

## Knowing Good And Evil

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Mostly unnoticed within the past two weeks, amid the carnage of violent acts of men in El Paso, Akron and Chicago, along with all of the malevolent political positioning that went with it, was the anniversary of perhaps the most quintessential example of what man has done in taking to himself “knowing good and evil,” taking from the second of the Two Trees. It was the anniversary of a week that a dear friend of mine once explained was a time he faced certain death!

In 1945, following the surrender of Germany in Europe, my friend, Richard Valdivia, then a young man in his early 20s, boarded a troop ship at the port of Marseille. Seventy-four years ago, he began his trip across the Atlantic towards the Panama Canal.

Richard and those with him, who had already endured the horrors of war, as they fought to free Europe from the iron fist of the Nazis, were now headed toward what he and those with him considered almost certain death. They were headed across the Atlantic to the Panama Canal to join the troops in the Pacific Ocean that would be part of the American force that would have to invade Japan.

Richard knew that the cost to end the war in the Pacific on both sides would be incredible. From what had happened at places like Bataan and Iwo Jima, Richard and those with him knew that they faced a people whose military considered surrender nothing less than the cowardly action of someone not worthy to live! To them, as seen at Iwo Jima, suicide was preferable to the humility of defeat! So now Richard and those with him on that ship faced the reality, after years surviving the fighting in Europe, that the overwhelming majority of them would never see home again.

However, by the end of the week, their ship turned away from the canal, headed toward the closest point of debarkation on the East Coast of the United States, and Richard was headed home because on August 6 and 9, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Under the perceived threat of total extermination, the Japanese surrendered on August 15, just a few days ago—74 years ago. Richard’s life, along with hundreds of thousands of other American and Japanese lives, continued on.

The cost was horrible, but nowhere near the cost to both sides if an actual invasion had taken place. Richard and the men with him were on the way to join the largest invasion force ever assembled as the United States, along with its allies including the British Commonwealth, Australia, and Canadian divisions, were preparing to invade Japan.

The plan had two parts, Operation Olympic and Operation Coronet. The first invasion force was scheduled to begin in October of 1945, and this was scheduled for that month in order to give the allies the opportunity to move Richard and all those men from Europe into the Pacific theater. Operation Coronet would take place in March of 1946. However, the two invasions that were to take place in those months couldn't be hidden from the Japanese. The geography of Japan made it obvious where they would have to place their invasion forces.

The Japanese were in the process of moving 2.3 million Japanese army troops into position to defend the Japanese islands, and they were being backed up by a civilian militia of 28 million men and women.

As the Japanese prepared for the invasion, Secretary of War Henry Stimson commissioned a study to examine the situation and make a relatively accurate forecast of casualties. It was estimated that the invading Allied troops would suffer between 1.7 and 4 million casualties, of whom 400,000-800,000 would be dead. The commission also determined the Japanese fatalities would have been around 5-10 million.

It later became public knowledge the casualty predictions even by the Japanese were extremely high. The Vice Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff, Vice Admiral Takijiro Onishi, predicted up to 20 million Japanese deaths.

In 1938, German chemists made a discovery of nuclear fission. After a theoretical explanation, the Germans made the development of an atomic bomb a top priority and immediately set to work on the horrible weapon.

The fear that the Germans would produce the bomb led some of the expatriates who had fled Germany, Albert Einstein being among them, to send a letter to the government of the United States, insisting on the United States research into the developing an atomic bomb.

As the Germans worked on the bomb during the war, the United States and the United Kingdom merged all their efforts in the 1943 Québec Agreement to produce a bomb under the direction of Major General Leslie Groves in the United States, with the caveat that they would all have to agree on the use of the bomb if it ever became operational. Along with this, the United States was aware that the Japanese themselves were working on an atomic weapon.

On July 25, 1945, after months of debate over how to use the weapon, whether in a demonstration or in an actual attack, it was determined that the weapon needed to be used in a surprise attack, and mainly because there was a very good chance the few handmade, unstable weapons the U.S. had could easily malfunction, merely giving the Japanese military more incentive to continue fighting on.

In an entry to his diary while attending the Allied Conference in Potsdam after the Japanese once again rejected the ally ultimatum for surrender (on July 26, 1945), President Truman wrote,

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10. I have told the secretary of war, Mister Simpson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless, and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop that terrible bomb on the old capital Kyoto or the new Tokyo. He and I are in accord the target will be a purely military one.

What happened after this is now a matter of historical record. On a clear Monday morning, August 6, 1945, a lone B29 piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets followed a B29 weather reconnaissance plane, and another followed after them to record the event. Colonel Tibbets's Plane, the *Enola Gay*, dropped the first of only two nuclear devices ever used against fellow human beings.

The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and 70,000 people died: 20,000 Japanese troops and twelve American prisoners (four of whom, it was later found out, were not really there, but were listed because they had died previously as the result of medical experiments).

Only after the second bomb at Nagasaki on August 9 did the Japanese respond and surrender on August 15.

The unanticipated consequences of the development and use of nuclear weapons and power is one of the clearest examples of how limited men are and how foolish we have been in pridefully taking to ourselves "knowing good and evil" and the consequences of dealing with it apart from God!

At this point, I want to read the impression of the time from someone who lived through that time and saw things for what they were because he had God's Holy Spirit. The following is an excerpt from a co-worker letter sent by Herbert Armstrong 74 years ago, following the momentous events of that time. He wrote:

Since I last wrote you, May 28 from San Francisco, we have lived through the most momentous events in world history. At that time, we had entered the period which has been the most vital PIVOT in American and World History. President Roosevelt had died, and the military war had ended in Europe. Mussolini had been ignominiously put to death and buried....

But even greater news has followed. World War II has come to its final end, and as I write, General MacArthur is preparing to go into and occupy Japan at the head of the most impressive display of military might ever beheld by mortal man - on land, on sea and in the air. This is planned in order dramatically to convince the Japanese they have been completely whipped.

But the most important news of all is the announcement, with the actual horrifying demonstration, of the atomic bomb and the age of atomic power. This, say scientists, will at once completely revolutionize both peace-time life and warfare upon the earth.

Within the past 400 years, the world has passed through the age of exploration, and then the machine age. Now we suddenly find ourselves plunged headlong without warning into a new, totally unexplored age of atomic power. Adjectives have been exhausted in an attempt to describe the staggering magnitude of this thing. It's a NEW AGE— but one destined to be of extremely SHORT DURATION! It's an age fraught with horrifying imagination-defying possibilities. Yet it's an age which at once opens to us marvelous new opportunities and the most stunning challenge and responsibility in the work of Almighty God!

Just a few months before this, as war in Europe drew to a close and Germany would be forced to surrender, 46 nations from around the world met in San Francisco to sign the charter of the United Nations in May of 1945.

Mr. Armstrong had attended the conference with full access under the press credentials of *The Plain Truth* magazine and he was a firsthand witness to men trying to determine for themselves knowing

good and evil. This is part of what he had to say when he spoke to an audience of listeners of *The World Tomorrow* in an auditorium of the “Native Sons Building” in San Francisco the evening of May 9:

This San Francisco conference is the greatest, most important conference of heads of nations held in the world's history. Here the top statesmen of the world are gathered. And why? To build a high tower! A super world organization! Men's nearest approach toward world government and armed organization with the power of armed force to guarantee world peace. But since world leaders do not know the way to peace, it cannot succeed!

The war is over in Europe—or is it? We need to wake up and realize that right now is the most dangerous moment United States national history, instead of assuming we have now won the peace!

Men plan here to preserve the peace of the world. What most do not know is that the Germans have their plans for winning the battle of the peace! Yes, I said the battle of the peace! That's a kind of battle we Americans don't know; we know only one kind of war. We have never lost a war, that is, a military war, but we have never won a conference, for leaders of other nations outfox us in the battle for the peace!

Mr. Armstrong's continues a bit further down in the speech:

The Bible foretells that a third round of war spells doom for us as God's punishment because we as a nation have forsaken Him and His ways! The third round is termed in prophecy an invasion by Babylon—a resurrected Roman Empire, a European Union.

Mr. Armstrong continues:

The Nazi underground will introduce a new kind of internal warfare and sabotage: divide and conquer! It will stir race hatred, class prejudice, strife among ourselves, religious bigotry while professing to champion religious tolerance—especially toward the religion of the coming United States of Europe [sound familiar?]. Even at this conference, classes and races are demanding their rights....

Mr. Armstrong continued:

These world leaders here in San Francisco are trying to build a high tower of world organization to produce and preserve peace. Can it succeed? Listen to God's word: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). Again, Christ said Matthew 15:13, "every plant which my heavenly father has not planted shall be uprooted."

The Lord God is not building this house. These men have not sought His guidance. Their deliberations were not opened by prayer, but by a moment of silence! The heavenly Father in heaven is not planting it! It shall therefore be rooted out!

Once before, men started to build a high tower to reach to the heaven of world domination. And God Almighty intervened and broke up their building (Genesis 10:8-

11; 11:1-9). In the end, God Almighty will have to intervene with force to break up all grown out of this effort of nations to assemble themselves together—without God!

Mankind, whether in violent rages of murder and politics, outright wars with untenable decisions to use power beyond their control or in building a high tower of nations to reach the heavens, are part of this world. On this anniversary of another major episode of men's attempt to know good and evil apart from God, it is good to reflect on Herbert Armstrong's words from 74 years ago, where he said, "Yet, it's an age which at once opens to us marvelous new opportunities and the most stunning challenge and responsibility in the work of almighty God!"

We within God's church, who are called by His Name, must learn to humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from our wicked ways, so He can forgive our sins and heal us (II Chronicles 7:14) and prepare us for the return of the only One who knows the way to peace.