

Why Is There Conflict in the World?

Crucial Questions

R. C. SPROUL

Why Is There Conflict in the World?

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Chapter One

The Shot Heard Around the Universe

In 1328, King Charles IV of France died without a male heir. Disagreements about who should sit on the throne eventually led to a series of conflicts that spanned 1337 to 1453. These conflicts—now known as the Hundred Years' War—encompassed various clashes between England and France, the heroics of Joan of Arc, a civil war in France, and an interruption due to the bubonic plague. The Hundred Years' War also saw innovations that included the professionalization of soldiers and new

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military tactics, and it played a role in the rise of English and French nationalism.

It's hard to imagine a war that lasts a hundred years. World War II was probably the most monumental war of the last century, yet it lasted less than six years, from September 1, 1939, to August 8, 1945. The United States' involvement was even shorter, beginning after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Yet that war seemed to last a lifetime for those who lived through it.

These wars, however, are dwarfed by another war—one that has lasted for thousands of years and shows no signs of ending soon. It rages all around us in ways that are sometimes obvious and sometimes harder to notice. Nevertheless, we see its effects everywhere. It is the war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man.

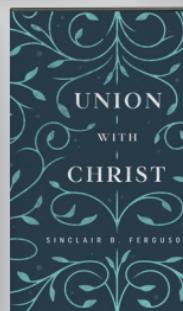
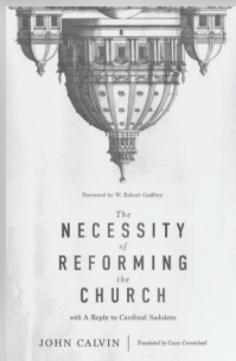
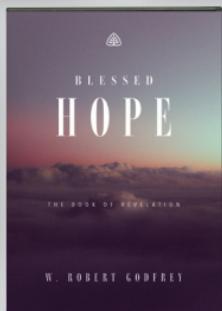
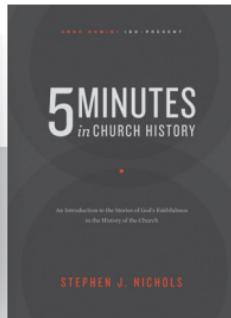
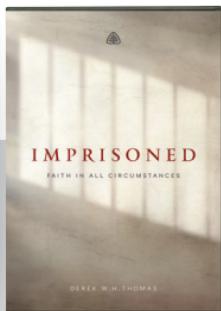
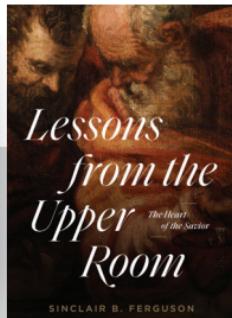
Early in church history, Augustine of Hippo wrote a book called *City of God* in which he compared these two kingdoms. The terms “city of God” and “city of man” referred to the prevailing attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and goals of two diametrically opposed kingdoms. There is a constant struggle between these two kingdoms, and every human being who has ever lived has participated in it. There are no exemptions and no deferments. Everyone is

conscripted into this war. No one escapes it. No one can conscientiously object. By virtue of our humanity, we line up either for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of man. It is a daily battle that has eternal consequences.

To understand this war, we must first understand how it started. Historians ask such questions about the beginnings of national and international conflicts. The firing of the shot against Fort Sumter provoked the American Civil War. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo sparked World War I. And the moment that started this cosmic conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man occurred in the garden of Eden. Genesis 3 records the temptation and fall of the human race. The account begins, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made” (Gen. 3:1).

Nearly everything that precedes Genesis 3:1 is positive. It speaks of God’s original, transcendent, majestic work of divine creation. Everything proceeds with divine benediction as God looks at the work of His hands and calls it “very good” (1:31). The one exception is the declaration that it is “not good” that the man be alone, a situation soon remedied by the creation of the woman (2:18–25).

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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