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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Counterfeits: How Tyrants Use ‘godhood’ As A Means Of Propaganda And Rule

Dean Dwyer



Augustus Caesar statue (Photo: CommonSpace Images)

Up from the grave He arose! If you are like me, you have probably sung that song every time we celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of our precious Saviour, Jesus

Christ. What a blessed time of year it is to gather together and sing triumphant songs of victory. Christ bore our sins on the tree, was buried and rose again, guaranteeing that all who have a saving faith in Him will live with Him eternally. No wonder the gospel is called the good news!

But dear reader, although we know that Christ ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father, history and mythology is littered with stories of others who supposedly ascended up on high.

In this article, we will examine some of those claims, for I am reminded of [Proverbs 30:4](#): “Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in

His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?" Let us also consider the words of Jesus Himself when, in that famous exchange with Nicodemus, said: *"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."* ([John 3:13](#)).

Rooted in mythology is the name Hercules. I am sure most people would have heard the name. His name is synonymous with strength. He was not only a divinized hero to the Romans but also to the Greeks, who considered him a demi-god and knew him as Heracles, which means "glory to Hera" (his stepmother). He was the first figure in Greco-Roman belief who had been born to a mortal mother but achieved godhood after his death. Hercules was renowned for his intelligence, loyalty and physical strength. Because of these qualities, many believed he ascended to Mount Olympus after his death to take his place as one of the gods.

In this way, Roman Emperors (who also set themselves up as divine figures) promoted his story to explain how they too would eventually live as gods.

Emperor Commodus (born 161AD and died 192AD) was particularly enamored with Hercules. He was a brutal ruler and not well-liked by the Roman people. When commissioning statues of himself, he would insist that he be depicted in a lionskin cape and holding a club, claiming to be the reincarnated Hercules.

In Roman culture, particularly amongst the emperors, their worship was not fixed upward (to the true and living God) but inward (to themselves). Like the coins we use today, Roman coins had two sides with two different inscriptions. At the time of Tiberius Caesar, one side bore the image of Caesar with the words "Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Fili Augustus", meaning "Tiberius Caesar, worshipful son of the god, Augustus". On the other side appeared the words "Pontif Maxim" – an abbreviation for "Pontifex Maximus", meaning "Chief High Priest".

But what was so special about Augustus that Tiberius would consider himself the son of this "god"? Well, the title "Augustus" means "exalted" and the Roman Senate gave him this title in recognition of his efforts to restore order after the Roman civil

war. And so revered was he that upon his death, the Senate declared him to be a god.

This is not without precedent, because the man who adopted him (Julius Caesar) was treated in much the same manner. In 42BC the Roman Senate formally deified Julius Caesar as *divus Iulius*, meaning “the divine Julius”. Augustus embraced his status as *divi filius* (“son of the god”) and had coins issued which bore inscriptions such as “Divine Caesar and Son of God”. An Egyptian inscription even called him a star “shining with the brilliance of the Great Heavenly Saviour.”

In an inscription dated to around 9BC and discovered in the Roman city of Priene in modern day Turkey, the birthday of Augustus is commemorated as being good news for all humanity.

It reads in part: *“Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, who she filled with virtue that he might benefit mankind, sending him as a saviour, both for us and our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings for the world that came by reason of him.”*

In the last line of the inscription, we read the words “good tidings.” That is the Greek word “euangelion.” To the secular world of the time, “euangelion” was a political word and it often referred to an empire or kingdom and how the power and riches of the kingdom bring with it good news for those who are faithful or have allegiance to that empire. In other words, people were directed to trust in the “good tidings” of Augustus and his kingdom.

Now, the name Caesar Augustus is mentioned only once in the Bible and that is in Luke 2. Do you know what else is announced in Luke 2? The birth of Jesus! And note the language used in verse 10: *“Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.”* There is that phrase – good tidings! But this time, it would not refer to the benevolence of a

political saviour but to the Christ who came to seek and to save the lost from their sins.

Augustus clearly didn't possess the qualities of a deity. Nor would have he ascended to heaven after his death to rule as a god. Yet, he accepted divine titles as a means of propaganda and rule.

You see, the people heavily depended on the emperor and there was an expectation that he alone would be their source of victory, peace, prosperity, safety and security. And in the context of Luke 2, although his decree of a census was his mechanism to measure the greatness of his kingdom, in reality God was using him to set the scene for the true King.

You see, Augustus and other Roman rulers thought they were building their own kingdom, but they were simply unwitting actors in God's plan.

Very soon another ruler will arise from the revived Roman Empire. Thankfully, believers will not have to sit under his rule. Yet, he will be accepted and loved by many. Perhaps he will even turn to the old Roman Pantheon for inspiration. But ultimately, we know he will be but one member of the unholy trinity.

Allowed to rule for a time, he will be defeated by the true King – the One who is the Son of God – who ascended up on high and is seated at the right hand of God.

When we celebrate His death, burial and resurrection, let us also celebrate His ascension. For because He is ascended, we are promised that He will come again to rule and reign in perfect righteousness. Then, no more will the world be subject to tyrannical rulers who claim they are gods.



Canada's Betrayal Of Israel

Canadian-born Israeli MK Sharren Haskel described as a betrayal Ottawa's decision to halt arm sales to the Jewish state and its latest motion on Palestinian statehood.

"I am so angry. Canada was always held as a symbol of democracy and a nation that values and defends freedom, liberties and inclusiveness. Trudeau's government is telling the world that Israel doesn't have the right to defend itself against crimes against humanity and this is moral bankruptcy," Haskel told JNS.

"Canada completely lost its moral compass and cannot be seen as a strong democracy anymore," she added.

On Tuesday, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz slammed Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau following Ottawa's announcement that Canada would halt arms sales to Israel.

"Regrettably, the Canadian government is taking a step that undermines Israel's right to self-defense against Hamas terrorists, who have committed terrible crimes against humanity and against innocent Israeli civilians, including the elderly, women, and children," tweeted Katz.

Canadian arms exports to Israel amounted to over \$15.4 million in 2022, according to Canadian government data. (In 2022, Saudi Arabia received about \$1.15 billion in Canadian military exports.)

Canada's decision followed the non-binding resolution passed by the House of Commons on Monday whose draft initially called for the unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state. The final version urged Ottawa to "actively pursue" the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution.

"The motion basically says that Trudeau's government stands in support of radical Islam even as Israel fights a second independence war, which we did not seek and which we were forced into by a murderous terrorist organization that Canada itself listed as such," Haskel said.

"If Israel doesn't have the right to defend itself from the worst massacre it has ever experienced, in which crimes against humanity were committed against our people and nation, then this ties down the hands of the free world in defense against radical groups who are sprouting everywhere and rising their heads up," she added.

To Haskel, Trudeau's government has completely failed the Jewish community in Canada which is under violent attack.

"Canadian Jews are taking down their symbols, hiding their identity, because Trudeau's government has failed to protect them," Haskel said.

"History is going to remember this as one of the greatest moral failures of the Canadian government. Canada is supposed to be a true friend of Israel, and this feels like betrayal," she added.

According to Shimon Koffler Fogel, CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), a Zionist and Jewish advocacy organization, both countries will have to work hard to heal the injury that Canadian decisions over the last six months have caused.

"It's not just only the latest developments, it's also voting against Israel at the U.N., it's some of the rhetoric that they have used with respect to Israel's effort to destroy Hamas in Gaza," Fogel told JNS.

In November, Trudeau accused Israel of killing civilians in Gaza. "I urge the government of Israel to exercise maximum restraint. The world is watching, on TV, on social media--we're hearing the testimonies of doctors, family members, survivors, kids who have lost their parents," said Trudeau during a press conference.

"The world is witnessing this killing of women, of children, of babies. This has to stop," he continued.

Trudeau received approval from Hamas, after Canada's affirmative U.N. vote on Dec. 12 to a resolution calling for an "immediate sustainable ceasefire" in Israel's war against Hamas. In an English-language video statement, Ghazi Hamad, a senior leader of the terror group, praised Canada, Australia and New Zealand by name.

"For the government, it's a question of trade-off, they are looking at different constituencies, the Jewish community, the Arab Muslim Palestinian community and are trying to balance competing demands on the system," Fogel said.

"They have a minority government, they depend on a second party to stay in power and that party, the New Democratic Party, is hostile. As is often the case, we are the victims in their effort to keep the government in place," he added.

Canada is home to the fourth largest Jewish community in the world, with 393,000 Jews in 2020, according to the World Jewish Congress.

The country's largest Jewish community lives in Toronto, numbering about 190,000. Chief of Toronto Police Myron Demkiw confirmed that there has been an explosion of antisemitic acts in Canada after Oct. 7 in a statement released on Monday.

"Of the 84 hate crimes so far in 2024, 56% are antisemitic. Last month was the highest number of antisemitic occurrences in the last three years," Demkiw said. A Jewish-owned grocery store was firebombed and graffitied in Toronto.

In Montreal, in the weeks following Oct. 7, the police reported 79 hate crimes against Jews. In the entire year before, the number was under 40. Instances included shots fired at two Jewish schools, Talmud Torah and Yeshiva Gedola, firebombs thrown at a Jewish community center and a synagogue in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, and a violent clash between pro-Hamas and pro-Israel groups at Concordia University.

"This trend actually predates Oct. 7," Fogel said. "Since Oct. 7, it has almost taken on a life of its own. The core engine for this hate are the Palestinian and Arab Muslim communities partnered with the woke, radical left.

"They have no shame in embracing Hamas. They see Hamas and its 'resistance' as the beginning of a global effort to turn the world upside down," he added.

Fogel stressed that individuals within the government's caucus have been "absolutely toxic" in their expressions of hate for Israel and by extension the Jewish community.

"Until 2021, we saw consistent support for Israel from all sides of the political spectrum. Over the last couple of years and obviously in a more accelerated manner since Oct. 7, we have seen a deterioration in that commitment from the Liberal party," he added.

Europe Is Wargaming a Food Crisis

A group of people came together last month to tackle the worst-case scenario for one of the best-fed regions in the world.

By Agnieszka de Sousa

The combined forces of El Niño and La Niña have crippled Latin American soy output. Ukrainian and Russian grain farmers have gone to war. Indonesia has banned shipments of palm oil to Europe, while China is hungry for crops. The Mediterranean region is getting more like a desert.

The year is 2024. "Food shortage in Europe? The only question is when, but they don't listen," says an unidentified voice in a video broadcast. The audience sits quietly — listening.

The dramatic collision of events, of course, hasn't yet come to pass. But over two days in central Brussels last month, some 60 European Union and government officials, food security experts, industry representatives and a few journalists gathered to confront the possibility of something barely on the radar a few years ago: a full-blown food crisis.

The group sat down in a refurbished art deco Shell building to simulate what might happen, and help design policies aimed at prevention and response. A few streets away, farmers were stepping up their protests against the EU, disrupting supplies to supermarkets as if to sharpen the focus of the participants.

The plush co-working space was hardly a bunker or secure basement in a warzone. But the video images of drought, floods and civil unrest to the pounding beat of ominous music created a sense of urgency.

"Expect a level of chaos," warned Piotr Magnuszewski, a systems modeler and game designer who has worked with the United Nations. "You may be confused at times and not have enough information. There will be time travel."

To watch one of the best-fed regions in the world stress test its food system underscores a growing level of alarm among governments over securing supplies for their populations. In the space of four years, multiple shocks have shaken up the way food is grown, distributed and consumed.

The coronavirus pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and disruptions on key shipping routes have disturbed supply chains and sent prices soaring. Erratic and extreme weather now regularly disturbs farming. Against that backdrop, officials are no longer asking when a food crisis may arrive, but rather how many crises they can deal with at once.

And so, it's 2025 and there are more harvest failures. They impact animal feed prices, which curbs livestock and fish production. Some ships carrying crops turn away from Europe to cater to higher bidders elsewhere.

Asia's palm oil export limits are now reducing supplies of daily staples from margarine to bread. Allegations of corporate greed, disinformation and conspiracy theories are spreading.

"The timeliness in terms of the topic was incredibly on point," said Katja Svensson, a senior food systems adviser to the Nordic Council of Ministers who participated in the simulation. She now wants her region to hold its own. "When it comes to movies, it's engrossing. You really become part of it, and it has a far greater impact," she said.

Stress testing has been a common feature in the banking industry since the financial crisis, while government officials and policymakers in the US have done so-called wargaming from time to time, even one involving a pandemic just months before coronavirus struck.

In Europe, government-led exercises are rare, let alone one focused on food, according to Magnuszewski, science director at the Centre for Systems Solutions in Wroclaw, Poland.

Seemingly, Europe is in an enviable position. It's one of the world's biggest suppliers of foodstuffs from grains and dairy to pork and olive oil, with some of the lowest levels of food insecurity.

On average, just 14% of household spending went toward food in 2021, compared with some 60% in Nigeria and 40% in Egypt. The Global Food Security Index regularly ranks European countries as the most secure in the world.

But there are vulnerabilities. Weather and climate events are hitting farmers regularly, costing Europe more than €50 billion (\$54.3 billion) in economic losses in 2022. The cost of fertilizers and energy needed to grow crops and keep glasshouses running soared in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Things unravel further later in 2025. Thieves are looting supermarkets. Police struggle to contain riots spreading in cities. People in Germany can't find fish and meat at grocery stores. Livestock farmers are going bankrupt.

Meanwhile, the public's focus shifts to profiteering by commodity traders. Small farms fall like dominos, while attacks on immigrants begin to become more widespread. Is the EU a sinking ship, someone asks in the video? It's all the fault of "liberal elites," someone else says.

Now for the solutions. Participants split into groups with each person assigned a new role, from farmer lobbyists to food worker unions. (This reporter played a representative of a trade group for oil plant producers). In circles of four or five with coffee and cookies, the groups workshopped policies from crisis management and building reserves to food provision for the most vulnerable.

Longer term, there are questions over how to curb Europe's concerning overreliance on imports of crops like soy needed to feed its vast meat and dairy industry. So a taskforce, attended by this reporter, pushed to cut subsidies for livestock farming. Wine and crudités ended the day.

Day two started with a mindfulness session before focusing on policy proposals and any conclusions. There was little objection to the idea that diets need to shift toward healthier options and away from meat. Questions loomed over how best to manage food reserves and monitor the level of stockpiles.

Participants singled out other topics for future exercises, from food safety and bioterrorism to countering disinformation and preparation for animal-borne diseases, the latter being "a huge issue and it risks becoming even bigger," Svensson said.

In truth, few governments in Europe are prepared for managing future food crises, according to Chris Hegadorn, a retired US diplomat who co-organized the workshop.

"We've been living in crisis for the last three years," said Hegadorn, adjunct professor of global food politics at Sciences Po in Paris. "There's a lot more to be done on every level. Crises are only going to come faster and harder."