

**An
Argument
from
Morality**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will show the existence of a moral God through both an inherent sense of morality within mankind and a standard of morality intended through God's people. It will first seek to explain that a universal moral law exists by showing reflections of that moral law in the hearts of humanity. It will secondly show that since there is a universal moral law then there must be a universal moral law Giver. This moral law Giver is seen not only through the pervasive reality of a sense of moral code and standard within humanity but this moral law Giver is reflected even in the very questioning of his moral law when the problem of suffering and pain is considered. Finally it will be shown that this moral law Giver is best seen not in some ethereal sense of human longing but through His design in His very own children who best reflect His moral code to other men. The conclusion is that there must be a moral law Giver who should also be observable through the new creations which are his particular possession. These principles find their seminal ideas in the thoughts of C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*.

I. AN INHERENT STANDARD

If you are driving along the highway and you are cut off by another driver, the instinctive response is to retaliate in such a way as to declare or portray that the driver who cut you off was wrong to do so and that he or she should have followed a more correct manner in which to operate his or her vehicle. This gut reaction of what is and what is not right or fair is the reflection of a belief in what should be a standard for all to follow in driving a vehicle. One universal rule to which, if applied by all, would produce the best driving for all with regard to safety, speed of arriving at destinations, consideration of others and overall propriety in driving

As C.S. Lewis points out, when the behavior of some men are not pleasing to other men then those displeased persons are appealing de facto to some kind of standard of behavior of which they expect the others to be aware.¹ There is then postulated here an inborn sense with each human being that there is a right way to do things, like driving cars, and a wrong way to do things. These right and wrong ways reflect an inherent sense that there is, at the root of it all, a standard by which all should abide. Every individual lives by his or her sense of a code of law with regard to what is right and what is wrong thereby stating by their sense of right and wrong that there must exist one universal moral standard of what is right for all.

This standard that men seek to follow (or at least seek to have others follow) must come from more than the mere reason of man. It was Immanuel Kant who sought to show a moral impetus and ability within man to postulate a system of right and wrong simply on the basis of reason.² Reason, according to Kant could come up with a perfect standard called a categorical imperative and this supposedly could be applied in any given situation of life through the strict application of man's highest reasoning powers. History, psychology and a simple reflection of pollsters seem to show that this capability of reason to develop a universal standard is simply not logical. If reason could accomplish such a feat then it would be expected that after thousands of years through the trial and error and applied reason of the collective human race that mankind would be closer than ever at this time to an agreed upon sense of what is right and what is wrong. Quite the contrary seems to be the case. One example of this discrepancy would be that one set of reasoning gives eternal sainthood to those who ram airliners into buildings while others would propose the exact opposite *reward*. In fact, this generation seems to be the most variegated and polarized of all generations. People live their lives with an abundance of logical inconsistencies. They claim to reasonably know God while cohabitating with another. They reason themselves into heaven while

¹ C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity." (New York; Quality Paperback Book Club, 1992), page 3

² Ravi Zacharias, "Can Man Live Without God," (Dallas; Word Publishing, 1994), page 35

hating their neighbor. Others vehemently deny the existence of absolutes and yet reason that this is an acceptable absolute.³ These examples reflect a paradoxical variety of what the reason of man may develop. It was journalist and pundit Malcom Muggeridge who once said that the depravity of man was the most empirically verifiable fact but also the most resisted by the human mind.⁴ It is because of this fact of depravity that mankind has lost his moral point of reference himself and is incapable of attaining a workable universal moral standard from reason. Kant was mistaken. Mankind himself has not and cannot come up with a universal moral standard based on reason. It must come another way.

C.S. Lewis stated that “The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other.”⁵ This sense of a standard is at least agreed upon by the inherent notion that one thing is right and another thing is wrong. It is at least agreed upon that some standard of rightness is out there somewhere and yet few stop to consider just where it may be found. John Frame has suggested a source, that since obligations arise from personal relationships, then absolute obligations must arise from a relationship with an absolute Person.⁶ Such an argument is difficult to reject out of hand.

II. A GIVER OF THE STANDARD

Even critics of moral law in their arguments with the problem of evil suggest by default, by their very questions, that there is a moral law that determines something to be evil. It is impossible to deny that there is a God through the problem of evil without implying by the argument that he does indeed exist. For example, in order to complain about unjust suffering, one must suppose

³ D.A. Carson, “The Gagging of God,” (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing, 1996), page 45

⁴ Ravi Zacharias, “Cries of the Heart,” (Nashville; Word Publishing, 1998), page 111

⁵ Lewis, “Mere Christianity,” page 11

⁶ John M. Frame, “Apologetics to the Glory of God,” (Phillipsburg; P&R Publishing, 1994), page 99

that suffering is at cross purposes with some higher standard that would not allow suffering.⁷ C.S. Lewis came to loggerheads with this when he developed his own personal argument against God that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. He then had to wonder how he had this idea of just and unjust?⁸ Skeptics who raise the question then with regard to the problem of suffering must not only give an answer themselves, but must ultimately justify the very question. G.K. Chesterton summed this up well when he said, “When belief in God becomes difficult, the tendency is to turn away from Him; but in heaven’s name to what?”⁹

Evil and suffering then seems to point from the other end of the spectrum to the reality of a good, a moral standard that all men cry out for. Through the reality of evil then, the grace and justice of a moral God is shown, believers are disciplined through such evil toward character development and even redemption has been affected through the evil of crucifixion. Suffering then points to the higher reality of a moral law and therefore moral Law-Giver by revealing in deep relief, the need for rightness and universal good.

The higher way of living then can be seen to consist of seeking to live by that higher, universal moral law in this occupied territory of temporary evil. The law of the universal law-giver is inherently desired as the highest form of living. It is what all men secretly hope for. Mankind desires this higher law that is known to be out there somewhere and logically may only stem from a moral Creator. As C.S. Lewis has stated, “If you wish to be wet you must get in the water. If you want joy, peace, eternal life then you must get close to, or even into, the only thing that has them, God.¹⁰ He is the sum total of all that men desire as they press for what is right in contrast to what is wrong. Every situation in which one moral idea is touted as better than another moral

⁷ Norman L. Geisler, “The Roots of Evil,” (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing, 1981), page 80

⁸ Lewis, page 31

⁹ Zacharias, “Cries of the Heart,” page 65

¹⁰ Lewis, page 137

idea, such as when good is desired in place of what is evil, is a reflection of the desire for what the moral Creator has placed in His creation. It is a thirst for His absolute moral good. Every sense of injustice in the world is a cry for the needed reality of the one universal moral good established by the moral creator and lost at the fall of man.

III. STANDARD BEARERS

The argument thus far then is that every moment of every day mankind states that there is de facto a universal moral law when they appeal to a sense that one thing is right and another thing is wrong from their point of view. This sense of a universal moral law then hardly springs from the pollsters or reason of collective mankind but must emanate from One who is the moral Creator of a moral universe which is currently in the thralls of suffering in the earth. This One is the sum total of defining the good. It is correct then at this juncture to expect that the standard of this moral Creator be revealed in some form. These absolutes do not merely exist as Plato's Forms in the realm of ethereal perfection attainable only via reason, but must be actually observed in function if they have a Creator. If this line of reasoning thus far is viable then it is true that what is good is also what is willed by a moral God. Good is then whatever God wills.¹¹ It therefore further stands to reason that this good that God wills, this expression of universal moral principle should be seen through the particular people of God's will, the true Church.

When the apostle Paul proclaimed Christ and the resurrection on the Areopagus at Athens he stated in so many words that Christians have what searchers are looking for (Acts 17). He complimented the Athenians on their religiosity and stated that he possessed what they were looking for. What he possessed in God was what they wanted. True believers then have always had that most specifically incarnational apologetic as those who proclaim by their way of living that a God of absolutes exists as the ultimate response to the cries of the human heart. Aristides in

the very early days of the church wrote his *Apology* by placing primary emphasis on the good and moral lives of Christians including the observable reality of their purity and charity.¹² The lives of true believers who ever seek God's higher ways of living stand as lighthouses to show the way to universal moral absolutes. Juxtaposed to this stand the hearts of many men and women that are filled with bitter emptiness and longing for something more out of life. Such emptiness and sense of unfulfilled need also speaks of the reality of absolute good that people long for as their emptiness motivates them to at least wish for higher things. These higher things may be observed in God's true church.

If there is a universal moral law as attested by the moral compass held in the heart of each individual on the planet, then there is also a universal moral law Giver since mankind on his own simply has never given any sense to the possibility of developing a moral law on his own. There therefore must be a God who is this moral law Giver. And if this God exists and interacts with men. He takes the raw stuff of individual humanity and crafts it into a New Creation after His moral compass. Such a conclusion from this line of reasoning should then certainly be seen in the lives of creatures remade anew by this God of absolute moral law. His true church then would be such a model of His absolutes, embodying the moral law of His character in ways such as forgiveness, grace, peace-making, patience, truth-telling, love and joy to name a few. Such is to be expected to attest to this God of absolute moral law. The people who live life best and highest would be such people. C.S. Lewis once suggested such a conclusion when he said, "What if every time you wanted to find out some important piece of information or check on some idea you automatically turned to a publication that originated with a person whom you easily identified with the Christian faith? Wouldn't that be even a better witness than ones that were

¹¹ Thomas V. Morris, "Our Idea of God," (Vancouver, Regent College Publishing, 1991), page 54

¹² Avery Dulles, "A History of Apologetics," (Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), page 25

more direct....”¹³ The Lordship then of this God of moral absolutes must then be seen in more than theoretical comparisons of right and wrong. He is seen through His people. This is only right and is the highest apologetic, that the people of God should themselves be a living mystery, living in such a way that their lives do not make sense if God does not exist.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

It has been seen then that people regularly appeal to a moral standard when they determine or seek to determine what is right and what is wrong. How do we account for this inherent sense of moral law but by the reasonable assumption that there is an absolute moral law Giver? Such is much more than mere social convention because society differs from society in what it deems morally acceptable such as between those who value crashing planes into buildings and those who do not. Such a moral law cannot be that which is simply developed from human reason because human reason in thousands of years of development and debate on such issues has only become more polarized over the years and fragmented in its sense of what is morally acceptable. If one might assert that there is no actual moral law but that people simply long for such moral perfection, it would not be reasonable to then question the right or wrong of evil and suffering in the world. If there is truly no moral law then evil and good are equally meaningless. It therefore seems that there is a moral law Giver who is behind the moral law that all men expect and this moral Law Giver may best be seen through His own particular people, His true Church.

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¹³ Timothy R. Phillips (editor), “Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World,” (Downers Grove, Illinois, Intersity Press, 1995), page 125

¹⁴ Phillips, page 169

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