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WHAT DOES WAR PREVENT?

If the sword did not support and maintain peace everything in the world would be destroyed by conflict. This is why war is nothing other than a short period of conflict preventing endless conflict. War is a smaller misfortune preventing a bigger misfortune.

The frequently made assertion that “war is a massive plague” is certainly true. What is also true, however, is how much more massive the plague is that is prevented by war.

To be sure, if people were pious and gladly kept the peace, war would be the greatest plague on earth. Yet what can

be done about the fact that the world is evil? That people do not want to keep the peace? That people plunder, steal, kill, rape women and children, and destroy honor and possessions?

Such tremendous strife, common throughout the entire world, which no one can endure, must be counteracted by the little strife called war or the sword. This is why God honors the sword so highly that he calls it his own order. God does not want us to say or think that humans invented or established it.

Because of this, the hand that uses this sword and kills

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is no longer man's hand, but God's hand. In such a case, it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, slays,

and wars. All these are his works and judgments.

In summary, when it comes to war, one must not look at how it kills, burns, destroys and seizes. This is what narrow, simple children's eyes see. When it comes to a surgeon, such eyes look no further than the amputated hand or leg. Such eyes do not see that the point of the surgeon's actions is to save the entire body.

The work of war or the sword must be seen with the eyes of an adult. Such eyes must perceive the reason why it slays and acts so gruesomely.

When this is done, it will turn out that war is a work that is in itself godly. War is as necessary and useful for this world as eating and drinking or any other work.

That is not to say that war is never abused. War is clearly

abused whenever killing and injuring take place out of malice and not out of need. But this is the fault of the person waging the war, not war itself.

Then again, when has there ever been a job or work or anything so good that it has not been abused by malicious and evil people? Such people are like the deranged surgeons who amputate a person's healthy hand out of malice, not because there is a need to do so.

Such people belong to all those who cause strife in general. Such strife must be resisted and peace enforced by legitimate war and sword.

It has always been the case, and still remains true, that whoever starts a war unnecessarily is defeated. Such a person cannot escape God's judgment, that is, God's sword. In the end God finds and destroys him.

To confirm that this is true we need only to turn to the greatest preacher and teacher next to Christ, namely, John the Baptist. In Luke 3:14, soldiers came to John and asked him what they should do. He did not condemn their work. He also did not tell them to stop being soldiers.

Instead, John the Baptist approved of their work saying "Be content with your wages and do not do violence and injustice to anyone." By doing so, John praised the work of war. At the same time, however, he prohibited and forbid its abuse.

The abuse of work and work itself are two different things. So Christ, standing before Pilate, confessed similarly that waging war is not unjust. What did he

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say? “If I were the king of this world, my servants would fight that I might not be handed over to the Jews” (John 18:36). Here also belong all the ancient war accounts in the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, and all the kings of the people of Israel.

Yet if waging war or the work of war is in itself unjust or displeasing to God, then we would need to condemn Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and all the other holy fathers, kings, and princes who served God in this way as well and who on account of this work are praised highly in Scripture. This is well known even to all who have read only a little of the Bible.



1. What would happen if the sword did not protect and maintain the peace?
2. What is the cause of war?
3. Whose hand is it that acts in war?
4. Must the work of war be seen with the eyes of a child or an adult?
5. Is war ever abused?
6. Is the abuse of war the fault of war, or the person waging war?
7. Did John the Baptist rebuke the Roman soldiers for being soldiers?
8. What happens to the person who starts a war?

9. Who would need to be condemned if war is in itself unjust?