

Why Does God Allow Evil?

Vincent Genovese was a moderately successful businessman who sold aprons and coats to businesses in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, one of the five boroughs of New York City. He and his wife Rachel had five children. They had named their eldest child Catherine.

One day in 1954 Rachel witnessed a shooting near home. Scared and disgusted, Vincent and Rachel decided to escape the mean streets of Brooklyn. So they and their children packed their bags and moved to New Canaan, Connecticut.

However, their eldest child Catherine, known affectionately as "Kitty," stayed behind. She was 19, pretty, headstrong, and independent. Like most girls her age, she was interested in conquering the world, and New York City seemed like a good place to start. New York was big, exciting and mysterious; New Canaan was not.

Years later, Kitty moved to an apartment in Kew Gardens, Queens, another borough of New York City. She worked as a bar manager for a local tavern, about five miles from home.

On March 13, 1964, Kitty left work at 3:15AM. She parked her red Fiat about twenty feet from her apartment building. As she began to walk toward the entrance, she noticed the silhouette of a man in the shadows. Startled and frightened, she began to run in the opposite direction. The man ran after her. He had a knife in his hand.

The man was a fast runner. He caught Kitty, 5'1" and 105 pounds, at the end of a parking lot. He grabbed her. She struggled, yelling at the top of her lungs, "Oh my God! He stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!"

Lights flickered on in nearby apartments. Curious people opened their windows and looked outside. One resident, Robert Mozer, shouted, "Hey, let that girl alone!" Startled, the man stopped attacking Kitty and fled.

Kitty was bleeding badly. Staggering toward home, grasping the sides of homes, buildings and gates for support, she finally reached a locked door of her apartment building. She was barely conscious. Then her attacker suddenly reappeared.

The man later identified as Winston Mosely, a married father of two children, began to beat her. Kitty cried, "I'm dying! I'm dying!" Her cries woke up the neighbors. A French girl, Andre Picq, lived on the second floor. In court she testified, "I heard a scream for help, three times. I saw a girl lying down on the pavement with a man bending down over her, beating her."

Again, the attacker fled. Bleeding profusely, Kitty struggled to get up, stumbled to the back of her building, entered through a back entrance, and reached a hallway leading to the second floor. Moments later her attacker reappeared. "I came back because I knew I'd not finished what I set out to do," he said in a statement to the police. What did he "set out to do"? Rape and kill a pretty woman. Kitty happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

At 3:50AM a neighbor, Karl Ross, called the police. He was too late. Kitty was dead.

Kitty's ordeal lasted at least 32 minutes. She cried out several times, waking numerous neighbors. At least 38 people heard her cries or partly witnessed the attacks. And yet no one helped Kitty. No one called the police until it was too late.

One neighbor said, "We thought it was a lover's quarrel." Others said, "Frankly, we were afraid" and "I didn't want my husband to get involved" and, despicably, "I was tired." The chilling fact remains: Kitty was brutally raped and killed, and no one lifted a finger to help her.

Why didn't God help Kitty?

There's bad, there's evil, and then there's Hitler

About 10 million soldiers died in World War I. Sadly, Adolf Hitler was not one of them.

Many Germans in the 1930s and 40s liked Hitler. And they shared his hatred of the Jews. How else can one explain the Holocaust? "Perhaps the most striking feature of the discussion of the Jews' place in Germany was the obsessive attention paid to the subject, the avalanche of words devoted to it, the passion expended on it...In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, according to one estimate, 1,200 publications devoted themselves to examining the 'Jewish problem'....The prevailing general image of the Jews held them to be malevolent, powerful, and dangerous. They were parasitic, contributing nothing to society....yet living off that same society, nourishing themselves at their hosts expense."

Many Germans shared Hitler's belief that the "Jewish problem" must be solved. Therefore, during the early 1940s, many Germans went on a demonic, murderous rampage. By 1945, about 6 million Jews had been killed at concentration camps throughout Eastern Europe.

Many Jews lost their faith in God at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Dachau, Majdanek, Belzec, etc. One survivor wrote,

"God did not reveal himself in Auschwitz or in other camps. The survivors came out of hell wounded and humiliated. They were betrayed by the neighbors among whom they and their forefathers had lived. They were betrayed by Western culture, by the Germans, by the language and literature they admired so much. They were betrayed by the great beliefs: liberalism and progress. They were betrayed by their own bodies....A doctor who survived, from a religious background, who sailed to Israel with us in June 1946, told us: 'We didn't see God when we expected him, so we have no choice but to do what he was supposed to do: we will protect the weak, we will love, we will comfort. From now on, the responsibility is all ours.'"

Regarding the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen observed,

"The Holocaust...lasted years. It consumed about 6 million, 10 million, who knows how many million people, Jews and non-Jews, but 1 million Jewish children—infants, too.... Auschwitz was the diligent work of man, a constellation of camps and factories, all of it worked by slaves, all of them marked for death. Auschwitz was essentially about murder, about what people did to people. A human being could go from physician or musician or mother or child to ash in the course of a couple of hours. Geology had nothing to do with it. The mysteries are not scientific. They are theological.

"Here is my fear. Because we cannot understand Auschwitz, because it is an immense bump in the road in our belief in a good God—a 'just God,' the president said in his inaugural address—we will let it slip from memory, remembered maybe like some statue in the town square that memorializes something or other, maybe a war, maybe a man."

6 million Jews; 3.3 million Soviet prisoners of war; 1.1 million deportees who died in concentration camps; and hundreds of thousands of Gypsies: all of them murdered by Hitler's evil henchmen. Why didn't God stop Hitler?

Communism

Hitler belongs in the Hall of Fame of Evil Dictators. And he has company: Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Kim Il Sung and his pathetic hermit son Kim Jong Il, and numerous other communist dictators. Since the dawn of time, no one state or empire has killed more people than the communist regimes of the 20th century. Consider the following:

USSR: 20 million deaths

China: 65 million deaths

Vietnam: 1 million deaths

North Korea: 2 million deaths

Cambodia: 2 million deaths

E. Europe: 1 million deaths

Latin America: 150,000 deaths

Africa: 1.7 million deaths

Afghanistan: 1.5 million deaths

Communist parties: 10,000 deaths

Most of us cannot comprehend the magnitude of such evil: nearly 100 million people killed in the demonic, totalitarian pursuit of a perfect society. The numbers overwhelm us. We cannot see or prefer not to see the people behind the numbers. The victims are faceless and nameless; they've become mere statistics. In order to put a face on one such "statistic," consider Hava and her baby.

Hava's baby

One day, in 1937, undoubtedly in the still of night, Hava Volovich heard a knock at the door. It was the dreaded "midnight knock" at the door. A few imposing men entered. Brusquely they told her that she was arrested; for no good reason, she had become an enemy of the Soviet state.

There were millions before Hava and millions after her: innocent people arrested not because of something they did but for who they were. From the 1920s to the early 1980s, millions of Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Kulaks, Latvians, Jews, Chechens, Kazaks, and intellectuals were herded into cattle cars and sent to some of the most inhospitable places on earth, like Northern Siberia. There they spent 20 or 30 years cutting timber or mining gold or uranium, or building roads, canals and factories, and performing other sundry tasks for an industrializing Soviet Union. Almost 30 million people, most of them innocent, were sent to these prison labor camps, and almost 3 million of them died there.

While in one labor camp, deprived of her friends and family, Hava became desperately lonely. To fill such emptiness, she deliberately sought to give birth to a child. Eleonora was born in 1942. Hava described her experience in a short memoir:

"There were three mothers there, and we were given a tiny room to ourselves in the barracks. Bedbugs poured down like sand from the ceiling and walls; we spent the whole night brushing them off the children. During the daytime we had to go out to work and leave the infants with any old woman who we could find who had been excused from work; these women would calmly help themselves to the food we had left for the children...."

"Every night for a whole year, I stood at my child's cot, picking off the bedbugs and praying. I prayed that God would prolong my torment for a hundred years if it meant that I wouldn't be parted from my daughter. I prayed that I might be released with her, even if only as a beggar or a cripple. I prayed that I might be able to raise her to adulthood, even if I had to grovel at people's feet and beg for alms to do it. But God did not answer my prayer. My baby had barely started walking, I had hardly heard her first words, the wonderful heartwarming word "Mama," when we were dressed in rags despite the winter chill, bundled into a freight car, and transferred to the "mother's camp." And here my pudgy little angel with the golden curls soon turned into a pale ghost with blue shadows under her eyes and sores all over her lips...."

Hava was put to work cutting timber, and then was sent to a saw-mill. In the evenings, she would take a small amount of firewood and give it to the nurses in the children's home. In return she received a few precious moments with her precious Eleonora.

"I saw the nurses getting the children up in the mornings. They would force them out of their cold beds with shoves and kicks....pushing the children with their fists and swearing at them roughly, they took off their nightclothes and washed them in ice-cold water. The babies didn't even dare cry. They made little sniffing noises like old men and let out low hoots...

"This awful hooting noise would come from the cots for days at a time. Children already old enough to be sitting up or crawling would lie on their backs, their knees pressed to their stomachs, making these strange noises, like the muffled cooing of pigeons."

Because one nurse was assigned to 17 children, and because of the inherent cruelty of the labor camps, children were deprived of proper care.

"The nurse brought a steaming bowl of porridge from the kitchen, and portioned it out into separate dishes. She grabbed the nearest baby, forced its arms back, tied them in place with a towel, and began cramming spoonful after spoonful of hot porridge down its throat."

Slowly Hava's precious Eleonora began to fade:

"On some of my visits I found bruises on her little body. I shall never forget how she grabbed my neck with her skinny hands and moaned, "Mama, want home!" She had not forgotten the bug-ridden slum where she first saw the light of day, and where she'd been with her mother all the time...

"Little Eleonora, who was now 15 months old, soon realized that her pleas for home were in vain. She stopped reaching out for me when I visited her; she would turn away in silence. On the last day of her life, when I picked her up (they allowed me to breast-feed her) she stared wide-eyed somewhere off in the distance, then started to beat her weak little fists on my face, clawing at my breast, and biting it. Then she pointed down at her bed.

"In the evening, when I came back with my bundle of firewood, her cot was empty. I found her lying naked in the morgue among the corpses of the adult prisoners. She had spent one year and four months in this world, and died on March 3, 1944...That is the story of how, in giving birth to my only child, I committed the worst crime there is."

Why did God let Hava's baby die?

Why?

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen opined that "Auschwitz...is an immense bump in the road in our belief in a good God—a 'just God.'" Most of us grow up on the notion of a "just" God who embodies everything that is good. We're reared on the belief that "God is love" (I John 4:8). After all, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). However, if God loves us so much, why, then, is there so much misery in the world? Why are there close to 1.5 billion people in the world living on less than \$1 per day? Why are there over a billion people without access to clean water and sanitation? Why do millions of children die from malaria each year? Why did God not protect Kitty Genovese from her deranged killer? Why did God not stop Hitler, Stalin and the other evil dictators of the 20th century? Why did God not save Hava's baby?

These are uncomfortable questions because they challenge our belief in a "just" God. Most of us shrink in the face of pure evil, or of a devastating tragedy—for example, a Tsunami that kills almost 200,000 people in Southeast Asia. Unable to cope, unable to find meaning, unable to find comforting words to justify our belief in a "just" God, many of us fall back on clichés. For example, "God's ways are mysterious" or "It was God's will." Yet try saying that to a grieving, inconsolable Hava or to a Holocaust survivor. At best, we'd come across as ignorant of the reasons for such evil and misery. At worst, we'd seem callous.

There is, however, a scripturally sound reason for evil and misery: Satan.

Satan, the "god of this world"

The Bible describes Satan as the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11), and as one who has deceived the entire world (Revelation 12:9; II Corinthians 11:13-15). Moreover, Satan rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28:12-17), and will again try to take over His throne (Revelation 12:7). When he fails again, Satan and his demons will try to destroy God's Church (Revelation 12:17). In fact, the satanically-inspired mayhem in the end time will threaten mankind's very existence: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

What have we learned about Satan? He's an immensely powerful, power-hungry, perverted, proud, jealous, and angry spirit being who once had it all (Ezekiel 28:12-15) and then threw it all away in his vain attempt to overthrow God. And Satan hates us because (i) God loves us (John 3:16); (ii) we're destined to become members of God's family (Romans 8:16-17); (iii) we're destined to rule as kings and priests in God's kingdom (Revelation 5:10); and (iv) we'll inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34), which is what Satan has been trying to get his hands on for who-knows-how-long.

It's impossible to explain Hitler, Stalin, and Mao—not to mention the Holocaust, slavery, nuclear and biological weapons, 9/11, terrorism, the bubonic plague, pornography, and the other

innumerable maladies that have afflicted mankind since the dawn of time—without mentioning Satan's perverse influence.

As "god of this world," Satan has influenced a majority of the world's religious, socio-political, cultural, and academic institutions and traditions. Moreover, we have no choice but to live in this world. Given Satan's role in this world, this is not a comforting thought.

All of this, however, poses a conundrum.

A conundrum

As plainly and repetitiously noted, Satan is the "god of this world." He's influenced almost everything worth mentioning. Therefore, you'd expect that mankind has been in a depressingly downward spiral since Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit. You'd expect that the history of man consists of nothing but wars and more wars, disease and more disease, debauchery and....you get the point. And you would be correct.

However, the history of mankind has also been about progress, loosely-defined of course. We live longer, we eat more, we eat better, we're taller, we're even fatter—that in itself is progress, considering that for most of history mankind has faced the specter of starvation, not obesity. This, therefore, is the conundrum: Satan hates us, he has control over just about everything that matters in the world, and yet (for the most part) the lot of mankind has improved steadily—really, magnificently—over the last few hundred years. What gives?

The good 'ol days are now!

Suppose you could travel back in time to, say, pre-Revolutionary France. And suppose you wanted to meet the average French Joe or Jane, circa 1700. What kind of person would you meet? Well, first she would be young—frankly, there weren't many elderly people back then. The average life spanned thirty years. And she wouldn't be that pretty. Many commoners had untreated scabs, running sores and skin diseases (e.g. eczema) that made them unattractive. And don't get too near to her: a bad diet, stomach disorders, no dentists, no toothpaste, no floss, no Listerine—all of this contributed to her foul breath. And beware her odor, especially on hot days—one bath per week, all that wooly clothing, and no deodorant.

Now, consider the reverse. "Suppose your great grandparents, who lived four generations ago, materialized in the United States of the present day....they would be dazzled. Unlimited food at affordable prices, never the slightest worry about shortage, unlimited variety—strawberries in March!—so much to eat that in the Western nations, overindulgence now plagues not just the well-off but the poor, the poor being more prone to obesity than the population as a whole. Four generations ago, the poor were lean as fence posts, their arms bony and faces gaunt. To our recent ancestors, the idea that today even the poor eat too much might be harder to fathom than a jetliner rising from the runway.

"Many other aspects of contemporary life, taken for granted by those of us who lived it, would dazzle our recent ancestors. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the average American

lifespan was forty-one years; now it is seventy-seven years....History's plagues—polio, smallpox, measles, rickets—have been defeated, along with a stunning reduction of the infectious diseases that for pre-antibiotics generations instilled terror. Every one of our great-great grandparents would have known someone who had died from a disease that today is shrugged at....

"Many other aspects of present-day life would strike our recent ancestors as nearly miraculous. The end of backbreaking physical toil for most wage earners. The arrival of leisure, the typical person now engaged in exertion (either for pay or within the household) about half as many hours as in the nineteenth century. The advent of instantaneous global communication and same-day travel to distant cities. The end of formal discrimination against minorities and women, increasing opportunity while allowing those who succeed to feel their achievements are fairly won. Mass homeownership, with heated dwellings everywhere, cooled homes almost everywhere. The entire senior-citizen demographic cared for financially and medically, ending the fear of impoverished old age. Complete, and usually low-cost, access to information, art, and literature. Incredible advances in freedom: political freedom, freedom of expression....freedom from conscription."

It's difficult to argue against the contention that people in the Western World, particularly in the United States, enjoy longer, more leisurely, and healthier lives. What's more, people in poor countries have also improved their lot. For example, according to the UN, poverty throughout the world has decreased more in the last 50 years than in the preceding 500. In 1970 about 35% of everyone in poor countries was starving; now, 16%. Illiteracy has dropped by almost 60% in the last 80 years. The price of food has fallen dramatically, and it continues to fall. During the 1980s, the amount of poor people with access to clean water and sanitation increased by 25%. And life expectancy has increased everywhere, by at least 30 years. (The scourge of AIDS, an avoidable disease, has reversed this trend in many countries.) And the list goes on.

Still unconvinced?

Do you believe, as many people instinctively do, that man's morals are progressively getting worse? A cursory glance at the book of Genesis should dispel that notion immediately. In a mere 50 chapters describing in part the first few thousand years of our existence, we read about murder, lying, stealing, rape, incest, slavery, war, prostitution, paganism, and other societal ills. In fact, mankind was so bad that God destroyed all of them, save Noah and his family, in a great flood.

Human nature has been around since Adam and Eve. Satan has been around longer. Combine human nature and Satan's beguiling yet perverse influence, and you'd get a recipe for evil and misery.

Still unconvinced that the good 'ol days are now? Well, then, when were the good 'ol days? The 1960s? 1900s? 1850s? And if those days were so good, then perhaps you should ask an African-American if he would be willing to travel back in time to Mississippi in, say, 1850?

II Timothy

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power" (II Timothy 3:15).

Many people use this scripture as proof that man is becoming more immoral. Yet reread the scripture. The Apostle Paul did not say that the end time will be morally worse than the preceding generations. Instead, he is stating fact: in the end time, men will be vain, greedy, arrogant, blasphemous, etc. And at what time was man *not* vain, greedy, arrogant, blasphemous, etc.?

Sure, love will "wax cold" in the end time: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). The end time will be unparalleled. As noted, if God does not intervene (don't worry: He will!), we'd join the dinosaurs on the list of extinct species. And this is why the "love of many will wax cold." The wars, some of them nuclear; the terrorism, nuclear and biological; the dissolution of civil society; government's inability to provide basic services (e.g. sanitation, access to clean water); the breakdown of our health systems: all of this will drive mankind batty. Man will do anything to survive, even if that means murder, stealing, and lying.

What's my point?

I began this article with a few questions: Why did God not protect Kitty Genovese from her deranged killer? Why did God not stop Hitler, Stalin and the other evil dictators of the 20th century? Why did God not save Hava's baby? In short, why does God allow so much evil in the world?

We're unable to answer those questions. However, we do know that Satan exists, that he's indescribably evil, and that he has control over the world's socio-political, cultural, academic and religious institutions. And he has inspired some men and women to do very horrible things.

Next, I posed a conundrum: Satan hates us, he's in charge of this world, but history has been marked in part by progress. Such progress has made our lives longer, healthier, richer, more comfortable, and more leisurely. With respect to progress, think (for example) access to clean water and sanitation, refrigerators, cars, labor laws, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the end of slavery, air conditioners, vaccines, deodorant, clothing made of cotton, the 8-hour working day, universal education, etc.

So what's my point? One of the greatest yet most underappreciated gifts from God has been the human mind. David wrote, "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well" (Psalms 139:14). Indeed, as David noted, the human body is a complex and wonderful machine. And the mind is even more complex and wonderful, that is, if channeled in the right direction.

In short, God gave us the mental capacity to do great things, and to improve our lot. Channeled in the right direction, the human mind produced the art of da Vinci, Michelangelo and Norman Rockwell; Beethoven's 5th and 9th symphonies; Mozart's sonatas, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, John Locke's *Treatise on Government*; Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence," Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and Second Inaugural, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, James Watt's steam engine, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Newton's Laws of Gravity, Alexandre Dumas' *Count of Monte Cristo*; Alexander Graham Bell's telephone; Gutenberg's printing press; Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*; Michael Curtiz's film "Casablanca," and so much more.

Channeled in the wrong direction, the human mind produced the doctrines of Fascism and Communism, and the weapons that will one day threaten to wipe out humanity.

God's gift: the human mind and what He expects us to do with it

God has given us the mental capacity to improve and enrich our lives. To some degree, we haven't disappointed Him. How else can one explain the obvious progress we've made in the last few centuries? As noted, we're healthier, taller, and stronger than our ancestors. We have leisure and benefits (paid vacation! pensions! sick days!) that our ancestors could only dream about. For all of this and so much more, we should thank God!

God has given us the capacity and responsibility to take care of the earth. "God said unto them (Adam & Eve), 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Genesis 1:27).

God has also given us the capacity and obligation to govern ourselves; in other words, self-government (more on that later). With some notable exceptions, we have largely failed in this task.

And God has given us the capacity to resist Satan the devil: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7; more on that later).

In short, God has given mankind the mental capacity to succeed and prosper. And it's up to us, individually and as a society, to use our God-given capacity to improve and enrich our lives. Therefore, we have more control over our lives and destiny than we'd like to admit.

The answer to the questions

Earlier I asked, Why did God not protect Kitty Genovese from her deranged killer? Why did God not stop Hitler, Stalin and the other evil dictators of the 20th century? Why did God not save Hava's baby?

The answer: It was not God's responsibility to prevent Kitty Genovese's murder. It wasn't His responsibility to stop Hitler, Stalin, and the other monstrous dictators. And it wasn't His responsibility to save Hava's baby. Instead, it was our responsibility!

In short, God gave to mankind the obligation, capacity, and guidance (i.e. laws) to prevent evil and to punish evildoers. In short, it's not God's job to prevent a Hitler or a Stalin. It's not His job to prevent drive-by shootings, genocide, and drug use. And it's not His job to punish criminals. Rather, God gave the job of preventing evil and punishing evildoers to us. Unfortunately, for the most part, we've fallen down on the job.

It's our responsibility to prevent evil and to punish evildoers

Consider the following scriptures:

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons*" (Hebrews 12:3-8).

"Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalms 32:2, New King James Version).

"Impute" means to attribute fault or responsibility to someone or something. Therefore, put another way, this time by the New International Version: "Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him."

These scriptures attest to God's incredible mercy, love, and discretion. Like a loving parent, sometimes God will punish us if we commit sin. Sometimes divine punishment from a loving and merciful God is the only way we'll learn our lesson. Yet at other times, God won't punish us. In effect He'll say, "I forgive you. Don't let it happen again." And that's it. No punishment, no correction.

The inspired author of Hebrews classifies two sorts of humans: members of God's family, that is, converted people who accepted God's calling; and people who aren't members of God's family, for whatever reason. The inspired author says that God, as a loving parent, corrects His children. If there's no correction, then He doesn't consider them His children: "But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." *Thus God does not intend to correct and punish people who aren't part of His family. Thus God does not intend to prevent evil and punish evildoers.*

If not God, who, then, has the responsibility for preventing evil and punishing evildoers? The book of Genesis provides the answer.

The Noachian Covenant

God created Adam and Eve, and gave them His laws. However, they sinned and God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. They had many children, and their children had children, and so on, and soon the earth became populated. However, man strayed from God's laws (Romans 1:18-32).

Man became wicked, resorted to paganism, and engaged in sinful acts. Therefore God "saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:5-8).

Noah was a righteous man (Genesis 6:9). God, therefore, decided to start over with him and his family (his wife, three sons and their wives). God destroyed the rest of mankind with a great flood. After the flood, God made an "everlasting covenant" with Noah and reaffirmed His laws. The "everlasting covenant" gave man the *right to self-government*. In other words, by commanding man to punish sinners (for instance, the death penalty for murderers: Genesis 9:5-7), God gave man the right and obligation to enforce God-given and God-inspired laws:

"The declaration of the Noachic Covenant subjects humanity to a new test. Its distinctive feature is the institution, for the first time, of human government—the government of man by man. The highest function of government is the judicial taking of life. All other governmental powers are implied in that....Man is responsible to govern the world for God."

In the first seven verses of the 9th chapter of Genesis, God gave Noah and his descendants—in other words, mankind—the right and responsibility to take care of this earth, and to govern according to His laws and statutes.

The everlasting covenant with mankind

Man, however, has failed to govern according to the laws of God: "The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, *broke the everlasting covenant*" (Isaiah 24:5). Here God referred to an "everlasting covenant" with mankind. The only other place where an "everlasting covenant" with mankind (not specifically with the nation of Israel) appears is in the 9th chapter of Genesis; that is, the everlasting covenant by which God gave man the right to self-government. But man has failed to govern properly; in other words, man has broken "the everlasting covenant."

The 24th chapter of Isaiah, both depressing and hopeful

The 24th chapter of Isaiah is both depressing and hopeful. Depressing because mankind has broken the everlasting covenant—in other words, we've failed to govern properly. Hopeful because the chapter ends on a high note: Jesus returns to earth, deposes our governments, and establishes His divine and glorious kingdom. "It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously" (Isaiah 24:21-23). Thereafter, Jesus will establish and enforce His laws for the entire world:

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' *For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4)

Jesus will use His law to remake society. And in a nutshell, that's the purpose of God's law: to make society in His image. (God's law also leads us to Christ.)

The purpose of law

The law is a mirror to a society's soul. The law and its fair application speak volumes about what a society values and doesn't value. For example, capitalist societies, such as ours, value private property. Therefore we have a copious amount of law that defines property and regulates property transactions (e.g. buying and selling, title searches, deeds, etc.).

Moreover, the "legal system of any society is a mirror that reflects, necessarily, the structure of power in that society. If we understood exactly and completely how the legal system of some society worked, we would also have insight into who counts in that society, who has the power and the influence and the authority; and who does not."

Applying these purposes to biblical law: God designed His law to teach us how to act toward Him and each other. Therefore, the law teaches us about what's important and what's not. And the law serves as a reminder that God is in charge.

Law in the Bible

The definition of sin is the transgression of God's law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). With the exception of Jesus, everyone—from Adam until now—has sinned. Solomon said, "for there is no one who does not sin" (I Kings 8:46). The Apostle Paul wrote, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God" (Romans 3:23). Because "sin" is the transgression of God's law, and because everyone has sinned, God's laws have thus been around since the Garden of Eden.

The book of Genesis records in part the history of how Adam's family grew into tribes and then nations. These tribes and nations were supposed to codify and collect God's disparate laws into legal systems. Unfortunately it did not work out this way.

By the time we reach the 6th chapter of Genesis, mankind had discarded God's laws. "Wickedness" was the norm (Genesis 6:5). Therefore God destroyed mankind in a great flood and started anew with Noah and his family. As we've seen, God made an "everlasting covenant" with Noah. In short, he entrusted Noah—and by extension, us—with the right to self-government. As noted, "The declaration of the Noachic Covenant subjects humanity to a new test. Its distinctive feature is the institution, for the first time, of human government—the government of man by man."

Man has broken the "everlasting covenant." By and large, we've been unable to govern according to God's laws and principles (Isaiah 24:5). However, God found a beacon of hope in Abraham. Bucking trend and custom, Abraham obeyed God's laws, commandments, and statutes (Genesis 26:5). As a result, God promised to bless Abraham and his progeny. He promised that Abraham's progeny would grow into great nations. One such nation was Israel.

After Israel's exodus from Egypt, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God reminded the Israelites about His law; "remind" because God's law has been around forever. Hence the fourth of Ten Commandments: "*Remember* the Sabbath Day..."

At Sinai, God began by delivering His guiding principles, codified as the Ten Commandments:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness [i.e. lie] against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

It's safe to assume that God gave these same Commandments to Adam and Eve. He had to remind Israel about them because they had spent the previous 430 years in a very pagan Egypt.

With respect to how mankind should govern itself, the Ten Commandments should be our guiding light. In ancient Israel, they were the Commandments around which all other laws, judgments and statutes revolved. And the Ten Commandments teach us how to relate to God (#s 1-4) and each other (#s 5-10).

Moreover, these Commandments are timeless. Each Commandment is reconfirmed in the New Testament:

No polytheism: Acts 14:15

No idolatry (no graven images): I John 5:21

No taking God's name in vain: Matthew 7:21-23

Observe the seventh-day Sabbath: Mark 2:28

Honor your parents: Ephesians 6:1

No murder: I John 3:15

No adultery: I Corinthians 6:9-10

No stealing: Ephesians 4:28

No lying: Colossians 3:9-10

No coveting (no lust): Ephesians 5:3

Moreover, the Ten Commandments highlight behavior that, if not stopped, would tear a society apart. The first four Commandments proscribe behavior that would necessarily lead Israel (and by extension, us) away from the true God. The next six Commandments proscribe behavior that would destroy civil society. Murder cheapens the value of human life; adultery tears apart marriages, the bedrock of society; stealing destroys the sanctity of private property; lying destroys trust between neighbors; and coveting implies that nothing is safe (your property, your spouse, your job, etc.) from the lustful eyes of others.

God designed these Commandments to be the guiding principles of ancient Israel. Moreover, by obeying these laws, Israel would serve as an example to other nations: "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the *sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'*" (Deuteronomy 4:5-6).

The Ten Commandments were the bedrock of Israel's legal system. The legal system comprised the Ten Commandments, laws, judgments and statutes. Law is "a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority; and the whole body of such customs, practices, or rules." Judgments are formal utterances "of an authoritative opinion, or an opinion so pronounced, or a formal decision given by a court." And statutes are laws "enacted by the legislative branch of a government."

The sources of biblical law are found primarily in the books of Exodus (chapters 20 through 34), Leviticus, and Deuteronomy:

Exodus 20-34 and the book of Deuteronomy: mostly criminal and civil laws.

Leviticus: addresses the role of the Levites in Israelite society. They performed duties (e.g. taking care of the Temple, administering sin, burnt and other offerings, etc.) that demonstrated how the Israelites should worship God. This book also includes the most complete description of God's holy days and festivals (chapter 23, more on that later), and His dietary laws.

The revolutionary aspect of God's laws

In many ways the laws of God were revolutionary. Many biblical skeptics claim that they were a mixture of Egyptian and Babylonian law (i.e. the Hammurabi Code). This is untrue. "Mosaic law is in fact radically different from all such legal collections. In the first place it is a religious law: here God is not the guarantor of the laws (as in Hammurabi's code, for instance); he is the author. Next, since the law is the 'charter of the Covenant with God,' its prescriptions (unlike other Middle Eastern texts) are often supported by a justifying motive.... The substance differs, too. Since the legislation is designed to safeguard the Covenant, the penalties are especially severe for all the crimes against God: idolatry, blasphemy, and those affecting the purity of the elect people, for example, bestiality and sodomy. But for the rest... *it is markedly more humane.* There is no death-penalty for property offences, for instance, whereas these are dispensed

unsparingly in the Hammurabi code. The slave was protected against his master's abuse. The children—explicitly—must not be punished for the sins of their fathers (compare the quite barbarous opposite in China!). Mutilation, much practiced in horrible forms in the Hammurabi and Assyrian laws, is totally absent in the Mosaic code....The 'eye-for-an-eye' principle...was itself a limitation to blood-feud...Finally, quite unlike the Hammurabi code which provides different satisfactions and different penalties according to the social condition of the parties (notably the privileged, the commoners, and the slaves), *the Mosaic code assumes equality before the law*. There was no special status for the priesthood or aristocracy, and even slaves had the protection of the law"

Equality before the law—what a revolutionary concept, especially in the second millennium BC! "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you" (Deuteronomy 5:12). Here God says that everyone—regardless of status, occupation, or even origin—must observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath was truly revolutionary. Despite its creation at Creation, no other society had an ordained day of rest for everyone. No other society taught that everyone had the same rights, in this case the right to rest on the Sabbath. The Sabbath, therefore, was not merely a command; it was a blessing.

The notion of equality was foreign to the ancient world. Instead, inequality was accepted as natural. Aristotle said inferior people are happiest when ruled by their superiors. "It is clear that the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior, and the one rules and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.... And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different, for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life. It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and the others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right." God disagreed, and inspired laws that created an egalitarian society.

In short, when Thomas Jefferson proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," he was unknowingly referring to timeless principles enshrined thousands of years earlier in God's laws, holy days, and festivals.

God's holy days and festivals

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies'" (Leviticus 23:1-2). What follows in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus are descriptions of God's holy days and festivals, including the seventh-day Sabbath.

The purpose of the seven holy days and festivals (Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits, Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles and the Day immediately following the last day of such Feast—enumerated

in Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16 and elsewhere) were educational. They reminded the Israelites that:

God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt (Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread);

God had blessed them (the Feast of Firstfruits, or Weeks);

God will protect them when they're in battle, and has provided them with special events throughout the year, announced by the blowing of *shofars* or trumpets (hence the Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets);

God will forgive them when they repent of their sins (Day of Atonement); and

God provided for them during their forty-year trek in the wilderness, and will continue to do so (Feast of Tabernacles and the Day immediately following this Feast, commonly referred to as the "Last Great Day").

By forcing the Israelites to do the same things (e.g. provide offerings, refrain from working, etc.) on the same days, and worship in the same manner with the same people, the holy days and festivals also reminded them that they shared a common heritage, destiny, and God. Thus the holy days and festivals (and the egalitarian laws) created a sense of collegiality, and of nationalism and patriotism, three necessary ingredients for building a nation-state. In essence, the holy days and festivals (and the laws of God) were the social glue that God used to bind the Israelites into a nation. (The holy days and festivals also provide a prophetic glimpse of the future.)

Crime & Punishment

"An eye for an eye"—a pithy phrase reminiscent of Charles Bronson's *Death Wish* movies, in which he's a vigilante who kills murderers, rapists, muggers, and other criminals. The phrase, however, originates in the Bible: "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deuteronomy 19:21; Exodus 21:23-24; Leviticus 24:20).

Many Americans don't believe in the death penalty. They point to the indisputable cases of innocent people on death row, although it has never been proved that an innocent man or woman has been put to death. However, their revulsion goes beyond this. They dislike, and some hate, the very notion of the death penalty. They believe the State can never justifiably take a life in retaliation for the life taken by a convicted murderer.

There are obvious flaws in our justice system. And every Christian should shudder upon learning that an innocent person was sent to death row. However, we should also realize that, in no uncertain terms, God sanctions the death penalty. In the formula "life for eye, eye for an eye," God is saying that the punishment should fit the crime. Besides, as already noted, this brand of divinely-inspired justice was itself "a limitation to blood-feud."

God inspired the Israelites to create a legal system that included the death penalty for convicted murderers, rapists, idolaters, people who engage in witchcraft and who willfully break the Ten Commandments. The operative word, however, is "convicted." Each alleged criminal has his day in court. Based on evidence presented in court, and on the testimony of no less than two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6), the judges decided whether he is guilty of the crime.

The penalty varied according to the crime. "For the most serious crimes, such as murder, adultery, and idolatry, the death penalty was prescribed. Other punishment...were stoning...exclusion from the community...and corporal punishment, limited in Deuteronomy 25:3 to 40 lashes....Fines and financial compensation were also used, as in Deuteronomy 22:13-19, where the man who falsely accuses his wife of adultery is fined by the elders....Other penalties include the confiscation of property (Ezra 10:8), and the *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation: 'Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot'....This may sound severe, but it was originally intended to set a limit on the revenge taken by injured parties. It was often taken to mean financial compensation...and in any case, in contrast to the code of Hammurabi, Deuteronomy 24:16 states that retaliation cannot be exacted from relatives, but only from the offender."

Apparently there were no prisons in ancient Israel. However, someone might be kept in temporary custody: "While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him" (Numbers 15:32-34).

The death penalty, now and then

The anti-death penalty proponents also claim that the death penalty is not a deterrent. They have a point. After all, in states that have the death penalty (e.g. Texas), there has not been a corresponding decline in the murder rate.

However, in our justice system, justice isn't swift. In many cases, the convict files umpteen appeals and thus spends decades on death row. And when his time is up, the community does not witness the execution. Thus the chance for deterrence is lost.

In ancient Israel, this was not the case. Justice was swift and the community witnessed the execution. Would-be offenders were thus deterred from pursuing a life of crime because they did not want to share the fate of the person who was executed before their very eyes.

Kitty's killer

Winston Mosely killed Kitty Genovese. He also admitted to several burglaries and rapes. For killing Kitty, he was sentenced to death—in God's eyes, an appropriate punishment. However, his sentence was later commuted to life in prison. While in prison, in 1968, during a transfer to a hospital in Buffalo, New York, Winston overpowered a guard and stole his gun. He took five people hostage and raped a woman in front of her husband. The FBI caught up with Winston in an apartment in downtown Buffalo, where he surrendered.

Why is Winston still alive? Why is he being fed and clothed with our tax dollars? A long time ago God placed us in charge. He gave us laws and guidance to live successful, prosperous, and peaceful lives. He gave us the job of preventing evil and punishing evildoers. However, we've failed. Our failure is why Winston is still alive.

Thirty-eight people heard Kitty's cries for help. Some of them had partly witnessed the attacks. And they failed to help her. Imagine the plight of her parents, plagued by the memory of their bruised, battered, bloodied precious daughter crying out for help, and her neighbors turning a deaf ear to her cries.

Our courts failed to send Winston to the electric chair. How did he repay our generosity? He escaped prison, took five people hostage, and raped a woman in front of her husband.

We cannot blame God for not helping Kitty. We cannot blame God for not punishing her killer. We should blame ourselves.

What if we didn't appease Hitler

In the 1930s Hitler denounced the Versailles Treaty, built a new air force, rebuilt the German army, militarized the economy, and reinstated the draft. He supported Franco in the Spanish civil war (1936-1939). He remilitarized the Rhineland, a huge tract of land in Western Germany, which contained large deposits of minerals. He collaborated with Mussolini and imperial Japan. He annexed Austria (called the *Anschluss*) and occupied part of Czechoslovakia in 1938. He conquered the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. He also began to persecute the Jews.

Meanwhile, Britain and France were busy in diminishing the sizes of their armed forces. In 1936, while Hitler was remilitarizing the Rhineland, carefree Parisians were gossiping about the latest scandals in France. The United States was busy in passing neutrality laws and legislation that created FDR's New Deal.

Together, Britain, France, and the United States had the wherewithal to stop Hitler. The French army alone was superior to Germany's in 1936. And yet we appeased Hitler. In September 1938 British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain waved a piece of paper (the Munich Pact) with Hitler's signature on it to throngs of people at an airfield. Chamberlain declared that he had achieved "peace for our time." Several years later, about 55 million people were dead—25 million soldiers and sailors, and 30 million civilians.

We (France, Britain, and the U.S.) had the power to stop Hitler. Instead we appeased him until it was too late. Therefore, we should not blame God for not stopping Hitler. We should not blame God for not stopping the Holocaust. We should blame ourselves.

Imagine history without Stalin

In the early part of the 20th century, Tsarist Russia was dying. A decrepit regime out of touch with the ordinary Russians, and weighed down by the enormous costs—both human and financial—of World War I, the Tsarist government collapsed in 1917. A succession of parties

jostled for primacy. Eventually, the relatively small but very organized Bolsheviks seized power in 1918. The Bolsheviks were led by Lenin, and after his death, Stalin, two men on the Mt. Olympus of Evil.

Shortly after their coup, the Bolsheviks encountered resistance from a gaggle of nationalist groups, led mostly by officers and luminaries of the deposed Tsarist regime. They're known to history as the "White" Russians, in contrast to the "Red" Bolsheviks

After seizing power, the Bolsheviks signed a peace treaty with Germany and withdrew from World War I. This was upsetting to the Czechoslovakian Brigades, who were in Russia to assist the Tsarist armies in World War I. After learning about Russia's withdrawal from World War I, the Czech Brigade declared its intention to go to the French front to fight for an independent Czechoslovakia. The Bolsheviks prevented their departure. Angry and vengeful, the Czech Brigade retaliated by blowing up the Trans-Siberia railroad and delivering assistance to the anti-Bolshevik forces.

A civil war ensued. On one side: the professional "Red Army" led by Leon Trotsky. On the other side: a motley collection of anti-Bolshevik groups aided by the Czech Brigade and the Allied nations of World War I—Britain, France, and the U.S. The allied nations sent money, materials, and men to the anti-Bolsheviks. They had four goals: (1) in the chaos of revolutionary Russia, they wanted to prevent imperial Japan from establishing an empire in the East; (2) they wanted to prevent Allied goods—guns and materials provided to the Tsarist government—from falling into German and Bolshevik hands, (3) they wanted to help the White armies overthrow the Bolsheviks and bring Russia back into the War, and (4) they wanted to rescue the Czech Brigade so they could rejoin the war against Germany.

Unfortunately the Allied Powers (including the U.S.) did not provide enough money, materials and men. It's not entirely our fault. The anti-Bolsheviks lacked coordination and clarity. But in the end, it doesn't matter: the Bolsheviks prevailed and, sadly, the rest is history.

We had a chance to provide more support to the anti-Bolsheviks. Imagine if the anti-Bolsheviks prevailed: Lenin reduced to a footnote of history; no Stalin; no Gulag; no Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that helped set the stage for World War II; therefore, possibly, no World War II; no Cold War; no Korean War; no Vietnam; no costly arms race. And possibly Hava Volovich would have led a normal life. Her baby would not have died in some horrible labor camp.

Should we blame God for not stopping Lenin and Stalin? Should we blame God for letting Hava's baby die? Or should we blame ourselves?

Entirely our fault?

No, it's not entirely our fault. As demonstrated in an obscure, ancient ceremony on the Day of Atonement, one of God's holy days, Satan is symbolically portrayed as the inspiration for evil in the world.

The Day of Atonement

"Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make *atonement* for you before the LORD your God" (Leviticus 23:27-28).

Atonement means "reparation for an offense or injury." In other words, if you do something wrong, you must pay. Each person should repent when he or she sins. What is sin? As noted, it's the transgression of God's law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). In other words, whenever we break God's commandments (including His Holy Days and Festivals), we sin. And God will forgive us only when we repent.

Whenever a particular Israelite sinned, God expected him or her to repent. However, He also ordained a *national day of repentance*: the Day of Atonement, which occurs on the tenth day of the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar (corresponding to our September or October). On this Day, God commanded the Israelites to fast in recognition of their sins, and of their need for God's mercy. God also commanded the high priest (Aaron in Leviticus 16) to perform an elaborate ceremony consisting of the selection of two goats: one for the "Lord," to be slain as a sin offering; and one that will symbolically bear responsibility for Israel's sins.

"He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the *scapegoat* shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness....Then he shall kill the *goat of the sin offering*, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness" (Leviticus 16:7-10, 15-16).

The slain goat was Israel's "sin offering." The live goat was symbolically responsible for Israel's sins: "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21-22). Notice that this goat was escorted into the wilderness by a "suitable man."

The live goat is inappropriately labeled as the "scapegoat." This term implies that the goat was unfairly blamed for the sins of Israel. However, this word is translated from the Hebrew word *Azazel*, which literally means "goat of departure." *This goat of departure symbolically bore responsibility for Israel's sins.* And in departing, it symbolically took Israel's sins with it into the wilderness.

Biblical symbolism & metaphor

The Bible is rich in metaphor and other figures of speech. For example, Jesus is referred to as a Lamb; the dictator who fights Christ at His return as a beast; and Satan himself as a dragon and roaring lion: "your adversary the devil walks about like a *roaring lion*, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Jesus was not a literal lamb, and the dictator will not be an actual beast. Similarly, Herod was not a fox (Luke 13:32).

God's Holy Days and Festivals are also rich in metaphor and symbolism. For example, God commanded the Israelites to slay a spotless lamb in commemoration of the Passover. (In Egypt, God passed over the Israelite households with the blood of slain lambs on their doorposts, on His way to slay the firstborn of each Egyptian household. This act provoked Pharaoh into releasing the Israelites from bondage.) Moreover, God commanded the Israelites to eat unleavened bread for the seven days following Passover, in commemoration of their hasty flight from Egypt; their exodus was so sudden that their bread did not have time to rise or leaven. Similarly, God commanded them to live in "booths," or temporary dwellings, for seven days during the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar. "You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:42-43).

The significance of the symbolism inherent in these Holy Days and Festivals became apparent in 31 AD. Only then did the apostles realize that, for example, the ancient Passover foreshadowed Jesus' death: hence Paul's designation, "Christ our Passover." By calling Jesus "our Passover," Paul demonstrated the Christian relevance of God's Holy Days and Festivals, as found throughout the Old Testament. Elsewhere, Paul writes, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a *festival* or a new moon or Sabbaths, *which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*" (Colossians 2:16-17). Here Paul described the Festivals as "shadow(s) of things to come..." In other words, the Festivals and Holy Days foreshadow, or predict, certain significant events. The Passover foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus "our Passover." What, then, do the other Festivals and Holy Days signify? They reveal God's sequential seven-step plan for man:

Passover: Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice. "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (I Corinthians 5:7);

Feast of Unleavened Bread: In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened "bread from heaven," that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to "*keep the feast* (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:7-8).

Pentecost, anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits*: Those who have God's Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23, James 1:18, Revelation 14:4), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits. Pentecost is also the birthday of Christianity and God's Church, which is the collection of God's saints or firstfruits.

Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets: The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (I Thessalonians 4:16).

Day of Atonement: What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in the aforementioned ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice in the first century and foretells Satan's banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be "at one" with God.

Feast of Tabernacles: After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

The Last Great Day immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

The *Day of Atonement*, the fifth sequential step in God's plan for us, follows the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing Trumpets, which represents the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the saints. What happens after Jesus returns? "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1).

Satan being thrown into the abyss from which he can't escape is remarkably similar to the aforementioned ceremony on the Day of Atonement, in which the live goat that symbolically bears responsibility for the "iniquities of the children of Israel" is led into the "wilderness by the hand of a suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21-22). In consideration of Satan's fate and of how he is partly responsible for the sins of the world, the live goat in this ceremony on the Day of Atonement represented Satan.

Satan, part II

In the ancient ceremony, the live goat bore the sins of Israel. In other words, it was largely responsible for the sins of Israel. However, because the Israelites sinned, they had to atone for their dastardly deeds; hence the term "Atonement."

It's clear that the goat killed as a "sin offering" foreshadowed Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice. The other goat, which bore in part the responsibility for the sins of Israel, symbolizes Satan.

As demonstrated by this obscure ceremony on the Day of Atonement, and by extrapolation, Satan is partly responsible for the evil in the world. The Day of Atonement also demonstrates that when Jesus returns, Satan will receive his comeuppance.

The Day of Atonement also reveals that we, too, are partly responsible for the evil in this world. Otherwise, the call for repentance on that Day makes no sense.

Satan is a tempter who's been plying his craft and honing his skills for a long, long time. However, he can't force us to do something. Instead, by playing on our weaknesses and temptations, Satan cajoles and entices us into sinning.

Therefore, who's responsible for not helping Kitty Genovese? Satan and us. Who's responsible for not stopping Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Mao et al? Satan and us. Who's responsible for letting Hava's baby die? Satan and us.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"

It seems like simple advice, offered long ago by James in his self-titled biblical epistle. If we resist the wiles and temptations of Satan, he'll flee from us. Resisting Satan, however, requires that we do not give in to our temptations or weaknesses. That's the hard part.

We all have weaknesses. Unfortunately Satan knows them, and he'll tempt us accordingly. Therefore, one of the first steps on the way to salvation is the acknowledgement of our weaknesses, and the determination to not give into them. Hence Paul's command: "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Romans 13:14). For example, if watching horror films is your weakness, stay away from the Horror Channel.

First things first: we must "clothe" ourselves with Jesus Christ. As James wrote, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Resistance is futile unless we first submit to God. Submitting to God implies that we must try to obey his Commandments, observe His holy days and festivals, pray, fast, read the Bible, and repent when we sin. (From our statement of beliefs: "Repentance is the act of acknowledging one's sins, and then resolving to fully obey God and then is manifested by positive change. It begins when God opens a person's mind to see himself in comparison with God and His law. True repentance is the first step toward reconciliation with God, and therefore ultimate salvation.")

Submitting to God also implies that He called you in the first place. Paul wrote, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). In other words, when God calls us and begins to open our minds, we become aware of our sins. We realize that sin is the "transgression

of the law." And we realize that Jesus died as our "sin offering" (Romans 8:3). This acknowledgement should lead us to repent.

However, as demonstrated by Jesus' parables, God is not calling everyone now. "He [Jesus] answered and said to them [His disciples], 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given'" (Matthew 13:11). Therefore, is there any hope for happiness outside the Church?

Yes, there's hope

The blessings of being in the Church—of accepting God's call and becoming converted—are manifold: you're no longer deceived, you know how to live in a godly manner, and you'll likely take part in the first resurrection (I Corinthians 15:23, Revelation 20:4-5). Moreover, we'll reign as "kings and priests" in Jesus' millennial Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Who wouldn't want that?

However, God is not calling everyone now. Therefore, can people outside the Church lead peaceful and successful lives if God hasn't called them? Of course! Most of our friends and coworkers are probably not in the Church. How many of them are murderers, rapists, burglars, or prostitutes? How many of them have been incarcerated? How many of them have acquired AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases? How many of them are married and have good or decent jobs? How many of them seem happy, or at the very least, content?

Paul wrote, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them*" (Romans 2:12-15). Here Paul referred to uncalled and unconverted yet kind and law-abiding Gentiles. By doing good deeds and eschewing evil, these Gentiles were unconsciously obeying the laws of God.

God created human nature. He hardwired us to have the capacity to do both good and bad. The dual-capacity of human nature explains the presence of atheists and agnostics in humanitarian organizations (e.g. CARE International, Doctors Without Borders, etc.). It explains, for example, how an atheist can devote his time, money—and in some cases, life—to helping needy people overseas. It also explains how the "Gentiles" in Paul's epistle "do by *nature* things required by" God's law.

Florence Nightingale did not know the truth of God. Contrary to common belief, Mother Teresa did not know God's truth. However, they and so many others devoted their lives to helping people. Like the "Gentiles" in Paul's epistles, they appealed to the "good" part of their divinely-created human nature. "Without knowing the written law of God, people in pagan society generally value and attempt to practice its most basic tenets. This is normal for cultures instinctively to value justice, honesty, compassion, and goodness toward others, reflecting the

divine law written in their heart....Their practice of some good deeds and their aversion to some evil ones demonstrate an innate knowledge of God's law...."

God wants us to be happy

God isn't calling everyone. But He doesn't want people outside the Church to be miserable. Solomon wrote, "I know that nothing is better from them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is a gift from God" (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13). God wants Church members to be happy and successful. God also wants people outside the Church—unconverted people who haven't been called by Him—to be happy and successful.

Is God upset that people in the Western world have improved their lot? Is He unhappy that we live in heated and air-conditioned homes, and have leisure to spare? "In 1850, the typical man's workweek was sixty-six hours; in 1900, fifty-three hours; today it is forty-two hours."

Is God unhappy that war-related deaths have decreased in the last few decades. "Figures from the World Health Organization show that in 2000, the most recent year for which statistics are available, four times as many people globally died in traffic accidents than in any form of combat—1.3 million traffic deaths versus 300,000 deaths from war."

Is God upset that life expectancy has increased by over 30 years in the last century? Is God upset that, contrary to popular belief, the environment in the Western World is cleaner and safer? Of course God isn't upset that our lives have improved. Besides, we owe such improvement to God! He gave us the mental capacity to improve our lives. We should thank God for that!

America or Afghanistan?

Yes, Satan is the "ruler of this world." As noted, he has influenced a majority of the world's religious, academic, socio-political and cultural institutions and traditions. However, no one can dispute the fact that some places of this world are preferable to others. In other words, would you rather live in Belgium or Burma? Luxemburg or Liberia? Germany or Guinea-Bissau? America or Afghanistan?

America the beautiful

America has been blessed by God. Long ago God promised to bless Abraham's descendants. Believe it or not, America descended from the ancient Israelite tribe called Manasseh. Many northwestern nations in Europe descended from other ancient tribes of Israel. In short, God directed their migration to regions of the earth that, because of climate and geography, are suited for development.

Moreover, many of our Founders ardently believed in God. They invoked Him constantly. "The evidence that the colonists believed that America was a holy land (that is, "set apart") is so abundant as to be trite. As early as 1630, Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop implored his people to 'Consider that wee shall be as Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon

us'....Over and over again, colonial divines invoked God's blessing on the American cause of 'civil and religious liberty,' for one could not survive without the other. Congress declared days of national fasting and prayer during the Revolutionary War, again when independence was won in 1783, and again when the Constitution was finished. Preachers up and down the seaboard attributed American independence to the sure hand of Providence."

The belief in God, the invocation of His blessings, favorable geography and climate, and cultural traits inculcated by God's laws (e.g. respect for private property, belief in limited government, etc.): all of this contributed to America's greatness and prosperity. The United States isn't perfect, not by a long shot. However, based on several indicators, most of us (including myself) would not want to live anywhere else.

So much misery in the world: what does God expect us to do?

There's so much misery in the world. For example, almost 22 million people have died of AIDS. Between 34 and 46 million people have HIV or AIDS, and 5.3 million people are infected each year. Sub-Saharan Africa is being decimated by AIDS. Southeast Asia, including India, may be next. Russia is teetering on the brink.

It's not God's responsibility to stop AIDS. As noted, a long time ago He put us in charge of this earth. He gave us the mental capacity to improve and enrich our lives, and to solve problems. Based on history, we know some problems are solvable: the eradication of smallpox, for example. Therefore, how do we get rid of AIDS? Simple: Don't engage in premarital, extra-marital or homosexual sex, and don't do drugs. In other words, keep God's laws regarding marriage (Commandment #7), premarital sex (no fornication: Matthew 5:32, Acts 15:20), and living healthy lifestyles, as exemplified by God's dietary laws.

Every year, between 1 and 3 million people, mostly children, die from Malaria. Can we get rid of Malaria? Probably not. However, we can greatly reduce the risk of infection if people in tropical countries are supplied with insecticide treated mosquito nets.

Over a billion people lack access to clean water and sanitation. Therefore, millions of people, again mostly children, die each year from dysentery and other water-borne diseases (e.g. diarrhea, hookworm, schistosomiasis, trachoma, etc.). Can anything be done? "By and large the crisis is a crisis of governance and management: lack of access to safe and affordable water supplies for poor people for domestic and productive use." Investment in piped water and sewerage connection in rural areas would be a great start.

Tens of thousands of people die each year in earthquakes, mostly in third-world countries. Most of them die because they live in unsafe dwellings; e.g. in mud brick homes, shantytowns, etc. Investment in better-built homes, and creation and enforcement of building codes, would considerably diminish the risk of dying in devastating earthquakes.

My point is that many of the world's seemingly intractable problems are indeed solvable, if we devote the time, money and patience to solving them. Moreover, we need not blame God for problems that are (i) created by us, and (ii) solvable.

A mind is a terrible thing to waste

Pardon the cliché, but the mind is a terrible thing to waste. The human mind, with its vast potential, is a gift from God. Therefore, every invention that has undeniably improved our lives—from the printing press to vaccines to air conditioners—is in some way a gift from God.

Starting with Adam and Eve, and confirmed in the covenant with Noah, God placed us in charge of this earth. He gave us the mental capacity to succeed and prosper. And He gave the job of preventing evil and punishing evildoers to us. Not simply to the Church, but to mankind in general.

Therefore, don't ask, Why does God allow evil? Instead, the question should be, Why do we allow evil?

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