that the Taliban made common cause with what was then the world's most violent and vicious terrorist organization: al Qaeda.

Thanks to the U.S. military, Afghanistan is no longer under the control of the medieval Taliban. As the late Christopher Hitchens wryly noted upon the fall of the Taliban: "The United States of America has just succeeded in bombing a country back out of the Stone Age. This deserves to be recognized as an achievement."²²

The U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, like the war against the Axis, was not primarily about religious freedom; it was about defending the national interest and defeating the nation's enemies. Even so, 15 years after the ouster of the Taliban regime, Freedom House reports that "Religious freedom has improved...faiths other than Islam are permitted." Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Baha'is have served in government. Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh places of worship are opened. Some 6 million Afghan children are now in school. About 2.5 million Afghan girls are attending school. This is good news.²³

The bad news is that the Afghan state has little writ beyond Kabul. Christians are permitted to worship only "in small congregations in private homes."²⁴ According to Freedom House,

Afghanistan "is still hampered by violence and harassment aimed at religious minorities... the constitution establishes Islam as the official religion." However, in a country where Muslims comprise 99 percent of the population, the recognition of Islam as the official religion is neither surprising nor distressing. What is distressing is the fact that "[t]he Afghan constitution fails to protect the individual right to freedom of religion or belief," according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).²⁵ This is especially dispiriting given the amount of blood and treasure America has sacrificed in Afghanistan's rehabilitation—and especially worrisome given the role religious intolerance played in Afghanistan's descent.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq

Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq for almost 24 years—longer than Hitler controlled Germany, longer than Tojo dominated Japan. During Saddam's reign, neither the Iraqi people nor their neighbors knew a day of peace. His wars scarred Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. His internal terror decimated the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq and the Shiite majority in southern Iraq, transforming the cradle of civilization into a giant torture chamber. And his cult of death deformed the country. It's estimated that Saddam murdered 600,000 civilians, which means tens of thousands of Iraqi children were orphaned by his pogroms and death squads. Saddam became their father and god. "With our souls and our blood," Iraqi children were required to pledge at school, "we sacrifice for Saddam. We will sacrifice ourselves for you, O Saddam."²⁶ Children who refused to join Saddam's youth paramilitary organization were

imprisoned by the hundreds. It was a regiment of U.S. Marines that set them free.²⁷ And as in the Balkans, U.S. troops in Iraq helped protect mosques and pilgrims as they traveled to religious festivals.²⁸

One need not support the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq and mission creep in Afghanistan, or the Obama administration's pullout from Iraq and drawdown in Afghanistan, to recognize that the U.S. military built for the Afghan and Iraqi people a bridge back to civilization—and an opportunity to learn the ways of political and religious freedom.

ESSENTIAL

Of course, most fundamentally, the American military protects the religious freedom of the American people.

This notion would surprise many of the Founders, who worried about standing armies threatening liberty. Their worries were understandable given the history they knew. But the intervening centuries have shown the U.S. military to be unique in its self-restraint, deference to civilian authority, and commitment to democratic institutions. Rather than a threat, America's troops—pledged to defend not a man or a party or a creed or a nationality, but a constitution—have themselves proved essential to maintaining American freedoms.

Sometimes the threat posed by the enemies of religious freedom—and the need for defenders to protect that freedom—is more obvious than others. World War II was one of those times. Indeed, on D-Day, FDR openly asked God to protect America's troops as they "struggle to preserve our Republic, our

religion and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity...With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy.”

This, too, is one of those times. ISIS leaders have declared, “We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses and enslave your women,” and warned Americans, “We will drown all of you in blood.”²⁹ ISIS materials call for “jihad against the Jews, the Christians, the Rafida [Shiite Muslims] and the proponents of democracy.”³⁰ Their goal is to create the conditions for a decisive battle between the faithful and faithless, and ultimately to construct a transnational theocracy. In various places, in various ways, the U.S. military stands athwart that dark vision of tomorrow.

ISIS has proven repeatedly that these are not empty threats. In Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State has executed uncounted numbers of Christians, Yazidis, and “apostate” Muslims; replaced steeple-top crosses with the black flag of jihad; destroyed Shiite mosques and Christian churches; and in a faint echo of Daniel’s, Christ’s, and John’s warnings about the desolation of holy places, turned churches into livestock warehouses.³¹ In France, ISIS footsoldiers have assaulted the secular and the sacred: a Bastille Day celebration, rock concerts and soccer stadiums, a newspaper, a Jewish grocery, and a Catholic church, where they slit the throat of a priest during mass. In southern Turkey, they attacked a Kurdish wedding service. In Saudi Arabia and Yemen, they bombed Shiite mosques; in Ankara, a peace rally; in San Bernardino, a Christmas party; in Orlando, a gay nightclub.

While our civilization celebrates

free will and freedom, our enemy demands sameness and submission, conformity and control. Even as the coalition rolls back the Islamic State’s borders and breaks its caliphate, ISIS, al Qaeda, and their jihadist brethren will remain a threat. The reason: they take literally Muhammad’s injunction “to fight all men until they say, “There is no god but Allah.”” When people like bin Laden and Zawahiri, Zarqawi and Baghdadi fuse religious commands with political and military power, we can only conclude that they are at war with the very notion of free will, which is the foundation of Judeo-Christian belief and indeed every ethical worldview.

God has always put a high value on free will. In Genesis, He gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey Him or not. In Revelation, He explains that He knocks, but the choice is ours to answer. God wants people to be free—free to choose His path or another, free from Pharaoh and Haman and Caesar and Hitler, free from jihadists who say there is no god except theirs, free from tyrants who say there is no god at all.

Moses’ interaction with Pharaoh was, at least initially, about religious freedom. Speaking through Moses, the Lord declared, “Let my people go so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.”

Jesus interacted with pagans and polytheists, Jews and gentiles, Greeks and Samaritans. He had the power to make all of them bow to Him, but He never did. Moreover, Jesus lived among religious zealots and self-appointed holy men willing to kill to prove their piety.³² He could have endorsed them or led them, but He never did.



Instead of making people accept His view, instead of using force and violence to gain converts, He practiced religious tolerance and modeled religious liberty. Consider Luke 9. A Samaritan village refused to let Jesus stay there “because He was heading for Jerusalem.” As one commentary explains, “Samaritans were particularly hostile to Jews who were on their way to religious festivals in Jerusalem” and often “refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims.”³³ Jesus didn’t force them to accept Him; He didn’t give them a choice to convert or die. In fact, when James and John asked “to call fire down from heaven to destroy” those who dared not open their doors to Him, Jesus rebuked



His disciples and simply “went to another village.”

There’s a lesson in this for individuals and for nations: No one should be forced to believe or not believe, and no one has the right to force others to believe or not believe. “Our respect in the world declines in proportion to how vigorously we attempt to force others to adopt our point of view,” as theologian and author Philip Yancey observes.³⁴ For evidence of this, look no further than the enemy in this war: The jihadists are fighting, quite literally, for a world where there is no faith but one. The U.S. military is fighting for precisely the opposite: a world

where people can choose any faith or no faith at all.

EGREGIOUS

The enemies of religious liberty are not quarantined to Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

According to USCIRF, the Iranian government is guilty of “ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture and executions.” Christians in Iran are scourged for drinking communion wine—80 lashes is the common punishment. Iranian authorities “raid church services, harass and threaten church members, and arrest, convict and imprison worshippers and church leaders.”³⁵

Shiite theocrats and Sunni autocrats may have different interpretations of the Koran, but the results are largely the same. In Saudi Arabia, “not a single church or other non-Muslim house of worship exists”; promoting “unbelief” is a crime; textbooks “teach hatred toward members of other religions,” promote violence “against apostates,” and label Jews and Christians “enemies.”³⁶

In China, according to USCIRF, “[i]ndependent Catholics and Protestants face arrests, fines and the shuttering of their places of worship.” Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, folk religionists, and Protestant house-church attenders are subjected to “jail terms, forced renunciations of faith and torture in detention.” Freedom House reports “hundreds of thousands” of religious adherents—many of them guilty of “simply possessing spiritual texts in the privacy of their homes”—are sentenced to forced labor.

Likewise, “[t]housands of religious believers and their families are imprisoned in penal labor camps” in North Korea, according to USCIRF. “Individuals engaged in clandestine religious activity are arrested, tortured, imprisoned and sometimes executed.” A UN panel finds in North Korea a “complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” At least 300,000 North Korean Christians have disappeared since the end of the war.³⁷

Representing some of the Pentagon’s gravest worries, these regimes—along with transnational movements like ISIS and al Qaeda—may be the real “axis of evil.” Indeed, Inboden sees a clear “correlation between religious persecution and national-security threats.”

This is not to suggest that America should go to war against every enemy of religious liberty, but neither should we beat our swords into plowshares, cut deals with Tehran, avert our gaze from the gulags in North Korea and China, draw a line of moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas, or breezily conclude, “the tide of war is receding”³⁸—especially given that the enemy in this war is still viciously fighting and still violently opposed to religious pluralism.

EXERTIONS

The freedom to worship or not worship, to believe or doubt, didn’t emerge by accident, and it doesn’t endure by magic. This freedom of conscience is in need of constant protection. John Keegan argued in his *History of Warfare* that “[a]ll civilizations owe their origins to the warrior.”³⁹ But more than that, all civilizations owe their continued existence to the warrior.

“How many battlefields there are on which that soldier has fallen for our freedom and yours and thus borne witness to the rights of the person,” Pope John Paul declared in 1979, pointing to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw’s Victory Square. He then equated “the soldier’s blood shed on the field of battle” with “the martyr’s sacrifice” and “the seed of prayer.”⁴⁰

The intent here is not to glory in war. Rather, it is to remind those of us who talk and write about freedom, those who dispense and receive Nobel Peace Prizes, those who take the freedom to worship or not worship for granted, that our freedom depends on what John Stuart Mill called “the exertions of better men.”

The U.S. military stands as the last line of defense for our religious freedom. It is a shield *for* faith. That’s why so many of us are alarmed by the bipartisan gamble known as sequestration, which, in a time of war and growing international instability, has shrunk the reach, role, and resources of freedom’s greatest defender: the U.S. military.

Given the threats facing the United States, sequestration should be ended and defense spending restored to a level commensurate with those threats. Some military analysts have suggested a return to the post-World War II average of 5 percent of GDP; some have urged 4 percent of GDP; few have recommended 3 percent of GDP (and falling), which is where defense spending has hovered in recent years.

In addition, leading policymakers should draw attention—relentlessly and repeatedly—to

assaults on religious liberty. The purpose is not to shame the enemies of religious liberty—for the shameless cannot be shamed—but rather to isolate them, challenge their enablers, and offer a platform to their victims. “A little less détente,” as Reagan declared during an earlier struggle for civilization, “and more encouragement to the dissenters might be worth a lot of armored divisions.”

What does that mean in the 21st century?

It means using high-profile settings such as the State of the Union, G-7, and UN Security Council to shine a light on those who have contempt for religious freedom and other human rights—the business-suit autocrats in China and Russia, the monstrous regime in North Korea, the self-styled holy men in Iran.

It means advocating for religious and political freedom. This presents a conundrum because, as historian Walter Russell Mead notes, there is a “tension between America’s role as a revolutionary power and its role as a status quo power.”⁴¹ The way to bridge this tension is to be a reforming power—ready to maintain the pillars of the liberal international order built after World War II, willing to support any effort to move internal political systems in the direction of this liberal order, but unwilling to support movements or groups that would steer a nation away from this liberal order. Even as we “encourage and help the reform process,” as Tony Blair explains, “we have to be clear we will not support systems or governments based on sectarian religious politics... Where the extremists are fighting, they have to be countered hard, with force.”⁴²

Indeed, it means that when stateless groups like ISIS and al Qaeda try to dismember civilization, when regimes like Milosevic’s Serbia, the Taliban’s Afghanistan, and Assad’s Syria cross the line, America should rally what Reagan called an “army of conscience” to defend that space where our interests and values intersect.

EXTREMES

Those who believe in God—and those who don’t—should be thankful for the United States military. For without it, our world and our lives would be very different. Had the Axis emerged victorious in 1945, the world order would have been characterized by godless racialism and fascist totalitarianism. Had the Soviet Union outlasted the West in 1989, the world order would have been characterized by godless collectivism and Leninist totalitarianism. And if the jihadists have their way today, the world order would be characterized by ruthless conformity and theocratic totalitarianism.

God’s crowning creation cannot flourish under those extremes. We are not made for those extremes. P

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SHILOH: A REQUIEM



Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh—
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain

Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undecieve!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
And all is hushed at Shiloh

Herman Melville

The Battle of Shiloh took place 155 years ago, over a pair of days in April, 1862. This contemporary sketch by Henry Lovie, which appeared first in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper," shows the Shiloh log church from which the battle took its name. Wartime photograph, Signal Corps, U. S. Army.



DOMINION /də'mɪnyən (IS NOT)
DOMINATION /dəmən'nāSH(ə)n/

“Let us make mankind in our image; and let them have dominion over all the earth...” Called to share the Divine likeness, human beings were made to exercise rule in the form of dominion: delegated, providential care—responsibility—for the conditions of history, in history. Such care is characterized by other-centered acts of self-donation. This contrasts sharply with domination. Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, human beings have been afflicted by the *libido dominandi*—we have been ruled by the lust to rule. Domination is characterized by self-centered acts of other-donation that feed our hunger for power, advantage, and glory through the forced submission of the powerless to our will.

The political-theological patrimony of the Christian intellectual tradition, including just war casuistry, helps guide human beings back to the just exercise of our governing vocation. In our private and public lives, including through the work of government, human dominion is approximate, limited, and imperfect. Following after God’s work of creating, sustaining, and liberating all of creation, human beings exercise power with the aim of peace, characterized by the presence of justice and order as oriented toward genuine human flourishing.
