

# CWR *magazine*

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION



## 8 DECADES LATER

ED DUNN

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“D-Day” June 6, 1944



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## 8 DECADES LATER

*They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate.*

—President Franklin D. Roosevelt

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

—Matthew 5:44-45

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering, enough to disarm all hostility.*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*So much of the progress that would define the 20th century, on both sides of the Atlantic, came down to the battle for a slice of beach only six miles long and two miles wide.*

—70th Anniversary, D-Day Ceremony

June 6, 1944 marks time with a date that is absolutely central to the freedoms we enjoy today. *Eight decades ago* this month, a combined force of nearly 156,000 troops from America, Britain and Canada landed on a small slice of beach in Normandy, France. The Allied force landed to try to stem the tide of Nazi aggression.

D-Day, as it would come to be known, would see the loss of life for 4,417 Allied soldiers, and the wounded or “missing-in-action” status for over 9,000 more. The freedom that resulted from those brave men taking that beach came at a tremendous and terrible cost. *Eight decades later*, it's hard to fully imagine both the cost and the long-term impact of that Day's events.

The lives of 156,000 men storming that beach on that Day must have come with such diversity. Out of the troop carriers came men of wealth and men of poverty. Men of color, men of differing levels of faith, education and culture. Men with families, and men who fought alone. Men with no God, and men

Cover Image: The wall-sized “D-Day Planning Map” was critical to the massive Normandy landing. It was located at Southwick House, the Allied strategic nerve center, a few miles north of Portsmouth, UK. It shows the perilous route the Allies took through a large Nazi minefield.

who trusted deeply and *never-more-intensely* in their own personal God. And, as we know well from documented accounts of the history of that Day, many of those brave and tremendous men of diversity never made it one step off their troop carriers.

As for the men who trusted deeply and *never-more-intensely* in their own personal God, we can only imagine what internal tension and dilemma that Day must have presented. Being a Christ-follower and going to war was not unique to soldiers in World War II. Countless men (and women) of faith have been approached, enlisted and conscripted to fight battles for causes both noble, and not-so-noble, since the time of Christ. To line up and go to war and to hold the words of Christ Jesus closely, could not have been easy. The sand those soldiers had to move through on D-Day was some of the most difficult (literally and figuratively).

How do we *love our enemies* when our enemies stand for an evil cause? What do we do when we find ourselves in the position of having to fight in-order-to stem the tide of evil? How do we harmonize a noble cause demanding difficult actions with higher ideals? There are no easy answers to such questions.

In the face of no easy answers, we whole-heartedly celebrate and remember those who have fought and lived, and those who have fought and paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. We gratefully live in and cherish the freedoms we enjoy that their *laying down of their lives* provides for us today. As someone who has

never been asked to serve under such unimaginable circumstances, I am left simply and humbly to pay my respects. I cannot know the magnitude of what those men faced.

than-noble beliefs and behaviors, we could see ourselves in the other. The truth is, *we are all made from the same clay* physically. As such, when it comes down to it, we have more

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## WHO IS MY ENEMY?

When Jesus taught that we should *love our enemies*, what was he asking of us? Was he asking us to do the impossible through his frequent use of paradox? Was he setting a new high-water-mark for human relations in both times of war and times of peace? As I reflect upon his teaching, I believe he is asking us to have a complete shift in our perspective.

*How can I love someone else and still see them as my enemy?* The two thoughts seem totally incongruent. I believe Jesus is simply and ultimately saying, have no enemies. In the war-torn world of his time, as in our time today, this teaching was indeed radical.

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life sorrow and suffering, enough to disarm all hostility,* writes Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. If we could see the hurt and pain that another person lives with; hurt and pain that may well drive them to less-

in common in this physical life than not. More in this physical life binds us together as humans than pulls us apart.

Seeing this, and more importantly, understanding this, leads us to a shift in perspective. I believe this is what Jesus was asking of us. His risen life in us empowers Christ-followers to see ourselves in the other, and they, ultimately in us.

With this insight, how could someone else remain our enemy? *How could we hate someone else who is so much like us?* Even in the face of warfare, this shift in perspective could more readily lead us to fight against the less-than-noble ideology, and less so against the other person. If we truly love the other person, and no longer see them as our enemy, we enjoy the peace of Christ.

## THE ONE WHO LIBERATES US

*They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate.* So stated President Franklin D.



Roosevelt in a public address to prepare the American nation for war. The Allied forces fought together to free Europe from the boot of tyranny. They fought to liberate those who deeply desired freedom but could not fight such tyranny on their own. That form of conquest is the most noble of causes. That resulting liberation points us to the highest and most

the tyranny of sin and death. Jesus alone has freed us from the less-than-noble beliefs and behaviors we all have in our lives, and he works lovingly and continually to transform us into his image.

Although we were once the enemies of Christ Jesus, as the Apostle Paul tells us in the book of Romans, that is no longer our place or position (Romans 5:10). We have been saved through faith in him. Our victory in him is secure.

As we whole-heartedly celebrate and reverently remember that victory in Christ, we give thanks for a complete shift in perspective. As he transforms us, we no longer see others as our enemies. We see others through his eyes of compassion, knowing that their sorrows and sufferings are our own. We face what all others face. We are one together in him and with each other.

Eight decades later, we give thanks with grateful hearts for the sacrifice of those who fought on that beach on that Day. The



This striking piece of sacred art was designed so that the light shining on Christ casts shadows that represent the two thieves next to him. (St. Francis Xavier, Missoula, MT. Photo via Scott Klautd.)

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

*—Matthew 5:44-45*

Wars will continue to be a part of human history, as they have been to-date.

Christ-followers will be approached, enlisted and conscripted to fight in those wars. This is

simply a sorrow of our physical lives on earth at this time. Yet, we know this will not always be the case. We trust in and rest in the fact that the war for our lives is over. Christ Jesus has won; Christ Jesus has given us the victory.

act of self-sacrificial love to liberate on the part of the Allied forces marks time as one of the most important Days in history.

The act of self-sacrificial love to liberate on the part of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to free all of humanity from the tyranny of sin and death, marks time as *the most important event in history*.

Christ Jesus has given us the victory, and in so doing, has made us children of our Father in heaven. Thanks be to him! □

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important of victories.

***We have One Liberator.*** Our Lord and Savior has made the ultimate sacrifice and paid the ultimate price in-order-to liberate all who will follow him.

Jesus alone has freed us from