

“You Shall Do the Right and the Good in the eyes of Lord”¹

“The most important question any society must answer is: How will we make good people?”² People hurting other people should be our primary focus. How people treat one another should be our ultimate concern. I am going to explore the notion that up until this point in time there is no better value system to act as our moral guide than in America, a value system based and built upon the Judeo-Christian, Old and New Testament value systems, Biblical values or monotheistic ethics. The Bible, which is the best moral instruction manual for life, helps us follow the "Golden Rule". The Bible is the best reference point for our values in America; it is the most reliable guarantee of goodness in the human species. It comes down to the basic question: Are people innately good? Does goodness come as naturally to human beings as breathing or does goodness and the “Golden Rule” need to be taught? If there is no God behind the concepts of goodness and the “Golden Rule” then can these concepts be effective? Judeo-Christian religions may theologially and practically differ, but they are based upon a monotheistic ethic value system laid down by God in the Old Testament and passed on to Jesus and the Gospels in the New Testament and then picked up by the founders in creating America. It was Victor Frankel, the psychiatrist who suffered the atrocities of the holocaust who said that there are only two races the “decent and the indecent”.³ Decent behavior must be taught. Raising good, decent children into good, decent adults should be our primary focus. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the founding fathers knew that a society based on the Ten Commandments would be magnificent. We have been given the arduous task of creating decent individuals and thus a decent and wonderful society in which to live. Decent behavior should trump all.

To raise good children into adults, goodness must be stresses over intelligence, grades or happiness. Parents should ask their children what they think would be more upsetting to their parents: if they cheated on a test and got into a prestigious college or never cheating and then not getting into the same prestigious college. Character and goodness must be valued more than success, happiness and a monetary lifestyle monetary lifestyle, or grades. By honoring the child

¹ (Deuteronomy, 6:18)

² The Dennis Prager Show. *Have We Stopped Trying to Make Good People*, <http://www.dennisprager.com/columns>.

³ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 136-138.

who eats lunch with the loneliest kid in the school, and not just the child with the highest grade point average or fastest mile time, we teach goodness. A better world comes from making better children and emphasizing goodness, integrity, honesty, kindness, and monotheistic ethics. Do you need God for ethics? Can ethics survive without God? If there is no God, then there is no objective good and evil, just the material universe that we experience for a short bit of time before going into oblivion. Does a society need God in order to have ethics? This is not to say that pagans or atheists are not ethical, that is not the question because of course you do not need to believe in God to be ethical. But ethics cannot survive if they come from a secular society; they merely exist in spite of it.

The most well known verse in the Bible is “love your neighbor as yourself.” But two questions arise from this verse. Is this the end of the verse? Are we translating the Hebrew correctly? To both questions, the answer is “No.” The whole verse is actually, “Love your neighbor as yourself, I am God (or exactly, I am the Lord).”⁴ Why is this important? By God saying it, then it is different than if Moses or a committee says it. God is the source of ethics, which is the essence of ethical monotheism. If there is no God, then love your neighbor is not binding, but merely an opinion. If it was a man made statement then it can be rejected by a man, but if it is a God made commandment, it is harder to reject. A person who believes that this verse comes from God will probably treat their neighbor better than a person who does not believe that this verse came from a transcendent source. If your car broke down in a strange city (in America) and it was the middle of the night and you were in a long dark alley alone and a group of ten men were walking towards you, would you feel better if you knew that they were just coming from a Judeo-Christian/Old-New Testament study Bible session? You probably would not think that the men would mug you. The second question about the exact translation of the Hebrew is to give love to your neighbor, not to love your neighbor. It is a behavioral act and not one that is emotionally based. It is how you act towards your neighbor not how you feel.

Those who believe in Judeo-Christian values have forgotten their message to the world. What the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob wants from us is to be united under one moral code, to be kind to one another, to fight evil and to help ease the world’s suffering. We need to stop ignoring God. The Bible is filled with stories of ethical and moral concerns about how to treat one another. The biblical God rules by moral standards. It is quite clear that what God wants for

⁴ (Leviticus, 19:18)

humans is to treat one another with kindness. An important concept in the Bible is to hate evil. We are even told to do so: “Those who love God—you must hate evil...”⁵ Prior to the Old Testament time, evil and suffering were a normal part of life. With the Bible came the idea of living a moral life that combated evil. Our agenda should be how to increase goodness and justice in the world. Instead of focusing on what is good for my specific ethnic, religious, social, political or gender group, we should focus on what is good for humanity. People hurting other people should be our primary concern.

Is goodness what we want most from those around us? Decent behavior should trump all behaviors. Ask most children what they think that their parents want most for them, to be smart, or successful, or happy, or rich, or kind. Almost no child will answer with kind. It is surprising how many of us look for goodness and kindness in others but do not stress it in our children. Religion and society must have an ethical essence. Ethical principles need to be a main component of a society. People should be judged by their behavior and not their theology. Martin Luther King said, “A man should be judged not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character.”⁶ Don’t we all want to be treated with kindness and goodness by others?

“For what one of the ancients aptly remarked is true, that in nothing does human behavior more nearly resemble God than in showing kindness. For what greater joy could there be for the created than to imitate God eternal?”⁷ The Bible asks of us to walk in God’s way, to imitate God on earth. The Hebrew word for this is *halakhah*. The Bible also lays out values that we should practice: “...the affirmation of life, love, justice, freedom, and truth. These values are not disparate items, independent from each other, but form a value syndrome.” These Judeo-Christian, biblical values, are what set our American society apart from any other society in the world. They are the moral foundation of our society. We do not care what religion you practice, but we do care about your values. The Bible should be used as a moral instruction manual for your life.

C.G. Jung came to the conclusion, after work with many patients of all denominations and religions, that once humans reach mid-life they become restless to find an ultimate meaning in their lives beyond the superficial and what Jung found was that God was the only satisfactory

⁵ (Psalms, 97:10)

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (speech given at The Great March on Washington, Washington D.C., August 28, 1963).

⁷ David Winston, trans., *Philo of Alexandria* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), 239-40.

answer. Unique to humans is the quest to find meaning to their lives and to resist death. “We want to know the ultimate meaning of life. It is divine restlessness that drives us on”... Augustine says, “Our heart is restless till it rests in Thee... The quest for the meaning of life, the search for our true essence...for God, is part of the basic principle of evolution.”⁸

There is a human need and desire for religion, a desire for the sacred and transcendent higher power. With the biblical monotheistic God comes a trust that He cares about us, why would a God not care about His creation, why would He know us if we could not know Him. Along with this biblical monotheistic God comes a set of morals and ethics tempered with kindness and compassion and justice. Sociologist and historian Rodney Stark tells us, “Because Christians believed in a loving God who in turn enjoined them to love one another, and because this love was not restricted to family or even tribe, Christians cared for one another in ways that were unusual in the pagan...world. By sharing things in common, nursing the sick and protecting women and children, Christians made the promises of God effective and thus attractive”.⁹ Thanks to the God of the Old and New Testament every human was created in His image and thus slavery was easily understood as wrong.

As a society we need an ethical value system and a moral code from which to base our behaviors. We need a code to help us with the right way of living. Most people know how they want to be treated, so just treat others how you would want to be treated yourself. Sounds simple enough, but obviously it is not so simple. “God asks for the heart, but the heart is oppressed with uncertainty in its own faith. It is good that there is a dawn of decision for the night of the heart; deeds to objectify faith, definite forms to verify belief.”¹⁰ A secular society gets it’s values from the heart, but in the long run, to guarantee goodness in the human species goodness in the human species a heart conscious cannot be relied upon.. There is no intrinsic goodness of the human heart. The Bible is not perfect, but we are meant to challenge it. Even Abraham challenged God, but this doesn’t mean that we throw it out and problems do not invalidate it. God’s morals are more reliable than the heart. The Bible gave a definite form to moral values in the form of

⁸ Willigis Jager, *Search For The Meaning Of Life* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 2003), 13.

⁹ Miller, Sara. “Why Monotheism Makes Sense.” *The Christian Century*, June 2004, 26-29.

¹⁰ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 279.

law and thus brought peoples intentions into actions where we were able to work through them clearly and see “good” from evil.

Religion is a good guarantee of goodness if you believe that Gods primary demand for us is goodness over ritual or faith. If love your neighbor as yourself is at the center of your belief system, then it seems as though a good society would follow. Both the Torah and Jesus espoused this notion of love your neighbor as yourself. The prophets in the Bible made it quite clear that mere ritual and rote observance without actively trying to pursue a moral life did not make for a religious life. Once again it goes back to how you treat others.

In order to make a moral society we need God, reason, and man. We as a society need to be committed to universal brotherhood. This concept was first brought forward with the earliest Jewish Prophets in the Old Testament. Universal brotherhood cannot be achieved by forcing people to comply with the same religion or by forcing one ethnic identity upon a nation. That is totalitarianism and not universal brotherhood. What we need to achieve universal peace is for people to maintain their individual ethnic identities and religious identities while ascribing to one morality and uniting as brothers. What is most important in America is to be united under the same biblical morals and values of the Old and New Testament.

A value cannot be an end in and of itself; it must be connected to God and goodness. Some people hold art as their God, but good art does not necessarily produce goodness. Neither does higher education. Look at Nazi Germany where there was both great art and very highly educated Nazi torturers. The “law,” too, cannot be an end in itself when divorced from goodness and God. We should ask ‘what is moral and just?’ and not simply ‘what does the law say?’ Morality needs to be higher than any law. Law cannot be the highest definition of what is good. The law or legal system does not work by a universal moral code, as does God’s moral code. If Rosa Parks had based her definition of good on the law, she would have never been bold enough to break the law. If the citizens of Germany had followed Gods moral code as opposed to Hitler’s laws, the holocaust would not have been able to happen. Even love cannot be an end in and of itself. God is much more than just love. He is justice, and peace, and kindness, and judgment, and truth among other attributes. God is many qualities, not just love. Should I love Hitler an equal amount as I love my partner? If by loving evil are you less likely to fight evil? If you are kind to the cruel, you will be cruel to the kind. If God is good, then He certainly cannot love Hitler and Charles Manson as much as Raoul Wallenberg (the Swedish diplomat who saved

thousands of Jews during the holocaust) and Mother Teresa. This is just not logical. Love is a great value, but not an end when divorced from God and goodness. What about the husband or wife who says that they love their spouse but beats or cheats on them. Their actions are not kind, but they might indeed love their spouse in the only way they know how. Another value is compassion, but compassion without God and goodness is not just. The Bible warns that a judge has to judge the rich the same as the poor; he is not allowed to favor one over the other. So, too, reason cannot be an end. We need reason but not without God and goodness. It was not reasonable to save a Jew during the holocaust. And Hitler did not think that his actions were unreasonable. Reason breeds rationality. Standing up and doing the right thing is not always reasonable. Religion devoid of God and goodness does not bring about goodness either. A person can believe in God and commit evil. Goodness must be first. Everyone should ask if his or her actions result in goodness, or whether their actions abandon it.

Just as we are an American Nation with differing political parties that unite us under one constitution with one president, religions do not need to have the same theology to be united under the same ethical beliefs. Differences and competition between parties and religions is a good thing. We should not be afraid of competition as long as we are united under one moral code that transcends man's faults and frailties.

“The only solution to evil: Ethical Monotheism. Ethical monotheism means two things:

1. There is one God from whom emanates one morality for all humanity.
2. God's primary demand of people is that they act decently toward one another.

If all people subscribed to this simple belief—which does not entail leaving, or joining, any specific religion, or giving up any national identity—the world would experience far less evil.”¹¹

Religion is the best system for insuring moral and good individuals. That in no way means that all religious people are morally superior or that non-religious people are morally inferior, only that a Judeo-Christian system is the best guarantee of moral individuals and, thus, a moral society. And if your religion does not make you a better person, then you should not practice that religion. We need to teach and learn a Judeo-Christian value system to avoid chaos in our

¹¹ Dennis Prager, *Think a Second Time* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996), 202

world. In 1834, almost one hundred years before Hitler's rise to power, a famous German poet, Heinrich Heine, spoke about how the world would become evil without a God based morality to guide it. He wrote, "A drama will be enacted in Germany compared to which the French Revolution will seem harmless and carefree. Christianity restrained the martial ardor for a time but it did not destroy it; once the restraining talisman (the cross) is shattered savagery will rise again."

The pursuit of justice is quite clear in the Old and New Testaments as well as in our American Constitution and Declaration of Independence. No human being is expected to always know what is the right or just action to take, so we have a system that aides in the decision towards justice. God is just and we are made in His image, and so we to must be just. "You shall do the right and the good in the eyes of the Lord."¹²

"On the most obvious of practical grounds, one cannot have a community if people merely assent to a list of moral principles; they must also agree to abide by rules governing their behavior toward each other, rules that may be based on those moral principles but that have the full authority of law. Moreover, communities need law not only to establish minimally acceptable behavior but also to motivate their members to accomplish social ideals."¹³

Humans need to be taught with instructions how to act morally. How do we become good at a sport or at playing an instrument? Even if you are naturally inclined towards the piano and can play it by ear, you still need lessons to better yourself. Why wouldn't we need instructions on how to behave morally? Goodness should be taught and nurtured and studied and revered. We want to be treated with kindness from others, but we do not want to invest in it—this doesn't make sense.

The question, 'Can a person "be good" without a belief in God?' is answered with, of course, 'a person can be good without a belief in God.' A person can be good and believe in the divinity of the tooth fairy, just as a person can have a belief in God and be evil. Any belief system can be misused. Dr. Mengele, the Nazi doctor who performed inhuman gross torturous experiments on human beings, does not make all medicine unnecessary. Yes there are those who can use religion to do evil, but this does not make God and religion unnecessary in achieving good.

¹² (Deuteronomy, 6:18)

¹³ Elliot N. Dorff , *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 279.

If God does not exist, then the concepts of “good” and “evil” become subjective to that particular human’s opinion; and then the question becomes ‘to which human’s opinion?’ Dr. Mengele felt that the torturous experiments on children and pregnant women were good and you think that they are bad. If there is not a transcendent source that says Dr. Mengele is wrong, then it is just your opinion that he is wrong.

Would you rather morality be determined by a transcendent source or the culture? What if you were governor over India and you had jurisdiction over a group of Hindus who thought that the practice of *sati* was a good thing. *Sati* is the Hindu practice of burning the widow alive with her husband’s corpse. Would you outlaw this practice or let it go on because it was culturally acceptable to the group of Hindus who practiced it? If you outlaw it, you believe in universal morality. The question then becomes ‘is your morality God based or person or culturally based?’

Morality like religion is faith based. Who is the source of those ethics? With no transcendent source from which to get your morality, morality is subjective. A morality based on a transcendent God is necessary; otherwise the teacher who teaches the child morals will be imposing the teacher’s or school’s or culture’s morals. Also, with no higher transcendent value, then what is being taught is tolerance towards *everyone’s* values; what is right for Suzie might not be right for Johnnie; and no one wishes to make a value judgment on whose value is correct.

Doing “good” is not always the easiest choice. It is much easier to not take a stand for something. Sometimes confronting evil or helping others, and not just saying nice things, requires courage. Most people feel that it is hard enough to take care of themselves let alone helping another person. If there is no God to define morality, to define what is bad and what is good in the world, then morality cannot be objective. Morality becomes subjective if it does not transcend human nature or personal preference or personal feelings. This does not mean that atheists cannot be moral or all religious people are moral. It merely means that if we do not have a transcendent source from which to get a moral code, then what is moral is left up to the man in charge and, thus, becomes subjective much like what is ugly and what is beautiful.

Only if you believe in a transcendent God and a higher moral code than man, can that code be universal. Otherwise it becomes subjective to that particular man and we descend to moral relativism. Moral relativism is not situational ethics. Morality is not a matter of opinion, but evil needs to be determined by the ethics of the situation, to judge the act by its context, in

order to make a moral decision. We need universal morality, so that an act is morally wrong for everyone in the same situation. A line from the book, *Brothers of Karamazon* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, is “Where there is no God, all is permitted.”¹⁴

Our conscious defines us as human beings. We are naturally aware of the meaning of right and wrong and God gave this to us. In his book, *The Quest for God*, Paul Johnson defines Natural Law as “...law fixed in nature by God the Creator which human creatures can discern by the light of natural reason. As such theologians, contrast it, with the Revealed Law, such as the Ten Commandments, presented directly to Moses by God and written in tablets of stone. Theologians argue that those commandments... are to be found in Natural Law too, and are common to most societies, and that Revealed Law merely gave them added emphasis and specific terminology”¹⁵

Johnson believes that the decline in Natural Law has resulted in moral relativism. Johnson reminds us that St. Paul referred to the doctrine of Natural Law in his epistle to the Romans when he says that even though the Gentles have not been taught the Torah, they still know it (Mosaic Law/Torah) in their hearts. Johnson believes that humans know Mosaic Law in their conscience or in their way. Johnson also believes that moral relativism is an evil in today’s society.

“The more our radio-telescopes enlarge our notions of how big space is, the less likely it seems that physically fragile creatures like ourselves, living in time and space, can ever achieve mastery of the universe – or think and behave as if we could – and the more likely it is that something metaphysical, like God, whose powers are not limited by any system of measurement, must exist, to keep it all in order.”¹⁶

Johnson goes on to say that most Western countries prefer their citizens to believe in God or to be God fearing, because that usually means that those people will keep the peace and follow a moral code of some sort. “In 1954, the phrase ‘under God’, as used by Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, was added by Congress to the United States Pledge of Allegiance. Two years later, the device from the US coinage, ‘In God We Trust’, became the nation’s official motto.”¹⁷ But in America church and state is kept separate, which I believe is a good thing”.

¹⁴ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: North Point Press, 1990), 2002.

¹⁵ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 66.

¹⁶ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 66.

¹⁷ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 35.

Johnson goes on to say how, “President Eisenhower told the country: ‘Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply-felt religious faith – and I don’t care what it is.’¹⁸ Eisenhower was confirming what Johnson said, that God-fearing citizens make the best societies.

If there is no God based morality, then morality is either relative and everyone can choose what he feels is right and wrong. If there is one moral code and it is not based on God’s authority, then it is based on man’s authority, but which man? The smartest, the best educated, the strongest, or the richest? And if reason is left to determine right from wrong then with reason comes rationality. Reason is amoral, thus rationalization. To reasonable men in ancient Greece watching men behead each other for sport seemed reasonable as did leaving new born unhealthy babies alone to die. The ancient Greeks thought that it was reasonable to kill newborn babies who were not beautiful and the Greeks thought that the Jews were barbarians for keeping ugly babies alive. It was reasonable to the Greeks to kill on the grounds of “being ugly” and it was unreasonable to the Jews. To Hitler and a lot of other Germans, to exterminate Jews seemed reasonably moral. On the other hand, hiding a Jewish child in your basement to save a Jewish child’s life and thus placing your family’s life in danger seems very unreasonable. Reason can be used to rationalize anything. We were blessed as humans with reason and we do need to use it.

The famous Jewish physician and philosopher, Maimonides, 1138-1204, believed in having a rational approach to religion and thus felt that there was a relationship between faith and reason. Many of the biblical ethical laws appeal to man’s innate ethical reason. “And a stranger thou shalt not oppress; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”¹⁹ “Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother; thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou was a stranger in his land.”²⁰ “Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”²¹ “Indeed, nowhere in the prophetic books are the ‘nations’ condemned for worshipping their Gods—only for the ethical abominations such as child sacrifice associated with worship.”²²

¹⁸ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 35.

¹⁹ (Exod. 23:9)

²⁰ (Deut. 23:7)

²¹ (Isa. 1:16-17)

²² Louis Jacobs, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 108.

Human beings do not always respond to what they know to be good. The prophetic demand is directed to people who know what is right but do not follow it in their lives. As Abraham Lincoln once said, “It is not that which I do not understand in the Bible that bothers me. It is that which understand only too well”.²³

Are we more likely to produce good people with or without God? The question has been asked if you were alone at night and walking down a dark alley way and ten men are walking towards you. Would you rather know that they had just come from a study session of the Old or New Testament? Would those having just come from a Judeo-Christian Bible session somehow make you feel safer? Probably it would. California State University Professor, Samuel Oliner, has devoted his career on the altruistic personality. Professor Oliner found out that of the few Jews rescued during the holocaust the rescuers were disproportionably Christian. Professor Oliner, who himself was rescued during the Holocaust, was asked after all his years of study, if he was to be transported back in time to Nazi Germany during the Holocaust and was allowed to knock on one door in hope of being rescued, would he knock on the door of a doctor, a professor, a lawyer, a farmer, a peasant, or a priest. Without hesitation, Professor Oliner answered a priest.

Do you think that you are basically a good person? Every person asked this question would answer for the most part with “yes.” Even Saddam Hussein thinks that he is basically a good person. Since everyone thinks that they are good, why is there so much bad in the world? The answer is because we tend to judge ourselves by what we mean or how we feel or on our intentions but not on how we act. Imagine that when you die, you are subjected to a video of your life. Would you be proud to watch? Would you behave differently if you knew that you were being watched?

“Revelation is required to avoid all uncertainty and for the precise details of how the rational precepts are to be carried out to be given...it is true that man would know by his own reason that it is wrong to steal, yet revelation is still required in order to inform man how property is to be acquired...even without religion’s precise teachings man’s moral sense would still function, but it would be confused when it came to application.”²⁴

²³ Louis Jacobs, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 107.

²⁴ Louis Jacobs, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 109.

People are not born “basically good” or “bad”, we are born innocent. A baby or a child has to learn not to take everything that they want. In the wee hours of the night a baby does not care about letting its mother sleep even if the mother is sick and sleep deprived. Most children do not have to be told not to share with their friends or siblings or not to say please and thank you so much. Children must learn that they have good and bad inclinations and that they must work to not let the bad over take the good. If you are not aware of your bad side you cannot fight it. In Judaism these sides of a person are called our *yetzer hara* (bad innate tendency) and our *yetzer tov* (good innate tendency). In Christianity, this is referred to as our sinful nature. Being aware of our nature is the first step in making this world a better place. After living through the atrocities of the 20th century and witnessing Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago, it is hard to believe that man is naturally inclined towards goodness. Even if you just hang around on the school playground and watch how children can treat one another it is apparent that we are just not, for the most part, naturally good and kind. Individual character development needs to be stressed and needs to be taught. Giving money to a charity is nice, but what about how you treat the less popular kids in your class? Making people better makes the world better. Goodness and kindness must be taught and then practiced so that they become habit and then character.

In Ecclesiastes 7:20 we are told, “There is no man so righteous who does only good and never sins.” God has given man “good” and “evil” drives. Like the cat that plays harshly with the mouse, the cat is not evil in his playing. Animals act with their instincts, but man can imagine being good or imagine to be evil. Man is in control of his instincts. For this reason man can act evil, not animals. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before your life and death, blessing and curse; choose life that you and your descendants may live.”²⁵

Humans may not be inclined towards goodness but there is an innate sense for goodness inside the human. When most people watch goodness in a movie they are inspired. People usually feel better after acts of kindness; in fact they usually feel better after performing an act of kindness rather than performing an act of fun. When people perform acts of kindness their self-esteem goes up and in general they feel really good.

Religion actually documents how to be good and how to be kind. To learn any new language you must be taught how to speak or to learn any sport you must be taught how to play.

²⁵ (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Then you must practice. Why do we assume that to be good comes natural? The most important thing a society can do is to make individuals good. This is the only answer to making an ideal world. It must start with parents and their children and what parents teach their children. Everyone should try to go just 24 hours without saying anything unkind about or to another. People need to learn to regain control over their tongues and over themselves. There are actual blessings that come from goodness; there is an intrinsic reward from doing “good.” But as humans we need a systematic presentation of being good and religion provides just that. Gratitude usually breeds happiness. The ungrateful are usually unhappy. Typically, those who are grateful and happy do not cause crime and are not unkind to others, but goodness is not simple. Being good is usually the harder choice over being bad, but the outcome of choosing the good over the bad, will more often than not, bring much reward. Just like overeating or drinking, it might feel good in the moment, but the after affects are awful. One needs more than love or good intentions to do “good.” One needs wisdom. Sometimes doing the right thing is not the nicest or easiest thing.

In his book, *The Quest for God*, Paul Johnson explains that in order to appreciate the good we need evil. The good is more clearly defined and more accurately appreciated when compared to evil. Johnson goes on to say that according to the theologian Origen, “...evil necessarily springs from God’s bounty in giving free will to his human creatures. It is an act of God’s nobility to allow them to choose evil as well as good, and evil must exist to make the choice meaningful.”²⁶ Johnson feels that this free will that we are given will make life infinitely more interesting. Johnson is so sure that those who unjustly suffer in this life will live a spectacular life in the hereafter, that God will right all of the wrongs and in the end, justice will prevail.

Our conscious defines us as human beings. We are naturally aware of the meaning of right and wrong and God gave this to us. Johnson defines Natural Law as “...law fixed in nature by God the Creator which human creatures can discern by the light of natural reason. As such theologians, contrast it, with the Revealed Law, such as the Ten Commandments, presented directly to Moses by God and written in tablets of stone. Theologians argue that those

²⁶ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 63.

commandments...are to be found in Natural Law too, and are common to most societies, and that Revealed Law merely gave them added emphasis and specific terminology.²⁷

St. Paul refers to Natural Law in his epistle to the Romans; he felt the Gentiles already had the Torah or Mosaic Law was self-evident. The stoic philosophers felt natural law was followed by the good and the wise as a matter of consciousness or duty that God was operating from within the human and this is what helped to sustain the natural world. Johnson believes that in the modern world, natural law has been left behind and moral relativism has taken its place. Johnson feels that this can only lead to evil.

In Genesis' creation story God creates light, land, sea, vegetation, day, night, fish, birds, animals and said that everything that He had created was good, but when He created man He did not call him good. Possibly this was because man was unfinished, meant to grow and mature. Man is free to choose between good and evil and made to know the difference. Man is clearly different than Gods other creations.

Religion said that the biggest thing in life to battle is you. Today people battle everything that is outside of himself or herself, such as sexism, racism, capitalism, xenophobiaism, or environmentalism. It is not society that is to blame for human unkindness. It is not economic forces that cause evil. A society that is filled with evil individuals will be evil. Good people make for a good society. Man created Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago, not God, not society, not economic forces. Societies that do not hold to a moral God based ethics historically have been the worst, such as Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Brezhnev, Cambodia's Pol Pot, and Hitler. To believe in man's innate kindness seems beyond silly after experiencing so many atrocities committed at the hand of man. Religion gives a person a God based ethical system to follow that is higher than any man. Given humanities history with evil, why are we not more preoccupied with good and evil? Doesn't everyone want to be treated with kindness? Don't we all fear being victims of evil actions. Do we lock our doors at night, are we afraid to walk down a dark alley at night. If so, then why do we not place more emphasis on kindness?

The Judeo-Christian value system said that humans beings, in order to achieve goodness, justice, wisdom, or any good value, you must battle yourself. We need to change from a heart-based society and how we feel, to a conscious based society and focusing on what is right and

²⁷Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 66.

what is wrong. We need to fight our feelings. A study was done with teenagers where they were asked whom they would save first if both were drowning, their family dog or the stranger. Almost all teens answered they would save their family dog first because they love their family dog and not the stranger. What if that family pet was a lizard or a fish; would that change your mind if the pet were loved just as much. Religious ethics demands that people have a higher value than animals and the human life is more sacred and should be saved first. This does not mean cruelty to animals; merely that a human life is more important and closer to God than an animal.

Accountability is dead. No one wants to be accountable for his or her own actions. Religious ethics gives you accountability at all times. If you are not accountable to Gods laws then you are only accountable to man's conscience. Love is not accountable to moral behavior, as we have seen from the drowning study. Human nature is not morally reliable. Human nature is survival of the fittest mentality. Nature has beauty but it does not believe that the meek shall inherit the earth. God is above nature. Nature is immoral. There are no hospitals or charities to take care of the sick and the poor and the old in nature. Hitler loved nature, he was a vegetarian and treated his dogs better than the Jews and gypsies and he despised religion. Most people need a codebook; an accountability guide or they need to be monitored by a God video.

Prior to the Old Testament nature was God. There was the God of rain, of the mountains, animal Gods, and Gods of every natural disaster. With the Old Testament God was above nature. God created nature but was not a part of nature. God is separate and transcendent of His creation. Nature may be beautiful and present and evoke beautiful feelings from us but nature is amoral. Nature does not demand behavior from us. Nature does not value kindness of justice or compassion.

So too if there is a good ethical God there is holiness. "Ethics enables life; holiness ennobles it. Holiness is the elevation of the human being from his animal nature to his being created in the image of God."²⁸ Examples of this are marriage and being faithful to one partner as opposed to copulating with everyone we are attracted too or how we do not eat on the floor with our mouths or how we do not relieve ourselves in public. Being created in the image of God makes us sacred as well as holy.

²⁸ Dennis Prager, *Think a Second Time* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 205.

If God is non-physical and beyond nature and we are created by Him and in His image then there must be more to life than here on earth. If we just die and leave this earth and there is nothing else then that would be sad. There is too much unjustified suffering in this world to justify nothing after this world. That would mean that those who create the suffering end up the same as those they made suffer. This would completely deny my papers premise of believing in a good God. If God is good then those who create evil will pay a price. God does not create the cruelty of man but I have to believe that He takes care of it after we leave this earth.

Judaism goodness and kindness

Almost every Jew, practicing or not, is familiar with the Hebrew concept of *Tikun O'lam*, which means perfecting or repairing the world. Judaism is organized around this concept. Judaism does this by creating a system of laws that shape ones values and actions. Religions, just like nations, political parties and organizations, need laws to help shape behavior. The Hebrew concept *kedusha* means holiness. Holiness is unique to religion because it means elevation of man from animal like to God like. *Kedusha* holds man to a higher standard than his animal self. Another Hebrew concept is *mitzvot*, or good deeds – the laws are likened to *mitzvot* and God judges you on how many mitzvot one carry out in their lifetime. Judaism has the term, *tzedaka*, which has been translated in English to mean charity, but in Hebrew means justice with compassion. *Tzedaka* was Judaism's attempt to legislate goodness over 3,000 years ago. This concept, *tzedaka*, was taken very seriously and still is today. God demands ethics. Since all humans are born with a divine image we must treat all humans thusly. Since humans were born in God's image they are to make the world a better place to live. Improvement needs a system.

In order to repair the world Jews must organize themselves and they have been doing this for some 3,500 years. Judaism is obsessed with making this world a better place. "It was Judaism that brought the concept of a God-given universal moral law into the world; the Jew carries the burden of God in history and for this he has never been forgiven."²⁹

²⁹ Reverend Edward H. Flannery, "Nine Questions," New York Times, November 30, 1974. 113.

What does it mean in Judaism to be “good”? Rabbi Joseph Telushkin tells us that someone who is good is not just someone who doesn’t hurt anyone – that just means that the person is not bad. Rabbi Telushkin tells us, “To be a good person involves the active pursuit of good. It is not enough merely to refrain from hurting other human beings; one must intercede on their behalf.”³⁰ “Do not stand by while your neighbor’s blood is shed.”³¹

Judaism has a system of laws of ethics and kindness, which command Jews to act ethically and kindly. A secular society could not easily legislate “goodness”, nor would we want it to, but a God based religion can. All organizations, from nations to charities and even to sports, follow a system. “Why not a system for goodness.”³² Even to pray in Hebrew, *l’hitpallel*, means to judge or examine oneself. All Jews are asked to do mitzvot, commandments, which are good deeds that are to be carried out. The Ten Commandments is another example of ethical laws such as honor one’s mother and father, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and not to covet. Man needs to define goodness. In Judaism goodness is consideration of others and moral behavior in every area of life, from how one behaves in business, to the personal, to family, to neighbors, to the sick, to the poor, to the weak, and to the dying. Being good is not meant to be easy – it is difficult to be a good person, one must work for it.

Judaism also has the holy. People are created in God’s image and therefore are automatically elevated. People are animals, but since they are created in God’s image their behavior is elevated. The animal kingdom is survival of the fittest. There are no hospitals to care for the sick and dying or charities to feed, shelter, and clothes for the poor, prayers over food, or the elevation of sexual love to be between life partners, in the animal kingdom. Judaism also introduced the world to the “holy.” The ancient Greeks believe that the beautiful was holy; the Jews believed the holy was beautiful. The ancient Greeks left the ugly babies outside alone in the elements to die. It was the Jews who said all babies, the deformed, the malnourished, and the sick deserve to live because they all were made in God’s image. All human life is holy.

³⁰Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 43.

³¹(Deuteronomy 16:20)

³²Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 44.

“Judaism said that God and morality were higher than all Gods, all leaders and all armies; that morality was universal, not relative to individuals, nations, or economics...” Judaism taught love of neighbor and love of stranger. Judaism brought forth the idea that a “nation shall not lift sword against nation.”³³ In a world where warriors ruled, Judaism taught that the Almighty was the only One to answer to.

“The Jews introduced God into the world, and called all people to live in brotherhood by accepting one moral standard based upon God. Each of these ideals, a universal God, a universal moral law, and universal brotherhood, was revealed for the first time 3,200 years ago, to some ex-slaves in the Sinai desert.”³⁴ In Judaism there are four categories of Jewish law. Each law is there to fill a purpose and a meaning. There are reflexive laws, which elevate the doer of the law. The Hebrew word *to pray* is a reflexive verb meaning to judge or examine oneself. We do not pray for God but for ourselves or for others. There are laws of ethics. These laws have to do with the legislation of our treatment on others. Besides those ethical laws in the ten commandments, such as honor ones parents, not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet, there are other laws such as giving ten percent of one’s annual income to charity, laws against gossiping with evil intent or outcome, and laws on treatment of animals such as no hunting for sport. There are ethical laws on the treatment of business relations, the old and the sick and the poor. There are laws of holiness. We were created in Gods image and therefore we are to act holy. We must elevate ourselves above the animals. We pray before our meals. We do not eat or fornicate like animals. We have elevated our activities. Lastly there are national laws. These are laws that commemorate a particular time in the history of the nation. Two other Jewish laws that do not “fit under” one of the above categories are observing the Sabbath and Kashrut (keeping kosher).

“A systematic legal code is necessary for a society. “It isn’t enough to tell people to not go about as gossips.”³⁵ Jewish law goes into detail about behavior so that, for example, the average person can understand what constitutes gossiping. The law explains abstract ideals such as how to love one’ neighbor or how to honor one’s parents. People need to be unified under a common ethical system in order for morality to exist between and among them; just as when a

³³ (Isaiah 2:4)

³⁴ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 111.

³⁵ (Leviticus 19:16)

traffic light turns green it means go and when it turns red it means to stop. A system has to be written down and binding in order to work. “The Torah is to the soul of man what rain is to the soil; rain makes any seed put into the soil grow, producing nourishing as well as poisonous plants. The Torah also helps him who is striving for self-perfection, while it increases the impurity of heart those that remain uncultivated”.³⁶

If one does not follow the ethical religious laws one cannot be expected to be ethical let alone religious. Just as in America we have a set of legal codes to follow and if broken that person cannot call himself or herself a law-abiding citizen. Judaism has 613 laws to follow; one does not need to follow all of these laws to be ethical.

Everyone Jewish or not should and can follow Leviticus 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself”. There are nine verses in Leviticus 19 that if followed would pretty much aide in ensuring an ethical society. Leviticus 19:

1. To give charity to the poor and to the stranger;
2. Not to cheat or mislead people;
3. Not to oppress a worker by not paying him promptly;
4. That a judge not favor the rich (out of respect) or the poor (out of sympathy), but always dispense justice;
5. Not to gossip;
6. Not to take revenge or even to bear a grudge; and
7. To show love to one’s neighbor as to oneself.

Religion teaches people how to treat one another and how to treat God. “The Torah is a law which directs man to imitate God by instructing him in the right action.”³⁷ The laws in the Torah try “...to fill all human activity with a certain spirit—that of the imitation of God.”³⁸ The laws are supposed to add meaning and purpose to life on earth.

Judaism believes that when the messiah comes that there will be peace and kindness throughout the land. Since that did not happen with Jesus, they cannot ascribe to the notion that he was the messiah. Christians on the other hand believe that there will be a second coming

³⁶ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 65.

³⁷ Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, (New York: Fawcett, 1969), 188.

³⁸ Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, (New York: Fawcett, 1969), 191.

when Jesus will come again and peace will be restored throughout the land. But this idea of a second coming cannot be found anywhere in the Old Testament, thus Judaism does not ascribe to this notion either. In fact, in Mark 9:1; 13:30, Jesus told his followers that some of them would be alive when the messianic prophecies would come true. It seems that the idea of a second coming was formulated later in order to explain why the messianic prophecies did not take place with Jesus the first time around. “The Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation...the doctrine of a supreme intelligent...sovereign of the universe...I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization”.³⁹

The story of the one of the greatest Rabbis of the Talmudic era, Hillel, best exemplifies what Judaism has to offer the world. Hillel lived some twelve hundred years after Moses and was born in Babylonian and moved to Israel. He lived approximately 30 B.C.E. to 10 C.E. When a non-Jew wanted to be converted to Judaism but did not want to have to study for years, he came to Hillel asking to teach him everything he needed to know about Judaism and the Torah while standing on one foot; essentially he wanted to know the essence of Judaism. Hillel answered him by telling him that the most important aspect of Judaism and the most important meaning of the Torah was to not do to someone something that you would not want done to you, that the rest was just commentary, and to go and study. The most important thing was not faith in God or following all of the laws and prayers, but treatment of ones fellow human beings. If everyone prescribed to this, think how wonderful the world would be. Moral behavior trumps all. The interesting thing is that Hillel did not merely restate the famous commandment in the Torah of loving your neighbor as yourself. This was probably because this is such a blanket statement that on its face is hard to follow. Loving a neighbor that you might not like that much is really unclear and hard to follow and not everyone is capable of doing this but not doing anything hateful to your neighbor that you would not want done to yourself is relatively easy to follow and to understand. “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your

³⁹ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 110.

God.”⁴⁰ “You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”⁴¹

Paul in 2 Corinthians says that Judaism places the law over the spirit, but this in fact is disingenuous to Judaism, which incorporates both the spirit and the law. In fact, as Hillel most famously states when giving the essence of Judaism to the convert the spirit trumps the law. The law was never intended to be an end in itself; it must be tempered with common sense and kindness.

Judaism believes that God judges us by our behavior. Thus Jews believe that you do not have to be Jewish to attain salvation just that your behavior has to be ethical, kind, and just. “Oh man God has told you what is good and what God requires of you—only that you act justly, love goodness and walk humbly with your God.”⁴² It was written in the Palestinian Talmud, Nedarim 9:4, by Rabbi Akiva, “Love your neighbor as yourself is the greatest principle in the Torah.”⁴³ “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to God than sacrifices.” All people, no matter what religion, can attain salvation if they practice good actions. People attain salvation thru their actions. God Himself cannot forgive you for the sins that you have committed against another person. You must ask forgiveness from the one you sinned against. God can only forgive you for the sins you sinned against Him.

Judaism believes that God demands us to resist evil and the wicked and not to stand by silently and let bad things happen. “You shall burn the evil out from your midst.”⁴⁴ You are to bring the wicked to justice, not to love them, but not to hate them either. A biblical example of this is Moses’ killing of the Egyptian who was beating the slave.

Judaism being so law based can keep practitioners on the moral path. There are laws for every aspect of life, from honoring the not so easy parents, to giving more charity than one might otherwise want to give, to not gossiping. There is even a law called “the shop keepers law” that does not allow a shopper to mislead a shop owner by making the shop owner spend a lot of time showing a shop item that was never intended to be purchased. But so too the person who

⁴⁰ (Leviticus 19:33-34)

⁴¹ (Ex. 23:9)

⁴² (Micah 6:8)

⁴³ (Proverbs 21:3)

⁴⁴ (Deuteronomy 7:17)

practices all of these laws can mistake the laws for God and place the laws ahead of God. That does not make a good person.

What makes us special is that we were created in God's image. We are divine and thus need to elevate how we behave. One of the special qualities that man inherited from God is his ability to make moral judgments. That is special to man; he has been blessed with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to judge others accordingly. This makes a human life infinitely more important than any other life on this earth and that is why murder is always wrong. God made us in His image with a divine nature, we are unique individuals in our makeup, but we are also called upon to act divinely.

We are not automatons or puppets and we are born with a free will to choose do "bad" or "good," but we are born with the ability to be able to discern the difference. We are all born with good and bad impulses and the ability to act on either one, in Hebrew known as one's *yetzer hara* (evil impulse) and one's *yetzer tov* (good impulse). Humans differ from animals in that animals have no moral sense but they also do not have an evil impulse. Since it is natural to have an evil impulse as well as a good one, we are told in the Torah to love God with all your heart, but the Hebrew word for heart is spelled differently, with two letter bets instead of one, which is referring to our two impulses of good and evil. You should recognize and love God with both, always trying to use your moral conscious by choosing the good.

Humans are responsible, not outside forces and not socio economic forces, for the evil that is done. Humans create the outside forces. Since humans have a proclivity to do "bad" and to do "good", they need to be allowed to make peace with their evil thoughts and to learn how to deal with them correctly. People will do bad and good and need to learn how to deal with the bad.

The Torah insists on justice throughout the world. Every human is responsible and held accountable to the same moral laws and no favor is given to anyone. Each is equal in the eyes of the lord. "The Torah insists that neither rich nor poor may be favored: "You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God's'. The alien, too, is to be treated fairly: Decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or stranger."⁴⁵ There

⁴⁵ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 115.

is a midrash that says that God told the Jews and Moses at Mt. Sini that if they did not bring this one, moral, invisible, unknowable, God to the world with His ten commandments, that He would drop Mt. Sini on their heads.

The Torah and all of the Jewish laws went extremely far in translating its moral and spiritual obligations, so that no one could question what was good or what was evil. Obviously a human cannot be legally held accountable to be good. Justice and morality was to go beyond the law. But throughout the Old Testament it is quite clear that God wants humans to treat each other with kindness and with justice.

The essence of Judaism is moral passion and to hate evil. An example of where Judaism differs from Christianity is in the case of the central park jogger who was raped by a group of boys. She was raped and brutally beaten and left to die. The Arch Bishop of New York paid a visit to the boys in prison for one reason, to tell the boys that God loved them. To a Jew this was immoral. If God loves those boys then He is not a good God. The boys did not ask for repentance or ask for God's love, but the Bishop felt inclined to give it to them. This Bishop sent a loud message to the hundreds of Christians who devote their lives to the poor and the sick and the homeless. That message was: How to get a visit from the bishop? Commit the worst of crimes. This would go against any Rabbi, because the essence of Judaism is to fight evil and to promote the good and although one characteristic of God is love, love is not everything. Love should not come before justice. Justice is all-powerful in Judaism. Judaism insists upon hating evil.

Judaism has an intense and relatively complicated legal system to ensure good behavior, but sometime this creates too legalistic a society thereby diminishing the spirit. "In traditional Jewish terms, they sacrifice all concern for *Kavanah* (intention, meaning) in their quest to make sure that the *keva* (the fixed Jewish practice) is done correctly. In philosophic terms, such people adopt a legalistic approach to the law, concerning themselves with the details to the exclusion of the broader aims and spirit of the law..."⁴⁶

Laws are important for in order to become the best moral individuals that we can be we need to set a standard or a system of moral laws that are understood and that are universal. It establishes a framework for which to base if our actions are good or bad. "Rab Judah said in

⁴⁶ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 271.

Rab's name: A person should always occupy himself with Torah and good deeds, even if not for their own sake, for out of (doing good) with an ulterior motive he will (do good) for its own sake."⁴⁷ Repeating something becomes habit and habit becomes character. In Judaism the law has always played an important role within the religion, God demands it. The Jewish legal system holds a theological purpose as well as a moral one.

In the Torah justice is tied to love. God has stated to love your neighbor as yourself, to love the stranger (repeated 36 times throughout the Torah), and to love Him. God is our parent and like a parent has to teach their children how to behave it is done out of love.

How we treat the other or the stranger is of the utmost importance in Judaism. The Rabbi's always say it's not how your friends treat you, it is how they treat the busboy the valet or the housekeeper; its how you treat the other that is important. If your nanny's child is sick and your own child is sick, do you encourage your nanny to stay home to take care of her own child? When you take care of the stranger it is referred to as a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of God's name. When you do not take care of the stranger and do the opposite it is known as *Hillul Hashem*, a desecration of God's name. This is to be taken very seriously. One of the worst religious sins one can commit is doing bad or acting unethical while pretending to be religious. This is known in Hebrew as *Khillul ha-Shem* – literally meaning the desecration of God's name.

Kindness in Hebrew is *chesed*. Micah 6:8 tells us: "It has been told to you. O man, what is good and what God requires of you: Only to act justly and to love *chesed* (kindness)..." It is important to note that it has been told to man and not assumed and that acting with justice will bring goodness to a person's life and that they are just not to act kindly but they are to love acting kindly.

In his book, *Ahavath Cheses*, Chafetz Chaim, brings the concept, *ahavath chesed*, to our attention. He gives the example that if you met someone who was a genius at investing money and he assured you that if you invested in a particular piece of property you would double or triple your investment, you would probably invest. Chaim then says that two of the most renowned people in history when it comes to wisdom, Abraham and King Solomon, have told us to invest in kindness and justice and we will be guaranteed a good life filled with righteousness

⁴⁷ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 276.

and honor, why do we not listen. The Bible intimates that when you act towards each other with justice and kindness, you will be blessed for generations to come.

“The basic thrust of Kabbalah—human deeds have a cosmic effect. When human beings are virtuous they send beneficent impulses on high to promote the harmony...and cause the flow of the divine grace. When humans are vicious they send baneful impulses on high to disturb the harmony...so that the flow of divine grace is impeded.”⁴⁸ We must always be cognizant of the fact that we are translating the ancient Hebrew into English or Latin or Greek, and we are not always accurate. “In the later midrash, *Leviticus rabbah* the doctrine of *imitatio dei* is explicitly stated to be derived from this verse: ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Go and say to the children of Israel: My children, just as I am separate (from unholiness) so should you be separate. Just as I am holy so should you be holy. Ye shall be holy.’”⁴⁹ *Imitatio dei* does not imply that man can be God but that man should try and resemble his Maker, but God is different than man. Man should try and imitate all of God’s goodness. Jewish mystics believe that mans good deeds and mans imitation of God has a direct effect on the cosmic energy of the earth. Doing good deeds on earth brings Gods hands to earth and helps to restore the universe. Jews should embrace Christianity because as Maimonides pointed out it is Christians that have brought the Hebrew Bible to the world.

Christianity and goodness.

Some twelve hundred years after Sinai took place, Paul of Tarsus saw an opportunity to introduce Jesus to the Roman Empire. Paul took out the Jewish laws and put Jesus in their place and thus began Christianity.

A major difference between Judaism and Christianity is faith over works, but I am not convinced that Moses and Jesus would agree that their religions differ on this subject. As Jesus said to his early disciples, “I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law (Torah) until its purpose is achieved...Therefore,

⁴⁸ Louis Jacobs, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 188.

⁴⁹ Louis Jacobs, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 228.

the man who infringes even the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven.”⁵⁰

It was actually Paul who placed faith over works. Paul felt that if faith was not more important than works then Jesus’ death was in vain, for who performs more good works than Jesus. Belief in Christ was necessary in order to be saved. It was actually Pauline doctrine in Romans that said people were saved by faith plus sacrament and Martin Luther reinforced this belief; both espoused it was faith not good deeds and the law that was most important.

One of the main differences between Judaism and Christianity is that in Judaism anyone who performs good deeds can be saved where as in Christianity a belief and faith in Jesus is required in order to be saved. “...if good deeds could achieve salvation, there would be no purpose to the crucifixion and Christ would have died in vain”.⁵¹ Judaism believes that everyone has direct access to God, “God is near to all who call unto Him”⁵² Christianity believes that you must accept Jesus before you can call unto God.

Paul tell us: “Sin came into the world through one man...Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”⁵³ The “Decrees of the Council of Trent” (1545-63) stated: “Since the fall caused loss of righteousness, thralldom to the devil and liability to the wrath of God, and since original sin is transmitted by generation and not by imitation, therefore all which has the proper nature of sin, and all guilt of original sin is removed in baptism.”⁵⁴

Even if Jesus is believed to be God, to Jews this does not mean that he can forgive all sins. In the Torah it is written that God can only forgive sins committed against Him, but not against another. The person to whom you have sinned against must do the forgiving. Therefore, even if Jesus is God, he cannot forgive sins committed against another, according to the Torah.

⁵⁰ (Matthew 5:17-19)

⁵¹ (Galatians 2:21)

⁵² (Psalms 145:18)

⁵³ (Romans 5:12, 18-19)

⁵⁴ James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics IX*, (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2003), 562.

Jesus tells us to love your enemies and to offer no resistance, “Offer the wicked man no resistance.”⁵⁵ “Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors.”⁵⁶ On the other hand Judaism says to be just to your enemies and to resist evil and the wicked, “you shall burn the evil out from your midst.”⁵⁷ Moses’ killing of the slave master who beat the slave is a biblical example.⁵⁸ Although Judaism does not command to love your enemies, neither does it command to hate them. Judaism commands you to act justly towards your enemies, to bring your enemies to justice.

Jesus’ call to “Love your enemies”⁵⁹ can be seen as allowing evil to go on and not standing up for goodness. But Jesus was probably speaking about how individuals should respond to evil done to themselves and not to others. It would sadden me to think that Jesus would say not to resist evil being done to another, to just stand by and watch it happen. Although the New Testament does say to love your enemies and to resist evil, I would hope that this would not condone standing by in silence when someone was being hurt. The thought of this makes me shudder. Equally saddening would be the notion that no matter how bad a person’s behavior as long as he believes in Christ he can attain salvation. If a person murders millions of people and up until his deathbed does not have faith, and upon his deathbed has faith, does this mean he is saved. Does the person who does numerous good deeds in the world not be saved if he does not have faith in Christ? This would lead me to believe that we have a cruel God, not a kind One.

Christianity did away with a lot of the Judeo laws and faith became its obligation, but there is no evidence that Jesus would have supported this as Christianity’s central obligation. Jesus and his followers felt that the law should be followed until universal peace was achieved. “Therefore, the man who infringes even the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven”.⁶⁰ Even after Jesus death his followers wrote about the importance of following the law in order to be saved.

After the destruction of the Jewish temple and community in 70 C.E. by the Romans, Paul of Tarsus took over and decided that the law was not important in order to be saved. One

⁵⁵ (Matthew 5:38-9)

⁵⁶ (Matthew 5:44)

⁵⁷ (Deuteronomy 7:17)

⁵⁸ (Exodus 2:12)

⁵⁹ (Matt. 5:44)

⁶⁰ (Matthew 5:17-19)

only needed faith to be saved. Paul misinterpreted a verse in Deuteronomy, 27:15-25 where it said that if the particular eleven ethical obligations listed were not followed that the person would be cursed, but Paul mistakenly translated this to say that if the whole of the Torah was not followed you would be cursed. This was not the case, because no human could follow the whole of the Torah. No human is perfect like God. “There is no man so righteous who does only good and never sins.”⁶¹ The whole Bible is filled with stories of people who have sinned and repented and thus restored in God’s grace. How cruel of a joke for God to create imperfect beings but to expect perfection. He does not.

The Pauline notion in Romans made it clear that faith would bring one to God. Paul said that faith was more important than ones works. “We conclude that a man is put right with God only through faith and not by doing what the law commands.”⁶² But “Better that they (Jews) abandon Me (God) and continue to observe My laws because presumably if you follow God’s laws you will return to God.”⁶³

Jesus will come again and fulfill the messianic prophecy, this is the second coming. Jesus died for our sins so if you do not have faith in him no matter how many good deeds you do on earth you cannot be saved. You need Jesus in order to be saved. Even Jesus himself did not seem familiar with a second coming, telling his disciples that some of them would be alive when the messianic prophecies took place.⁶⁴

The notion that a person is saved only if they believe in Christ is not against other non-Christians, it is pro salvation. Christianity being so faith based can bring a lot of good to society because those who have great faith in Jesus want to emulate him and carry out acts of loving kindness as Jesus did here on earth. Being solely faith based can be a negative thing when the only thing that matters is ones faith and they do not care about ones actions of being kind and loving.

When Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek when someone strikes you we must read this in context of who he was speaking to, Jesus was speaking to individuals and not a nation or not how one should react to watching the cheek of another being slapped and standing by and not reacting. Jesus was clearly speaking on the micro level and not the macro. In our personal lives,

⁶¹ (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

⁶² (Romans 3:28)

⁶³ (Jeremiah 16.11)

⁶⁴ (Mark 9:1)

it is not generally a good idea to react to someone's meanness with violence. In this same verse Jesus also spoke about other personal areas of a person's life such as adultery, oath-taking, divorce, fasting, giving to the poor, prayer, etc. Jesus was on to something powerful here. If individuals took care of their behavior and made sure that they acted with kindness our world would be filled with kind people. Our biggest issue to deal with is ourselves.

Psalms tells us, "Those who love God—you must hate evil."⁶⁵ For Christians the biggest sin was no faith and sexual sin, but this has changed over time. This focus has changed over time due to all of the evil that has ensued in our society from mass murder to torture to rape, genocide and totalitarianism.

Some Christians feel that "all you need is love". But ask those that believe that "all you need is love" whom would they save first if their dog and a stranger were drowning. Most would save their dog first because they love their dog and do not love the stranger. But God's morals would say that a human life is infinitely more precious than an animal life and the human should be saved first.

Willigis Jager likens God's will to karma. Jager feels that every act we perform brings with it a reaction. So the more good will we put out there the more that comes back to us and goes out to others. Jager believes in the notion that habits become character so that if we put out goodness we become good. That is why Jager believes that guilt is a negative feeling and thus creates negativity and should be avoided. Thus, forgiveness plays a big part in religion. Jager believes that we need to take responsibility for our own wrong doing and bad behavior – we are responsible for our good and evil deeds. Love to Jager means acting kindly and performing good deeds. Jager says that, "Almost all religious systems work predominantly with moral appeals...morality is not the cause of mental attitude where action and conviction agree; rather, it is the effect. In esotericism, this is called wisdom, the harmony between Gods will and ours."⁶⁶ What Jager believes is that the gift of doing "good" benefits others but also ourselves; that how we treat others directly effects how we are treated. "...the strongest ethical motive in mysticism is the experience of oneness: the fact that we are one with all creatures and that in the final analysis what we do to others we also do to ourselves."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ (Psalms 97:10)

⁶⁶ Willigis Jager, *Search For The Meaning Of Life* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 2003), 194.

⁶⁷ Willigis Jager, *Search For The Meaning Of Life* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 2003), 197.

In Christianity, God is love (among other attributes). Paul writes, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”.⁶⁸

On their death bed, most people do not boast about how much time was spent in the office or how fast their sports car drives. They also rarely put their religion on their gravestone. Most people, at their end of life, talk about how much they loved. In Christian theology, we are born with Original Sin and the only way to combat this sin is thru faith in Christ. By faith that means devotion and belief in Christ’s ways. That is trying to live a Christ like existence, which has a direct effect on how we treat others. In Judaism, living this God like way is laid out in detail. However, it is not laid out in Christianity, but it is clear to see that Christ treated others with goodness and kindness, so to model oneself after him is a good thing. Jesus died for our sins. We are all born with original sin and thru faith in Christ and spreading his word people can be saved. We are to try to live as Christ by imitating his charitable and loving acts.

A legal system is needed to identify what constitutes the good and the right and the bad and the wrong. Catholics have the Pope to help do this. The Pope is able to make it clear on what is the right or wrong action to take on moral matters. Religions also rely on the individual’s moral conscious in moral matters, but Christ and Scripture guide them. Christianity felt that Judaism referred to the laws too much in determining good behavior, preferring instead the Holy Spirit. The law felt too cold and austere, too legalistic. If people follow a Christ like existence then all behaviors would automatically be good and kind.

In the New Testament, specifically in Romans, it is Paul who feels that the law is overrated. Historically, we can see that the canon law has been very important in Christianity. Christian historian Paul Johnson supports the notions of natural law, “which has been a part of Christianity since its inception...and provides a form of moral absolutism compatible with Christian teaching, which I believe is true for all times and peoples.”⁶⁹ Johnson says how evil and destructive moral relativism is to a society. Johnson says that, “Jewish moral theology is often superior to the Christian equivalent, in my judgment. Jewish teachers have been at it twice as long...and they have not been burdened, as Christian theologians and teachers have been, by

⁶⁸ (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

⁶⁹ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 66.

the immensely complicated dogmatic theology of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Eucharist...The Jews have escaped all of that, and they have in consequence been able to devote more time and thought to moral behavior. Indeed, that is what Judaism is really about – what a Jew should do or not do. As a result, they have acquired insights into perennial and difficult problems of morality which have been denied to Christians.”⁷⁰

Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are profoundly relevant to our lives today. How beautiful the world would be if we lived by these Ten Commandments. In Hebrew, the word actually is not commandment but statements. The first commandment is actually not a commandment but a statement, to “*Believe in God.*” A belief cannot be commanded. We can be commanded to try and know Him, but we cannot be commanded to believe in Him. The first commandment also says how God took us out of Egypt and delivered us out of slavery – now we owe Him. How can a human pay God back, by treating others kindly? The second commandment talks about false Gods. False Gods are more prevalent today than ever before but we do not recognize them as false Gods so they are more dangerous. False Gods can be education (the end for the parent is seeing their child get in to Stanford), or art (Bach always signed his manuscripts, for the glory of God), or money. God and goodness should be the only end in life, anything else that is treated, as an end, is a false God. There is no relationship between great education and goodness. Decency should be the first value. To the Greeks the beautiful was holy to the Jews the holy is the beautiful. Even love can be a false God. If God were love then love would be God. God is love but He is also justice and truth and punishment. When teens were asked which they would save if both were drowning, their pet dog or a stranger, most all secular teens said their dog because they love their dog and not the stranger. The third commandment is “*Do not use Gods name in vain.*” Once again the original Hebrew translates to don’t carry God’s name in vain. This means religious people who act despicable. God demands ethics but if you destroy God’s name you are disgracing the religion. Humans are not perfect but if you are wearing a yarmulke

⁷⁰ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 177.

or a cross then remember to take it off before entering a porno movie, for example. That way you ruin your soul and not Gods. The fourth commandment is keeping the Sabbath and making the day holy. The day must be elevated above the rest of the days. Now we are free to reflect. The fifth commandment is to “*Honor ones parents*”. Notice it does not say love. God does say to love your neighbor, to love the stranger, but to honor your parents. This is probably because many children are ambivalent towards their parents. If your parents were perfect, you will blame them because you will never be able to live up to them and if they weren’t perfect you will blame them for having imperfections. Just try to do the right thing as a parent because no matter what they will find a reason to be angry with you. As the old saying goes, “Grandparents and grandchildren’s attraction is so strong because they both have a common enemy”. The sixth commandment says “*Do not murder.*” It does not say do not kill. Murder and kill are two different words in Hebrew. There is immoral killing (murder) and moral killing. The seventh commandment is “*Do not commit adultery*”. There is sanctity to the family and it is between the married partners and God that makes it holy. The eighth commandment is “*Do not steal.*” In ancient times the original intent of this commandment was for kidnapping. But it also applies to property, although the tenth commandment kind of takes care of this. The ninth commandment “*Do not bare false witness*” was meant for truth in testimony to be used in court. The last commandment is “*Do not covet anything that your neighbor possesses.*” How nice it would be if we could get the world to obey the Ten Commandments for just one week? What a wonderful world it would be.

The Founders

Just as the founders created our constitution and declaration of independence to help shape America into the nation she is today, a religion must organize in order to help effect the world in a positive way. If people are not committed to morally and ethically changing the world, it will be hard to reach the goal of a kind society. Thomas Jefferson, who was not known as a religious man, believed that people could not be governed without a religion. Thomas Jefferson felt that a society’s right could not be secured when there was no bedrock (creator) to

secure them. Jefferson believed that you needed something other than the majority rule: “In God we trust” was the motto of the country.

It is hard for a government to enact goodness and we probably would not want it to do so. The founders instinctively knew this and that is why we have religious individuals and a nonreligious government, but in order to produce a moral society that society needs a legal ethical system of laws that hold the individuals responsible. A society cannot be good if its individuals are not good. In order to achieve a moral ideal or greatness in anything, be it sports or academics, a system is necessary. Being good is hard to achieve. Why not create a system for kindness and goodness in the world. Isn't that what most people want from others? In fact the seven laws of Noah are a good start to guarantee goodness in the world. Since all of mankind is decedents of Noah these moral imperatives can apply throughout the land. The Ten Commandments can be applied to the three major Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity alike. Practicing Jew have 613 laws that they are supposed to abide by, but Jews hold that following the Ten Commandments and Noah's laws are sufficient to ensure goodness in humanity. “The Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation...the doctrine of a supreme intelligent...sovereign of the universe...I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization.”⁷¹

When asked most people define themselves as “good”, but by “good” we do not mean just refraining from behaving badly, we mean an active pursuit of “goodness.” “Do not stand by while your neighbor's blood is shed.”⁷² “Justice, justice you shall pursue”⁷³ “And you shall burn the evil from out of your midst”⁷⁴ Most of us are content not actively helping others. That is why it is important to hold people accountable to a God based system of ethical laws.

“The foundations of morality in the West are religious. Though a moral individual may be irreligious, he acquired his moral values from his ancestors who in all likelihood were religious, and/or from Western civilization which adheres (or at least pays lip service) to moral values formulated by Judaism and communicated by Christianity. The ethical secularist is

⁷¹Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 110.

⁷² (Leviticus 19:16)

⁷³ (Deuteronomy 16:20)

⁷⁴ (Deuteronomy 17:7)

essentially living by moral values inherited from thousands of years of religion.”⁷⁵ I have a friend who was raised as a strict catholic and was sexually molested by a priest as a boy. My friend is kind and moral but he is raising his daughter without religion due to his one bad experience and she is a turning out to be a well-loved barbarian.

The moral principles of our western society are rooted in the tradition of scripture. This is known as “cult flower culture.” A person, who knows nothing about flowers and sees a cut flower, doesn’t understand that the flower needed the rich soil to nurture the flower. Eventually, without that nurturing soil, the flower will die. It is the same for western civilizations moral principles because they were rooted and nourished in religious soil. Once those roots dry up, so will the moral foundations of our civilization. Morality ungrounded in God is indeed a house built upon sand, unable to stand up against the vagaries of impulse and the brutal pressures of power and self-interest”.⁷⁶

Our founding fathers based our civilization upon Judeo-Christian biblical values of freedom, brotherhood, justice, dignity, and inalienable rights. If we do not have these inalienable rights then man is the moral barometer with his personal ideals and we are subject to his whims. That is how we ended up with Auschwitz, the Gulag Archipelago, Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge – they all denied God’s moral code and went with mans instead. True that there might be some naturally morally people but just as with an Olympic athlete or a musical prodigy, we do not stop teaching excellence in sports or music.

Americans have a democracy, we do not all vote the same and we are from different parties but we support the same President and work together to support the democratic process and our constitution. To better our society we need national unity. The concept that competition and differences bring out the best keeps us on our toes and keeps us real and truthful and trying to do better. We need dialogue between Jews and Christians to bring about ethical monotheism. Improvement needs a system.

The founders wrote in the Declaration of Independence that we are endowed “by our Creator” with certain inalienable rights. These rights are given to us by a transcendent moral source, God and cannot be taken away by man. Our Declaration of Independence gives us

⁷⁵ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1981), 74.

⁷⁶ Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man*, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 91.

inalienable rights. These are not rights given to us by great thinkers or brilliant men but rights given to us by God. Thus man cannot take inalienable rights away since man did not give us these rights. God is the source of our values and that makes American values exceptional. America calls itself a Judeo-Christian nation that is we have a secular government and a society based on religious values.

The founders viewed themselves as heirs to the Old and New Testament. The founders so identified with the Hebrews exodus and liberation that Jefferson wanted the American seal to depict the Hebrews leaving Egypt. Both the Hebrews and the Americans left one nations values for a new set of values based on liberty, under God, and e pluribus Unum, which translated from Latin to English means from many one. These three ideas, which America was founded upon, are written on every coin in America. The founders deeply believed in the God of the Old Testament, His biblical moral laws, and the Ten Commandments. This belief in universal morality and not relative morality is fundamental. We have separation of church and state. Past experience has shown that merging the two is not good for either. But we are a nation based on moral values, which shape our thinking and guide who we are and how we make the laws that govern us.

The founders along with other educated Americans at the time studied Hebrew because it was the language of the Old Testament in fact Hebrew was needed to graduate from Harvard and Yale adopted a Hebrew insignia and a verse from the *Torah* is inscribed on the liberty bell, “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land...”⁷⁷

Who ever said that Benjamin Franklin was a deist surely did not read Franklins autobiography. Benjamin Franklin clearly writes;

“That there is one God, who made all things.

That He governs the world by His providence.

That He ought to be worshiped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.

That the soul is immortal.

⁷⁷ (Leviticus 25:10)

And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter”.⁷⁸

Benjamin never questioned the existence of God. Benjamin believed the above to be essential in all religions in our country. Benjamin also believed that God was the fountain of wisdom. He also felt that we humans should try and imitate Jesus and Socrates.

The Old Testament along with the New Testament brings with it the best value system ever devised. This value system was adopted by our founders and incorporated into American society. Why is it that almost anywhere you go in the world America is seen as the best place to live? I would bet my money that it is based on our value system and how we treat one another. In America we are endowed by our creator with unalienable rights, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which cannot be taken away from us by man since man did not give them to us. Since we do not have a government based on religion and thus do not legislate kindness we do subscribe to a value system based on religious morals, and that can be seen by our founders giving us inalienable rights that have been endowed by our creator.

It comes down to rights versus obligations. The founders made them rights and laws and in religion they are obligations and covenants. All religious faiths are welcomed to America. The founders speak to the dignity of the human person and just as with the Bible the founders do not leave any human out regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religion—as long as you are a human being you shall be protected under one moral code. The United States centers its society’s citizens around law, just as the Torah has done.

The law is there to help guide man to a moral and ethical society. “As former vice-chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary Rabbi Simon Greenberg pointed out, the Declaration of Independence is to the Constitution very much as the *aggadah* (Jewish lore) is to the *halakhah* (Jewish law); in both cases the first element is the ideal that the second endeavors to articulate in real terms.”⁷⁹ Jefferson made the pursuit of happiness more important a priority than the pursuit of property, as Locke purported. Just as each year on the Day of Atonement, Jews have to account for all the times during the year that they should have been happy and did

⁷⁸ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1996), 74.

⁷⁹ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 30.

not react to it that way; Jews are supposed to speak about how they can live life happier and find a deeper meaning to it all.

The founders stressed that individuals' right to life liberty and the pursuit of happiness and laws were written to ensure that each individual is allotted the opportunity to have the freedom to achieve as much as they can. We are all born free with liberty to change our circumstances to go from a poor black fatherless child to the president of the United States of America. Equality does not mean equal. Some will make more money but we are free to be a Derrick Jeter and make millions. That is what American liberties are all about. We are all held accountable to the same moral standards so if you are rich and steal it the same punishment as a poor who steals. All men are equal in the face of the law.

A legal system is needed to ensure that people know what good and moral behavior is. The founders had read the Calvinist doctrine and the Thomas Hobbes doctrine that people are inherently selfish and thus a legal system was needed to see that people behaved morally and good. Yet those who followed John Locke believed that humans were rational and would be able to make moral decisions using reason. The Declaration of Independence said that... "some rights"--- "endowed by their Creator," are "unalienable" by any governmental authority. As a result, defining the right and the good is a matter, first, of individual conscience and, second, of majority vote with protections for minority rights.⁸⁰

America is an obsessed society when it comes to love. America is the only country that would have love on its postage stamp, but love is not everything. Love should not come before justice and the founders knew this.

Even George Washington, who is considered to be a deist said in his Farewell Address to Congress that the new country was in the care of divine providence and if the citizens behaved that God, would make sure that the nation would not break down. There is the example of President McKinley who felt that God should be looked to for guidance before making momentous decisions. "Shortly after the United States annexed the Philippines, he told a delegation to the White House how he reached that decision: 'I am not ashamed to tell you, Gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance that

⁸⁰ Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do The Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 268.

one night.’...It is always better to have God in the equation than left out of it (when it comes to making monumental decisions).”⁸¹

How many Americans know that inside of the room in Washington D.C. where the President delivers speeches to Congress and to the nation, directly behind the President, the Vice President, and the Speaker of the House, chiseled in the marble wall are the words “In God We Trust.” In addition, directly in front of the President, Vice President, and Speaker of the House, is a giant sculpture of Moses holding the Ten Commandments. This confirms that we are a God based nation with a nondenominational government. America is unique. It was our founders, Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln in particular that knew that the Hebrew Scriptures together with believing Christians and the Enlightenment period produced our unique God based liberty American system. It seems the founders knew that as God becomes less so does liberty.

If you believe in goodness, kindness, compassion, love, and justice (among other things) over evil, then these are the values that the Bible espouses. Thus, it is hard not to believe that the Old and New Testament has the best value system ever devised. If anything, all of the evil in the world should not make a person not believe in God and believe in humanity. God gave us the ability to do good and bad. We have the ability to create gas chambers or hospitals. God does not control our decisions. If He did the world would be a different place and we would be mere puppets. But with all of this cruelty I would rather believe in God then place my faith in humanity. There is one moral standard that the whole world should be accountable to, not one theology. We are humans created in God’s likeness and we have a mission to unite the world under the same moral code, Gods. We are like Jonah in the Bible, running away from our duty. We are in the midst of a storm.

God is needed in our society. “The God of Israel, the God of America’s founders, the Holy God who is made holy by justice (Isaiah), the God of the Ten Commandments, the God who demands love of neighbor, the God who endows all human beings with certain inalienable rights, the God who is cited on the Liberty Bell because He is the author of Liberty.”⁸²

Religion or belief in God is not magical. It is possible to have belief and not do good or not become wiser or kinder. The Bible can be used for good or bad. If you do not want to do “good”, you will not have to be good, you control your actions, and we have free will. You can

⁸¹ Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 40.

⁸² Dennis Prager, “If There Is No God,” World Net Daily (2008), accessed February 3, 2011, <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?pageId=72781>

choose to be beautiful or disgusting. But with this vehicle of moral values we can fill our desire to be better people and have a better world and go a magnificent distance.

We need to affirm that there is one creator of the world whose primary goal is for his creation to be kind to one another. This concept is as old as Abraham, almost 4,000 years old!