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ULTIMATE ISSUES

A REPORT BY DENNIS PRAGER

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What happened at Bitburg?

A lot happened at Bitburg. It provided a vivid illustration of the Jews' role in forcing the world to confront evil. It demonstrated how the Jews only partially fulfill this role. And it revealed a significant difference between Christians and Jews.

I

To understand Bitburg, one must first understand the role played by Jewish suffering.

The Jews are the world's miner's canary. Canaries are taken down to mines because they quickly die upon exposure to noxious fumes. When the miner sees the canary dead, he knows there are noxious fumes to be fought. So it is with the Jews. Noxious moral forces often focus first on the Jews. But their ultimate targets are the moral values that the Jews represent. That is why non-Jews who share Jews' values have a vested interest in combating anti-Jewish forces. They make a fatal error when they dismiss antisemites as the Jews' problem.

Examples include the antisemitism or anti-Zionism of the Nazis, Idi Amin, Mouammar Qaddafi, the United Nations, and present day Islam. Each was first dismissed as the Jews' problem. By failing to understand the universal implications of antisemitism, moral non-Jews awoke too late to the threat posed by these antisemites.

Fifty-five million lives might have been saved had democracies understood the meaning of Nazi Jew-hatred. Five-hundred thousand Ugandans were eventually murdered by Idi Amin whose vicious anti-Zionism was ignored as a Jewish problem. Qaddafi, now regarded as the primary supporter of terrorism against Western democracies, first revealed his moral nature in his obsessive hatred of Israel. The transformation of the United Nations into a force inimical to democracy and human rights was rendered inevitable by its becoming an international vehicle for anti-Zionism. And the Muslim enemies of Israel are finally being perceived as the enemies as well of such Western values as individual rights, democracy, and freedom.

Antisemitism is not another hatred and it is much more than hatred of Jews. It is ulti-

mately hatred of what the Jews, wittingly or not, willingly or not, have represented: the call to a higher moral law. Judaism and traditional Jews have always understood this. As the Talmud explains it, the Hebrew words for hatred and Sinai, *seenah* and *seenai*, are as related as they sound: the hatred of the Jews comes from Sinai. That is where the Jews received God's moral Law, and the world has never forgiven the Jews for imposing on it their ethical monotheism, their God of moral demands and moral judgment.

Non-Jewish students of antisemitism have often commented on this as well. As the Catholic historian of antisemitism, the Reverend Edward Flannery wrote, "It was Judaism that brought the concept of a God-given universal moral law into the world;" willingly or not, "the Jew carries the burden of God in history, [and] for this has never been forgiven."

And Ernest van den Haag in *The Jewish Mystique* summarized the roots of antisemitism in these words: "Most unpleasant, [the Jews'] invisible God not only insisted on being the one and only and all-powerful God... he also developed into a moral God.... The Jews have suffered from their own invention ever since."

Even antisemites have acknowledged this meaning of antisemitism. The father of German racial theory, Houston Stewart Chamberlain complained that "The Jew came into our gay world and spoiled everything with his ominous concept of sin, his law, and his cross." He was echoing Richard Wagner's words: "Emancipation from the yoke of Judaism appears to us the foremost necessity." And Hitler defined his mission as the destruction of the "tyrannical God of the Jews [and His] life-denying Ten Commandments."

The Jews have suffered for being the human representatives of God's moral demands. They have truly fulfilled Isaiah's description of them as God's "suffering servant." Whenever others reject God's moral law, Jews suffer. Of course other peoples have suffered at the hands of evil men and ideologies but the Jews and their suffering have repeatedly focused the world on its greatest evils.

The Jews therefore have two tasks vis à vis evil. First, confront the world with its greatest

In this issue

What happened at Bitburg? How the Jews played their role in the world. Rarely does a single event reveal so much.

The war against differences. Why people do not like differences between adults and children, men and women, people and animals, and even good and evil. An attempt to understand the appeal of totalitarianism to human nature.

A personal report. The extraordinary people I met as a result of the Afghanistan holocaust article.

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evils—never allow it to “reconcile” itself to them, never “forgive” them (unless the evil repent, which is impossible, for example, in the case of dead Nazis). Second, explain these evils. Explain that the Jewish suffering caused by these evils is a result of the denial of Sinai, the hatred of the ethical monotheism introduced by the Jews. For this reason, and only for this reason, antisemitism has universal importance.

Bitburg helped to clarify precisely how well the Jews implement these tasks.

First task: confront the world with its evils

The Jews have two tasks vis à vis evil. First, confront the world with its greatest evils—never allow it to “reconcile” itself to them, never “forgive” them (unless the evil repent, which is impossible in the case of dead Nazis). Second, explain these evils. Explain that the Jewish suffering caused by these evils is a result of the denial of Sinai, the hatred of the ethical monotheism introduced by the Jews.

Most Jews, being quite human, as well as quite oblivious to their role in the world, have hardly sought to confront the world with its evils. They would just as soon let others play this role. But Bitburg showed once again that Jews are not at all willing to leave this role to others. While many nations suffered terribly at the hands of the Nazis, it was the Jews, almost alone, who screamed bloody murder at any hint of forgetting Nazi evil.

The question is, Why? Why, if they do not identify with their calling to confront the world with its evils, do Jews so consistently do precisely that?

The answer, I believe, is that their role leaves them no choice.

For even though the Jews may not want to keep reminding the world to confront evil, they do so anyway—out of what they perceive as self-interest in not allowing the world to forget *their* suffering. But since the greatest forces of evil so often focus on the Jews, the Jews' suffering and their constant talking about it serve to an unparalleled extent to focus people's attention on those evils.

It was, in fact, a Roman Catholic, William F. Buckley, Jr., who once made this point most tellingly. In a public interview with Rabbi Joseph Telushkin and myself, he pointed out that if all Soviet Jews were allowed to leave the Soviet Union, as wonderful as that may be for the Jewish people, it would not be a positive development for the world. The reason, he immediately explained, was that in the West and at the United Nations, the Jews and Israel were really the only ones constantly confronting the world with Soviet evil. And why? Because the Jews were protesting on behalf of their fellow Jews. But if there were no Jews left suffering in the Soviet Union, Western Jewry would keep silent about the Soviets, and then no one would confront the world with Soviet evil.

In other words, the Jews' screaming about their suffering, even though done for selfish ethnic, rather than religious moral, reasons,

serves a universal moral purpose.

The Holocaust is the quintessential example. Had the Nazis inflicted their Holocaust upon another people, most Jews, being normal human beings and oblivious to their religious/moral role, would hardly be screaming at the world “never again”—with the result that the world would not be talking all that much about Nazi evil. The Jews do not demand that the world remember the six million Ukrainians murdered by the Soviets, or the one out of every three Cambodians killed by the Communists in Cambodia, or the genocidal destruction of Tibet by the Chinese Communists, or confront the greatest evil of this moment, the Soviet destruction of Afghanistan. *And the result is that the world ignores these evils.*

Ideally the Jews would live up to their role and scream about these other horrors. But while the Jews may be failing in this role, they can hardly be criticized for demanding only that the world confront the evils done to their own—for other groups do not even do that. The apathy of Western Christians to the horrible persecution of fellow Christians in the USSR, the silence of the Catholic Church over the virtual decimation of fellow Catholics in Lebanon, and the lack of worldwide Muslim opposition to the Soviet annihilation of Islam and Muslims in Afghanistan are simply incomprehensible to Jews.

Thus even though for most Jews it is self-interest, rather than a conscious fulfillment of their role, that motivates them to ensure that certain evils will not be ignored, it is still the Jews who most consistently demand that the world stare at evil's blinding light.

The confrontation at Bitburg was a classic reenactment of the Jewish role. Most people, including most fine, moral people who loathe what the Nazis did, and even groups that also suffered at the hands of Nazis, wanted to forgive and/or forget. The Jews said stare at evil, call it evil, remember evil. They said “reconciliation.” The Jews cried “remember.”

Thus the Jews at Bitburg played their historical role.

Second task: explain these evils

But they played it only half way. True, almost alone, the Jews insisted on remembering Nazi evil, but because they did so primarily out of self-interest (remember *our* suffering) rather than because of their religious role, they could offer no reasons why the world should remember Nazi antisemitism. Consequently, the world is coming to perceive the Jews' obsession with Auschwitz as obsession with themselves rather than as obsession with evil.

The Jews are telling the world to remember

Nazism but they are giving the world no reason other than sympathy for the Jews to do so. Why should the world spend five more minutes on the Holocaust than on the mass murders of American Indians, Australian aborigines, Cambodians, Afghans, Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, or anyone else? By speaking as a suffering ethnic group rather than from our religious/moral role as spokesmen for ethical monotheism, we have little to say to the world about evil and solutions to it.

If we were to explain that Nazism is, in essence, the denial of the Jewish and Christian values of a God-based society with personal moral responsibility to that God and His moral law, then we Jews have a humanity-serving reason to keep humanity's memory focused on the Holocaust. If we would explain that the denial of God as the basis of ethics leads first to the destruction of Jews as the historical representatives of that doctrine and then to the destruction of all other decent people, then others, too, would become obsessed with the Holocaust.

Unfortunately, however, most Jews, in their alienation from Judaism and their adoption of secular values, find such notions bizarre, if not actually repugnant. That it is primarily a war on God that has led to Auschwitz, Gulag, Cambodia; that the Jews' role is to bring mankind to ethical monotheism—to teach that God without ethics (Khomeini, Crusaders, etc.) and ethics opposed to God (Nazism, Marxism-Leninism) both lead to terrible evil; that Jewish suffering has a universal religious/moral meaning—such notions are utterly alien to most Jews whose secular worldview renders a Jewish one inscrutable.

But only such religious notions render the Holocaust meaningful—for both Jews and non-Jews. Otherwise the Holocaust is only a provincial, ethnic tragedy. Instead of teaching the world the universal meaning of Jewish suffering, we merely appear self-obsessed. We have to show how the Holocaust, as all antisemitism, threatens far more than Jews. Not because of humanist platitudes such as all suffering affects all people, or no man is an island, or so long as one people is oppressed, all are oppressed. But because the Jews, as Catholic bishop Edward Flannery wrote, “carry the burden of God in history.” And those who wish to supplant God with a *fuehrer* or with a Party, will seek to annihilate Judaism and/or the Jews. This is what Nazi and Soviet antisemitism are all about. This is why others should never ever forget the Holocaust.

Christians, for example, should be made aware of the anti-Christian essence of Nazi antisemitism. As Robert Jay Lifton, a professor of psychiatry who studied Nazi doctors, recently wrote in a *New York Times* article explaining Dr. Josef Mengele's Jew-hatred: “According to an Auschwitz friend and fel-

low-SS physician, Mengele espoused the visionary SS ideology that the Nordic race... had been weakened by Christian morality of Jewish origin.” Like Hitler and many pre-Nazi German antisemites (see, for example, Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, Cornell, 1975), Mengele believed that Christianity was a Jewish aberration thrust upon an unwilling German race. That plenty of despicable and foolish German Christians did not perceive the anti-God and anti-Christian components of Nazi antisemitism and actually supported Nazism tells us something about those German Christians but nothing about Nazism.

If we showed Christians that modern antisemitism—from the Nazis to the Communists to the Muslims—is inevitably anti-Christian, we would enlist their passionate interest in the Holocaust and antisemitism generally. But instead of teaching that Auschwitz was built by an ideology that loathed the God of Judaism and of Christianity, most Jews continue to regard Christianity as if it were still calling for Crusades and inquisitions and still look to secular ideals for their salvation. Instead of teaching that Jews and Christians must fight *together* for ethical monotheism, many Jews continue to fight *against* Christianity and ethical monotheism. Instead of teaching Christians the divine role Jews and their suffering play, many Jews label Christians who do believe in the divine Jewish role fanatics and enemies.

In short, we must teach Christians and others the universal lessons of Auschwitz and Gulag. God is necessary for a moral order, His death must lead to additional holocausts, and the future of mankind is either Jerusalem or Moscow, ethical monotheism or totalitarianism, because people will be morally responsible for their actions either to Almighty God or to the all mighty state.

Of course, most Jews would choke while uttering such words. Rather than teach the need for ethical monotheism, most Jews continue to preach humanism—*belief in humanity* after the Holocaust, *belief in humanity* after Gulag, *belief in humanity* after Cambodia—and a *secular* humanism, even though the most destructive and sadistic regimes in history have been anti-religious.

If we did teach these lessons of the Holocaust, *then* non-Jews would be likely to react positively to our very appropriate obsession with it. *Then* they would understand that the Holocaust is far more than a Jewish problem.

Ironically, but as is often the case, it the religious Jewish approach that has universal meaning and the secular ethnic Jewish approach that means nothing to non-Jews. As of this moment the only reason we Jews have given for a non-Jew to feel strongly about the Holocaust is human empathy. But that is

The Jews at Bitburg played their historical role. But they played it only half way.

The Jews are telling the world to remember Nazism but they are giving the world no reason other than sympathy for the Jews to do so. Why should the world spend five more minutes on the Holocaust than on the mass murders of American Indians, Australian aborigines, Cambodians, Afghans, Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, or anyone else?

hardly enough for most people, and it certainly does not answer why anyone should devote more attention to Jewish sufferings than to any other.

II

One reason, then, why Jews do not teach the lessons of the Holocaust is their ignorance of and even opposition to religion- and God-based explanations for anything. There is another reason. If Jews understood their obligation to push the world to stare at its most blinding evils, and to teach that these are consequences of ideologies that are anti-God, they would have to reach a conclusion that too few Jews are willing to confront: along with Nazism (which is essentially dead), Communism has been this century's most systematic evil. If we understood what the Holocaust should teach the world and took our role seriously, we would have to confront the world with the evil that was—Nazism, and with the evil that is—Communism.

Communism has murdered far more people than did Nazism (only because Nazism was destroyed, but this fact hardly invalidates the point, it merely argues for the destruction of Communism whenever possible). It has destroyed far more national and religious cultures, subjugated more nations, ruined more lives, and tortured more innocents. And Communism, even more explicitly than Nazism, is a war against God and Judeo-Christian Western civilization. But for reasons that are beyond the purview of this essay, Jews, while rarely (at long last) pro-Communist, still often lead opposition to anti-Communism.

Indeed, for many Jews there is a remarkable cognitive dissonance regarding Communism and the Soviet Union. On the one hand, they protest vehemently against Soviet persecution of Soviet Jews, they know that outside of Nazi Germany no regime has ever as effectively warred on Judaism, and they are aware of the methodical torture of, among others, Anatoly Scharansky. Yet when the President of the United States calls those very same Soviets an "evil empire," they will scream that he is a war monger and cold warrior, and demand to know who we are to judge them. And they will consider it *immoral* (not merely an erroneous but moral anti-Communist strategy) to fund opponents of the burgeoning Communist tyranny in Nicaragua, or for that matter to fight Communism anywhere, and they will keep silent on Afghanistan whose decimation is nearing genocidal proportions.

Western Jews' policies regarding Soviet Jewry (recalling William Buckley's point) provide a classic example of the Jews unwittingly playing their religious/moral role, and of their playing it only half way. There are far

more Christians in Soviet prison camps for being Christian than there are Jews for being Jewish. Yet, by and large, Western Christians ignore, or even worse, deny, as do the National and World Councils of Churches, how terribly Christians do suffer in Communist countries. So it is often primarily thanks to the Jews screaming about the sufferings of Jews in the Soviet Union, that the West has often had to confront the evil of the Soviets. But just as we tell the world about the Holocaust but not about the meaning of Nazi evil, the Jews are telling the world about Soviet Jews, but not about Soviet evil.

So we play our role with regard to Communist evil, as we did at Bitburg with regard to Nazi evil, provincially, and therefore only half way. But this is still half way more than Christians are doing about imprisoned Soviet Christians or Muslims are doing about Afghanistan.

I did not agree with the conservative defenders of the President's visit to Bitburg. The Jews were right, and the President and his defenders were wrong about ever having a "reconciliation" with Nazi evil, but their error emanated in part (the other part, the Christian view of forgiveness, will be discussed) from their very valid preoccupation with Communist evil. They said that because of the contemporary battle against the Soviets, doing what our strategically most important ally in Europe wanted was more important than giving in on Bitburg. If we could support Stalin in fighting the Nazis, we could stand with Kohl and his dead SS men against the Soviets.

Thus, I believe that the moral scorecard at Bitburg read: Jews right about dead evil and therefore about Bitburg, Reagan and the conservatives right about living evil, but wrong about Bitburg.

III

Some years ago Simon Wiesenthal wrote an illuminating little book entitled *The Sunflower*. In it, he recounts how one day while he was an inmate in a Nazi concentration camp, he was picked at random to go to a nearby hospital. There a young Nazi soldier who had participated in atrocities such as burning Jews alive lay dying. The Nazi had asked that a Jew, any Jew, be brought to him from the nearby camp. He wanted to ask a Jew for forgiveness before he died.

Wiesenthal was brought to the Nazi's room where he found a young man bandaged from head to toe. After recounting to Wiesenthal the atrocities he had perpetrated, he implored Wiesenthal to forgive him. Wiesenthal listened to the entire story, then left the room without forgiving the young man. Years later he sent this story to about two dozen major thinkers, and asked them to react. Was he,

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Wiesenthal, right or wrong?

Though Wiesenthal does not so note, there is one consistent pattern to the responses. All the Jews, whether religious or not, said Wiesenthal was right. All the non-Jews, whether religious or not, said he was wrong. I do not believe that the reason is in any way related to the fact that it was Jews who were murdered. Among other things, that would be an insult to the very fine non-Jews who responded.

Bitburg, like *The Sunflower*, illustrated one of the most significant differences between Judaism and Christianity: their attitudes to forgiveness and therefore to evil.

When Elie Wiesel implored President Reagan not to visit Bitburg, he spoke as a Jew. Virtually every Jew who heard Mr. Wiesel understood him and could barely comprehend how anyone could not see the logic and righteousness of his position. To almost every Jew, it is axiomatic that one does not, indeed one has no right to, forgive murderers and torturers on behalf of their victims.

On the other hand, almost every Christian, lapsed ones included, understood the President, and could barely comprehend how Elie Wiesel and the Jews did not see the logic and righteousness of Mr. Reagan's position. To almost every Christian, it is axiomatic that one forgives. Period.

For more than three years I have been moderating a weekly radio show featuring a Protestant minister, Catholic priest, and rabbi. With different guests each week, a broad range of opinions is assured. Yet one issue consistently unites Protestants (from fundamentalist to most liberal) and Catholics and divides them from the Jews (from Reform to Orthodox)—forgiveness.

I have asked this question repeatedly to Christian clergy: "Do I understand correctly that it is the Christian position that if I hurt, even murder, another person, any person, you as a Christian are duty bound to forgive me?" Every one has said yes.

To virtually any Jew, this notion is simply immoral. Even Jews who are Jewishly ignorant hold to the basic Jewish principle that only the victim can forgive the person who has hurt him. And those who are familiar with Judaism know that according to it, God Himself does not forgive unless the victim has already done so.

It is this profoundly differing view of forgiveness—which may reflect a profoundly different view of evil—that explains more than anything else, why President Reagan and his supporters on the one hand, and Elie Wiesel and the Jews on the other did not understand each other. President Reagan is a Christian. On this issue of forgiving evil, Jews and Christians so disagree that they simply do not understand one another.

This is not to say that for a Jew to understand the Christian position is to appreciate it any the more. One of the reasons I am so passionately committed to Judaism is precisely because of its obsession with good and evil (rather than, let us say, with love, forgiveness, and salvation). Its uncompromising attitude to the deliberate infliction of suffering on the innocent is Judaism's "light unto the nations."

At Bitburg, the Jews did not entirely fulfill their mission, while Christians who called for "reconciliation" with Nazi monsters were more consistent with theirs. But Bitburg showed once again that when it comes to having the world confront evil, it is still Judaism that leads the way. ■

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The War Against Differences

When observing the proliferation of totalitarian societies—and the Western intellectuals who found them appealing—one must wonder what it is in human nature that is attracted to totalitarianism.

The contemporary war on differences, being waged now in our own free society, supplies, I am convinced, most of the answers. There is a totalitarian temptation in human nature, and we are seeing it acted out before our very eyes.

Good and evil

The most dangerous attempt to obliterate differences is taking place in the moral sphere. One of the basic beliefs of the West's value system has been that there are real differences between good and evil, that there are good and

bad actions, good and bad societies, good and bad people.

This belief is under attack in three ways. The first is moral relativism which holds that good and evil are not objectively different, they only exist subjectively for the individual or society. There are no real moral distinctions—what you hold to be good is good for you and what I hold to be good is good for me.

The second is the doctrine of moral equivalence which similarly denies good and evil. Its way of destroying moral distinctions is to reduce all actions to a moral sameness, a moral equality. In this way, to cite but a few examples, state executions of murderers become the moral equivalent of the murderer's act ("killing is killing"), the invasion of Grenada

What is it in human nature that is attracted to totalitarianism? The contemporary war on differences, being waged now in our own free society, supplies much of the answer.

Why this war against good and evil? It gets people off the moral hook.

One form which the war against differences in religion has taken is a conception of "universalism" which holds that ideally there would be, for example, no Jews or Christians, just "people." This belief has propelled many Jews into "universalist" movements of the Left.

becomes the moral equivalent of the invasion of Afghanistan ("an invasion is an invasion"), Western nuclear weapons become the moral equivalent of Soviet nuclear weapons ("nuclear weapons are nuclear weapons"), and the United States and the Soviet Union become moral equivalents through constant references to them as "the two superpowers" rather than to democracy and totalitarianism (which would contrast good and evil).

A third method of denying moral distinctions is simply to deny the existence of evil. Actions or people that once may have been termed evil are no longer evil, they are "sick", or the blameless result of social conditions or economic factors. Even crime is no longer called evil. It is "anti-social" or "pathologic." The Soviet downing of the Korean airliner was not evil, declared a *Psychology Today* editorial, it was the result of Soviet paranoia.

Why this war against good and evil? The obvious reason is that it gets people off the moral hook. With no objective moral standard, we are all free to make up or own "good" and "evil." Then I am not accountable to anyone (not to others, not to God) for my actions—no matter what I do, I am the moral equal of everyone else; I am absolved from having to judge others and therefore absolved from having to fight evil. I'm O.K., you're O.K.—I don't judge you (or your society), you don't judge me (or my society). We are all equally good or bad.

And if I do something that seems universally evil, the third method of avoiding moral responsibility is implemented. I am not responsible for what I did—I am sick, or look at my economic circumstances, or my parents were awful, or....

Religions

A particularly frequent target of those who oppose differences is religion. Opponents may be found in both the religious and the anti-religious. Both regard differences in religion as a major source of evil. Let us obliterate all these different religions, they say, and then we will all be united.

The religious opponents of differences demand that all people believe in their religion and practice it in their way. The anti-religious agree with their religious counterparts that the different religions cause much of the world's problems. They disagree only in their remedy. They do not want everyone united in one religion, they want everyone united with no religion. So, while they proceed from opposite views of religion, both the religious and anti-religious have reasons to oppose the existence of different religions.

One form which this war against differences in religion has taken is a conception of "universalism" which holds that ideally there would be, for example, no Jews or Christians, just "people" (or just Americans or just Euro-

peans). This belief has propelled many Jews into "universalist" movements of the Left. And it is precisely these movements, in their denial of individual religious and ethnic identities, that have produced totalitarianism.

Nations

Another common, and related, target of those who attribute evil to differences rather than to people is the nation-state. If only, their lament goes, we all identified with humanity rather with a particular nation.... If only we could be ruled by a world government....

Again, the problem is seen as differences. Ignored is how much evil was committed prior to the development of the national state, how much cruelty people commit against fellow nationals, indeed against members of their own family. In fact, the nation state owes much of its development to the need to combat human cruelty. As historian Barbara Tuchman points out in *The Distant Mirror*, during the middle ages in France, roaming bands of men would enter peasant villages, rape the women, torture the men, and steal the peasants' property. Had there been a national state and army strong enough, Mrs. Tuchman notes, these bands would have been stopped. And indeed, once the state did develop, they were stopped.

Economics

Perhaps the most obvious area where differences are regarded as pernicious and to be destroyed is economic status. To many people, differences in this area are inherently immoral. It is these differences, and not whether people's economic needs are met that most troubles these people. Inequality is the great injustice. Abolish inequality and you will have abolished the root of evil.

It is this loathing of economic inequality that has animated communism and produced totalitarianism. For any attempt to do away with all economic differences entails the abolition of private property and the complete control by the state of all modes of economic activity. *There is no other way to abolish economic differences.* For this reason, as nobly intended as opposition to economic differences may be, attempts to eradicate those differences result in totalitarianism.

Men and Women

Another major target of those who oppose differences is the sexes. For many people, it is an article of faith that the only differences inherent to men and women are physical, that all other differences are socially induced.

Men are more physically aggressive? Socially induced. Men like numerous sexual partners more than do women and are more predisposed to enjoy sex without commitment or emotion? Socially induced. Little boys prefer guns and trucks to dolls? Socially induced. Men are far more aroused by pornographic pictures? Socially induced.

Differences between men and women are held to be societal creations that are injurious to women. If only, the plea goes, we could end all these differences, if men and women would only come to realize that except for the biological, there are no basic differences between them. Then we could all be human, not men and women....

Thus, a war has been waged against differences between men and women. These differences are denied, and those who hold that they exist are routinely condemned as sexists—which proves that the issue for many is male-female sameness, not male-female equality.

In no area has the war against differences been as obviously a result of discomfort and wishful thinking as it has with regard to men and women. It is very painful for a woman to recognize just how different men are from women. It makes a great deal of sense that women would want to believe that men are just like them, that society has corrupted men's woman-like nature. For a woman to appreciate, for example, just how superficial the sex act could be for a man takes a rare ability to live with disappointing news.

Human and Animal

Throughout Western history it has been a given that there is a profound distinction between people and other animals. Emanating from the Hebrew Bible's statement that man is created in the image of God, this belief is at the root of Jewish and Christian civilization's contention that human life is uniquely sacred. With the secularization of the West, this belief has come under attack.

Vast numbers of people no longer believe in the sanctity of human as opposed to other forms of life. Rather, it is now commonplace to hold that "all life is sacred"—meaning *equally* sacred. The belief that human life is innately more valuable than that of animals is considered "speciesism"—discrimination on the basis of species.

I have asked high school and college students throughout the country whether they would save their dog or a stranger first if both were drowning. In every instance one third has voted for the dog, one third for the person, and one third did not know. In fact, I have asked this question to people of all ages on my radio show, and many adults have likewise voted for their dog. Most significantly, even among those who do vote for the person, almost none are willing to say that people are intrinsically more valuable.

People are increasingly uncomfortable with the traditional belief in a qualitative difference between humans and animals. This opposition to the human-animal difference is particularly prevalent, as are the others described here, among the well-educated. I am continually fascinated by the attempts of so many scholars in both the natural and social sci-

ences to show just how similar humans and other animals are. The obvious delight they take whenever they can show that apes, dolphins and other animals are little or no different from humans is illuminating.

Adults and children

Adults and children provide yet another example of opposition to differences. Children are increasingly treated, dressed, and talked to as if they were adults, and many adults dress, act, and talk like children.

For a generation now, the trend has been to treat children as if they were the peers of adults. One obvious example is that children no longer address adults as "Mister" or "Misses," but by the adult's first name. This immediately establishes a child's equal status with an adult.

This trend reached its nadir in the 1960's when college students demanded to determine college curricula *and the professional "educators," adults twice, three times the students' age, gave in to them.* One need not look much further to explain the low respect in which the public has come to hold "educators" and schools.

Other examples include the reticence of many parents, not to mention other adults, to tell children what to do. Among the more sophisticated, a parent is expected to "dialogue" with one's children, not to raise one's voice against them, etc. In other words, we are supposed to treat our children as we would a peer—just as you don't tell a peer what to do but dialogue with him, so it should be with children.

Rather than act as someone who has much to teach a child, many adults talk to children as if they were their pals and as if they have as much to learn from the child as the child has from the adult. This is particularly widespread among divorced parents who often relate to their child as to a spouse.

In fashion too, we blur adult-child distinctions with designer jeans for nine-year olds and the portrayal of children in ads to look like adults.

The other side of the coin is the tendency of many adults to want to remain children. One reason why adults do not want children to call them "Mister" or "Misses" is because these titles make them feel like an adult. As one young people's idol, basketball great Larry Bird, put it, "I hate it when people call me 'man' or 'mister' . . . I'd like to be a kid forever, without responsibilities" (*Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, May 17, 1985).

Additionally, many grown men dress as if they were twenty and drive cars suitable to that age, while many mothers devote great energies to looking indistinguishable from their daughters. And then there is the permanent student—that individual who associates leaving school with dreaded adulthood. But most

In no area has the war against differences been as obviously a result of discomfort and wishful thinking as it has with regard to men and women. It is very painful for a woman to recognize just how different men are from women.

People are increasingly uncomfortable with the traditional belief in a qualitative difference between humans and animals. It is now commonplace to hold that "all life is sacred"—meaning equally sacred.

The trend has been to treat children as if they were the peers of adults. One obvious example is that children no longer address adults as "Mister" or "Misses," but by the adult's first name. This immediately establishes a child's equal status with an adult.

People who are happy with, or rooted in, their distinctiveness do not wish to destroy distinctions. Jews who celebrate their Judaism welcome Christians who celebrate their Christianity.

The most important source of this war on differences has itself been the breakdown of a difference, that between God and man.

There are many secular opponents of totalitarianism, but religion—whether Catholicism in Poland, Buddhism in Tibet, Islam in Afghanistan, or Judaism in the Soviet Union—is the only antidote to totalitarianism.

depressing are the legions of men and women—especially the former—who are afraid of marriage, of parenthood, of commitment, of anything that signifies having left carefree childhood.

By speech, dress, attitudes, values, depth, and appearance it is often difficult to know whether one is with a child or an adult.

Conclusion: why totalitarianism appeals to free people

What is the appeal of the war on differences? Are there any underlying reasons that are common to all these examples of opposition to differences? I believe that at least five suggest themselves.

One appeal shared by many of these examples is the attempt to deny that people are the major source of evil. It is not people, but economic inequality, poverty, and class struggle, that cause evil. It is not people, but religious and national differences, that cause evil. People do not do evil—it is all relative. And even when some acts do really seem to be evil, it is not the person's fault, it was caused by sickness, economic deprivation, or some other outside force.

A second, and related, common attribute is avoidance of personal responsibility. If good and evil are not objectively different, but are what I say they are, then I do not have to live up to any objective moral standard. If people and animals are really quite similar, why not act like an animal? Why curb my animal nature with uniquely human values? If children and adults are little different, then I never really have to grow up and do what is expected of an adult.

And a third common source is fear. One such fear is of confronting differences. If everyone believes in the same or in no religion, I need not confront anyone with different and challenging beliefs. If men and women are the same, I need not confront the painful differences that do exist, and need not fulfill any of the responsibilities inherent to my gender.

The other fear is of being different. Many people are highly uncomfortable with being different. Only when all distinctions—moral, sexual, national, religious, age—are destroyed do such people imagine themselves happy.

A fourth characteristic of those who wish to destroy differences is unhappiness, or non-rootedness. People who are happy with or rooted in their distinctiveness do not wish to destroy distinctions. Jews who celebrate their Judaism welcome Christians who celebrate their Christianity; conversely, Jews who are unhappy or ambivalent over their Jewish identity have been among the leaders of movements to destroy others' national and religious

identities. Women who are happy in their womanhood and men who are comfortable with their manhood want men to retain their masculinity and women their femininity. They do not aim for some androgynous ideal of "personhood." And adults who make peace with growing older do not emulate youth.

The fifth and perhaps most important source of this war on differences has itself been the breakdown of a difference, that between God and man. Among the core beliefs of Western civilization has been that God is God and man is man, that they are wholly separate and that man is entirely subordinate to God. Since the age of Enlightenment, this distinction has been under fierce attack. For, as Marx put it, from now on, "Man is God," and as Engels formulated it for those who missed Marx's point, "God is man."

With this distinction eroded, the war on all the other differences has followed inexorably.

- If man is his own god, then he is also the source of his standard of good and evil (thus the war against objective good and evil).
- With no God, clearly the existence of all these different religions can only impede progress (hence the war against the different religions).
- With no God, the only reality is, as the Marxists put it, "material." The only important goal is therefore is material equality.
- With no God, man can hardly be considered to be created in the image of one, hence distinctions between man and the rest of nature are pointless. Indeed with no God, literally nothing, including human life, is sacred.
- And without religion, for so long the basis of the veneration of the wisdom of the past and of the elderly, the veneration of youth and of the new become inevitable.

It makes sense then that the greater the role God and religion play in a person's life, the more likely he or she is to favor retaining these differences, and the more secular the individual, the more he or she will wage a war against them. And this in turn explains why this war against differences is primarily waged—and sympathies for totalitarianism primarily expressed—by the best educated. Our universities are, after all, the most secular institutions in Western society.

Thus, while there are many secular opponents of totalitarianism, from Sidney Hook to Andrei Sakharov, religion—whether Catholicism in Poland, Buddhism in Tibet, Islam in Afghanistan, or Judaism in the Soviet Union—is the only antidote to totalitarianism.

It is not coincidental that the Hebrew Bible's word for "holy" and for "different" (*kadosh*) is the same. Judaism understood that the holy world it seeks to create depends upon the maintenance of distinctions, and that an unholy world is dependent upon their eradication. ■

Correspondence

Second issue

I found the second issue of *Ultimate Issues* to be provocative, well written, and handsomely produced. I would be eager to see your first issue with its treatment of the Jesse Jackson phenomenon.

Best wishes.

MARTIN PERETZ
Editor
The New Republic
Washington, DC

Ultimate Issues is an excellent source of fresh, clear, provocative thinking about hard issues. Thank you for producing this stimulating nutrient for the mind.

LOWELL PONTE
Roving Science Editor
Reader's Digest
Carlsbad, CA

Let God choose another people

Your publication is deeply concerned with Jewish identity and the future of the Jewish people. I am also concerned about that but for different reasons. Isn't it time that the honor of *atah bechartanu* ["Thou hast chosen us"] should go to another people?

Nothing so affected me in my younger days, as a ship news reporter, than to meet in 1946 and 1947, the transatlantic liners carrying the concentration camp survivors to America. I interviewed many of them, corresponded with them and slowly came to the conclusion that God was a busy life-force. I suppose one can forgive God for his forgetfulness but it is difficult to forgive a power that allowed the suffering of little children.

Since He is God, He must have a conscience and the slaughter of the innocents must weigh heavily on that conscience. It certainly does on mine. Just think, after all that the Jews have gone through for hundreds, indeed thousands of years, culminating in the mystery of the Holocaust, Jews must still suffer. Really somebody else, if only for a little while, ought to be the

Chosen People. It's time.

St. Augustine's ontological proof for the existence of God is hard to argue with but it would be much more difficult to prove to me that there is a just, merciful God after what I have seen. I have had this out with Elie Wiesel who agrees but says even so a Jew must believe in Him.

Just as I put away my *tefilin*, *talit*, and *siddur* a long time ago, so I put away that faith in which I was raised because I keep asking myself: are the Jews doomed, even with the "miracle" of Israel, to eternal damnation? This is no *crise de nerfs* and I find it difficult even to argue about it. All I see is myself as I look on the famous photograph of a little boy with his hands up among the Jews being rounded up by Nazi troops in Warsaw and I wonder what could that little boy possibly have done that doomed him to so ghastly a fate. What was so awful about the children who mocked Elisha and his baldness so that because of his curse, "there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tear forty and two children of them"? Why, according to Malachi (1:2-4), should God hate Esau, hate him while he was even in utero? Does Judaism accept the doctrine of infant damnation?

The Midrash tells us that when Pharaoh ordered the Jewish children to be walled in alive in the pyramids, the Angel Michael seized one of them and held it up to the heavenly court. When God saw the frightened child, He was moved to such compassion that He decided then and there to end the exile. So we have a question, as propounded by Wiesel in the context of the Holocaust: "One Jewish child succeeded in moving God, but one million Jewish children did not. I try to understand and I cannot." Who can? And who can understand the condemnation of the unborn Esau, who when he met Jacob twenty years later, generously forgave his brother for everything? And what is the answer to the question: If God loved man would he have created him?

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
Visiting Scholar
Hoover Institution
Stanford University
Stanford, CA

And we do understand why God al-

lowed the little children to be murdered in the McDonald's massacre in San Ysidro? Or allowed a sixteen year old Orange County girl to lose her face and eyesight to the rapist who poured lye over her head? Or let six million Ukrainians be murdered by Stalin?

I entirely identify with your anger over God's creating a creature, man, who does so much evil. But let us face the awful reality. Since we both find belief in man morally and logically impossible, we are left with but two choices—faith in God or in faith in nothing, i.e., Judaism or nihilism.

I have long been guided by the response of the rebbe whose entire family was murdered by the Nazis—for the believer there are ultimately no questions and for the atheist there are ultimately no answers. There is no intellectual, moral, or existential alternative to faith in God.

And let us say that God acceded to your wish and ended the Jews' chosenness. What type of world would there be without some people constantly recalling it to ethical monotheism? Would the Jews or the world be better off? Would fewer or more innocent children be tortured?

Finally, I found no reference in Malachi to God hating Esau before he was born. The doctrine of "infant damnation" is nowhere in Judaism.

Thank you for writing. Your writings have long been an inspiration.

Orthodox Jews are taught why to be Jewish

I have read your article *The Greatest Jewish Problem* and I wish I could understand your arguments for the fact that the greatest problem is that the Jews are *not* taught *why* to be Jewish. I am overwhelmed at your statement that in 13 years at 3 Yeshivas, no one ever told you *why* to fulfill the mitzvahs of the Torah. I have never heard of a Yeshiva in the entire world that has not taught its Talmidim the reason and purpose of living as a committed Jew. The Torah repeats over and over again the thought that "You are a holy people," and God wants you to live a life of holiness so that you can carry out our Torah's Command-

ments.

My great teacher, Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik, has spent his entire life teaching us *why* we should follow the laws of our tradition. In a Rabbinate that extends for 43 years, I cannot recall one sermon that I delivered that did not deal with the *why* of being a Jew.

After repeating again and again that the modern Jew is in dire trouble because no one tells him *why* to be Jewish, you concluded your article by completely contradicting yourself by stating the following words: "Why be Jewish? Because the Jewish people has a religious moral, holy mission to repair the world under God's rule. Because the Jews are bidden by God to be a light unto the nations. Because Judaism fills one's life with a holiness, meaning and joy that is not attainable to the uncommitted Jew. When Jews understand these reason they will lead Jewish lives."

If you were never taught why to be a Jew, as you state, how come you are able to write the words quoted above?

I am confused by your article and would appreciate some clarification. The problem of modern Judaism is not that we leaders do not teach our people *why* to be good Jews. The problem is that they don't want to listen.

RABBI PHILIP KAPLAN
Pawtucket, RI

Please name one Yeshiva that teaches rational reasons for keeping Kosher, for not lighting a fire on Shabbat, for the laws of family purity, for observing any Jewish laws, for being a religious Jew at all.

In fact, an essential element in all of my Orthodox education was that (a) there are no rational reasons for many of Judaism's laws, and (b) we must not even attempt to come up with any reasons for if we do, people will stop observing when offered reasons to the contrary. Whenever I asked, I was told that there are many khukim, translated for time immemorial as unexplainable laws.

Years ago, I was invited back to my yeshiva high school to lecture to the senior classes. I went to all six of them with the exact same approach. I asked the students if all Jews should keep kosher. Yes, they said. I then asked if it is the duty of observant to bring other Jews to observing mitzvot. Yes, they said. All right, I said, make believe that I am a Jew who wants to

know about Kashrut, and who is open to observing it. Can you offer me any reasons other than "God said so"?

In all six classes I received the same response. There are no reasons other than God and the Torah said so. Not one student could give a single reason for Kashrut. I then told them that I disagreed, that in addition to God commanding it, there are many reasons, primarily ethical, for keeping kosher -- and that such reasons had brought me and thousands of other Jews to kashrut. Not only did the students find it literally incredible that someone would observe kashrut for "reasons" but they insisted that this was against Judaism's outlook, that they had been specifically taught not to look for reasons, and that I was in effect an apikores(heretic).

Indeed, I left keeping kosher after yeshiva precisely because no reasons were given. I returned to kashrut after reading an article on the ethics of the Jewish dietary laws written by an observant non-Orthodox rabbi, Prof. Jacob Milgrom of Berkeley, in a non-Jewish philosophical journal.

Orthodoxy has a better chance at keeping Jews Jewish than do other movements. But let us remember that its anti-reason attitude has produced two staggering failures: it alienated vast numbers of Jews Judaism, and it has produced a too many observant Jews whose observance is habitual and meaningless.

Reason cannot be immoral

I must take issue with your notion that things can be both immoral and rational. Surely the term "rational," in agreed upon usage, encompasses a sphere broader than "only me" and "only right now".

Immoral actions inevitably lead to unnecessary harm, however slight, to oneself or others, usually both. I cannot think of a single instance of any form of immorality in which this is not the case, can you?

The person cheating in school denies knowledge of his ignorance to his teachers. Thus, he cannot be corrected. Thus, he leaves school with a pretense of knowledge which is very likely to get him and others (who trust him) in trouble. Or take the person sideswiping a car in the middle of the country with absolutely no chance of getting caught. I see in this the seeds of harm to self

and others. Do you?

I share your disaffection for the spiritually bankrupt humanists. But while they say "your morality is irrational," implying that rationality is of a higher order than morality, you counter with "your rationality is immoral," implying that morality is higher than reason. You may be right, but why try to prove your point within their lower order frame of reference?

BOB WARNER
Altadena, CA

To respond briefly, I have never said that reason is immoral. It is amoral. There is of course a big difference between the two. In many instances reason can argue equally effectively for both moral and immoral acts. Reason is a great tool -- and I mean both those words to be operative. It is great (that is why you and I must use it) and it is a tool (which can be used like any tool for good or for ill). In a world devoid of a God, it is at least as rational to live for oneself as it is to live for an ideal higher than oneself, and it is certainly less rational to sacrifice oneself for any ideal (which is one reason why our secular, rational age is so tempted by pacifism).

Who acted more rationally -- rationally, not morally -- a German non-Jew who risked his life to save a Jewish neighbor, or the one who did nothing? Who is more acting more rationally, Mother Theresa who lives in poverty and gives her life to the dying poor, or Hugh Hefner who believes that we are here once so why not have as much material and sensual pleasure as possible?

A Christian's reaction to the Jews

I have just finished reading your first issue and found it to be very thought provoking. Though I am not Jewish, I have become, with the recent deepening of my own faith (Catholic), more aware of the apparent parallels between Judaism and Christianity. I appreciate your "Where I Stand" and find that your articulation of the Jewish mission is right up there with the teachings of Saint James.

I fully agree that any resurgence of antisemitism is more than a Jewish concern. First, and foremost, I have come to hold true that God makes him-

self present in human history, and in a special way is manifested in His People. The Jews are a sign for all time of the one true God. Any attack on Judaism is an attack on God. It is something that history has already proven. Unfortunately too few are interested in the lessons of history and many Christians fail to appreciate the 'Judeo' in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Shalom.

ROBERT J. GALLEGO
West Covina, CA

Your letter is not atypical of very many Christians' thinking on the Jews. If our Jewish institutional leaders were not as alienated from religion as so many of them are, American Jews and Christians could forge an ethical/religious alliance that would reshape our deformed world.

Thank you for the comparison to James. His teachings are an inspiration. In fact, I believe it is a tragedy of epic proportions that Paul and not James had the overriding influence on the development of Christian thought.

Holocaust in Afghanistan

It is not hard to understand why good people ignored the Jewish genocide we call the "Holocaust." But it is hard to understand why the Jews of the world ignore the genocide that is now Afghanistan.

The problem is, I fear, that Jews, people and governments see genocide as a political issue, which it is not, and not as a moral issue, which it is.

I applaud most of your arguments in issue #2 but I am puzzled why you did not mention the Bitburg affair. Were you afraid you might have to take umbrage with your friend, the President?

HARRY WALD
Sherman Oaks, CA

Regarding Bitburg, please see the lead article. Regarding Afghanistan,

please read the follow up on the back page. Regarding the President being my "friend", I entirely agree with the reaction of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Mr. Reagan's visit to Bitburg: "When a friend makes a mistake, the friend remains a friend, and the mistake remains a mistake."

I read your article in *Ultimate Issues*, "Afghanistan: how good people can ignore a holocaust," with great joy. At last, a Jewish man was speaking out for Afghanistan and urging more support from the Jewish community lest we face another holocaust. I was even more overjoyed to hear that my friends, Dr. Robert Simon and Michael Utter of the International Medical Corps (IMC) were on your radio program recently. And the response the next day from the Simon Wiesenthal Center to hold a presentation before the Jewish leaders in Southern California—*tremendous!*

I am a Jew born and raised in New York City, a graduate from Columbia University in psychology. My parents are from Poland and are survivors of the Holocaust. All of their immediate family and most of their relatives were murdered there. Having realized the suffering they endured and the pain which they still carry, I had set my heart and mind to work on causes which would help prevent similar injustices from occurring today.

I am very interested in working with the Jewish community in Washington and New York with regard to this issue. I feel that some of the most altruistic and compassionate people are Jewish. Our unilateral support of the civil rights movement in the '60's and the assistance we provide to Israel are but a few examples. Perhaps we can work together on helping to gain more support within the Jewish community.

HENRY KRIEGL
Committee for a Free Afghanistan
Washington, DC

God bless you and your Committee. Unfortunately, Jewish social activists tend to be more concerned with a potential nuclear war that would kill them than with the actual non-nuclear genocide that is killing Afghans.

This letter to the editor was published in *The San Francisco Chronicle* on June 10, 1985. I thought you'd regard it with *hagrin*.

A UC Berkeley senior was visiting our home recently and I asked him if he had been active in the recent protests against South Africa on the Berkeley campus.

He said, "Absolutely."

I asked him if he and his friends were going to protest events in Afghanistan? He replied, "What's happening in Afghanistan?"

B.R. Turner
Palo Alto

Congratulations on a first rate publication.

RANDY WOHL
Berkeley, CA

I am convinced that there is literally no evil that a Communist regime could perpetrate that would arouse the activism of "liberals" in academia, the media, and elsewhere. They were silent—if not actually supportive—during Stalin's genocide in the Ukraine and the Baltics, during China's annihilation of Tibet, during the Communist genocide in Cambodia, and they are silent during today's Soviet genocide in Afghanistan.

Your thoughts, questions, and reactions, agree or disagree, are essential to the purpose of *Ultimate Issues*. Not all letters can be published and some may be shortened for the sake of space, but you are urged to participate in this ongoing dialogue.

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A Personal Report

A most common Soviet strategy is to drop little bombs disguised as brightly colored butterflies, pens, and radios.

These are designed to maim rather than kill. If enough children can have their arms or faces blown away, families will leave their ancestral villages for medical help in Pakistan.

Karen McKay, the executive director of the Committee for a Free Afghanistan, spent five years studying the Holocaust in Israel. In fact, we even spoke part of the time in Hebrew! She believes that the world's indifference to the Jews' Holocaust was being repeated in Afghanistan.

The front page article in the last issue of *Ultimate Issues* was *Afghanistan: How good people can ignore a holocaust*. In it I noted that what the Soviets are doing in Afghanistan is nearing holocaust proportions. In the systematic annihilation of the rural population, the deportation of tens of thousands of children to the Soviet Union, the forced emigration of millions of Afghans to Pakistan, and the deaths of over a million—all out of population of fifteen million.

Among the results of the article were contacts from the Committee for a Free Afghanistan in Washington, D.C. (see letter in Correspondence) and the International Medical Corps, a Los Angeles based group of physicians who go into Afghanistan to treat the wounded and ill.

And what contacts they turned out to be.

The doctor who heads IMC is Robert Simon, a 36 year old assistant professor of medicine at UCLA. Though not religious, he is one of those people that makes you believe that man is created in the image of God. When meeting him, you understand why Henry Kriegel (see letter) writes that he went to work with the Committee for a Free Afghanistan after hearing Dr. Simon speak.

As for Mr. Kriegel, after receiving his letter, I called him. As delighted as he was that someone in Jewish life had written on Afghanistan, so I was delighted that a Jew was working at the CFA. Speaking with him, I was, again, profoundly impressed by the idealism and decency of these people working to publicize the greatest evil of this moment.

But nothing prepared me for Karen McKay, the executive director of the Committee for a Free Afghanistan. Good people have always fascinated me. I am as curious about what makes people do good as the psychologists and criminologists are about what makes people do bad. For this reason, and because I wanted to know whether the Committee for a Free Afghanistan was headed by people who simply had a conservative political agenda or by idealists who want to stop a holocaust in the making, I called her with some questions.

My first and most important question was, therefore, "Why are you doing this?" Her response moved me beyond words. *She had spent five years studying the Holocaust in Is-*

rael, at the Hebrew University. In fact, we even spoke part of the time in Hebrew! Specifically, she researched what she said were "deliberate decisions" by the Americans and British not to bomb the railway tracks leading into Auschwitz, even though they had done pinpoint bombing all around the death camp. She believed that the world's indifference to the Jews' Holocaust was being repeated in Afghanistan. That is why she founded in 1980, the Committee for a Free Afghanistan.

These then are the people I met who are leading the fight to end the apathy to what the Soviets are doing in Afghanistan. If I did not know what is happening in Afghanistan, merely meeting such people would have led me to work with them.

During the first week of September, Karen McKay is making yet another trip to Pakistan to bring horribly wounded Afghan children to an American hospital. A most common Soviet strategy is to drop little bombs disguised as brightly colored butterflies, pens, and radios. These are designed to maim rather than kill whoever (namely a child) picks it up. The point of it is this: since the Soviets want to control Afghanistan but cannot control its people, they want Afghanistan emptied of as many of its people as possible. No amount of death has yet succeeded in moving the majority of Afghans to leave. Even if a child is killed, the family will bury it and remain in their village. But if enough children can have their arms blown off, or their face torn apart, the families *will* leave their ancestral villages in order to seek medical help in Pakistan.

To do such work, these people need our help:

Dr. Robert Simon
International Medical Corps
P.O. Box 49525
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Karen McKay or Henry Kriegel
Committee for a Free Afghanistan
214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E.,
Suite 480
Washington, D.C. 20002

Thank you for your efforts in this regard and have a happy and healthy New Year.

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ULTIMATE ISSUES

A REPORT BY DENNIS PRAGER

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

WINTER 1985

Jesse Jackson and the meaning of antisemitism

Most Americans, Jews included, regard Jesse Jackson's hostility to the Jews as an unfortunate problem—for Jews. This perception is very wrong. Jesse Jackson is a threat to far more than Jews because to the antisemite, the Jews are the embodiment of fundamental moral values of the Western world. It is those values, and ultimately all those who hold those values, that antisemites seek to destroy. The Jews are only their first target.

If this understanding of antisemitism is correct, and if Jesse Jackson is indeed an antisemite, then he is a dangerous man. He is indeed. Jesse Jackson, like other modern day antisemites, is hostile to the Western world and to democracy and sympathetic to tyranny. He is also antagonistic to America, a tragedy for black Americans, and a warning to liberals and Democrats. In view of the Jews' role in the modern world, none of this is surprising.

The meaning of antisemitism

Antisemitism is a Jewish problem, but non-Jews make a very self-destructive error when they dismiss it as only the Jews' problem. Treatment of the Jews has served as one of humanity's moral barometers. Watch how nations, individuals, or ideologies react to the Jewish people or the Jewish state, and you have an early and deadly accurate picture of their values and intentions.

The Jews are the world's miner's canary. Miners take canaries down to the mines because canaries are particularly vulnerable to noxious fumes. They die upon exposure to those fumes, well before the miners are aware of them. When the miner sees the canary is dead, he knows there are noxious fumes to be fought.

So it is with the Jews. Moral non-Jews who fail to act against antisemites and anti-Zionists will in due course suffer from them. Jew-haters begin with Jews but never end with Jews. This is why antisemitism and anti-Zionism should be so important to non-Jews. Identifying the Jews' enemies gives civilized societies an unparalleled opportunity to identify the forces that also wish to destroy them. Examples abound.

Hitler and the Nazis. Most dramatic was of course Hitler and the Nazis. During the 1930's, the Western democracies, by dismissing Nazi antisemitism as a Jewish problem, failed to confront Hitler when it might have been possible to stop him. When they finally awoke to the threat that Hitler posed to democracy and Western moral values, it was too late. Fifty-five million lives might have been saved had the democracies understood Jew-hatred.

Idi Amin. When Ugandan dictator Idi Amin became a rabid anti-Zionist, expelled the hundreds of Israelis from Uganda, sent a message to the United Nations Secretary General hailing the Holocaust, and decided to erect a statue to Hitler, nearly everyone either ignored Amin or dismissed his Jew-hatred as the Jews' problem. Soon after, however, he began to decimate Uganda's Christian community and various tribal groups. The man dismissed as merely an anti-Zionist murdered a half million Ugandans before being overthrown.

Mouammar Qaddafi. Libya's Mouammar Qaddafi is one of the world's primary supporters of terrorism against Western democracies and a ruthless tyrant over his own people. He, too, first revealed his hatred of Western democratic and moral values by his hatred of the Jewish state. Arnaud de Borchgrave, former international editor of *Newsweek*, reported that Qaddafi on three separate occasions told him that his greatest aim in life is to develop an atom bomb to drop on Israel.

The United Nations. The clearest indication that the United Nations had betrayed its founding principles to support democracy against tyranny was here, too, revealed by its attitude toward Jews and Israel. The anti-Zionism and antisemitism of the General Assembly, which has devoted more time to delegitimizing Israel than to any other issue, was originally dismissed as the Jews' problem.

In this issue . . .

In addition to the lead article, this issue features the first in a series of statements of one Jew's credo: Where I Stand.

Also . . . some thoughts on Jews, Christians, and the American elections; a different opinion on Abba Eban's acclaimed television series, Heritage; and a reflection on the Israeli Jews accused of terrorism.

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Jesse Jackson and the meaning of antisemitism

Most Americans, Jews included, regard Jesse Jackson's hostility to the Jews as an unfortunate problem—for Jews. This perception is very wrong. Jesse Jackson is a threat to far more than Jews because to the antisemite, the Jews are the embodiment of fundamental moral values of the Western world. It is those values, and ultimately all those who hold those values, that antisemites seek to destroy. The Jews are only their first target.

If this understanding of antisemitism is correct, and if Jesse Jackson is indeed an antisemite, then he is a dangerous man. He is indeed. Jesse Jackson, like other modern day antisemites, is hostile to the Western world and to democracy and sympathetic to tyranny. He is also antagonistic to America, a tragedy for black Americans, and a warning to liberals and Democrats. In view of the Jews' role in the modern world, none of this is surprising.

The meaning of antisemitism

Antisemitism is a Jewish problem, but non-Jews make a very self-destructive error when they dismiss it as only the Jews' problem. Treatment of the Jews has served as one of humanity's moral barometers. Watch how nations, individuals, or ideologies react to the Jewish people or the Jewish state, and you have an early and deadly accurate picture of their values and intentions.

The Jews are the world's miner's canary. Miners take canaries down to the mines because canaries are particularly vulnerable to noxious fumes. They die upon exposure to those fumes, well before the miners are aware of them. When the miner sees the canary is dead, he knows there are noxious fumes to be fought.

So it is with the Jews. Moral non-Jews who fail to act against antisemites and anti-Zionists will in due course suffer from them. Jew-haters begin with Jews but never end with Jews. This is why antisemitism and anti-Zionism should be so important to non-Jews. Identifying the Jews' enemies gives civilized societies an unparalleled opportunity to identify the forces that also wish to destroy them. Examples abound.

Hitler and the Nazis. Most dramatic was of course Hitler and the Nazis. During the 1930's, the Western democracies, by dismissing Nazi antisemitism as a Jewish problem, failed to confront Hitler when it might have been possible to stop him. When they finally awoke to the threat that Hitler posed to democracy and Western moral values, it was too late. Fifty-five million lives might have been saved had the democracies understood Jew-hatred.

Idi Amin. When Ugandan dictator Idi Amin became a rabid anti-Zionist, expelled the hundreds of Israelis from Uganda, sent a message to the United Nations Secretary General hailing the Holocaust, and decided to erect a statue to Hitler, nearly everyone either ignored Amin or dismissed his Jew-hatred as the Jews' problem. Soon after, however, he began to decimate Uganda's Christian community and various tribal groups. The man dismissed as merely an anti-Zionist murdered a half million Ugandans before being overthrown.

Mouammar Qaddafi. Libya's Mouammar Qaddafi is one of the world's primary supporters of terrorism against Western democracies and a ruthless tyrant over his own people. He, too, first revealed his hatred of Western democratic and moral values by his hatred of the Jewish state. Arnaud de Borchgrave, former international editor of *Newsweek*, reported that Qaddafi on three separate occasions told him that his greatest aim in life is to develop an atom bomb to drop on Israel.

The United Nations. The clearest indication that the United Nations had betrayed its founding principles to support democracy against tyranny was here, too, revealed by its attitude toward Jews and Israel. The anti-Zionism and antisemitism of the General Assembly, which has devoted more time to delegitimizing Israel than to any other issue, was originally dismissed as the Jews' problem.

In this issue . . .

In addition to the lead article, this issue features the first in a series of statements of one Jew's credo: Where I Stand.

Also . . . some thoughts on Jews, Christians, and the American elections; a different opinion on Abba Eban's acclaimed television series, Heritage; and a reflection on the Israeli Jews accused of terrorism.

The moral degradation of UNESCO was also ignored, even when it became so mired in anti-Jewish rhetoric that it declared that Jesus was a Palestinian. Now, however, the United Nations is regarded as Alexander Solzhenitsyn has pointed out, as a misnomer—it is really the United Governments, most of which enslave their nations.

Islam and the Arabs. The Muslim Arabs' hatred of Israel provides yet another example. Their obsession with destroying Israel tells a great deal about their moral state. Arab regimes that want Israel dead are not otherwise fine, moral, and democracy loving. Not a single Arab Muslim country is a democracy, and most are ruthless dictatorships whose first aim is to destroy the Jewish state. Their war is ultimately against Western values, Christianity, and democracy. That is why Israel's Arab enemies constantly refer to the Jewish state as "an outpost of Western values" in "their" region. That this has not been recognized by Western nations, Christians, and democrats the world over—even after the destruction of a Christian and democratic Lebanon—is only one more example of their unwillingness to understand the meaning of Jew- and Israel-hatred.

The Soviet Union. With regard to the Soviet Union, it is the Jews, more than any other group within the Soviet Union or in the Western world (compare, for example the recent whitewash of the Soviets by the National Council of Churches) that has consistently reminded the world about Soviet totalitarianism. It makes perfect sense that, after the United States, Jews are the most frequently attacked group in the Soviet Union.

Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson's hostility to the Jews is but the most recent example of anti-Zionism and antisemitism serving to reveal the moral nature of an individual and the threat that he poses to Western democratic values. That Jackson's conflict with the Jews and Israel has been regarded by most people, including many Jews, as primarily a Jewish problem bears witness to the inability, or unwillingness, of good people to learn the single greatest lesson of antisemitism: the Jews are only the first. Like the antisemitic individuals and regimes before him, Jesse Jackson is a threat to far more than the Jews.

Jackson's antisemitism

Jesse Jackson's hostility to the Jews is long standing and far deeper than his "Hymies" comment.

As early as 1973, in a speech attacking then-President Nixon, he charged that "Four out of five [of Nixon's advisors, such as Haldeman, Ehrlichman] are German Jews."

When attacked by the press, he said his media critics were "all Jewish."

He has called the relationship between Jews and Democrats "a kind of glorified form of bribery, financial bankrolling and moral bankruptcy."

He has blamed Jewish promoters for boxing matches between a South African white and an American black.

Regarding the Holocaust, he has said that he is "sick and tired of hearing about the Holocaust and having America being put in the position of a guilt trip." And after visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, Jackson said that "Genocide should not be allowed to happen to anyone, not even the Palestinians." When, after hearing such comments, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin refused to meet with him, Jackson termed it "a racist decision based on skin color."

He condemns Zionism as "based on race," and continues to defend his 1980 statement that "Zionism is a kind of poisonous weed that is choking Judaism."

He is one of the only active supporters of the PLO in American public life. "PLO recognition", he said in 1979, "is a human right." He opposed the extradition from the United States of a PLO terrorist who had murdered two Israelis in Tiberias. For good reason Arab PLO supporters carried him on their shoulders and chanted "Jackson! Arafat!"

Finally, he refuses to disassociate himself from Louis Farrakhan, who proudly identifies himself as an antisemite and calls Judaism "a gutter religion."

Despite all this and more, there are those who contend that Rev. Jackson is not an antisemite. They point out that he has Jewish advisors and Jewish friends, and that in his heart does not hate all Jews. Apparently, many people, Jews included, in the aftermath of Nazism and the Holocaust, believe that in order to qualify as an antisemite, one must, as the Nazis did, hate all Jews.

But if antisemitic means having to hate every Jew, then the Nazis were this century's only antisemites. And Stalin, Brezhnev, Arafat, and the sponsors of the U.N.'s Zionism is Racism resolution were not antisemites, since they had or have Jewish friends. That someone does not hate all Jews is irrelevant to ascertaining whether he is an enemy of the Jewish people. When you say and do what Jesse Jackson has said about and done to the Jewish people, you are an enemy of the Jews, even if in your heart you do not hate every Jew. I do believe that in his heart Jesse Jackson does not hate all Jews. So what?

Louis Farrakhan, on the other hand, does hate the Jews and Judaism, and Jackson's unwillingness to condemn this antisemite and white-hating racist provided yet more evi-

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dence of his moral stature. A moral man would disassociate himself from whatever Farrakhan stands for. A man of God would declare Farrakhan a sinner who should repent. He would proclaim his dissasociation from Farrakhan as categorically as Ronald Reagan declared his from the Klu Klux Klan. When the Klan endorsed the President, he said he was embarrassed by their support, and that he rejects them and everything they stand for. This is what Jesse Jackson should have said about Farrakhan. But when Jackson is asked about Farrakhan, instead of attacking Farrakhan, he attacks the questioner. He either attacks the press for being under Jewish influence, or he brands the question racist, or protests that Farrakhan is not the issue, or claims that since he, Jackson, is a man of God, he must hold out his hand of reconciliation to everyone.

That Jackson is an enemy of the Jewish people is evident to virtually every Jew. What is not evident to Jews, and needs most forcefully to be articulated, is that Jackson's antisemitism, like that of all other antisemites, tells us far more about the man than just his attitude to Jews.

Jackson versus democracy

One consequence of the dismissal of Jackson as the Jews' problem has been the virtual ignoring of his sympathy for anti-democratic regimes. Jesse Jackson likes tyrannies and tyrants (of the Left), and dislikes Western democratic institutions.

When Jesse Jackson travelled around the world to hug Yasser Arafat, nearly everyone, Jew and non-Jew, reacted to the Jewish element, as if hugging the world's leading terrorist is solely a Jewish issue. Those who understand antisemitism, however, suspected that more was involved. Suspicions were confirmed when he later embraced Hafez Assad, just a year after the Syrian tyrant had exterminated 20,000 of his opponents, and when he then embraced Fidel Castro.

Willie Brown, California State Assembly Majority leader, *defending* Mr. Jackson's embrace of Fidel Castro, said that we have to understand that Jesse Jackson has an affinity for Third World people like Castro. While Brown meant it positively, those of us who regard Assad and Castro as unworthy of a decent person's affinity, do not regard Brown's descriptions as complimentary.

After Jackson hugged Yasser Arafat and Assad, William Buckley wrote that we ought to have a rule: If you have to meet with a tyrant who has murdered great numbers of his own people and who governs them ruthlessly, at least do not hug him. Shake his hand, if you

must. Why hug him, why give an Arafat a kiss?

The answer is that Jesse Jackson likes such people. Even more than his hugs, his words reveal his admiration for anti-Western tyrants and movements. For example, he praised Arafat as "my friend and the friend of justice and humanity," and the PLO as "a spirit . . . it's bred in children... it is a spiritual thing, the PLO." (He is right about its being bred in children. Perhaps Jackson was referring to the graduation exercise for young PLO recruits. To see whether their 15-year-old graduates have mastered the ability not to be squeamish, the boys have to tear apart live chickens or rabbits with their bare hands. That is "the PLO spirit" that is bred in children.)

Mr. Jackson also likes Mr. Assad, who is described by human rights organizations as among the bloodiest dictators in the world. When President Reagan's emissary was to meet with Assad, the emissary publicly explained that in view of the Syrian leader's brutality, it was distasteful to meet him. Jesse Jackson criticized the envoy, saying that unlike Reagan's administration's people, "I feel a kinship" with Assad. Then on national television, Jackson added that Assad "is really a human at heart."

Those who have lived under tyranny best understand the big lie that underlies Jackson's so-called "moral offensive" in meeting with Third World dictators. Witness the reaction of Andre Vargas Gomez, a former Cuban diplomat and democratic dissident. Despite his joy at being released by Castro to Jesse Jackson after 20 years in a Cuban prison camp, Mr. Vargas Gomez declared that "To go to Cuba to join on 'a moral offensive' with Fidel Castro is a moral offense."

Arafat, Assad, and Castro are not the only dictators and terrorists with whom Mr. Jackson has an affinity. When asked his opinion of the IRA (Irish Republican Army), Jackson replied, "I feel an identity with its mission."

The Khmer Rouge provides yet another example. Though I am a Jew who holds the term Holocaust almost sacred, I am forced to apply that label to what the Khmer Rouge (Communist Cambodians) did to the Cambodian people five years ago. They murdered two million of the six million Cambodians—one out of every three, the same percentage as that of Jews murdered by the Nazis. And what is Jesse Jackson's assessment of the Khmer Rouge? "Unfortunate, sometimes the best of people lose their way."

Given Jackson's values, it was easy to predict his reaction to the Sandinistas. They have all the attributes he most admires—they are Third World, Communist, building a tyranny, and hate America. And indeed Mr. Jackson waxes euphoric over Nicaragua's dictators. "They are," he says, "on the right side of his-

Jesse Jackson . . .

on Arafat:

"My friend and the friend of justice and humanity."

on Syria's Assad:

"I feel a kinship."

on the IRA:

"I feel an identity with its mission."

on the Khmer Rouge's genocide:

"Unfortunate, sometimes the best of people lose their way."

on the Sandinistas:

"They are leading Nicaragua to democracy."

on America:

"America is not known for her capacity to love and heal but for her capacity to organize and kill."

on Zionism:

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tory, and they are leading Nicaragua to democracy.”

Perhaps the finest summary of Mr. Jackson's view of tyrants and terrorists, was that of Martin Peretz, editor of *The New Republic*: “Virtually every time Jesse Jackson opens his mouth on foreign affairs, he bolsters the confidence of tyrants and terrorists around the world that they have plenty of friends in America.”

Jackson versus America

If people understood the meaning of Jackson's antisemitism, they would also understand the threat that Jackson poses to America. From his statements and attitudes it is fair to say that he hates this country.

In 1981, when more than twenty black children in Atlanta were murdered, and the black community there was in a state of panic, Jesse Jackson announced that “It is open season on black people. . . . These murders can only be understood in the context of affirmative action and Ronald Reagan's conservative politics.” Jesse Jackson publicly blamed white America and the Reagan administration for the murders of black children. This was a libel whose only possible intent was to incite blacks to hate whites. For that charge alone, Jackson should have been drummed out of public life. Yet he has been apparently accountable for nothing he says or does. (A black man was later charged with the murders.)

“America,” Jackson told a *Playboy* interviewer, “is not known for her capacity to love and heal but for her capacity to organize and kill.”

Jackson's constant references to the Reagan administration as a “repressive regime” are also worth noting. He uses much harsher words for America's democratically elected government than for any Communist or Third World tyranny. “Regime” is also instructive. It is rarely used to describe democracies—which is precisely why he uses the term. In fact, given his sympathy for tyrants, his view of America as “repressive,” and his belief that Nicaragua is a democracy, there is every reason to conclude that this man either does not understand democracy or actually opposes it.

A tragedy for black Americans

Despite his great popularity among blacks, and the pride he instilled in many of them by being the first black to mount a serious campaign for the presidential nomination of a major party, Jackson is a tragedy for the black people of the United States.

First, he has created or greatly increased black-white tensions. Just as Americans, both black and white, were beginning to believe that healing was taking place after the horror of slavery and the evils of segregation, when Americans were beginning to see one another as Martin Luther King wanted, through colorblind eyes, Jesse Jackson reinjected color into American life.

During the campaign for the Democrats' presidential nomination, almost every time Jackson spoke he increased black-white tensions. Jackson alienates sympathetic whites from both blacks and Democrats. Any major black politician would have received more white votes in the Democratic primaries than Jackson did. Jesse Jackson is part of the reason the Democratic ticket lost 49 states. The “Rainbow Coalition” has no white in it. For blacks to have as their leader a man who is detested by white America may be emotionally cathartic for many black people but it is highly injurious to black progress. Second, Jackson is doing blacks a terrible disservice by leading them to believe that white racism is the root of their problems. We blacks, he is telling them, are hated and even murdered by whites (recall his blaming white America for the murders of the black children in Atlanta). We blacks, he ceaselessly communicates, are victims. *Our problems emanate from white America.* This is unfair to whites, but it is devastating to blacks.

Some blacks, like the Hoover Institute's Tom Sowell, recognize this. They protest that Jackson and white liberals who share Jackson's position are worsening the black plight by telling blacks that they can do little to help themselves: their problems are caused by others—whites, Republicans, Congress—and the solutions will be delivered by others.

I am keenly aware of the pride that Jackson has instilled in innumerable blacks. But beyond that he has helped few blacks but himself. Any minority group can blame its problems on prejudice. But unless that prejudice is truly paralyzing, such notions are a terrible disservice to members of that group.

Thus, while it is bad for whites to be cast as the blacks' villains, most whites go back to a home, a family, and a job. But the poor black who believes a Jesse Jackson and some white liberals, gets it into his mind that he is a victim, helpless until bailed out by others. Jackson is communicating to him that he is not the master of his fate, the white man is. Only the white man and his money can help him. Some black scholars now acknowledge what Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan long ago noted, that the greatest black problems are no longer white racism and they are rarely solvable by infusions of government funds. Were Jesse

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The “Rainbow Coalition” has no white in it. For blacks to have as their leader a man who is detested by white America may be emotionally cathartic for many black people but it is highly injurious to black progress.

Where I stand

Part One

by
Dennis Prager

1. Doing good: "Is it right?"

I have inherited from Judaism, from my upbringing, and from personal experience, a preoccupation, perhaps even an obsession, with questions of right and wrong. Innumerable times per day, my mind hears the question, "Is it right?"—from great macro issues like abortion and Afghanistan to relatively trivial micro issues such as using restaurant stubs for tax write-offs or the use of canned laughter on TV comedy shows.

This may all sound trite, but the fact is that all of us have an uncanny ability to avoid asking "Is it right?"

Examples abound.

■ Many of us ask whether our intentions are good rather than whether the act intended will actually achieve good. The horrors of Communism bear witness to the ability of good intentions to produce holocausts.

■ Or we may ask "How do I feel about it?" rather than "Is it right?" This has become the operative question for many who have adopted the worldview of the Sixties. And many parents from that time continue to raise their children with "How do you feel about it?" rather than "Is it right?"

■ Still others will substitute "What is the law?" for "Is it right?" This substitution characterizes the ACLU and parts of the right-wing Orthodox world.

■ Some Christians, heirs of Luther's thinking in particular, and apparently most Muslims, substitute "Is my faith right?" for "Is it right?"

■ And, of course, most well-educated people, Jews included, ask "Do I think it is right?" rather than "Does God think it is right?" More on this below.

All of these substitutions for "Is it right?" are made by well-intentioned individuals. For others, "Is it right?" is simply not an issue. For them, "What does it do for me?" and "Can I get away with it?" are the only considerations.

Precisely because it is so easy to avoid asking "Is it right?", its paramount importance cannot be stressed too often. And once the primacy of doing good is granted, other beliefs

flow logically.

2. It is more natural for people to do bad than to do good.

If we do want to do good, become good, and make a better world, we had better know with what raw material we are working. People are capable of the most beautiful acts of kindness and selflessness. But acts of goodness are not our most natural inclinations. It is more natural to be selfish than to be selfless; cheating is more tempting than honesty; it is easier to ignore evil than to fight it; adultery is more natural than fidelity.

This view of humanity is not cynical. It is simply a reality that men of wisdom have always acknowledged. What divides the cynic from the realist is the question, can people be made better? The cynic says no. Along with other non-cynics, I say yes.

Therefore, my primary question in evaluating any religion or philosophy is: how does it intend to make people better, and to what extent has it succeeded in doing so?

3. People must be taught to be good.

Since people are not basically good, the most important thing we can teach every new generation is to be good. Unfortunately, partially because our humanist culture posits that people are basically good, we rarely teach our young people to be good. We teach them everything except this, thinking that all that people need in order to be and do good are a loving upbringing and a good (value-free) education.

Our grandparents were less educated but often wiser. To them, raising a child with no moral education at school, and little discipline at home would have been unthinkable. Yet to this generation, giving our children good chemistry labs has been deemed far more important than giving them ethical, let alone religious, instruction. Thus we have produced a record breaking number of good lawyers, good doctors, and good Ph.D.'s, but not very many good people. We will pay the consequences.

4. Ethics must be based on God.

It is not possible to prove that God exists.

To this generation, giving our children good chemistry labs has been deemed far more important than giving them ethical, let alone religious, instruction. Thus we have produced a record breaking number of good lawyers, good doctors, and good Ph.D.'s, but not very many good people.

But we can show that if God does not exist, neither does an objective morality. If, in the ultimate analysis, it is not God who says, "Do not murder," then we have no way of knowing that murder is evil. All we can say is that we do not like it.

If good and evil do not emanate from a moral source infinitely higher than each of us, then each of us is the source of morality for himself. Right and wrong then become matters of personal, subjective taste: "What you think is good is good for you, and what I think is good is good for me." By this thinking, Hitler's morality is as valid as Mother Theresa's.

So much for the theoretical need for God. Practically speaking, the need is even more obvious. As Dostoevsky put it in *Brothers Karamazov*, "Where there is no God, all is permitted." This statement should be placed on the doorposts of every home. People must see themselves as accountable for their actions to something higher than themselves. That something is either God or the state. Either people police themselves (by feeling answerable to God) or the state has to police them (which is why democracies need religion).

Of course, I am aware of atrocities committed in the name of God. Every Jew is painfully aware of centuries of horrible Jewish suffering at the hands of believing Christians and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Muslims. But the fact that religious people have committed evil in no way negates the need for a God-based morality. Indeed, the very Jews who suffered most from other religions were the least likely to deny God and Judaism. They understood that to deny God because of what *non-Jews* had done to them would be the height of idiocy. First, it would simply render those antisemites victorious, but even more importantly, it would negate the whole purpose of Jewish survival which is to bring the world to the God who demands ethical conduct from everyone. Only modern secular Jews, who have suffered the least from religious antisemites, deny God because of what Christians have done or Muslims are doing (and despite the fact that the greatest persecutors of Jews in this century have been anti-Christian and anti-religious Nazis and Communists).

To deny the moral necessity of God because of what believers have done is logically equivalent to denying the need for laws because of what Nazi and Soviet lawyers have done. The only thing that evil done in God's name proves is that belief in God does not guarantee moral behavior—which leads to my next basic belief.

5. A belief in God that is not rooted in ethics will lead to evil.

Since religious belief does not necessarily make people moral, it is absolutely necessary for a religion to hold, and for its spokesmen to

preach, that God's primary (though not exclusive) demand is that His adherents do good works.

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini is murdering communities of innocent Bahais in the name of Allah because he believes that Allah is more concerned with people having the right faith than with performing the right acts. Medieval Crusaders had a similar attitude, holding that God is more interested in humanity having one form of faith than in practicing one standard of morality. They therefore murdered, in the name of Christ, untold numbers of innocent Jews and Muslims.

For these reasons, I conclude that what matters most is not what particular faith you hold so long as you believe that (1) you are morally responsible for your actions to God, (2) God is more concerned with the right actions than the right form of faith, and (3) God judges those people who are not of your faith by their ethics rather than by their faith alone.

This is why I believe that ethical monotheism—the doctrine that the one universal God demands that all people live by His one universal ethic—is the moral solution to the problem of evil. God without ethics and ethics without God lead to the same thing: evil. This is the Jews' message to the world, but tragically for both the Jews and the world, the Jews have become, in Abraham Joshua Heschel's brilliantly accurate description, "a messenger who forgot his message."

6. The Jews are Chosen to spread ethical monotheism.

If I did not believe that the Jews had a divinely appointed mission, I would find remaining Jewish after the Holocaust logically absurd. We are indeed God's messenger, and indeed, Jews disproportionately believe that they have a message to the world. Tragically, however, those who believe this rarely believe that Judaism is the means or that ethical monotheism is that message. Rather they believe that secularism is the means and that some other ism—Marxism, socialism, feminism, conservatism, liberalism, humanism—is the message. And those Jews who do know and live Judaism do not believe that they have a message to the world. So Jews who change the world do not do so as Jews, and those who live as Jews do not try to change the world.

Our task, in the words of a prayer recited by all Jewish denominations, is: "to repair the world under God's rule." When Jews understand Judaism and this mission, they will change the world for the better. It is this belief that guides this Jew's life.

(Each issue of *Ultimate Issues* will continue "Where I Stand," in order to apply this Jewish mission to the issues of our time. Reader reactions are deeply welcomed.) ■

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Jackson a black leader rather than a black demagogue, he would address those problems which ultimately blacks themselves must solve.

For example, more than half of the blacks born every year in this country are born to unmarried women. Born out of wedlock, the majority of black children grow up fatherless. There are more black girls who give birth during high school than black girls who graduate from college. Are these catastrophic problems Ronald Reagan's fault? Are they a result of white racism? If white racism is at fault, the black family should have collapsed during the worst racism, slavery, and during official racial segregation. Yet, as recently as the 1930's, in a much more racist America, the black divorce rate was lower than that of whites.

The fact is that most black problems, such as the crumbling black family, and a violent crime rate four times in excess of the black percentage of the population, are precisely that, black problems. The notion that whites and government must, or even can, solve those problems only serves to prevent blacks from confronting their own problems and to perpetuate black dependence. Had Jesse Jackson confronted the breakdown of values which is at the core of so many black problems, he would have made a seminal contribution to his people and been regarded by most Americans as a leader rather than as a demagogue. With his charisma, he could have led blacks by telling them not what they want to hear, but what they need to hear. Instead, he blames whites, the President, Republicans, and Jews for black problems and focuses on the PLO instead of the disintegrating black family.

Another aspect of the Jackson tragedy for blacks is revealed by an old statement by the black novelist, James Baldwin. "Whenever I go to a white writer's congress," wrote Baldwin, "I have a method for figuring out whether my colleagues are racist. It consists of saying stupid things and supporting absurd theories. If they listen to me respectfully and then burst into applause, there's no doubt about it, a group of racist pigs." Nothing better sums up many Democrats' and liberals' reactions to Rev. Jackson.

Baldwin's statement explains why whites who regard blacks as their equals must feel free to call Jesse Jackson an anti-democratic, anti-American, antisemitic demagogue. When a white who is sympathetic to blacks says that to blacks (not merely to whites when blacks are not around), it is clear that he takes blacks seriously. Jesse Jackson's claims to black leadership through the constant invocation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s name, as if he is that great man's moral heir, are Orwellian to those who recall King's views on Amer-

ica, Jews, Israel and Communist tyrannies. Contrast the anti-Zionism of Jackson with Martin Luther King's attitude toward Zionism. At Harvard in 1968, when a black radical student said that Zionism is racism, Rev. King angrily told the student that anti-Zionism is merely a codeword for antisemitism and he should never repeat that slander.

In a far tougher time in American history, Martin Luther King knew how to unite black and white and Jew and Christian. In a far better time, Jesse Jackson, claiming King's mantle to black leadership, is working to tear King's painstakingly won unity asunder.

Jackson and the liberal Democrats

Despite Jackson's antisemitism and anti-Americanism, the Democratic Party's reaction was, in Baldwin's words, to "listen respectfully" because Jackson is black. Democratic leaders felt that if they condemn Jackson's antisemitism, anti-Americanism, or support for terrorists and Third World tyrants, blacks would abandon the Democratic ticket. This was based on one or more of these suppositions:

1. Nearly all black Americans share Jesse Jackson's views.
2. Jesse Jackson is not worth responding to. If we just "listen respectfully" to him irrespective of his values, nearly all blacks will support the Democrats.
3. Nearly all black Americans support Jackson because he is black, not because of his radical views.
4. Many liberal Democrats have little trouble with Jackson's radical views.

If the first is true, Mr. Mondale should have taken issue with Jackson for America's and the Democrats' sake. He should have let black America know that antisemitism, anti-Americanism, and anti-democratic values have no place in his party, and let the electoral chips fall where they may.

If the second is true, the Democrats are precisely the type of racists to which James Baldwin referred. If the third is correct, the Democrats are playing a dangerous game. Big Lies work because they are first perceived as unimportant lies. The fourth is true, and worth analyzing.

To most Jews and to all who oppose appeasement of tyrants, Jesse Jackson's trip to Syria and his praise of Assad were reprehensible. But not to many liberal Democrats. Senator Ted Kennedy, for example, perhaps the most popular Democrat and liberal in the country, deeply admired Jesse Jackson's trip to Syria. "This personal initiative by Rev. Jackson," said the Massachusetts senator,

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"will rank as one of the finest by a private citizen in the history of international relations."

Within the liberal and Democratic establishments only some Jews took exception to refusal of liberals to attack Jackson. One of the leading liberals in Jewish life, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and past head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, admitted as much. Even he began to question the moral credibility of his liberal friends. In an essay in the *New York Times*, he asked, "Where are our liberal allies now that we need them, where's the National Council of Churches, where's the National Council of Bishops?"

Rabbi Schindler's question was right but his list was too short. He should have also asked where were all the liberal writers, commentators, politicians? And why did the Democrats reject a platform plank condemning antisemitism and racism? Rabbi Schindler should also have asked an equally revealing question. Where were the conservatives, when the Jews needed them? The answer would have been so embarrassing, however, that the Rabbi understandably avoided asking the question. For, by and large, conservatives were writing the truth about Jesse Jackson's antisemitism, anti-Americanism, and hostility to democracy. George Will, William Buckley, William Safire, and *Commentary* Magazine were screaming that the emperor was naked throughout the campaign. Of course there was one liberal exception, Martin Peretz and his magnificent *New Republic*. But Peretz is an anomaly who lives in his own rarefied world, neither liberal or conservative, just moral.

Let us, then, try to answer Rabbi Schindler's question: Why have liberals and Democrats been so unwilling to confront Rev. Jackson?

One obvious reason is that it is these very same liberal Democrats who have helped bring us to the state where a man with Jesse Jackson's views could run for President of the United States. Too many liberals have made anti-American rhetoric respectable. Liberal Democrats have rendered us accustomed to the morally lopsided view of the world in which the United States, which keeps every democracy on earth alive, is a source of evil, and that Communism is somehow a noble alternative for the Third World. That is why we are not shocked when a man seeking the Democratic presidential nomination visits a Communist state, hails its totalitarian anti-American rulers, and condemns the United States as the major force for evil in Central America.

For Jews there is a critical lesson in this. Jesse Jackson represents the chickens coming home to roost for Jews on the Left. These

Jews, who so disproportionately helped to create domestic radicalism and render anti-American radical rhetoric respectable, have created an anti-Jewish Frankenstein. If you constantly attack American foreign policy as immoral, as so many Jews have done from Vietnam to El Salvador, then expect American support for Israel to be attacked as well. Third Worlders like Jesse Jackson are not going to be pro-Sandinista, support anti-Western national liberation movements, and then oppose the PLO. For the Left, for Third World advocates, and for others who condemn American "imperialism," American support of Israel is considered as anti-Third World and reactionary as its policies in Central America.

American Jews should wake up to the reality that American strength and willingness to use that strength are inextricably linked to the survival of Israel and of every other democracy. Too many Jews, in their un-Jewish equation of arms and war with immorality, oppose virtually any strengthening of American defenses, but then demand that America be very strong when it comes to Israel.

Conclusion

Luckily for the Jews, the Democrats did not condemn Jackson once the Jews began attacking him. Just as the Jews were blamed for the downfall of Andrew Young—even though his comments at the United Nations about America having thousands of political prisoners just like the Soviet Union does, and about the saintliness of the Ayatollah Khomeini had already rendered him an embarrassment to the Carter administration—the Jews would have been blamed for the far more serious crime of bringing down a man whom many blacks regard as a virtual messiah.

Jews, however, have suffered enough from denying others' messiahs. With regard to the Reverend Jackson, the Jews for their own sake should now hold their peace. We have said quite enough for those who want to hear to have heard. Now let non-Jews who cherish democracy, wish to improve black-white relations, love America, and want to prevent antisemitism from becoming respectable see to it that Jesse Jackson's absence from the public stage remains permanent.

Jewish problems are humanity's problems, and until non-Jews learn this they will constantly get hurt by the people who hurt us. If I could, as a Jew, make one point to America and the West, it is precisely that. We Jews never asked for this role, but we have it. Unwillingly and unwittingly, it fell upon the Jews of the United States of America, in the year 1984, to be the moral litmus test of a man named Jesse Jackson. ■

Jews have suffered enough from denying others' messiahs. With regard to the Reverend Jackson, the Jews for their own sake should now hold their peace. We have said quite enough for those who want to hear to have heard. Now let non-Jews who cherish democracy, wish to improve black-white relations, love America, and want to prevent antisemitism from becoming respectable see to it that Jesse Jackson's absence from the public stage remains permanent.

Some thoughts

The Jews, the Christians, and the elections

From a purely Jewish perspective, Walter Mondale and Ronald Reagan presented American Jews with a pleasant choice. Among other positive factors, both men are deeply committed to the fundamental Jewish survival issue, the well-being of Israel. To a large extent, therefore, most Jews voted for whomever they voted for a variety of reasons. Insofar as Jews voted on a Jewish basis, however, I believe the major issue boiled down to this: whom do you fear more, Jesse Jackson or Jerry Falwell?

For me, this was not a tough question to answer. Jesse Jackson is a pro-PLO antisemite, and Jerry Falwell is pro-Israel and a defender of Jews. You don't agree with Falwell's theology? Neither do I. You don't agree with Falwell on political issues such as his call for an amendment banning abortion? Neither do I. But it is factually and morally wrong to call him an antisemite. I have read Falwell's works, personally interviewed him, and listened to many of his broadcasts to Christians, and have found no evidence to call him an antisemite.

It is also wrong for Jews to condemn Falwell's passionate support for Israel on the grounds that this support is based upon his Christian theology. First of all, Falwell consistently denies that his support is rooted in a vision of the Jews' return to Israel, or to an Armageddon, as a precondition to Jesus' Second Coming and/or the Jews' acceptance of Jesus. But even if those are his reasons for taking a historically antisemitic community and leading them to support of the Jews and Israel, so what? *Since when do we Jews judge people by their theology rather than by their actions?* (Anyway, why should a Jew not agree to accept Jesus if he returns so long as

Dr. Falwell and other Fundamentalists promise to keep supporting Israel until then?)

In the meantime, let's be honest. Jews fear a resurgent Christianity, period. Having spent six years writing a book on antisemitism, I certainly understand why. But life is not static. Jews must recognize that much of Christianity has changed. Our enemies were traditionally Christians and on the Right. Not today. Our enemies now are Muslims and on the Left.

How ironic that religiously and politically conservative Jews, so often criticized for not changing with the times, constitute the only groups of Jews willing to see that Christians have changed? And "progressive" Jews who so pride themselves in changing with the times, seem to be the least capable of changing or even seeing change, still living in the past, slaying right wing phantoms and medieval Christian Inquisitors.

I will have much more to say on this in future issues of *Ultimate Issues*. Suffice it for now to point out a general rule. The more rooted a Jew is in Judaism, the more he welcomes Christians rooted in their Christianity. The less religious the Jew, the less he welcomes Christians' religious expressions.

We must always fight to maintain a secular government. But as far as the American people are concerned, I fear an irreligious population more than I do a Christian one. I understand that most Jews do not feel this way. But (1) I agree with Dostoevsky, that "Where there is no God, all is permitted."

(2) It is very sad that the Jews, the people who introduced God to humanity and who have the mission to spread ethical monotheism, are the people most devoted to eradicating religion in our society.

(3) The Christian West is the Jews' best friend in the world today.

(4) More Jews remain Jewish in a religious society than in a secular one. ■

Our enemies were traditionally Christians and on the Right. Not today. Our enemies now are Muslims and on the Left.

As far as the American people are concerned, I fear an irreligious population more than I do a Christian one.

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Jewish terrorists

There is a huge moral gulf between Israel and its enemies but there is no moral difference between a Jew blowing up an Arab bus and an Arab blowing up a Jewish bus.

The Israelis charged with terrorism are of course innocent until proven guilty. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon Jews, especially religious Jews, to make known their attitude to the *actions* of which these men are accused. And that should not be difficult. A Jew who blows up an Arab civilian bus is violating the Sixth Commandment.

There is a huge moral gulf between Israel and its enemies but there is no moral difference between a Jew blowing up an Arab bus and an Arab blowing up a Jewish bus. That most Arabs would not agree with this statement is a statement about the moral state of the Arab world. To the extent that Jews would not agree with this statement, Judaism has failed to raise them above their enemies. ■

Abba Eban's *Heritage*

The PBS Series on the Jews, *Heritage* was beautifully made. As with so much in the contemporary media, however, it was technically, but not otherwise, inspiring. The reason,

in this instance, is quite simple. A secular individual, no matter how eloquent and knowledgeable, cannot convey the meaning of a religion, let alone serve as a religious inspiration.

I cannot imagine any viewer coming away from Abba Eban's *Heritage* with an understanding of why generations of Jews devoted, let alone sacrificed, their lives to preserve Judaism. Nor can I imagine a single uncommitted Jew, of the countless number that undoubtedly watched some of the series, having been moved to look into Judaism. I appreciate that *Heritage* was a positive introduction to Jewish history for many non-Jews, but an almost unique opportunity to reach alienated Jews was wasted.

In this sense, *Heritage* represents the greatest problem in contemporary Jewish life. The Jewish people, devoid of religious passion and oblivious to its religious/moral message, is inspiring fewer and fewer Jews to live as Jews. Or, to put it another way, the day on which all Jews will be as convinced as Abba Eban that God had no role in the writing of the Torah, but that it was written by some wise Jewish men in Babylon, will mark the end of Abba Eban's heritage. ■

Correspondence

As this is the first issue of *Ultimate Issues*, there is no correspondence section. It is my hope that this section will constitute a major part of all future issues. Your thoughts, questions, and reactions, agree or disagree, are es-

sential to the success of *Ultimate Issues*. Of course, not all letters can be published and some may have to be shortened for the sake of space, but you are urged to participate in this ongoing dialogue.

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FYI: Dennis Prager

Dennis Prager, 36, has written, with Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, now the most widely used English language introduction to Judaism, and *Why The Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism* (both published by Simon and

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ULTIMATE ISSUES

A REPORT BY DENNIS PRAGER

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2

SPRING 1985

Afghanistan: how good people can ignore a holocaust

"A whole nation is dying. People should know."

Afghan doctor. "Whole villages are bombed into oblivion, sometimes as a reprisal after a guerilla attack, sometimes for no reason at all. Soviet soldiers enter the villages, selecting non-combatant men, women and children at random to be shot, dynamited, beheaded or burned alive.

"Two men, brothers, from Mata, aged ninety and ninety-five, and blind, stayed behind when the rest of the villagers fled during last spring's offensive. Russians came, tied dynamite to their backs, and blew them up.

"Civilians are burned alive, dynamited, beheaded; bound men forced to lie down on the road to be crushed by Soviet tanks; grenades thrown into rooms where women and children have been told to wait.

"Mothers are forced to watch their infants being given electric shocks. A young woman who had been tortured in prison described how she and others had been forced to stand in water that had been treated with chemicals, which made the skin come off their feet." (Jeri Laber, Helsinki Watch, *New York Times*, November 22, 1984).

Right now there is something akin to a Holocaust taking place in Afghanistan. The systematic destruction of villages and the murder of all their inhabitants precisely parallel the infamous Nazi atrocity at Lidice. Nearly one out of every three Afghans, four to five million people, have fled Afghanistan, and approximately one million have been killed. Neutral observers are unanimous in concluding that the Soviets are literally destroying rural Afghanistan—emptying it of its population and starving those who remain.

The Soviets are, for all intents and purposes, destroying Afghanistan. Unless they are stopped, Afghanistan will cease to exist as such, and will become a Soviet republic in everything but name. Islam is being destroyed, tens of thousands of children from the major cities have been sent to the Soviet Union to be indoctrinated in Russian and Communism, and the rest of the country's population either submits

to Sovietization or flees.

We Jews have always wondered how the world could basically go on during the Holocaust as if nothing were happening. Ever since Pol Pot and the Communist holocaust in Cambodia, I have understood how easy it is for people to go on with their normal lives while a nation is slaughtered. Afghanistan now provides another example.

Is the analogy to the Holocaust invalid? The Holocaust was unique, and there is no Auschwitz in Afghanistan, but on the other hand:

- The Jewish nation, religion, and culture have survived the Nazis. It is not likely that the Afghan nation, religion, and culture will comparably survive the Soviets.
- You and I know much more about Afghanistan than nearly anyone in the West knew about the Holocaust, so our silence is unforgivable.

- Once people learned of the Holocaust, no one denied how evil the Nazis were. Today, on the other hand, despite all we know about the Gulag Archipelago, Afghanistan, the systematic destruction of Judaism and Christianity in the Soviet Union, and other Soviet atrocities, to call the Soviets evil is to be considered a "cold warrior," a "reactionary."

How many Afghans will the Soviets have to burn, how many countries will they have to extinguish, how many more tens of millions will they have to murder, before Soviet cruelty becomes the primary item on the agenda of people who care about people?

We Jews must cry out on behalf of Afghanistan, and do so *davka* as Jews. Jewish organizations must speak out, take out ads and organize demonstrations to remind the world that we who endured the first Holocaust, have the duty to scream the loudest at events that approach its unique evil.

Then we will continue to be in a moral position to protest the silence that accompanied our Holocaust.

In the meantime, however, if you ever wondered how good people could ignore a holocaust, look around right now. ■

In this issue

The immorality of pacifist thinking: turning the moral tables on pacifists and the peace movement.

The greatest Jewish problem: in the free world it is neither antisemitism nor survival.

When rabbis and cantors become doctors and artists: Ph.D.'s and musical art may not be what congregations need.

Readers comment on: The first issue of *Ultimate Issues*

The immorality of pacifist thinking

Millions of people living in democracies have come to sympathize with a doctrine that would lead to the end of democracy.

"The Soviets are producing missiles, and the West is producing pacifists."
Francois Mitterand, President of France.

Pacifist doctrines once associated with isolated individuals and religious fringe groups are sweeping the democratic West. Though few call themselves pacifist—"anti-war," "peace activist" and "non-violent" are among the preferred self-descriptions—millions of people living in democracies have come to sympathize with a doctrine that would lead in our generation, as it would have in the last, to the end of democracy and to unlimited evil.

If during the Nazi era, democratic societies had been as attracted to pacifism and non-violence as they are today, far more than the 55 million killed in World War II and virtually every Jew in the world would have been killed, and freedom, democracy, and human rights would have disappeared from this planet. Yet despite this, pacifist beliefs such as killing and war are never justifiable, violence is always wrong, and even calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament are spreading throughout the democratic West.

In the religious world, pacifist thinking has become mainstream. Nearly every Catholic priest and mainline Protestant minister of the scores who have appeared on my radio show either sympathize with, or actually affirm, pacifism. Their views are not exceptional.

The Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Christ, the Disciples of Christ, the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church have all made "peace" their priority program. By "peace," such groups mean anything from unilateral disarmament to outright pacifism. For example, 35 of the 37 organizations on the peace resource list of the Episcopal Church promote *unilateral* disarmament and such denominations as the American Friends Service Committee and the Fellowship of Reconciliation actually proclaim adherence to pacifism.

Catholic leaders, too, are moving in that direction. The National Catholic Educational Association has made "peace"—disarmament, non-violence, and opposition to nuclear arms—a cornerstone of Catholic education. The Catholic trend, according to Vanderbilt's Chester E. Finn, Jr., is toward teaching uni-

lateral disarmament. And the Church's overall intent is best summed up by one of the peace activists himself, San Francisco Archbishop John Quinn: "To disarm the spirit" of the West.

Even two rabbis, spokesmen for a religion that deems pacifism a sin, have said—again, on the air, not simply in private conversation—that they would respect an individual who during World War II could have killed Hitler but refused to because of his pacifist principles. In *Searching the Prophets for Values*, a school text published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbis Balfour Brickner and Albert Vorspan answer their question, "Can a Jew be a pacifist?" in the affirmative.

Such thinking is hardly confined to religious circles. Other manifestations include the widespread opposition to a military draft or even to draft registration, the many journalists, politicians, and intellectuals who instinctively condemn any use of force by democracies, the vowing of candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination virtually never to use force, and calls for unilateral disarmament by many respectable citizens and by movements such as the left wing of the British Labor Party, and the Greens and the left in West Germany. Providing intellectual, moral and financial support are myriad organizations from Physicians for Social Responsibility to Musicians Against Nuclear Arms.

What has happened? How do so many personally decent people justify respecting, let alone embracing, a doctrine that allows and leads to limitless cruelty?

The pacifist arguments

When challenged, pacifists and their sympathizers offer a variety of explanations:

1. It is always wrong to kill another human being.
2. The Ten Commandments states, "Thou shall not kill."
3. Human life is the supreme value.
4. The best answer to the problem of combating evil is the doctrine of non-violence as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.
5. As a corollary to the above, "you can't fight

Even two rabbis have said—on the radio, not simply in private conversation—that they would respect an individual who during World War II could have killed Hitler but refused to because of his pacifist principles.

violence with violence.”

6. Owing to the existence of nuclear weapons, pacifism has become a moral imperative. No matter how much we may deplore Gulags and the spread of totalitarianism, or feel for boat people and the Afghan nation, it is better Red than dead.

These are the moral arguments most often offered for pacifism and other doctrines of non-violence. Many of us who consider pacifism immoral suspect that there are additional reasons why so many people are making non-violence pacts with evil. We will note these. But first it is necessary to show why even the pacifists' own arguments are not moral. Only then can we remove the mantle of morality from the pacifists and return it to those who believe that sometimes the only moral position involves violence.

It is always wrong to kill.

'Always' is the operative word here. Let there be no ambiguity about this. The moment one does not mean 'always,' he is no longer a pacifist. He is, like the rest of us, a proponent of the moral use of violence and an opponent of pacifism. The moment one affirms the morality of killing Nazis during World War II or killing a sniper who is shooting school children, he is opposed to pacifism and *for* the moral use of violence.

The moral question is not whether killing is moral, but when is killing moral. Sometimes the answer is clear—such as when there is no other way to protect an innocent human life. At other times the answer is far less clear. But the only alternative to the uncertainty of moral killing is the certainty of immoral killing. If we do not kill the sniper who is shooting the school children, he will kill them. If men had not killed Nazis, Dr. Mengele would still be performing experiments on people. If someone had killed Stalin, perhaps 20 million Soviet lives would have been saved.

There is, in sum, moral killing and immoral killing. The latter is known as murder, which is why we have two words for the same act.

“Thou shall not kill.”

Now we can understand why this is not what the Ten Commandments commands. It is an errant translation—its words are, “Thou shall not murder.” Hebrew, as English, distinguishes between killing and murder. Killing, according to the Bible, is sometimes a virtuous act. It is murder, the deliberate killing of an innocent person, that is prohibited.

It is particularly reprehensible when clergy misquote the Ten Commandments or when they equally denounce all violence in the name of religion. They should know better. All decent people long for Isaiah's vision of the time when “nation will not lift a sword against an-

other nation.” But we will hasten Isaiah's messianic vision by fighting evil, not by allowing it to proliferate.

Moses, the greatest Jew of all time, the great giver of moral law to humanity, killed an Egyptian slave master who was beating a Hebrew slave. The moral hero of the Hebrew Bible deliberately killed a man, an act that God, who then chose Moses as His prophet, apparently deemed moral.

Human life is the supreme value.

This fundamental tenet of many pacifists contradicts the moral bases of Western civilization. It is a moral axiom of Judaism and Christianity that at times life must be sacrificed for the sake of morality. Yet pacifism holds the direct opposite: morality must be sacrificed for the sake of life. The life of a torturer is absolute. When the only way to stop him is through killing or war, better that he continue torturing.

When life is the highest value, everything else, by definition, is of lower value. Justice, decency, morality, kindness, and all other acts of nobility are rendered secondary to living. Life is absolute, all else is relative. This belief means that biology takes precedence over morality. Long lives are more valuable than decent lives.

But the belief that human life is the supreme value fails not only morally. Even on its own terms of preserving life, it fails. By prohibiting the killing of murderers when only killing will stop them, pacifism increases death. In the name of the absoluteness of life, peace is made with massive death.

It is not surprising that secularism, which denies the transcendent, should lead to the veneration of life. What else is there but this life? But it is shocking that religious Christians or Jews should flirt with, let alone embrace, such an ideology. The essential message of Judaism and Christianity is that life is not an end in itself. Life is to be a *means*—to goodness, to sanctity, to God.

Life as an end in itself is idolatry.

Martin Luther King, Gandhi and the doctrine of non-violence.

The non-violent resistance practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King in their respective struggles against British imperialism and American racist institutions was a major moral achievement. It attained its moral ends and saved lives. In many other instances, however, non-violence saves no lives but the murderers' and only leads to greater immorality.

When Great Britain or the American government is the enemy, non-violence is the appropriate moral response. When Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Qaddafi, a death

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It is a moral axiom of Judaism and Christianity that at times life must be sacrificed for the sake of morality. Yet pacifism holds the direct opposite: morality must be sacrificed for the sake of life.

When Great Britain or the American government is the enemy, non-violence is the appropriate moral response. When Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Qaddafi, a death squad, or Charles Manson is the enemy, non-violence means suicide for the innocent, victory for the guilty, and acquiescence for the rest of us.

The idea that violence could be used for the good has become foreign to the contemporary Western mind blunted by the pacifist notion that violence is wrong. Those who suffer know better: there are graffiti in East Europe that read, "We envy Grenada."

With nothing higher than themselves to live—let alone die—for, many in the West now live for themselves—and would die for nothing.

squad, or Charles Manson is the enemy, non-violence means suicide for the innocent, victory for the guilty, and acquiescence for the rest of us. Against Nazism, Communism, terrorism, or the rapists and murderers in our crime-infested cities, "non-violent resistance" is a misnomer—it increases violence and resists good.

The naivete inherent to the doctrine of non-violence is clearly revealed in the words of Gandhi himself. He wrote in 1938: "I am as certain as I am dictating these lines that the stoniest German heart will melt [if only the Jews]. . . adopt active non-violence. . . I do not despair of his [Hitler's] responding to human suffering even though caused by him."

When Gandhi's heirs speak of the essential humaneness of the Soviet leaders, they are true to the spirit of their mentor.

You cannot fight violence with violence.

The essence of this argument is that when you use violence to fight evil, you are fighting evil with evil and you become morally equivalent to that evil.

This parity of immorality, which characterizes much of the moral thinking in our time, is yet another example of the widespread impact of the pacifist view that killing anyone, in any context, is immoral. The one who kills a murderer is morally equated with the murderer. Violence is wrong, period.

Thus, one hears, "what makes Hitler's killer any better than Hitler?" Or, "why is the state executioner any better than the murderer he executes?" And on the macro level, many people claim to see little moral difference between the American invasion of Grenada (which initiated democracy and was welcomed by Grenadans as liberation from tyranny) and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (which initiated a quasi-genocide). Killing is wrong. Invasions are wrong. Those who suffer know better: there are graffiti in East Europe that read, "We envy Grenada." Can one even imagine anyone, anywhere, writing, "We envy Afghanistan?"

The idea that violence could be used for the good has become foreign to the contemporary Western mind blunted by the pacifist notion that violence is wrong.

Nuclear weapons render pacifism morally obligatory.

The reason most often offered for the increased respect for doctrines of non-violence is the threat of nuclear war. Nuclear war challenges previous theories of just wars. In conventional wars, good could vanquish evil. But in a nuclear war it is conceivable that neither the good nor the evil would survive. In the nuclear age, the argument goes, pacifism may be indispensable to humanity's survival.

Is this so? Does pacifism, an immoral doc-

trine when humanity's survival is not at stake, become moral in the nuclear age?

I do not believe so. Even if one believes that the use of any nuclear weapons will lead to the use of all nuclear weapons and that such use would end the human race, there is no reason why he is absolved from fighting evil whenever possible with non-nuclear weapons.

A moral case can be made for an individual's refusal to use nuclear weapons in time of war on the grounds that it could lead to the end of humankind. But this is neither pacifism, nor a doctrine of non-violence, nor anti-war, nor even opposition to nuclear deterrence. It is the refusal to fight in a specific war on moral grounds related to that war only. Such a position, which has nothing to do with pacifist or non-violent thinking, is to be honored. That pacifism is wrong does not mean that fighting in all wars is right.

Pacifist opposition to all war, even a conventional one waged to save innocent Cambodians, or Jews, or Afghans, or Ugandans, or oneself, remains as immoral in the nuclear age as it was before. Today, as in the past, pacifism means acquiescence in evil.

Why is the West producing pacifists?

Given the terrible consequences and the moral incoherence of pacifist thinking, the question of its popularity remains. Why, to return to President Mitterand's observation, are the democracies producing pacifists while the totalitarian empire bent on their destruction produces missiles? Pacifists offer the six reasons cited above. But when millions of people in the free world come to adopt values that could allow it to be destroyed, deeper reasons must be sought.

At least two reasons may be suggested.

First, many members of the post World War II generation in Western Europe and of the Vietnam War generation in the United States have become alienated from basic Western values. Many no longer regard the West, their country, a religion, or even democracy and freedom as worthy of dying or killing for.

Without addressing the causes of this alienation, one result of it is clear. In addition to their intrinsic merits, these values serve an extremely important function: they give people something higher than themselves to live for. For those who have rejected these values, therefore, the highest value in their life has become their life. With nothing higher than themselves to live—let alone die—for, many in the West now live for themselves—and would die for nothing. Hence the "meism" that characterizes much of this generation.

I believe that the increased pacifist thinking in the West today is one of many self-centered outgrowths of this denial of higher values. Preoccupation with self-preservation is just one of a number of manifestations of the obsession with self that has resulted from a generation's alienation from Western values. Despite all its moral rhetoric and sincere intentions, the blossoming of pacifist thinking today is no indication of moral enlightenment. It is a tragic manifestation of widespread alienation from Western values. It is the self-centered consequence of having nothing higher than the self to believe in.

There is an obvious proof to this explanation. The peace activists are preoccupied with a potential holocaust that could kill *them*. They ignore real holocausts that are killing others. They are passionate about ICBM's that could kill *them* but the genocide in Cambodia, the Soviet destruction of Afghanistan (see *Afghanistan* in this issue), and the Gulag Archipelago have left them cold.

The second major reason for the proliferation of pacifist thinking in the West is related to the first. As a result of the alienation from Western values, there is a profound confusion over how evil the West's adversary is. If the West is not worth fighting for, then clearly, the Soviets and Communism are not worth fighting against. Hence the constant lumping of the two superpowers into a moral equivalence. Hence the enemy of the Western peace movement is not the Soviet Union but nuclear arms. Hence the quiet over Communist atrocities or the equating them with right wing atrocities, thereby nullifying Communism's unique threat to humanity.

To express deep concern over the greatest atrocities of our time, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Soviet totalitarianism would be to acknowledge the primacy of the Communist, particularly the Soviet, threat to peace. Such acknowledgment accords with the peace movement in the Soviet Union. But it utterly undermines the belief that lies at the heart of the Western peace movement's worldview, that the enemy is arms—Soviet and American—not an expansionist tyranny.

Peace activists in Moscow understand that the greatest enemies of peace are not arms, but arms in the hands of aggressive tyrants. They understand that even if nations are

armed to the teeth, so long as they are democracies, there is little to fear. Democratic open societies do not go to war with one another. Expansionist tyrants cause wars—against democracies and against one another. They are after all, constantly at war with their own people.

Thus while the Western peace movement is saturated with moral rhetoric, truly moral peace movements are to be found in places that need peace movements. It is moral, courageous, and necessary to be a peace activist in a war-making tyranny. Peace activists in Moscow, Havana or Peking risk everything and go to prison. Peace activists in New York, London or Bonn risk nothing and go on television.

Peace activists in Communist countries understand that the Soviet police state is the greatest threat to world peace. They also understand that only well-armed democracies can prevent the world from sharing their fate. That is why the Soviet Union so actively supports the efforts of Western peace activists to 'disarm the spirit' of the democracies, and sends their own peace activists to prison camps.

A moral and realistic Western peace movement would therefore concentrate on supporting Soviet democratic dissidents. It would recognize that the creation of a more open Soviet society is by far the single greatest way to prevent nuclear war. It would work for a strong Western defense, as well as push for meaningful arms control and a peaceful *modus vivendi* with the Soviets.

Until then, the Western peace activists are serving the Soviets considerably more than they are serving peace. The louder the Western voices for peace, the more they drown out the cries of Afghans and boat people. This is why the Soviet regime is so supportive of them. Does the support of these tyrants ever give the peace activists reasons to doubt their moral purity? Does the support of the annihilators of Lithuanian Catholicism and Russian Jewish life ever disturb the consciences of the Catholic and Jewish peace activists?

If democracy survives the efforts of the West's pacifists and peace movement, they may be best remembered for confirming the two thousand year old Talmudic warning: "Those who treat the cruel mercifully will end up treating the merciful cruelly." ■

The peace activists are preoccupied with a potential holocaust that could kill *them*. They ignore real holocausts that are killing *others*.

Peace activists in Moscow, Havana or Peking risk everything and go to prison. Peace activists in New York, London or Bonn risk nothing and go on television.

The louder the Western voices for peace, the more they drown out the cries of Afghans and boat people. This is one reason why the Soviet regime is so supportive of them.

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The greatest Jewish problem

While Jews certainly have external enemies who must be fought, the greatest Jewish problem—the rapidly dwindling number of committed or even identifying Jews—is internal. It is not caused by neo-Nazis, Arafat, the Soviets, Jesse Jackson, school prayer, the arms race, or any of the other external problems concentrated upon by Jews and their organizations. The greatest Jewish problem is caused, and can only be solved, by the Jews themselves.

In my essay on Jesse Jackson (*Ultimate Issues*, vol 1, no 1), I noted that one reason why he is a tragedy for black Americans is that he focuses blacks' attention onto external problems such as white racism, rather than on the far more serious internal problems that afflict American blacks. It is easier for leaders to tell their people—since it is easier for people to hear—that their problems emanate from outside. But when leaders do this, they are not leading. Indeed they are hurting their group because they are not addressing its greatest problems, which are so often internal.

This applies equally to Jewish life in the free world. While Jews certainly have external enemies who must be fought, the greatest Jewish problem—the rapidly dwindling number of committed or even identifying Jews—is internal. It is not caused by neo-Nazis, Arafat, the Soviets, Jesse Jackson, school prayer, the arms race, or any of the other external problems concentrated upon by Jews and their organizations. The greatest Jewish problem is caused, and can only be solved, by the Jews themselves.

The problem is not survival

Before addressing the problem, its causes and possible solutions, let me put it into perspective. Those of us who hold that the greatest Jewish problem is the disappearing Jew are often criticized as doomsayers. Hasn't every generation of Jews had its predictors of the end of Jewry? Aren't we, as one Jewish philosopher put it, "the ever-dying people?"

In light of this objection, I want to make my position very clear. I do not for one moment fear the end of the Jewish people. So long as there are human beings, I have no doubt that some of them will be Jewish. Should other planets ever be colonized, I am certain that some Jews will be there asking passersby whether they had put on Tefillin that morning.

Nor am I a survivalist. The purpose of Jewish life is not that Jews survive. The purpose of Jewish life is that Jews lead Jewish lives, be "a light unto the nations," and "repair the world under God's rule." Therefore, when I say that the greatest Jewish problem is the diminishing number of Jews, it is not because I am worried about Jewish survival. We will survive.

The problem

I am concerned not that Jews will die out,

but that they will become irrelevant. I am concerned that fewer Jews means that Judaism will have less of an impact upon the world. There will always be Jews. The questions are what type of Jews? What quality of Jewish life? What impact will Judaism have on a world increasingly devoid of enduring values? And, of course, how many? As the dean of Jewish historians, Salo Baron, writes in *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, "Whether the total number of Jews amounts to thousands or to millions makes a calculable difference in their social and hence in their religious life. . . . Quantity here becomes quality. . . ."

Once one understands, to use Herman Wouk's description, that the Jews are an army, one does not ask whether all its soldiers will survive. One asks whether the army is getting stronger or weaker, whether its struggle is nearer to or further from success.

Or, to cite Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's equally accurate description, the modern Jew is "a messenger who forgot his message." Here, too, one does not ask whether the messenger will die — a messenger who forgets his message may very well live, but if he forgot his message, his survival is meaningless. As a messenger he *is* dead.

When Jews understand that they are an army, a messenger, they will recognize that their greatest problem is not Jewish survival but that fewer Jews are fighting, fewer Jews know that they have a message.

The cause

In other words, fewer and fewer Jews know *why* to be Jewish. This is the cause of the greatest Jewish problem. Jews may know how to survive but they do not *why* to survive. This is the overwhelming reason why Jews are assimilating.

This is a relatively new development. In the past, it was often enough to be born a Jew. You knew you were a Jew, that you would marry a Jew, live as a Jew, and die as a Jew. The greatest Jewish problem, has often been *how* to survive — in the face of antisemitism, terrible economic conditions, and other problems caused by outside forces. The problem is that Jews continue to act as if this is still their greatest problem. Thus Jewish life concentrates on *how* to fight antisemites, *how* to rescue persecuted Jews, *how* to feed and clothe the Jewish poor, *how* to gain political support for Israel.

Jews may know *how* to survive but they do not know *why* to survive. This is the overwhelming reason why Jews are assimilating.

And this emphasis is not only true of secular Jewish life. Religious Jewish life, too, generally ignores the *why* and focuses almost exclusively on the *hows*. In my thirteen years of study in three different Yeshivas, I learned well *how* to daven, *how* to keep kosher, *how* to study Jewish sources, *how* to keep the Shabbat, and innumerable other *hows* of Judaism. What I rarely learned was *why* I should do any of these things. And despite the fact that the only real answer to why be Jewish is a religious one, in all my years of religious Jewish education, the issue was, for all intents and purposes, ignored.

Jewish life, therefore, has been devoting its energies largely to dealing with the problem of the past, not *the* problem of the present. Without a Jewish *why*, a Jewish *how* strikes most Jews today as irrelevant. As Nietzsche put it, "He who has a why to live can bear with any how." Jews today lack the *why*. Give them that *why*, and they will find the *how* to survive. If Jewish life wants another generation of Jews to fight Israel's enemies or to raise funds for Jewish causes, it had better teach Jews why, in the first place, they ought to lead a Jewish life.

Jews need reasons to be Jewish

In open societies, relatively free of antisemitism, Jews need *reasons* to stay Jewish. Inter-marriage provides a perfect example. There have always been two types of arguments against it — positive Jewish ones (why it is so important to perpetuate Judaism), and negative ones (about non-Jews).

In the past, even non-practicing Jews could, if nothing else, often count on the validity of negative arguments: "non-Jews are different," "they don't make good husbands," "they drink too much," "in an argument, they'll revert to antisemitism."

But these arguments no longer hold water. And the differences between irreligious Jews and irreligious non-Jews of the same socioeconomic and educational backgrounds are virtually non-existent. Young Jews therefore now regard those arguments as racist, since they are based on preserving the purity of Jewish ethnicity rather than the purity of Jewish values.

Only if Jewish values are distinctive is there a positive and non-racial reason for Jews not to intermarry or in any other way to maintain a distinct Jewish identity. But Jews have been raised increasingly to believe that Jewish values are not distinctive, that they are essentially identical to liberal, secular humanistic ones. Consequently, many Jews, both in their behavior and their values, have become indistinguishable from the many non-Jews who

also have been raised without a distinctive religious value system and who hold the same liberal, secular humanistic values.

None of this should come as a surprise. Haven't a great many Jews been raised to regard most differences among groups — especially in the area of religion — as a reactionary notion to be discarded? Haven't they been taught to be "universalist" by not being "too Jewish?" Haven't they been taught that religion is either irrelevant to ethical values or an actual impediment to them? And once Judaism is no longer a Jew's source of values, does he have a single distinctive Jewish value?

Given such an upbringing, why should an American Jew identify as a Jew, lead a Jewish life, or marry a Jew, or raise Jewish children, or support Israel, or . . . ?

The solution

Once the greatest Jewish problem and its cause are recognized, the solution is overwhelmingly clear. Jews must be taught *why* to be Jewish. Jewish life must embark on a campaign to teach this to Jews with the same commitment, resources and sense of life or death as it has in creating and supporting Israel. Even Jews whose dominant Jewish concern is Israel alone should recognize that without such a campaign to fight assimilation, there will be few Jews left in the Diaspora to support Israel.

Why be Jewish? Because the Jewish people has a religious/moral/holy mission to "repair the world under God's rule." Because the Jews are bidden by God to be a "light unto the nations." Because Judaism fills one's life with a holiness, meaning and joy that is not attainable to the uncommitted Jew. And because Judaism has *distinctive* values which if communicated to the world, will reduce human suffering, help to extinguish evil, and prevent holocausts (which are taking place with greater frequency and more apathy — see *Afghanistan* in this issue).

When Jews understand these reasons, they *will* lead Jewish lives. But they must have the reasons. In an open and free society, Jews need powerful, positive reasons to remain Jewish. They need to know why they should be different when non-Jews are equally well educated and fine, and why Judaism has better moral and personal answers than secular humanism.

And Jews need to learn the answer to a question once posed to me by a holocaust survivor who has completely rejected his Jewish identity, "Why should I bequeath to my child the possibility of another holocaust?"

Jews need *reasons* — intellectual, personal, moral — to be Jewish. Ethnic *feelings* will no longer suffice to keep Jews Jewish. ■

Many Jews, both in their behavior and their values, have become indistinguishable from the many non-Jews who also have been raised without a distinctive religious value system and who hold the same liberal, secular humanistic values.

Jews need *reasons* — intellectual, personal, moral — to be Jewish. Ethnic *feelings* will no longer suffice to keep Jews Jewish.

Jews must be taught *why* to be Jewish. Jewish life must embark on a campaign to teach this to Jews with the same commitment, resources and sense of life or death as it has in creating and supporting Israel.

Correspondence

First Issue

I found the first issue just fine from every point of view — including the excellent format. More power to you.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.
New York, NY

Ultimate Issues is very impressive indeed and I wish you all the best with it. I found myself cheering the several "Where I Stand" items, except for the reference to "heirs of Luther's thinking," which would require some extended discussion. I would have thought that the author of "Where I Stand" would be more sympathetic to the hero of "Here I Stand"!

(PASTOR) RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Director
The Center on Religion & Society
New York, NY.

Your *Ultimate Issues* is superb. I don't agree with everything you say about Jackson, but for the most part your assessment is deservedly devastating. I endorse it wholeheartedly.

I am ecstatic about your emphasis in returning God to center stage in Jewish thought. Most rabbis and intellectuals talk exclusively about "amcha," a history, Israel, holidays, ceremonies, and maybe ethics. But never God. I've been waging my own battle for this Jewish renaissance of faith, because I am convinced we are lost without it.

Bravo your effort and performance.

RABBI HOWARD R. GREENSTEIN
Reform Congregation Ahavat Chesed
Jacksonville, FL

I received and enjoyed *Ultimate Issues* and look forward to more.

I, a one time "Liberal" Jew who actively supported Henry Wallace in 1948, and voted for him, have evolved into a very "Conservative" one politically. This evolution was, and is, hard to explain.

Most recently I saw an interview with Jeane Kirkpatrick on why she has registered as a Republican after being a lifetime Democrat. I agreed almost

one hundred percent with her reasoning. In the World War II era the Democrats were the "interventionists" and the GOP the "isolationists." Now the roles are reversed. It is not so much a question of Liberal vs. Conservative as it is a realization of the incessant expansionism of the Russian *Empire* as against those who have their heads in the sand. The real question is why so many of our fellow Jews can't see it.

We listen to you on the radio as much as possible and enjoy.

HAROLD L. ENGEL M.D., J.D.
Studio City, CA

The first issue of *Ultimate Issues* was fascinating to say the least. Certainly you speak your mind and don't hold back on your convictions. I agree wholeheartedly with you that while there is indeed a danger in matters such as voluntary school prayer, in that it can lead to the imposition of sectarian religion, that danger is somewhat remote. It must be weighed against the dangers inherent in a society that produces a generation of children who have no feeling for transcendence or spirituality in their lives. Jews should be keenly aware that secularism is in itself a value, not a "neutral" point of view and that there are risks in having such a position serve as a cornerstone for our national spirit and body politic.

My congratulations again on your excellent newsletter.

RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN
The Holyland Fellowship
of Christians and Jews
Chicago, IL

Disagreement on Eban

I find myself compelled to write to take advantage of your invitation to express reactions "whether we agree or disagree." I am speaking here for many friends on the subject of *Heritage*.

Referring to your statement that "although beautifully made, it was technically but not otherwise, inspiring," I must say we were all *shocked* by this statement as well as all of the

statements that followed on this subject. Among us are devoted Jews, uncommitted Jews and non-Jews.

The series has stirred emotions within all of us as it has everyone we have spoken to that has viewed it -- each in his own way. I personally, as an uncommitted, alienated Jew have been made to feel, through this series, a sense of heritage that I have never experienced before. It has made all of us ponder, meditate, and study -- it has accomplished even more than Abba Eban's intention was to accomplish.

EILEEN FOX AND LEN ENGEL
Los Angeles, CA

Your points are well taken and I certainly hope that you are right and that I was wrong. But the evidence you offered does not yet convince me, because the question is not whether viewing Heritage will inspire an uncommitted Jew to "feel a sense of heritage." My question was whether it will inspire a single uncommitted Jew to become a committed Jew. It is quite possible, indeed it has been quite common, for Jews to "feel a sense of heritage" and to assimilate. We can no longer rely on ethnic feelings to keep Jews Jewish. Jews need reasons to stay Jewish (please see The Greatest Jewish Problem). With great respect for his accomplishment, I do not think that Abba Eban's Heritage offered any.

"Is it right?" An Orthodox response

In your article *Where I Stand* you state that "parts of the right-wing orthodox world substitute the question 'what is the law', for the question 'is it right.'"

Reference to the law is in fact the surest way to discover what is right.

This is the implication of your own statement that "if it is not G-D who says, 'do not murder,' then we have no way of knowing that murder is evil."

If we cut and shape the Torah to suit our own moral preconceptions, the Torah loses all meaning as a guide to action. If we're only validating what we already believe, we may as well spare

ourselves the time and effort.

On the contrary, traditional Jews have looked to the Torah as an unchanging standard of ethics in every age, and this has protected us from the moral fashions of a society where sexual mores or the ethics of abortion change as rapidly as lapel widths.

RABBI NACHUM BRAVERMAN
West Coast Educational Director
Aish HaTorah Jerusalem
Beverly Hills, CA

We could not agree more, as my statement that you cited reveals, that either God is the source of ethics or anything is equally "good." And we both agree that it is the Torah -- not the moral fashions of the day -- that must ultimately guide a Jew's morals.

None of this, however, negates my statement that "part of the right-wing Orthodox world substitute the question 'what is the law', for the question 'is it right.'"

For the fact is that unless a Jew wants to do 'what is right,' his rigorous observance of Jewish laws will not ensure either good or Godly or Jewish behavior. This was pointed out by the Ramban in his famous commentary on "You shall be holy." Why, Ramban asks, should the Torah command the Jews to be holy? Isn't observance of the laws enough? Wouldn't simply observing the laws result in holy behavior? Why bother with a seemingly superfluous command? Because, he answers, it is possible for a Jew to be "disgusting with the permission of the Torah" (naval birshut haTorah).

Admittedly, there is a great moral and intellectual tension here. On the one hand, the Orthodox see the danger in asserting the existence of an extra-Halachic morality -- a good that exists above the specifics of the laws. And they are right to point this out. For one thing, such thinking could lead to the breakdown of Halacha. For another, much evil has been committed by Jews who have abandoned fidelity to the Jewish legal system and looked only to some vague notion of 'morality' or 'individual conscience'.

On the other hand, there is the danger pointed out by the non-Orthodox, that obedience to Halacha without moral questioning can also lead to evil. And they, too, are right. The Neturei Karta and Meir Kahane (who rejects 'morality,' and bases his atti-

tudes on 'Halacha') provide two obvious contemporary examples.

Let me cite one more example. Years ago, after a lecture in Toronto, a woman told me the following story. She had been raised without any Judaism but in the past two years, as a result of Orthodox outreach, she had begun to observe Jewish laws. She was, however, about to stop observing. She has a retarded child, she explained, and a few weeks earlier, when she lifted him outside the Orthodox shul she was attending, her Orthodox friends told her to put the child down, that she was violating the law against carrying in the public domain on the Shabbat. She protested that he was a retarded child who needed all this attention. They responded that they appreciated that fact but that the law determines what is right.

If law had been enough, the prophets, themselves strict observers of Jewish law, would have screamed at the Jews to observe the laws. Yet, they rarely did. Instead, they constantly repeated God's demands of justice and kindness. Why? If observance ensures just and kind Jews, why bother demanding justice and kindness?

To achieve good and God's will, the Jew must ask both questions: "What is the law?" and "Is it right (in God's eyes, of course)?" Neither question alone will repair the world under God's rule. That was my point, and responses are most welcome.

Rabbi Braverman's second response:

Of an observant Jew who is *mnul* (disgusting), it must be said that he is only selectively observant. The prophets chastened the Jewish people for their ritualistic observance of the mitzvot between man and G-d and their inattention to those mitzvot which should inform their relation to other men. They were not calling for an extra-halachic ethic — it is a mitzvah to take care of the poor.

That Meir Kahane or Neturei Karta may quote Torah in support of their positions does not invalidate "the Law" as a standard for action. On the contrary, Meir Kahane told me he finds Yeshiva students the most difficult to convince as they insist on confuting his "logic" with proofs from Torah that his methods are insane.

Finally, within the law there is latitude and a judge makes use of that latitude in giving judgment. A man of

great poverty for whom the loss of a chicken is a tragedy is under certain circumstances permitted to eat what would otherwise be unacceptable. That is the Law.

I find, however, that people's frustration with the "tyranny of the law" is often merely their own unwillingness to inconvenience themselves. To take as an example your woman in Toronto — loving G-d and loving her son, she could perhaps have picked him up while standing still or while sitting on the ground, both of which are acceptable on the Shabbat.

Faith and works

I agree that a saving faith *must* produce good works or ethics. However, faith is the rock foundation, for without it, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Also, in your article *Jews, Christians, and the Elections*, I don't think you mean to say, "We must always fight to maintain a secular government," because secularism is "rejection, indifference, or exclusion of religion and religious considerations," and you go on to say that "it is very sad that the Jews... are the people most devoted to eradicating religion in our society." Please comment.

ERNEST L. BIAGI, JR.
Warminster, PA

I have no problem with holding that faith is the "rock foundation" of Judaism and should be of good works as well. My problem is with those who hold that faith is more important than good works, or that God is not primarily interested in how we act.

Yes, I do mean to say that "We must always fight to maintain a secular government." While I want the society and its leaders to be guided by religious moral principles, the government should not be religious. I am convinced that a religious government is bad for both state and religion.

Finally, I should have written that Jews are among the, not the people most devoted to eradicating religion in our society. Why this is so will be discussed in forthcoming issues.

In defense of the Democrats

Your analysis of Jesse Jackson's anti-semitism is undoubtedly correct. However your use of this issue to smear mainstream Democrats and to apologize for your support of Reaganism strains your credibility as a spokesman for *tikun olam* [repairing the world].

Tikun olam is at the heart of the program of the Democratic party. Judaism and Democratic political philosophy share the conviction that society must not be indifferent to suffering and injustice. Government has an obligation to support the widow, the orphan, the underprivileged; to pursue justice; to guaranty health, education, and welfare to its citizens; to seek an end to war. Decent and honorable politicians such as Walter Mondale, Hubert Humphrey, Jimmy Carter, and Gary Hart (to name only a few) each in their own way have dedicated their careers to the cause of *tikun olam*. This is the principal reason why the Democratic party has traditionally and consistently enjoyed the support of thoughtful Jews.

Mr. Reagan's radical program, on the other hand, is at war with *tikun olam*. Mr. Reagan's campaign to get the government "off the backs" of people is in substance an open endorsement of official indifference to the suffering of others. Mr. Reagan's endeavors to cut the heart out of public assistance to the needy, his retreat from civil rights, his attempts to dismantle legal services for the poor, and his glorification of the use of military force in international relations, are only but a few examples of a program that should cause alarm in the heart of every thoughtful Jew.

Therefore, your assertion that the major issue for Jews in the past campaign boiled down to Jesse Jackson vs. Jerry Falwell appears simple-minded, is insensitive, and borders on slander. If Jesse Jackson or his anti-semitic and anti-democratic ideas were ever to gain control of the Democratic party, Jews would have no choice but to abandon that party. But there is not one shred of evidence to support your slanderous insinuation that the pernicious elements of Mr. Jackson's message have had any influence on the mainstream leadership of the Democratic party. The Democratic leader-

ship forcefully denounced Mr. Jackson's political defecations in terms that were heard loud and clear by everyone except those who chose not to listen.

You and many others complain that the Democratic leaders did not personally attack Mr. Jackson with sufficient vindictiveness. But you ask too much. In your essay you demand that Mr. Mondale adopt your shrill rhetoric and "let the electoral chips fall where they may." The Democratic leadership wisely ignored your advice and attacked Mr. Jackson's ideas but not his person. These Democratic leaders chose not to commit political suicide because they understood that the work of *tikun olam* was more important than your version of moral purity.

DAVID E. CHER
Los Angeles, CA

I think your passions on the issues you raise blurred a fair reading of my essay. Let me briefly correct some false impressions.

1. I said nothing in defense of "Reaganism." But if Democrats such as yourself continue to equate opposition to the Party's leftward drift with Reaganism, they will achieve a self-fulfilling prophecy. I am not the only Democrat — Jew or non-Jew — who feels increasingly alienated from his party.

2. I did not "smear mainstream Democrats." First of all, in terms of smearing, your letter has far more adjectives than my entire first issue. Second, it is the left-wing of the Party that I fear and criticized.

3. I do not believe that "Tikun olam is at the heart" of the Democratic Party. The Democrats' movement toward isolationism in a world of Cambodias and Afghanistans (please see Afghanistan in this issue) is not Tikun olam. Whereas in the past it was the Republican Party that was associated with turning away from world commitments, it is now the Democrats who embrace isolationism. Senators Mondale, Hart and even Moynihan, condemned the liberation of Grenada.

I know that many Jews like to believe that the Democrats and the Jewish vote for the Democrats are rooted in the prophetic and rabbinic ideal of Tikun olam. But as Leon Wieseltier, a Mondale supporter and an editor of the liberal New Republic, ironically noted: "The small number of Jews

who really are familiar with the Biblical, prophetic, and/or rabbinic traditions voted for Reagan."

4. You write that "the Democratic party has traditionally and consistently enjoyed the support of thoughtful Jews." Unlike you, I believe that it is possible to be a "thoughtful Jew" and support either party in America, and many Jews whose Democratic party ideal was Senator Henry Jackson feel increasingly abandoned by the Democrats.

5. You write that Mr. Reagan's "glorification of the use of military force" and "retreat from civil rights" "should cause alarm in the heart of every thoughtful Jew." Again, your monopoly on who is a "thoughtful Jew."

What exactly does "glorification of the use of military force" mean? Grenada? Do you not believe that that was Tikun olam? Grenadians thought it was. (Please see the essay on pacifist thinking in this issue.)

What is Mr. Reagan's "retreat from civil rights?" His opposition to quotas and to a civil rights commission that had vowed not to be color blind? Is Morris Abram, one of the foremost civil rights fighters in this century, and former president of the American Jewish Committee, not "a thoughtful Jew" because he is a member of Reagan's civil rights commission. Has he, too, "retreated from civil rights?"

7. The Democrats did not "attack Jackson's ideas." They could not even pass a resolution condemning antisemitism.

8. I did not write that "the major issue for Jews in the past campaign boiled down to Jesse Jackson vs. Jerry Falwell." On the contrary, I wrote that "most Jews voted for whomever they voted for a variety of reasons," and that "from a purely Jewish perspective Walter Mondale and Ronald Reagan presented American Jews with a pleasant choice." Then I added that "Insofar as Jews voted on a Jewish basis . . . the issue boiled down to this: whom do you fear more, Jesse Jackson or Jerry Falwell?" Every commentary on the Jewish vote of which I am familiar said the same thing. As The New Republic wrote, "in the end, Jewish voters decided that the specter of Jerry Falwell, and the vision of a Christian America . . . frightened them more than the specter of Jesse Jackson."

Why Convert?

Congratulations on your first issue of *Ultimate Issues*. I thought it was excellent both in choice of topic and in content. I felt like I was at BCI again because after reading it my mind was actively exploring some new ideas and reacting to them with intensity and excitement.

I am facing right now a decision that could have a significant impact on the rest of my life. I have been going out with Ted for one and a half years and we have been discussing marriage for the last few months. He is 27 and I am 25. He was raised a Catholic, completely left the Catholic church when he went away to college, and then started dating Jewish girls. In his senior year he began a very serious relationship with a Jewish girl that lasted three years, during which time he went to services, Passover, and learned about Judaism.

During four years of college and two years of work (before coming to Harvard Business School where I met him), his only contact with the Catholic church was coming home in December at Christmas and going to Christmas mass. He insists this has no special meaning to him and he is doing this for his mother.

When I first met Ted I thought he was Jewish. I had met his former girlfriend once before, and in fact she told both of us to look each other up. I knew she was Jewish and with Ted's last name I just assumed he was too. It was probably about a month before I realized what his family background was. I guess I "should" have stopped going out with him at that point but I liked him and did not want to give up the relationship.

Our conversations about marriage have focused more and more on Judaism and I realized approximately last November that it was really important to me that Ted convert. *It is this con-*

version issue about which I am seeking your advice and opinion. Ted has been incredibly receptive to learning about Judaism, discussing important issues with me, attending some Jewish events, etc. He has read your book (*The Nine Questions* . . .) and *Ultimate Issues*. He has a great deal of respect for your opinions. Here are the issues about conversion that we need to resolve:

1. If actions are more important than faith in Judaism, and Ted is sharing with me the actions prescribed by Jewish law in our home and in our life, then why does he need to confirm his *faith* by converting?

2. If the main purpose of Jews marrying other Jews is to produce the next generation of practicing Jews, and we are committed to bringing our children up with strong Jewish values in the home then is it really necessary for him to convert? His commitment to bringing up Jewish children, keeping Kosher and following Jewish law is genuine and deeply felt.

These are the issues Ted has challenged me with and I cannot answer them. He thinks he has given me strong reasons why it is not necessary for him to convert. He is one of these people who is very "neutral" about his religious position. He believes in God, not in Jesus, but he is hesitant to formally accept any organized religion unless he can be given strong reasons for doing so.

NAME WITHHELD UPON REQUEST
Harvard Business School
Boston, MA

Thank you for the lovely words. It was wonderful to hear from you. I cannot make the case against intermarriage in the space available, but I would like to offer you some thoughts on your specific questions about conversion.

Precisely because actions are more

important than faith, Ted should convert. He is the one who is saying that faith is more important — not you. You are insisting on his actions to show that he is a Jew, and he is saying that his faith is enough.

The Jews are a nation, not just a religion. Therefore we have rules of entering our nationhood just as every nation in the world does. You cannot become an American citizen just by feeling American or even by doing a lot of things American. You must undergo a specific procedure in order to be considered an American.

The very fact that Ted hesitates is proof of how important the conversion procedure is. If it meant nothing, then obviously he wouldn't care at all about doing it. The fact is that it does mean so much and therefore he is hesitating. This is a very important statement on his part -- both to you and to himself.

If you want to marry a Jew, a Jew is either born one or converts to Judaism. Converting means that the convert accepts that Judaism and its thousands of years of laws are far more important than he or she. One who is unable to say this about the Jewish demand of conversion is highly unlikely to say this about Judaism's far harder demands later in life.

And what will he and you tell your children? That Daddy likes some Jewish practices, but is not willing to become a Jew?

I have tremendous personal empathy for your and Ted's positions. So forgive the directness of tone. But I know you wanted that rather than just empathy.

Your thoughts, questions, and reactions, agree or disagree, are essential to the purpose of *Ultimate Issues*. Not all letters can be published and some may be shortened for the sake of space, but you are urged to participate in this ongoing dialogue.

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When rabbis and cantors become doctors and artists

Just as many Jews are prouder to say, "my son the doctor" than "my son the committed Jew," so, too, many congregations feel that "our rabbi the doctor" has much greater prestige and credibility than just "our rabbi."

In my talks with cantors, it is made abundantly clear that cantorial schools teach the primacy of the cantorial "art." Such matters as inspiring Jews to love to pray, and leading them to sing ("I don't want to be a song leader," one cantor, a close friend, always tells me) are secondary.

The New York Times, December 27, 1984: "Cantor Morton Shames of the Conservative Temple Beth El in Springfield, Mass., said: 'Congregations today do not want to hear the great music of the synagogue. In fact, they are ignorant of it. The demand is for mediocrity, for cantors to limit their art' " (emphasis added).

There is a well known saying that when rabbis became doctors (Ph.D.'s), the Jews got sick. A more accurate reading is, because the Jews got sick, rabbis became doctors.

The nachas that many Jews derive from being able to call their rabbi "Dr." is part of the larger *avodah zara* (idol worship) in Jewish life of academic degrees and titles. Just as many Jews are prouder to say, "my son the doctor" than "my son the committed Jew," so, too, many congregations feel that "our rabbi the doctor" has much greater prestige and credibility than just "our rabbi." For many Jews, "rabbi" just isn't enough. Partially in response to this thinking, many rabbis have felt it necessary to become doctors.

But it is not only the congregations that have placed this pressure upon rabbis. The seminaries that produce our rabbis have similarly made it clear to their students that academic achievement is more important than being a good rabbi. A seminary professor with a Ph.D. is likely to receive more respect, and more likely to have been hired in the first place, than a faculty member who is "just" a rabbi.

Judaism is a passionate, religious, and moral, as well as intellectual, way of life. But seminaries have increasingly rendered it an academic discipline. *Wissenschaft des*

judentums has become an end in itself. While Jewish scholarship is essential, it would seem to me that the most important task of the seminaries is to teach rabbis how to make the case for Judaism, how to reach unaffiliated and assimilating Jews, how to inspire Jews. Jews need inspirers in their rabbis far more than they need them to have a doctorate.

The problem is very similar with regard to cantors. Just as it has not been enough for rabbis to fulfill their traditional role as teachers, it is not enough for the cantor to fulfill his traditional role of *shaliach tzibur* (messenger of the congregation). The cantor is to be an "artist."

And the seminary, again, is at the root of the problem. In my talks with cantors, it is made abundantly clear that cantorial schools teach the primacy of the cantorial "art." Such matters as inspiring Jews to love to pray, and leading them to sing ("I don't want to be a song leader," one cantor, a close friend, always tells me) are secondary.

I am acutely aware of, and have aesthetic devotion to, the beauty of great cantorial music. But, more than anything else, I want to sing in synagogue. I am overcome with religious feeling when the entire congregation sings. A cantor who makes me sing makes me love going to shul. I do not go to shul for musical art. For that, this music lover goes to concerts (and I do wish there were more Jewish music concerts) and listens to his many classical and Jewish recordings.

To an unparalleled extent, the quality of Jewish life is affected by rabbis and cantors. That is why we need them to be rabbis and cantors, not doctors and artists. ■

FYI: Dennis Prager has written, with Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (Simon and Schuster), now the most widely used English language introduction to Judaism, and *Why The Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism* (now an S&S paperback). He is social and political commentator, with a daily program, on KABC Radio in Los Angeles.

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