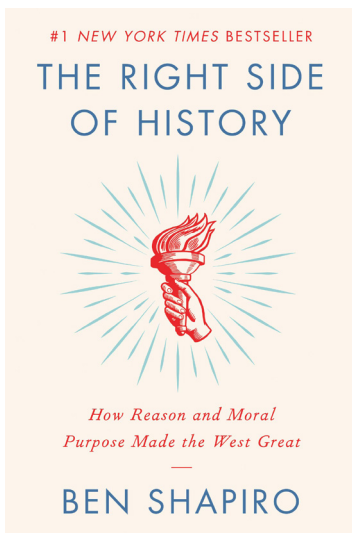


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The Right Side of History

THE SUMMARY

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Introduction

We act because we believe. In order to fix ourselves, then, we must reexamine what we believe.

We believe freedom is built upon the twin notions that God created every human being in His image, and that human beings are capable of investigating and exploring God's world. Those notions were born in Jerusalem and Athens, respectively.

Those twin notions—those diamonds of spiritual genius—built our civilization, and built us as individuals. If you believe that life is more than materialistic pleasures and pain avoidance, you are a product of Jerusalem and Athens. If you believe that the government has no right to intrude upon the exercise of your individual will, and that you are bound by moral duty to pursue virtue, you are a product of Jerusalem and Athens. If you believe that human beings are capable of bettering our world through the use of reason, and are bound by higher purpose to do so, you are a product of Jerusalem and Athens.

Civilizations that rejected Jerusalem and Athens, and the tension between them, have collapsed into dust. The USSR rejected Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, substituting the values of the collective and new utopian vision of "social justice"—and they starved and slaughtered tens of millions of human beings. The Nazis rejected Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, and shoved children into gas chambers. Venezuela rejects Judeo-Christian values

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and Greek natural law, and citizens of their oil-rich nation have been reduced to eating dogs.

In America, we are in the process of abandoning Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, favoring moral subjectivism and the rule of passion. And we are watching our nation collapse into age-old tribalism, individualistic hedonism, and moral subjectivism. Make no mistake: we are still living off the prosperity of the world built by Jerusalem and Athens. We believe we can reject Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law and satisfy ourselves with intersectionality, or scientific materialism, or progressive politics, or authoritarian governance, or nationalistic solidarity. We can't. Our civilization is riddled with internal contradictions, communities bereft of values, and individuals bereft of meaning. We flatter ourselves to believe that we can abandon the values of the past and somehow survive indefinitely. Philosophically, the West has been running on fumes for generations.

The tension between Jerusalem and Athens is real. But removing the tension by abandoning either Jerusalem or Athens collapses the bridge between the two. To strengthen our civilization, we must examine how the bridge was built. It took Western civilization three thousand years to get here—we can lose it all in one generation, unless we begin shoring up our foundations. We must stop chipping away and start retrofitting. That task requires us to reexamine those foundations, brick by brick.

Chapter 1 - The Pursuit of Happiness

Thomas Jefferson didn't write that the government was granted power to grant you happiness: it was there to protect your pursuit of happiness. The government existed to protect your rights, to prevent your rights from being infringed upon. The government was there to stop someone from stealing your horse, from butchering you in your sleep, from letting his cow graze on your land.

At no point did Jefferson suggest that government could achieve happiness. None of the Founding Fathers thought it could. Yet more and more Americans are investing their happiness in politics. Instead of looking inward to find ways to better their lives, we've decided that the chief obstacle to our happiness is outside forces, even in the freest, richest country in the history of the world. This desire to silence—or subdue—those who disagree with us has been reaching new, terrifying heights.

Perhaps the problem is that what we're pursuing isn't happiness anymore. We're instead pursuing other priorities: physical pleasures, emotional catharsis, monetary stability. All these things are important, of course, but they don't bring lasting happiness. At best, they're means necessary to the pursuit of happiness. But we've mixed up the means with the ends. And in doing so, we've left our souls in desperate need of sustenance.

Happiness comprises four elements: individual moral purpose, individual capacity, collective moral purpose, and collective capacity.

If we lack one of those elements, the pursuit of happiness becomes impossible; if that pursuit is foreclosed, society crumbles.

Our society was built on recognition of these four elements. The fusion of Athens and Jerusalem, tempered by the wit and wisdom of our Founding Fathers, led to the creation of a civilization of unparalleled freedom and replete with virtuous men and women striving to better themselves and the society around them.

But we are losing that civilization. We are losing that civilization because we have spent generations undermining the

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two deepest sources of our own happiness—the sources that lie behind individual moral purpose, communal moral purpose, individual capacity, and communal capacity. Those two sources: Divine meaning and reason. There can be no individual or communal moral purpose without a foundation of Divine meaning; there can be no individual capacity or communal capacity without a constant, abiding belief in the nature of our reason.

The history of the West is built on the interplay between these two pillars of Divine meaning and reason. We receive our notions of Divine meaning from a three-millennia-old lineage stretching back to the ancient Jews; we receive our notions of reason from a twenty-five-hundred-year-old lineage stretching back to the ancient Greeks. In rejecting those lineages—in seeking to graft ourselves to rootless philosophical movements of the moment, cutting ourselves off from our own roots—we have damned ourselves to an existential wandering. We must make our way back toward our roots. Those roots took hold at Sinai.

Chapter 2 - From the Mountaintop

Let's return to our original standard for happiness: individual purpose, individual capacity, communal purpose, and communal capacity. What does Judaism alone have to say about these necessary elements?

When it comes to individual purpose, Judaism says that God expects things of us—that He has standards for our behavior, that He demands our holiness, that He cares about our commitment. A human being on a desert island can find purpose in living the life God wants for him, and it is laid out for him through a series of rules to be found in His holy book.

With regard to individual capacity, the Bible states openly that we are free agents with the capacity to choose sin or holiness, and that we have an obligation to do so. We are holy; we are made in God's image. And we are equal in capacity to act as God's creatures, although we may have different capabilities. The Bible also makes clear that our job is to use our minds to discover God—to seek Him out, to ask questions, to struggle with Him. The Bible does not, however, set out the notion that our own search for universal truths will bring us closer to happiness. The notion of a search for truth outside of God is foreign to Biblical thought.

Certainly, Judaism provides the notion of a communal purpose—that we must live within our communities and model our behavior to others. Finally, communal capacity: What does the Bible have to say about the best system for fulfilling individual and communal purpose? Surprisingly little. Judaism believes that power ought to exist in the first instance in the family; secondly, in the community of faith; and finally, in the government. Judaism is ambivalent at best about the notion of state power, and has a healthy suspicion of centralized power.

In short, the Bible presents a fulsome view of human happiness—but one that requires further elucidation. The Bible tells us what God expects of us and tells us that we have the duty to fulfill those expectations; it tells us that we are special, and that we are loved by an infinitely good, caring, and powerful Being. It tells us that we have a duty to reach to Him. The Bible makes God accessible; it brings God down to earth. In doing so, it offers man the opportunity to raise himself. But the Biblical tradition does not stress the ability of people to reason *a priori*; revelation stands above reason.

And revelation is not enough. The soul with which God endowed man seeks the Divine through reason—the uniquely human quality that lifts humans above the animals, and places us at the foot of God's throne. To seek a higher moral purpose, human beings would have to cultivate their reason. For that, they turned to Athens.

Chapter 3 - From the Dust

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There is a battle currently raging on college campuses regarding the role of the university. Is it to create a safe space for students to “find themselves”? Is it a place to experience the wonder of a wide variety of thought? Or is it a place to inculcate the basic thought underpinning Western civilization?

In the past, the answer was clearly the last option: people went to college to be steeped in the classics. The Founding Fathers were well versed in Latin and Greek; their writing is replete with references to ancient literature.

Why should Americans bother to learn about ancient Greeks? Because the classical roots of Western civilization in Athens still have much to teach us. Athens teaches us what we are capable of doing as human beings. Athens teaches us that we have the ability to use our reason to reach beyond ourselves. Athens teaches us not only how liberty can flourish, but why it *should*.

The first contribution of the ancient Greeks was the philosophy of natural law. In the view of Plato and Aristotle, the human mind was freely capable of deciphering nature’s rules—and they believed that those rules did, in fact, exist. We could determine rules and values from nature itself. Nature had a purpose—or the God behind it did.

They posited that virtually every object in creation is directed toward an end—a *telos*, in Greek. The value of an object lies in its capacity to achieve the purpose for which it was designed. Facts and values aren’t separate things—values are embedded within facts. A horse is virtuous if it properly pulls a cart. The purpose of man, according to both Plato and Aristotle, is to reason, judge, and deliberate—to look at the world and discern the final causes for which things exist. Just as Adam is tasked with naming the animals, we are tasked with recognizing the *telos* of the world around us.

The ancient belief that virtue was to be located in our use of reason necessitated the investigation of nature. This led to the birth of science. The science and technology that has bettered our world—the iPhones college freshmen use to denigrate Western civilization—was built on Greek origins. The ancients believed that by studying the nature of things, we could discover the nature of being. The best way to investigate the nature of human purpose was to look at reality itself, and attempt to discover the systems behind it in order to find a higher meaning.

Based on the notion of virtue—the use of reason to act in accordance with nature—Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics developed ethical systems that didn’t merely recommend personal cultivation, but also encompassed the creation of new forms of government.

The ancients believed that in order to cultivate virtue, the *polis*—the city-state—must be at the center of human life. Good citizenship was a prerequisite to being a good man. Our virtues exist in relations with others. The college students who fulminate against classical studies are undercutting the very foundation upon which they stand—they’re ignoring reason, science, and democracy.

Chapter 4 - Coming Together

The worlds of Jerusalem and Athens seemed largely irreconcilable. There were three serious conflicts between Jewish thought and Greek thought. The first surrounded the nature of God: the God of Moses was active in the universe, and the God of Aristotle was an Unmoved Mover largely unconcerned with human affairs. Judaism saw God’s presence in human events and God was intimately involved with man’s action. The Greeks believed far more in fate than in a divine presence with a moral sense.

The birth of Christianity represented the first serious attempt to merge Jewish thought with Greek thought. The

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Christian admixture was far more Jewish than Greek in its vision of God and of man's quest in the world, but it was also far more Greek than Jewish in its universality.

Christianity universalized the message of Judaism. Jesus' story was meant to extend to the entire world. The key Christian concept—the notion of faith in one personal redeemer, the representative of God's logic in the universe—broadened the appeal of Judaism to billions of people over history in a way Judaism never would have: Christianity's focus on grace rather than works makes it a far more accessible religion than Judaism in a practical sense. In making faith paramount, however, Christianity demoted the role of Greek reason in the life of human beings by conflating the *Logos*—the logic lying behind all the universe—with the person of Jesus.

Saint Augustine (354-430) suggested that investigating the universe was a waste of time for those who accepted the truth of revelation. Later scholasticism would open the door for a renewed investigation into the unity between God and His created universe, and between faith and reason by encouraging Christians to extend the provenance of God's dominance over all the areas of human knowledge.

During the twelfth century, Aristotle's works, long buried, were rediscovered in the West. Athens was back. Among Christians, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) merged Aristotelianism and Christianity—a commitment to reason and logic, as well as to revelation. As God was the master of heaven and earth, His creation was evidence of Him, and knowledge of that creation would bring us closer to Him. In Aquinas's thought, Jerusalem and Athens are reunified. God orders us to use our reason, and reason impels us to discover the natural law—laws designed by God.

Why is revelation even necessary? Aquinas here borrows from Augustine: were we perfect, reasoning beings, revelation might be unnecessary. But we are not. Revelation bridges the gap. Aquinas's faith in human reason—and his faith that human reason would not be able to tear down the revelation of God—lead to a consonance that would blossom into the scientific revolution. Contrary to the propaganda of a postmodern atheist movement, nearly every great scientist up until the age of Darwinism was religious. The age of scientific progress didn't begin with the Enlightenment. It began in the monasteries of Europe.

Chapter 5 - Endowed by Their Creator

If one attitude characterizes modern politics, it's an attitude of complete and utter moral certainty. Those on the political Left are certain that those who oppose them are Nazi-esque monsters hell-bent on domination of individual lives; those on the political Right are certain the opposite is true. Most important, both sides of the political aisle seem determined, at times, to use the power available in culture and government to cram down their vision of the world on their opponents—to establish a heavenly kingdom of hegemonic, one-party rule. That demand for certainty cuts against the foundations of our very civilization.

The history of the West teaches us that while we must share a common vision for our civilization, the means by which we pursue that vision need not be shared. By the end of the thirteenth century, Western civilization was completely dominated by Catholicism, but with rising challenges to the power of the church, two strong new ideas emerged: first, human beings are capable of exploring the world and bettering their material condition in it; second, each human being is free and endowed with natural rights. Skepticism of centralized political power grew from centuries of political and religious conflict; optimism in the power of science grew from new discoveries made in light of the liberated individual mind. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment completed the foundations of the West that built our world.

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The Founding Fathers were devotees of Cicero and Locke, of the Bible and Aristotle. They'd done their reading. And they based their new national philosophy on the lessons garnered from that reading. The founders weren't unconcerned with the dangers of radical individualism—they feared a society of religion-less individuals. Nor were they tyrannical collectivists—they feared mob rule and the heavy hand of government cramming subjective definitions of “virtue” down the throats of individuals. Rights and duties were simply two sides of the same coin. All of this is clearly visible in the Declaration of Independence.

The philosophy of the founders, made material in the creation of the United States and in the continuing quest to fulfill their ideals, has been the greatest blessing for mankind in human history. The United States has freed billions of people; it has enriched billions of people; it has opened minds and hearts. But that founding philosophy—the crown jewel of the West—has not prevailed. It has, instead, been gradually decaying. With that decay, the foundations for human happiness have been eroding. We, in our day, may be watching them collapse completely. How could such a collapse occur? Gradually, slowly . . . and then all at once.

Chapter 6 - Killing Purpose

Now, I have argued that the founding philosophy was based on both secular reason and religious morality, that modernity was built on these twin poles, cultivated and perfected through the fires of religious warfare and secular argument. We built a civilization that was practical and purposeful, religious and rational, virtuous and ambitious. Individuals were set free to cultivate virtue, and communities were built to set the framework for that pursuit of happiness. A devotion to progress in history began with Judeo-Christian religion, and Judeo-Christian thought and Greek thought both held in common the belief in purpose.

All of this changed with the rise of Darwinism. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) provided the first scientific grounding to the notion of a world without God, and a world beyond the mind of man. With Darwin's evolutionary biology, a unifying field theory of life could suddenly be proposed: accident. God did not create man in His own image; man was merely the next step up in a chain of evolution propelled forward by natural selection. There is no *telos* to the universe

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) worried deeply about mankind unbound from moral obligation. He saw in the rise of an atheistic world the face of the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), the famed French sadist, rapist, and pedophile who embraces passion, discounted human responsibility, and saw in his own pleasure the highest good. Dostoyevsky saw the Sade-ian perspective as the logical endpoint of a system without God, theorizing that that without immortality, all constraints on human behavior would disappear. He saw that man would find in his search for purpose something far darker than the Judeo-Christian tradition and Greek teleology that built the modern world.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) advocated the destruction of Judeo-Christian values. He properly understood that all other systems of morality—from utilitarianism to Kantian categorical imperatives, are based at root on the moral discoveries of the Judeo-Christian tradition—and he said that man can only be freed by destroying that moral vestigial structure. What was required is a new morality, created only on the basis of strength and will. That morality will no longer be based on human happiness. Instead, Nietzsche valued honesty and struggle, strength and courage. He valued man unbound.

What Nietzsche observed, and what he lauded, had been underway for generations. Philosophy had spent two centuries killing Judeo-Christian values and Greek teleology—or at least discarding them in favor of brave new utopias

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filled with perfectible human beings, or crystal palaces ruled by men of reason, or worlds of determinism filled with avoidance of pain and maximization of pleasure. Either man would rule supreme, or he would destroy all in his path. Which would it be? The world would soon find out the answer to that question.

Chapter 7 - The Remaking of the World

Why can't we all just be reasonable? This is the characteristic call of our age. Forget values; forget judgment. Let's just be reasonable with one another. Tolerance can supplant Judeo-Christian ideas. We all know what's right, deep down. If we follow our star, civilization won't just survive—it will thrive and flourish.

This idea is a vestige of the Enlightenment mentality. The juxtaposition between the American Revolution and the French Revolution demonstrates the contrast between the strains of Enlightenment thinking. The American Revolution, based on Lockean principles regarding the God-given rights of individuals, the value of social virtue, and a state system created to preserve inalienable individual rights, broke sharply with the French Revolution.

The French Revolution was born with a utopian sense of purpose: man would finally be free of old constraints. Those constraints were not merely political; they were constraints of the soul, chains on human freedom itself. The most obvious chains were those imposed by religion itself. Denis Diderot, editor of the famed *Encyclopedie*, said he wished to strangle the last king with the guts of the last priest.

The French Revolution was bloody, vicious, and awful. Tens of thousands of people were murdered by the regime between 1793 and 1794, with another quarter million dead in a civil war, and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte would cast the continent into a new era of upheaval. Where did the French Revolution—born with dreams of liberty, equality, and fraternity—go wrong?

It went wrong because the Enlightenment of the French Revolution rejected the lessons of the past; it saw in the history of the West mere repression and brutality, and longed for a tomorrow full of visions and dreams based on vague notions of human goodness. Across the English Channel, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) argued that the French Revolution had failed because it had ignored the lessons of human nature, the morality of Christians, and the traditions of the past.

The French Revolution didn't end in a communist utopia, but Karl Marx concluded in 1852 that it was the first step in the gradual evolution of markets toward communism and glorious utopianism. With the rise of romantic nationalism in Germany, the ideals of collectivist redistribution took precedence in the East. The end of World War I marked the final breath of the tsarist regime in Russia—and with it, the rise of Marxism. Stalin carried Lenin's bloody legacy further—murdering tens of millions of people under his rule—and in China, Mao Tse-tung brought Stalinism to a new audience, in the process murdering some sixty-five million human beings.

The deep-seated need for collective purpose and capacity found its outlet in the United States in bureaucracy, the movement away from a government answerable to the population and toward a government run by so-called experts. But these experts weren't experts on human nature, it turns out: instead, they used science as a catchword for political priorities that maximized centralization. By manipulating the currency, setting wages and prices, and bullying those who objected into silence, FDR and his cadre of geniuses lengthened the Great Depression by nearly a decade.

By the end of WW II when these three prominent collectivist world-views—romantic nationalism, communism, and

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bureaucracy—came into direct conflict, the great hope of the *telos*-free, Godless Enlightenment faded from view—or, more precisely, was been buried under the mountain of corpses from World Wars I and II. The West was suddenly in crisis.

Chapter 8 - After the Fire

The world survived World War II, of course. Not only did the West survive—it got freer, richer, more prosperous than ever. Human wealth expanded exponentially. Life spans increased.

But there remained a hole at the center of Western civilization: a meaning shaped hole. That hole has grown larger and larger in the decades since. We tried to fill it with the will to action; we tried to fill it with science; we tried to fill it with world-changing political activism. None of it provides us the meaning we seek.

We all grew up in a West formulated on the basis of thousands of years of history. History isn't merely happenstance. To explain our current notions of individual rights, we must look into foundational ideas. The neo-Enlightenment attempts to disown Judeo-Christian values and Greek teleology rest in historical ignorance. Neo-Enlightenment advocates tend to attribute every ill of the past several centuries to religious superstition and ancient mumbo-jumbo, failing to acknowledge that the values they hold dear rest on ancient foundations.

Historically, religious people have been on both sides of such issues as slavery, suffrage, and Jim Crow—*of course they have*, since we live in a world shaped by the Bible. Those arguments have taken place in a common context in which Biblical values are held up against other Biblical values, in which Greek teleological reason is held up against itself. The traditions of individual liberty sprang from the tension between Jerusalem and Athens. Carving off the roots of the Western tree while hoping to maintain the integrity of the trunk amidst high winds is an exercise in wishful thinking.

In December 2017, I discussed this issue precisely with Sam Harris, who was arguing that the Bible was a rotten text filled with awful lessons: I told him, "The moral system by which you suggest that a portion of the Bible should be removed is built on the moral system of the Bible, developed over two thousand years." When Harris protested that his most considered view of ethics came from a broader framework of studies, I answered, "I'm not talking about your browsing in world literature. I'm talking about the fundamental moral precepts that you took to be moral from the time you were a child arise from a Western civilization predicated on Judeo-Christian notions of good and bad."

The new scientific Athenians will have to make common cause with the devotees of Jerusalem, rather than making war on them. The same holds true in reverse. For, as it turns out, there are larger philosophical threats to Western civilization that require our attention.

Chapter 9 - The Return to Paganism

In 2015, I appeared on CNN HLN's *Dr. Drew Show* as part of a panel discussing ESPN's decision to award Caitlyn Jenner their Arthur Ashe Courage Award for his decision to announce his transgenderism. The conversation began with a unanimous vote of approval for ESPN's decision . . . until I was asked about the decision.

I explained that I didn't understand why society ought to engage in the mass delusion that Jenner was in fact a woman. Jenner may call himself a transwoman; Jenner may change his name. But Jenner is not, by any biologic metric, a woman. And a society that refuses to acknowledge the biological differences between men and women is engaging in knowing falsehood.

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This rather simple statement drew the ire of another panel member, Zoey Tur, a transgender female and biological male. Tur proceeded to berate and belittle me for my perspective, calling me an ignorant “little boy.” I responded by reiterating that Jenner is a biological male, and that believing you are a member of the opposite sex is a mental disorder—that men cannot magically become women and women cannot magically become men.

After Tur responded again with insults, I finally asked Tur, “What are your genetics, sir?” The question wasn’t meant as a provocation—it was meant to make a point. Biology matters. Facts matter. Reason matters. But at this point, all hell broke loose. Tur grabbed me by the back of the neck on national television, and threatened to send me home in an ambulance (an odd offer, since you usually don’t go home in an ambulance). Other members of the panel reacted with horror to my “insulting the pronouns.”

Needless to say, none of this had to do with reason. Unfortunately, reason is no longer in vogue. Subjectivity rules the day.

Reason, in fact, is insulting. Reason suggests that one person can know better than another, that one person’s perspective can be more correct than someone else’s. Reason is intolerant. Reason demands standards. Better to destroy reason than to abide by its dictates.

After the enormous human developments brought about by the exercise of reason, all this should seem bizarre. But the death of reason could have been predicted once reason alone failed to provide us with meaning.

Our only alternative is to return to the Judeo-Christian values and Greek reason that undergirded America’s founding. It’s not enough to make the case for the utility of the Enlightenment; the Enlightenment was the ground floor of the building, resting on certain foundational ideas and basic premises. We must shore up those ideas and premises if we hope to keep building skyward rather than adding weight to an already shaky superstructure.

Conclusion - How to Build

America is struggling right now in a lot of ways. But its largest struggle is the struggle for our national soul. We are so *angry* at each other right now. That anger is palpable. Where did it come from? It came from the destruction of a common vision. We used to believe in the Founding vision, supported by a framework of personal virtue culled from Judeo-Christian morality. We used to see each other as brothers and sisters, not the “the 1 percent vs. the 99 percent” or “the privileged vs. the victims.” We weren’t enemies. We were a community, forged in fire and tethered together by a set of values stretching back to the Garden of Eden—a community of individuals who believed in our own capacity to change ourselves and our world around us.

We can regain that. We *must* regain that. Our individual and communal happiness depends on us regaining the values we’re losing all too quickly. To do so will require boldness. To do so will require sacrifice.

What God asks of us, what our ancestors ask of us, and our civilization asks of us is not only that we become defenders of valuable and eternal truths, but that we train our children to become defenders of those truths as well. Historically, this has meant putting our own children in direct danger. My own family history is replete with extended relatives murdered in Europe for their devotion to Judaism.

The easiest way to evade responsibility is to avoid teaching our children our values. If we merely let them choose their value system for themselves, we reason, then we put them in no danger; if we act as neutral arbiters, bubbling them

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off from the possibility of harm through vague shibboleths about tolerance (though we're never quite specific about just what we're willing to tolerate). The answer is obvious: we can opt out. All we have to do is stop teaching our children.

If we wish our civilization to survive, however, we must be willing to teach our children. The only way to protect *their* children is to make warriors of our own children. We must make our children messengers for the truths that *matter*. That comes with risk. And that is a risk we must be willing to take.

Are we teaching our children to march forward, the banner of their civilization in hand, or to back slowly away from it, watching the shining city on the hill receding into the distance? What do we teach our children? When I look at my four-year-old daughter and two-year-old son, what do I want them to know—what *must* they know to become defenders of the only civilization worth fighting for? My wife and I will start by teaching our children four simple lessons:

Your life has purpose. Life is not a bewildering, chaotic mess. It's a struggle, but it's a struggle *guided by a higher meaning*. You were designed to use your reason and your natural gifts—and to cultivate those assets toward fulfillment of a higher end. That end can be discovered by investigating the nature of the world, and by exploring the history of our civilization. That end includes defending the rights of the individual and the preciousness of individual lives; it includes acting with virtues including justice and mercy. It means restoring the foundations of your civilization, and building new and more beautiful structures atop those foundations.

You can do it. Forge forth and conquer. Build. Cultivate. You were given the ability to choose your path in life—and you were born into the freest civilization in the history of mankind. Make the most of it. You are not a victim. In a free society you are responsible for your actions. Your successes are your accomplishments, but they are also the legacy of those who came before you and those who stand with you; your failures are purely your own.

Your civilization is unique. Recognize that what you have been given is unique in human history. Most human beings have lived under the control of others, suffered tyranny and oppression. You have not. The freedom you enjoy, and morals in which you believe, are products of a unique civilization. Learn your history. Explore where the roots of your values lie: in Jerusalem and Athens. Be grateful for those roots. Then defend those roots, even as you grow to new heights.

We are all brothers and sisters. We are not enemies if we share a common cause. And our common cause is a civilization replete with purpose, both communal and individual, a civilization that celebrates both individual and communal capacity. If we fight alongside one another rather than against one another, we are stronger. But we can only be stronger when we pull in the same direction, and when we share the same vision.

That's where our task starts. But that's not where it ends. We will teach our children that they stand on powerful, vital foundations built by hands not their own, and that they are protected by walls they, too, must defend. We will teach them that they must learn *why* the walls exist before tearing them down. We will do our best to teach them what made our civilization great—and what makes our civilization great still. It is our job to reconnect with both the word of God and with the philosophy of reason and individual liberty—two ideas that are, after all, inextricably intertwined.

It is our job to carry on the tradition. It is our job to push the task forward. If we do, then we will be truly deserving of God's blessing, and fit to proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. We will choose life, so that we and our children may live.