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The Good of Marriage

Cover Story

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.

— Genesis 2:18

Marriage has been a central reality in human relationships since the beginning of time. Scripture describes Adam's initial condition as "aloneness" — a void that was "not good." That word "good" is by itself inadequate to paint the full picture of the original Hebrew word, *tôwb*, which means good in every way possible: in beauty, in convenience, in joy, in fruitfulness, in economics, in wisdom, in sensuality, in happiness, and even in morality.[1]

Thus God deemed marriage *tôwb*, as it was his vehicle of choice to completely position Adam to steward creation. Today, though, most Americans — including many Christians — have forgotten that plot and, therefore, its centrality in God's plan. The institution of marriage is under attack from its cultural foes and underappreciated by its would-be allies. Postmodernists and secular humanists, who regard marriage as nothing more than a pragmatic social construct, would redefine it altogether or effectively do away with it. On the other hand, many Christians who seek to preserve marriage see its only relevance as protecting individual relationships.

But Scripture reflects reality. Marriage's goodness colors nearly every imaginable aspect of public life. As salt preserves food for a banquet, biblical marriage preserves whole societies as well as individuals and families. It also shapes our understanding of singleness and its purpose. According to Glenn Stanton, Focus on the Family's director of family formation studies, marriage shows us a glimpse

of who God is. Marriage is good in part because it allows us a peek at the nature of God. "This is a human reality," Stanton told Summit Ministries. "Marriage and family are not just social constructs."

Reality Reflects the Good of Marriage

Stanton, who also is a research fellow at the Institute of Marriage and Family in Ottawa, Canada, has written five books on those subjects. In his research he has found that no matter what metric is chosen, marriage and family are the greatest stabilizing influences for personal relationships and all of society. In his latest book *The Ring Makes All the Difference* (available as part of a special The Good of Marriage package on page 8), Stanton contrasted the effects of marriage and cohabitation and chronicled the multitude of ways that marriage proves itself beneficial to whole societies, families, and individuals. "What God tells us in his Word is absolutely demonstrated in science," Stanton said.

Married people are in general healthier than those no longer married or who have never been married.[2] Married households have about five times greater net worth than unmarried households.[3] Married people report being much happier than those who are not — so much happier, in fact, that the security and comfort marriage provides is equivalent to earning a much higher income.[4] And numerous studies have shown that having two biological parents results in happier, better educated, healthier children.

How Christians Can Speak to the Marriage Crisis

Christians who study marriage were stunned by a 2009 Pew study showing that 40 percent of Americans now believe marriage is obsolete.[5] Meanwhile, the proportion of married adults has been steadily trending down for decades and in 2010 was only at 52 percent for women and 55 percent for men.[6] Those numbers have elicited alarms even from the cultural left. Just before Christmas, *Washington Post* columnist Ruth Marcus wrote that as marriage declines, more and more Americans will find themselves in untenable economic situations.[7]

Non-believers might not want to admit it, but every statistical indicator shows that the abandonment of God's design for marriage is hastening the decline of

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from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers

Most Christians think that the Bible's relevance to marriage begins in Ephesians 5, in which the apostle Paul calls for wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives. The only difference between a Christian marriage and a secular marriage, according to this way of thinking, is that the Christian couple is more likely to be faithful, that Christian wives are more likely to be obedient, and that Christian husbands are more likely to be loving.

We must understand that the Christian view of marriage is not merely adding ornamentation to something that is part of the natural order of things. God invented marriage as part of his purpose for humankind. The first marriage, between our first parents, described in Genesis 2:21-25, says that they became "one flesh." The word "flesh" there means "blood relationship" or "clan." It is a legal, covenantal term implying that the man and woman were married in a ceremony performed by God himself.

The close tie between God's stewardship commands (be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and tend the garden) and the marriage of Adam and Eve help us see that marriage is: (1) to be between a man and woman, (2) for the potential of reproduction, and (3) so that the man and woman may work together, completing one another. It's a beautiful picture of trust, satisfaction, and growth.

Even singleness takes on more meaning in the context of stewardship. Adam was single when he was first given stewardship commands from God. The wedding ceremony doesn't magically impart purpose to formerly single people. Rather, the man and woman come together as stewards of their God-given gifts, committing to combine their efforts through a miraculous mathematical formula in which one plus one equals one.

> **"Marriage isn't just about your personal fulfillment — it is important for the stability of all society!"**
>
> **Dr. Jeff Myers**

But oneness isn't just for personal fulfillment. Paul Popenoe, the forerunner of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, said, "It can be demonstrated from history that no society has ever survived after its family life deteriorated." America's early leaders understood that a biblical view of marriage was essential to the stability of society. In his 1828 dictionary, Noah Webster defined marriage in explicitly biblical terms: "The act of uniting a man and woman for life . . . marriage was instituted by God himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children."

Webster must be spinning in his grave at how all reference to God's purposes has been scrubbed from the dictionary that still bears his name. Without a doubt he would join the chorus of pro-marriage forces shouting from the rooftops: *marriage isn't just about your personal fulfillment — it is important for the stability of all of society!*

At Summit we spend a lot of time in the classroom and in small groups illuminating a beautiful, compelling perspective on marriage and family: how to pursue the virtue of chastity; how to invest your single years purposefully; how to gain accountability and stay away from pornography; and how to be masculine or feminine in a godly way.

But we also help students understand that the biblical ideal of marriage is under attack from abortion, homosexual marriage, promiscuity, pornography, divorce, and rebellion. Even the fact that most people dedicate their lives to amusing themselves rather than being a blessing to the nations is an attack on the family because it denies God's purposes for human beings as seen in Genesis.

I hope you enjoy this issue on marriage. Armed with truth, you and I can be Noah Websters for our own day, speaking of God's purposes generally, and marriage specifically, and living them out in our own lives.

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Western Civilization. Stanton thinks Christians don't really understand marriage and why it is good. "I don't find many evangelicals who can go any farther than Ephesians 5," he said. Christians need a "living theology of marriage," according to Stanton. "We need to understand that marriage is a huge and fundamental part of the Christian story, and that our marriages are a bit of an earthly icon. The ultimate marriage [between Christ and his church] is to come."

Stanton has found in his research that the millennial generation (those born in the mid-to-late-1980s or later) is the most pro-marriage generation today. "They see marriage as receding, and they mourn it," he said. This, when viewed alongside the rise in cohabitation and more women having children before getting married, points to the universal desire for marriage and family. And this is where Christians — when they understand the immense good of marriage — can come alongside a culture in marital distress. Instead of looking down their noses at less-than-traditional attempts at marriage and family, Stanton says churches should have one response to those desiring the right things: "Your goal is good, and we can help you." One of the "goods" of biblical marriage is that it fosters community, and communities of married couples mentoring young couples could yield great benefits for younger generations and society in general. "The church is the only institution that can really do that," Stanton said.

Understanding Marriage Involves Understanding the Role of Singleness

Just as the biblical view of marriage is the only one that so closely ties the institution to who we are as humans and to who God is, the biblical worldview is also the only one to offer such a substantive design for singleness. "I don't know of any other belief system that has as robust a calling for singleness as it does for marriage," Stanton said. "Purity is so much more than what *you don't do*. *It's who you are*. Both purity and chastity are positive virtues and not merely an absence of wrong behavior."[8]

Several years ago, author Lauren Winner penned an article for *Christianity Today* (based on her book *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*) positing that chastity during singleness is itself a discipline; being single is as much a calling as being married, and single people are just as responsible to steward their gifts and lives as are married people.

That's not how American popu-

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Marriage and the Health of the State

» **Marriage, Fertility, and the Economy** — Seven spending sectors of the U.S. economy correlate with marriage and fertility:

1. Child Care
2. Groceries
3. Health Care
4. Home Maintenance
5. Households Products/Services
6. Life/Personal Insurance
7. Juvenile Products

Married parents spend **23% more** in these sectors than childless singles.

Marriage and the Workforce — In more than 75 countries worldwide, fertility rates are lower than 2.1 children per woman, the ratio necessary to sustain current workforce levels.

» **Marriage and the Welfare State** —In 2010, U.S. Social Security began paying out more to the elderly than it took in from the workforce, due to a declining replacement rate.

» **Marriage and Social Capital** —**About 40%** of children throughout the Americas and Europe are now born outside marriage. It is projected that **by 2023** the majority of American children will be born out of wedlock. Children born out of wedlock are often hampered by more mental, emotional, health, and educational problems than children born in wedlock (see page 4 for more details).

Source: The Sustainable Demographic Dividend, National Marriage Project

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Marriage and Children

» 2010 Poverty Rates

Asian Americans
- **Single** 30.1%
- **Married** 7%

Hispanic Americans
- **Single** 50.3%
- **Married** 21.6%

African Americans
- **Single** 47.6%
- **Married** 12%

White Americans
- **Single** 32.7%
- **Married** 5.2%

Source: FamilyFacts.org

» Child Poverty 2006-2008

1-parent, female-led families **36.5%**
Married, 2-parent families **6.4%**
Source: FamilyFacts.org

» Child Well-Being

A 2003 study in Sweden concluded that children growing up in non-intact families were twice as likely to suffer from **psychiatric disorders**, **diseases**, **suicide attempts**, **alcoholism**, and **drug abuse** than children in intact families.
Source: "Cohabitation, Marriage, and Child Wellbeing," National Marriage Institute.

» Teen Sex

Males Reporting Sexual Activity
- **Intact Family** 29%
- **Step Family** (Approx.) 45%
- **Single Parent** 50%

Females Reporting Sexual Activity
- **Intact Family** 30%
- **Step Family** >50%
- **Single Parent** (Approx.) 46%

Source: FamilyFacts.org

lar culture treats pre-marital chastity though. Gina Dalfonzo, editor of Breakpoint.org and a freelance writer, is currently working on a book on singleness in the church. "I think that the chaste lifestyle needs to be taken seriously, because it's not anymore. It's treated as a joke, or a repression, a hang up. It needs to be understood again." Dalfonzo, who is single, said that pre-marital chastity is now the only sexual activity disdained by American culture. "The culture needs to be willing to listen to us, too. If they say they're okay with all sorts of sexual behavior, they have to answer the question, why are they not okay — why do they make a big joke — about adults who are chaste?"

> ***"What God tells us in his Word is absolutely demonstrated in science."***
>
> **Glenn T. Stanton**

Jennifer Marshall claims in her op-ed "'Single Ladies' Not Giving Up" that many singles, women in particular, still want the trappings of marriage but have given up on the institution itself because of personal experience.[9] This leads to the aforementioned single parenthood and rampant promiscuity, which perpetuate difficult social, economic, and health circumstances, especially on children. "We just inflict untold harm on these vulnerable little kids," Dalfonzo said. "We've separated the ideas of sex and babies. We have so made sex into recreation that we just don't think about babies coming from sex unless it's specifically something we wanted to happen."

Just as marrieds have a societal responsibility to guard their sexuality within the protection of their marriages, so, too, singles have a societal responsibility to guard their sexuality inside the protection of the same institution. The lifestyle is not easy, Dalfonzo admitted. "It is a life worth living. Nothing worth doing is easy."

As Stanton said, our view of chastity and our view of marriage must be "rightly centered" around our true identity under God's good plan.

Notes

1. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1990).
2. "Married adults tend to report better health," FamilyFacts.org.
3. "Married households have more assets," FamilyFacts.org.
4. Glenn T. Stanton, *The Ring Makes All the Difference*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011), 101.
5. "The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families," Pew Research Center, November 18, 2010, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org.
6. "The proportion of married adults has decreased," FamilyFacts.org.
7. Ruth Marcus, "The marriage gap presents a real cost," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com.
8. Glenn T. Stanton, "The Glorious Story of Sexuality," Focus on the Family, http://www.focusonthefamily.com.
9. Jennifer Marshall, "'Single Ladies' Not Giving Up," The Heritage Foundation, October 28, 2011, http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary.

a look at our world

news and commentary

Editor's Note: As you know, our President Emeritus Dr. David Noebel helps us with research by sending 20-30 pages of clippings of each month's news. This month Dr. Myers organized some of that research and wrote commentary on several items. Let us know if this is helpful (to see the complete list of Doc's clippings, go to www.summit.org/resources/the-journal/ and turn to page 9, or call us at 866.786.6483).

Secular Humanism

Sociologist Robert Merton used the phrase "law of unintended consequences" as the societal equivalent of "be sure your sins will find you out." Unintended consequences usually happen when an elite group demands wrong-headed public policy changes that cascade into a catastrophic series of events.

Two recent examples:

Abortion on demand. Mara Hvistendahl's frightening new book *Unnatural Selection* reveals that in most societies that embrace legalized abortion, it is used as a tool for sex selection. Hvistendahl estimates that 163 million baby girls have been aborted worldwide in the last 30 years, and that upsetting global gender balances has led to violence and other social disruptions (*Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 17-18, 2011, p. C11).

Teen smoking. Anti-smoking campaigns were driven by an anti-tobacco bias. They worked: the number of 12th graders smoking tobacco has dropped in half since 1997. But *smoking itself* hasn't gone away. The National Institute on Drug Abuse points out that many teens now see marijuana smoking as a safe alternative: 6.6 percent of 12th graders used marijuana on a daily basis, the highest rate since 1981 (*Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 15, 2011, p. 2).

Biblical Christianity

"People get from books the idea that if you have married the right person you may expect to go on 'being in love' forever. As a result, when they find they are not, they think this proves they have made a mistake and are entitled to a change — not realizing that, when they have changed, the glamour will presently go out of the new love just as it went out of the old one. In this department of life, as in every other, thrills come at the beginning and do not last . . . but if you go through with it, the dying away of the first thrill will be compensated for by a quieter and more lasting kind of interest."

— C.S. Lewis

Whatever else you think about Tim Tebow, he has certainly raised the bar for what it takes to be admired as an NFL player and as a person. This sort of raising-of-the-bar happens a lot in sports and in life. Before Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile, everyone who was fast enough to approach that record was a hero. Once the record was broken, though, all of those not-quite-fast-enough athletes became losers. Some were resentful, but a handful stepped it up and joined Bannister in this new level of success. Those who couldn't, or wouldn't, just faded away.

After the Detroit Lions' Stephen Tulloch sacked Tebow, he knelt down and genuflected in mockery of Tebow's prayer stance. But Tebow turned the other cheek: "He was probably just having fun and was excited he made a good play and had a sack. And good for him."

Daniel Foster (*National Review*, Dec. 31, 2011. p. 24) said, "That's way too much earnestness for the ironic. It's way too much idealism for the cynical. And it's way too much selflessness for the self-absorbed. In short, people aren't upset at Tebow's God talk. They're upset that he might actually believe it."

The phrase "social justice" is on the lips of many young Christians today. Shouldn't we identify with the downtrodden and the oppressed? Certainly. But the question is how. Marx and Engels cynically used Christianity's tradition to gain converts to Communism. "The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern work-

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ing-class movement," they wrote. "Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves. . . ." (*The Triumph of Christianity, Rodney* Stark, pp. 87-88).

In my recent interview on the Frank Pastore Show in Los Angeles, a caller echoed this claim: "Jesus was a socialist. So were the disciples, except for one. Judas was a capitalist." It may make for great radio, but is it true?

Rodney Stark puts some of these assumptions to rest in his most recent book, *The Triumph of Christianity*. Christianity was primarily, claims Stark, a movement of the privileged classes of Jews who had settled in Greco-Roman cities. These Jews converted en masse to Christianity through the ministry of the apostle Paul, and they, in turn, reached out to Gentiles.

In other words, Christianity wasn't about economic revolution — it was about the nature of truth itself. And this truth was radical: it was about Christ, not Caesar. *A Wall Street Journal* Christmas editorial put it rather nicely:

> "Then, of a sudden, there was a light in the world, and a man from Galilee saying, Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. And the voice from Galilee, which would defy Caesar, offered a new Kingdom in which each man could walk upright and bow to none but his God" (Dec. 24-25, 2011 p. A14).

By the way, the Heritage Foundation's Jennifer Marshall will be joining us at our upcoming adult conference to reveal shortcomings of the leftist "social justice" movement and show how a biblical worldview offers an effective framework for demonstrating compassion.

Economics

If there was one appeal of Occupy Wall Street, it was a demand to raise corporate taxes. Walter E. Williams, though, argues that raising corporate taxes is the worst thing you can do if you want to help poor people. His argument is fascinating:

> "Which workers on a road construction project earn higher pay, those employed moving dirt with wheelbarrows or those doing the same atop giant earthmovers? You'd guess the guys operating the earthmovers, but why? . . . It's because those workers have more capital (tools) to work with and are thereby more productive. Higher productivity translates into higher wages. Tax policies that raise the cost of capital formation — such as capital gains taxes, low depreciation allowances and corporate taxes — reduce capital formation. As a result, workers have less capital, lower productivity and lower wage growth" (*Human Events*, Nov. 14, 2011, p. 20).

So if raising corporate taxes isn't the solution, what is? Williams and Stephen Moore have an idea about which liberals and conservatives should agree: that the rich and famous should, at the very least, not be subsidized by the government, be it the Department of Energy bailing out green companies, the International Monetary Fund bailing out banks and financial institutions, or the Department of Agriculture bailing out "farmers" such as Bruce Springsteen and Scottie Pippen.

> **"In other words, Christianity wasn't about economic revolution — it was about the nature of truth itself."**

Moore and Williams propose a new law: "The Millionaire Subsidy Elimination Act." As opposed to raising their tax rates, which hurts U.S. competitiveness and job creation, "Cutting benefits to millionaires . . . would help grow the economy." If Senator Tom Coburn is correct, existing corporate welfare programs transfer $200 billion annually to Americans whose incomes exceed $1 million. If that's not something that liberals and conservatives can come together on, I don't know what is.

The perfect time for bringing this evil to light would be right now, during the Republican primaries. Candidates could rally independents, secure their conservative base, and even raise suspicions among liberals about whether the Washington elite is really on their side. Unfortunately, as Richard Diamond writes, "None [of the candidates] are aware that an institutionalized dependence — our financially-bankrupting, maturity-preventing, legislated dependence on our own government — is the cause of the suicidal situation we are in" (*The Washington Times*, Dec. 19, 2011, p. 2).

Same-Sex Marriage Is about More Than Individuals

A robust discussion of marriage these days must address the portentous threat that same-sex marriage poses to the very idea of marriage. While pro-life forces seem to be winning hearts and minds in the younger generation, commitment to biblical marriage and sexuality is waning in statehouses, on college campuses, in the court of public opinion, and even in churches. As many as two-thirds of young Christians say they think that sex outside of marriage is morally acceptable, and that gay people should be allowed to be married. [1]

Same-Sex Marriage Calls into Question the Image of God

The biblical view of marriage recognizes that marriage touches far more than individual relationships. It illuminates the nature of God and what is good for society.

The first commitment Christians need to make if they want to think biblically about marriage, according to Glenn Stanton, Focus on the Family's director of family formation studies, is that marriage itself is a metaphor for a larger relationship — the relationship God seeks with his bride, the church. Ultimately, it's about human beings bearing God's image. "Nothing in the universe matters more than that," says Stanton.

Just as the *good* of marriage is exhibited through reality and verified through the social sciences, the *error* of same-sex marriage can be substantiated through the study of anthropology. Stanton has documented the fact that all human civilizations have instituted some form of heterosexual marriage and a subsequent nuclear family, while none has formally instituted any type of homosexual marriage. [2]

Furthermore, the historic anthropological definitions of marriage — including one posited by homosexual anthropologist Colin M. Turnbull — all include provisions for marriage being a vehicle to stabilize, benefit, and propagate whole societies. Documented definitions of marriage from same-sex marriage advocates, on the other hand, relegate marriage to love, commitment, and sometimes shared finances between two people. [3] Redefining marriage effectively disavows natural law and the historic model passed down for millennia.

Redefining Marriage Imposes Legal Realities on Everyone Else

Same-sex marriage may seem beneficial to gay couples, but it does nothing to undergird the stability of society. Marriage between a man and a woman, on the other hand, clearly does. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) has pointed out that natural marriage promotes the formation of naturally procreative unions, stability and responsibility in naturally procreative relationships, and the natural and mutually beneficial bond between parents and their biological children.[4]

Because only marriage between a man and a woman has these kinds of stabilizing influences, state governments and the federal government should resist the redefinition of marriage. If gay people want to be married, they can be — just as long as they marry someone of the opposite sex. For gay activists to claim a right *beyond* this is to establish a special class of rights for certain people based on their feelings of love.

Same-sex marriage activists claim to just want fairness, but as ADF has correctly pointed out, if same-sex marriage is legalized, governments are then obligated to foster the accommodation of same-sex marriage by individuals, businesses, and organizations. "Whenever the law says something is 'equal,' the law sooner or later treats those who disagree as bigots," according to an ADF paper.[5]

The LGBT Community: People, Not Abstractions

Despite the sociological and political debates swirling around same-sex marriage, we ought to remember that those in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual (LGBT) community are people, not abstractions. Most adults know gay people personally as family members, classmates, co-workers, friends, and even fellow churchgoers. Christians need to firmly oppose the gay agenda and at the same time articulate God's desire for purity and sexual wholeness, because that is best for all of us. As the late Reverend Richard John Neuhaus put it:

> "People are not going to follow those they view as hostile to their interests or contemptuous of their person. . . . They must know that the change to which you call them is *for* them."[6]

At the end of the day, our voices will be heard only if we are simultaneously for truth *and* for being agents of Christ's redemption to a sexually broken world.

Notes

1. "A New Generation of Adults Bends Moral and Sexual Rules to Their Liking," Barna Group, October 31, 2006, http://www.barna.org/barna-update.
2. "Glenn T. Stanton, "Differing Definitions of Marriage and Family."
3. See Note 2.
4. "Trial Brief of Prop 8 Proponents," Perry et al v. Schwarzenegger et al., http://www.scribd.com/doc/23892014/Trial-Brief-of-Prop-8-Proponents-Filed-12-07-09.
5. J"How does same-sex 'marriage' affect your or your marriage?" Alliance Defense Fund.
6. "Telling the World Its Own Story," Richard John Neuhaus, Catholic Education Resource Center, http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0081.html.

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Why Does Marriage Matter?

Look closer at why the biblical view of marriage and family is best for individuals, families, and whole societies in Summit's **The Good of Marriage Package**. It includes:

Book: *The Case for Marriage* (Linda Waite, Maggie Gallagher) looks closely at the emotional, physical, economic, and sexual benefits the biblical view of marriage brings.

Book: *The Ring Makes All the Difference* (Glenn T. Stanton) tears down the myth that cohabitation is merely a marriage practice run or a suitable replacement.

CD: Summit President Dr. Jeff Myers delivers 3 lectures on family and marriage that explore the biblical view of family and marriage, what the Fall did to change them, and how men and women can recover a biblical view.

CD: Summit author and speaker John Stonestreet outlines in 2 lectures why the traditional marriage and family model are best for society and what happens when that view deteriorates.

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PO Box 207, Manitou Springs, Colorado 80829 | **Phone**: 866.786.6483 | **URL**: www.summit.org | **E-mail**: michael@summit.org

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel

Biblical Christianity

When Saul of Tarsus set out on his journey to Damascus the whole of the known world lay in bondage. There was one state, and it was Rome. There was one master for it all, and he was Tiberius Caesar.

Everywhere there was civil order, for the arm of the Roman law was long. Everywhere there was stability, in government and in society, for the centurions saw that it was so.

But everywhere there was something else, too. There was oppression—for those who were not the friends of Tiberius Caesar. There was the tax gatherer to take the grain from the fields and the flax from the spindle to feed the legions or to fill the hungry treasury from which divine Caesar gave largess to the people. There was the impressor to find recruits for the circuses. There were executioners to quiet those whom the Emperor proscribed. What was a man for but to serve Caesar?

There was the persecution of men who dared think differently, who heard strange voices or read strange manuscripts. There was enslavement of men whose tribes came not from Rome, disdain for those who did not have the familiar visage. And most of all, there was everywhere a contempt for human life. What, to the strong, was one man more or less in a crowded world?

Then, of a sudden, there was a light in the world, and a man from Galilee saying, Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

And the voice from Galilee, which would defy Caesar, offered a new Kingdom in which each man could walk upright and bow to none but his God. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And he sent this gospel of the Kingdom of Man into the uttermost ends of the earth.

So the light came into the world and the men who lived in darkness were afraid, and they tried to lower a curtain so that man would still believe salvation lay with the leaders.

But it came to pass for a while in divers places that the truth did set man free, although the men of darkness were offended and they tried to put out the light. The voice said, Haste ye. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

Along the road to Damascus the light shone brightly. But afterward Paul of Tarsus, too, was sore afraid. He feared that other Caesars, other prophets, might one day persuade men that man was nothing save a servant unto them, that men might yield up their birthright from God for pottage and walk no more in freedom.

Then might it come to pass that darkness would settle again over the lands and there would be a burning of books and men would think only of what they should eat and what they should wear, and would give heed only to new Caesars and to false prophets. Then might it come to pass that men would not look upward to see even a winter's star in the East, and once more, there would be no light at all in the darkness.

And so Paul, the apostle of the Son of Man, spoke to his brethren, the Galatians, the words he would have us remember afterward in each of the years of his Lord:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

—*Wall Street Journal*
December 24-25, 2011, p. A14

When the Detroit Lions' Stephen Tulloch sacked Tim Tebow in the first quarter of their week eight matchup, the linebacker immediately kneeled next to the prone Denver quarterback, in a mockery of Tebow's habit of praying on-field, most recently seen after his miraculous fourth-quarter comeback against the Dolphins the week before.

The insult coincided with and reinforced the explosion of "Tebowing" as an Internet meme, complete with a Twitter account and website. There you can see an act of communion with one's creator rendered as a bit of pop-cultural ephemera, and you can scroll through pictures of folks striking the pose everywhere from Oxford to Istanbul, with that muddle of irony and enthusiasm that has become my generation's trademark.

But there isn't an ironic bone in Tim Tebow's body. That's what makes him conspicuous. That's what makes the fact that he's managed to stay squeaky clean, in a sport that notoriously is not, conspicuous. And it's why the power of Tebow's evangelical-Christian faith, and the earnestness with which he professes it, seems to annoy so many people.

Indeed, even other religious quarterbacks have, in a friendly way, advised Tebow to tone down his religiosity to

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avoid turning fans off. Said former Super Bowl champion Kurt Warner, himself known to have led on-field prayers: "I'd tell him, 'Put down the boldness in regards to the words, and keep living the way you're living. Let your teammates do the talking for you. Let them cheer on your testimony.'" Likewise, when Packers QB Aaron Rodgers was asked about Tebow in the context of his own, more subdued avowals of his faith, he quoted Saint Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."

It's easy to understand why Tulloch, a mediocre middle-linebacker who was a fourth-round pick out of NC State, would want to take Tebow down a peg. For good and for ill, head games and intimidation are as much a part of football as tackling is (not to mention that Tebow has four inches and a pound on Tulloch, and is a talented enough athlete that he'd probably make a better defensive back).

But there is also something a bit nastier in Tulloch's mockery, in the phenomenon of "Tebowing" as a whole, and in the criticisms by former players like ex–Broncos quarterback Jake Plummer, who said of Tebow, "when he accepts the fact that we know that he loves Jesus Christ, then I think I'll like him a little better."

So what is it that so many around football — players, pundits, fans — are so peeved about? Why has Tebow's faith generated so much controversy and criticism in a sports-entertainment complex that is so filled with clichéd Jesus praise that, to quote Homer Simpson, you'd think God only helped professional athletes and Grammy winners? I have a theory. Part of it is redirected anger at Tebow's success, after the whole of the football smartset had come to the seemingly bizarre conclusion that though he was clearly one of the ten or so best ever to play the position in the NCAA, Tebow had no shot in the NFL. Football doesn't like to be wrong; they're mad enough when surefire prospects turn into busts, but when surefire busts succeed, they're livid. They don't like to see a guy who winds up to throw passes like he's pitching for the Yankees — and only occasionally sees them land anywhere near their intended target — marching down the field in the fourth quarter.

But the greater part of it has to do with the curious double standard that seems to be in place when it comes to an athlete's religiosity. With very few exceptions — Mariano Rivera comes to mind, as well as Curt Schilling, and post-"Prime Time" Deion Sanders — athletes' professions of faith strike most believers, nonbelievers, and agnostics alike as empty ritual, an extended solipsism in which big men with bigger egos congratulate themselves for having God on their side. How could it be otherwise? We see that in fact so many of them are supremely arrogant — materialists, abusers, and lechers. We've become cynical and secular enough as a society that this dissonance doesn't bother most people. The hypocrisy is actually sort of comforting, a confirmation that that old hokum in the Bible has no bearing on the world as it actually is. It's the same sort of glee you see from some when Christian politicians and ministers are felled by all-too-human moral — especially sexual — foibles.

By contrast, Tebow is the last Boy Scout. A leader on the field and off who spent his college years not indulging in any of the worldly pleasures afforded to Heisman Trophy winners, but doing missionary work in Thailand; helping overworked doctors perform circumcisions in the Philippines (you read that right); and preaching at schools, churches, and even prisons. This is a young man with such a strong work ethic that, according to teammates, he can't even be coaxed into hitting the town on a night after a Broncos win, because he is too busy preparing for the next week's game. This is a young man who even turned the other cheek at Stephen Tulloch's Tebowing, saying, "He was probably just having fun and was excited he made a good play and had a sack. And good for him."

That's way too much earnestness for the ironic. It's way too much idealism for the cynical. And it's way too much selflessness for the self-absorbed. In short, people aren't upset at Tebow's God talk. They're upset that he might actually believe it.

— Daniel Foster
National Review
December 31, 2011, p. 24

The initial success of Christianity seems to have been based primarily on conversions among the Diasporan Jews. Our first knowledge of Christians in Rome comes from disorders reported within the Jewish community over "Chrestus." Paul was sent to Damascus to punish Jews for accepting Christ. The many other Christian congregations that preceded Paul's missions were most certainly Jewish since no exception had

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yet been made for the conversion of pagans without their becoming Jews too. No doubt Gentiles began to swell the ranks of converts as Paul spread the word about the new policy: the "God-fearers" probably quickly switched en masse from the synagogues to the churches. But since Paul continued to base his efforts within the Diasporan communities, Jewish Christians must have continued to dominate the church. This is consistent with my previous study in which I found strong statistical evidence that Greco-Roman cities with a significant Diasporan community had Christian congregations far sooner than did other cities. All nine of the larger Greco-Roman cities with Diasporan communities had a Christian congregation by the end of the first century. Only four of the twenty-two equally large of the Greco-Roman cities without such a community had a church that early; a third of them still lacked a church by 180.

Eventually, of course, the rise of Christianity was accomplished by the mission to the Gentiles. This was greatly facilitated by the many aspects of the Christ story that made it familiar and convincing to pagans: the star in the East, the Virgin Birth, the visit by the Magi, the miracles, the blood sacrifice of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

— Rodney Stark
The Triumph of Christianity
p. 84-85

Tradition has it that Christianity recruited most of its initial supporters from among the very poorest and most miserable groups in the ancient world. Since early times, many ascetic Christians have claimed that poverty was one of the chief virtues of the "primitive" church, and by the nineteenth century this view was ratified by the radical Left as well. Karl Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) put it thus: "The history of the early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome." Working from this assumption, Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), the German editor of Marx's words, built the case that Jesus may have been one of the first socialists and that the early Christians briefly achieved true communism.

Although many Bible scholars rejected Kautsky's claims, the view that Christianity originated in lower-class bitterness and protest remained the received wisdom all across the theological spectrum.

Recently, it has become apparent that the deprivation theory fails to fit most, if not all, of the well-documented cases of new religious movements — whether Buddhism in the sixth century BCE or the New Age Movement in the twenty-first century CE. Contrary to prevailing sociological dogmas, religious movements typically are launched by the privileged classes. Why this occurs will be examined later in this chapter. First comes a detailed refutation of the claim that early Christianity was a lower-class movement, which I will replace with the recognition that, from the very beginning, Christianity was especially attractive to people of privilege — Jesus himself may have come from wealth or at least from a comfortable background.

— Rodney Stark
The Triumph of Christianity
p. 87-88

Sociology

Do American students of Asian ancestry face racial discrimination in college admissions? There is much evidence that they do. The Center for Equal Opportunity has found, for example, that the combined median SAT scores for Asians admitted to the University of Michigan in 2005 were 50 points higher than those for whites. Further, where it is forbidden by law to consider race in admissions policy, proportions of Asian students in colleges are higher than elsewhere. The student body at the University of California-Berkeley, for example, is over 40 percent Asian (three times the proportion of Californians with Asian ancestry). It is well-nigh a universal belief among Asian Americans that college admissions officers discriminate against them when the laws permits this. What to do? For students of mixed parentage the solution is obvious: Check any box on the application form other than "Asian." Since three-quarters of white-Asian marriages in the U.S. involve a white father, surname is a giveaway only for the other quarter. A December 3 report from Associated Press reveals that this practice is exactly what is happening. Apparently we are trending toward the model of apartheid South Africa, where

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Asians were "honorary whites."

— *National Review*
December 31, 2011
p.8

Teenagers in the U.S. are shunning cigarettes but smoking more pot, according to a national annual study that found daily marijuana use among high-school seniors has reached a 30-year peak.

The study, released Wednesday by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, found that 6.6% of 12th graders surveyed used marijuana daily or almost every day, the highest rate seen since 1981.

"Put another way, one in every 15 high-school seniors today is smoking pot on a daily or near-daily basis," said Lloyd Johnson, the study's lead investigator.

The report suggests teenagers aren't convinced that there is harm in smoking marijuana. Only 22.7% of high-school seniors saw great risk in smoking pot occasionally, slightly less than the 25.9% rate of five years ago.

The study found that cigarette use has declined to historically low rates—18.7% of 12th graders reported recent cigarette use, meaning they had smoked a cigarette in the past month, compares with a recent peak of 36.5% in 1997.

— *Wall Street Journal*
December 15, 2011
p. 2

In this meticulously reported study of global demographics, Mara Hvistendahl shows that sex-selective abortions over the past three decades have erased 163 million baby girls that, by biological averages, should have been born. The spread of medical technology has upset global gender balances, and the author shows a link between skewed sex ratios and violence and other social disruption. "Unnatural Selection," our reviewer said, "is one of the most consequential books ever written" about abortion and the effects on modern society."

— *Wall Street Journal*
December 17-18, 2011
p. C11

Global Warming

With the Durban conference receiving little attention, you likely haven't heard much about the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) latest global-warming report either. That's because after the Climategate scandal, when hundreds of e-mails displaying the manipulation of data by climate scientists were released, and over 100 errors in the science came to light, the IPCC has been thoroughly discredited. Their latest report is a typical attempt to scare the public into action, but they clearly understand that global warming no longer sells. According to Time magazine, it seems that their goal is to "retire" the phrase "global warming" and replace it with "extreme weather." Remember when Al Gore and the alarmist movement sought to use the image of Hurricane Katrina as the future of global warming? Well, a closer look at the report reveals that the IPCC actually has very low confidence that increased hurricanes are or will be a result of global warming.

If the first Climategate scandal, and the errors in the IPCC science, were not enough to display the IPCC's political agenda, another batch of Climategate e-mails, now known as Climategate 2.0, has surfaced just before the Durban conference. But as Joe Romm of "Climate Progress" said about the timing of their release, "It's so refreshing that anybody thinks those climate talks actually matter."

Why should Americans be concerned about this crisis of confidence in the IPCC? Because EPA Administrator Jackson has admitted that EPA never engaged in an independent analysis of the science underpinning their forthcoming global-warming regulations, but instead relied primarily on the discredited IPCC. Now, a recent report by the EPA Inspector General has found that EPA cut corners on what is called an "endangerment finding," which is the basis for these regulations. So not only will these rules be all pain for no gain, their foundation is the flawed science of the IPCC, implemented through a flawed scientific process at the EPA.

Now that the Kyoto process has completely collapsed, the IPCC has made itself utterly irrelevant, and the global-warming hoax has been thoroughly exposed, many have left the issue for dead. The American people may no longer be worried about the global-warming hoax, but they should be very worried about what the Obama EPA's global-warming regulations will do to their jobs and their pocketbooks.

President Obama has already abandoned the possibility of an international treaty. Now it's time for him to halt his job-killing global-warming agenda.

— Sen. James Inhofe
Human Events
December 12, 2011, p. 19

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One of the changes among scientists in this century is the increasing number who believe that one can have complete and certain knowledge. For example, Michael J. Mumma, a NASA senior scientist who has led teams searching for evidence of life on Mars, was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "Based on evidence, what we do have is, unequivocally, the conditions for the emergence of life were present on Mars—period, end of story."

This belief in absolute certainty is fundamentally what has bothered me about the scientific debate over global warming in the 21st century, and I am hoping it will not characterize the discussions at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa, currently under way.

Bjorn Lomborg on the ClimateGate 2.0 e-mail scandal and World AIDS Day.

Reading Mr. Mumma's statement, I thought immediately of physicist Niels Bohr, a Nobel laureate, who said, "Anyone who is not shocked by quantum theory has not understood it." To which Richard Feynman, another famous physicist and Nobel laureate, quipped, "Nobody understands quantum mechanics."

I felt nostalgic for those times when even the greatest scientific minds admitted limits to what they knew. And when they recognized well that the key to the scientific method is that it is a way of knowing in which you can never completely prove that something is absolutely true. Instead, the important idea about the method is that any statement, to be scientific, must be open to disproof, and a way of knowing how to disprove it exists.

Therefore, "Period, end of story" is something a scientist can say—but it isn't science.

I was one of many scientists on several panels in the 1970s who reviewed the results from the Viking Landers on Mars, the ones that were supposed to conduct experiments that would help determine whether there was or wasn't life on that planet. I don't remember anybody on those panels talking in terms of absolute certainty. Instead, the discussions were about what the evidence did and did not suggest, and what might be disprovable from them and from future landers.

I was also one of a small number of scientists—mainly ecologists, climatologists and meteorologists—who in the 1970s became concerned about the possibility of a human-induced global warming, based on then-new measurements. It seemed to be an important scientific problem, both as part of the beginning of a new science of global ecology and as a potentially major practical problem that nations would have to deal with. It did not seem to be something that should or would rise above standard science and become something that one had to choose sides in. But that's what has happened.

Some scientists make "period, end of story" claims that human-induced global warming definitely, absolutely either is or isn't happening. For me, the extreme limit of this attitude was expressed by economist Paul Krugman, also a Nobel laureate, who wrote in his New York Times column in June, "Betraying the Planet" that "as I watched the deniers make their arguments, I couldn't help thinking that I was watching a form of treason—treason against the planet." What had begun as a true scientific question with possibly major practical implications had become accepted as an infallible belief (or if you're on the other side, an infallible disbelief), and any further questions were met, Joe-McCarthy style, "with me or agin me."

Not only is it poor science to claim absolute truth, but it also leads to the kind of destructive and distrustful debate we've had in last decade about global warming. The history of science and technology suggests that such absolutism on both sides of a scientific debate doesn't often lead to practical solutions.

It is helpful to go back to the work of the Wright brothers, whose invention of a true heavier-than-air flying machine was one kind of precursor to the Mars Landers. They basically invented aeronautical science and engineering, developed methods to test their hypotheses, and carefully worked their way through a combination of theory and experimentation. The plane that flew at Kill Devil Hill, a North Carolina dune, did not come out of true believers or absolute assertions, but out of good science and technological development.

Let us hope that discussions about global warming can be more like the debates between those two brothers than between those who absolutely, completely agree with Paul Krugman and those who absolutely, completely disagree with him. How about a little agnosticism in our scientific assertions—and even, as with Richard Feynman, a little sense of humor so that we

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can laugh at our errors and move on? We should all remember that Feynman also said, "If you think that science is certain—well that's just an error on your part."

— Daniel B. Botkin
Wall Street Journal
December 2, 2011, p. A19

Origins

Physicists around the world have something to celebrate this Christmas. Two groups of them, using the particle accelerator in Switzerland, have announced that they are tantalizingly close to bagging the biggest prize in physics (and a possible Nobel): the elusive Higgs particle, which the media have dubbed the "God particle." Perhaps next year, physicists will pop open the champagne bottles and proclaim they have found this particle.

Will finding the Higgs boson be the end of physics? Not by a long shot. The Standard Model only gives us a crude approximation of the rich diversity found in the universe. One embarrassing omission is that the Standard Model makes no mention of gravity, even though gravity holds the Earth and the sun together. In fact, the Standard Model only describes 4% of the matter and energy of the universe (the rest being mysterious dark matter and dark energy).

From a strictly aesthetic point of view, the Standard Model is also rather ugly. The various subatomic particles look like they have been slapped together haphazardly. It is a theory that only a mother could love, and even its creators have admitted that it is only a piece of the true, final theory.

So finding the Higgs particle is not enough. What is needed is a genuine theory of everything, which can simply and beautifully unify all the forces of the universe into a single coherent whole—a goal sought by Einstein for the last 30 years of his life.

The next step beyond the Higgs might be to produce dark matter with the Large Hadron Collider. That may prove even more elusive than the Higgs. Yet dark matter is many times more plentiful than ordinary matter and in fact prevents our Milky Way galaxy from flying apart.

So far, one of the leading candidates to explain dark matter is string theory, which claims that all the subatomic particles of the Standard Model are just vibrations of a tiny string, or rubber band. Remarkably, the huge collection of subatomic particles in the Standard Model emerge as just the first octave of the string. Dark matter would correspond roughly to the next octave of the string.

So finding the Higgs particle would be the beginning, not the end of physics. The adventure continues.

— Michio Kaku
Wall Street Journal
December 16, 2011, p. A17

Politics

It's depressing. Not one of the candidates in the Republican debates has identified the root cause of our dire situation. None are aware that an institutionalized dependence — our financially-bankrupting, maturity-preventing, legislated dependence on our own government — is the cause of the suicidal situation we are in.

Being ignorant of this fact, the one nominated and elected will not be able to correct it. In particular, not one candidate realizes that all our accumulated dependency on government since the problem began in 1933 — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Educational and Housing assistance, etc., etc., and on and on into every corner of our lives — has arrested the forces of growth, well-being, and prosperity in ourselves and in our country.

None realize that because of the considerable amount of money taken from everyone to operate this wide array of mandated legislations, every low-income American and almost all middle-income Americans have had their natural growth towards self-reliance and maturity arrested by their own government.

Neither the candidates nor most of the people have yet to recognize that our childlike need to be taken care of, and our desire to have a huge safety net to take care of almost everything, has driven most to vote for their own permanent dependence on that government safety net, and for their own permanent immaturity.

Believe it or not, there was a time in America before this childlike need to be taken care of extended on to adulthood, that every American, rich or poor, grew up to become an independent, responsible, self-reliant, mature human being.

Believe you me, in those days when there was respect for the natural law of growth, and a Constitution that limited the size and influence of government. There was not an American who thought he had a right to have what he couldn't pay for, who thought he was

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entitled to money, services, and products which in no way he had worked for and earned.

Back then Americans had pride, and would be ashamed of having the infantile thoughts today's Americans now frequently express. And they'd be outraged at having a government that borrowed and printed huge sums of money and ran up trillions of dollars in national debt to keep from defaulting on its debilitating and divisive social commitments.

Now with our institutionalized dependency we are close to being a doomed country. All countries, socialist or not, that legislate the people to be dependent on their government soon destroy themselves; for soon it's the huge government, and not the people, that does the governing.

— Richard Dimond
The Washington Times
December 19, 2011, p. 2

The Obama administration Tuesday issued the first-ever U.S. strategy to address foreign nations' human-rights violations against gays, directing all U.S. government agencies to protect them from abuses.

"I am deeply concerned by the violence and discrimination targeting [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered] persons around the world - whether it is passing laws that criminalize LGBT status, beating citizens simply for joining peaceful LGBT pride celebrations, or killing men, women, and children for their perceived sexual orientation," President Obama wrote in a memorandum with his name attached. "Under my Administration, agencies engaged abroad have already begun taking action to promote the fundamental human rights of LGBT persons everywhere."

It instructs the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies to use foreign aid to "build respect for the human rights of LGBT persons."

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican presidential candidate, criticized Mr. Obama for being "out of touch with America's values."

"This administration's war on traditional American values must stop," Mr. Perry said.

"This is just the most recent example of an administration at war with people of faith in this country. Investing tax dollars promoting a lifestyle many Americas of faith find so deeply objectionable is wrong," Mr. Perry said. "Promoting special rights for gays in foreign countries is not in America's interests and not worth a dime of taxpayers' money. President Obama has again mistaken America's tolerance for different lifestyles with an endorsement of those lifestyles. I will not make that mistake."

Peter Sprigg, a senior fellow at the Family Research Council in Washington, said the administration is trying to redefine human rights internationally.

"No treaty, and no generally accepted international agreement, has ever accepted homosexual conduct as a human right," Mr. Sprigg said. "It's highly controversial abroad, and within the United Nations."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton also delivered an address in Geneva, Tuesday promoting the administration's advocacy of human rights protections for gays.

"In many ways, they are an invisible minority," Mrs. Clinton said in prepared remarks. "They are arrested, beaten, terrorized - even executed. Many are treated with contempt and violence by their fellow citizens while authorities empowered to protect them look the other way - or join in the abuse. Too often, they are denied opportunities to work and learn, driven from their homes and countries, and forced to suppress or deny who they are to protect themselves from harm."

The Human Rights Campaign in Washington hailed the administration's actions.

"As Americans, we understand that no one should be made a criminal or subject to violence or even death because of who they are, no matter where they live," said HRC President Joe Solmonese in a statement. "Today's actions by President Obama make clear that the United States will not turn a blind eye when governments commit or allow abuses to the human rights of LGBT people."

The president's memorandum spells out that U.S. agencies abroad must "strengthen existing efforts to effectively combat the criminalization by foreign governments of LGBT status or conduct and to expand efforts to combat discrimination, homophobia, and intolerance on the basis of LGBT status or conduct."

It also directs those agencies to engage international organizations in the effort to combat discrimination.

Mr. Sprigg said the policy will be especially problematic in certain African nations where there is resistance

to the acceptance of homosexuality. He criticized the administration for promoting these efforts while "pulling back" on requiring other countries to recognize religious liberty as a human right.

He cited as one example the decision by U.S. Army personnel to remove a cross from the front of a chapel at a base in northern Afghanistan out of concern for offending the local population.

— Dave Boyer
The Washington Times
December 12, 2011, p. 10

A Senate Armed Services Committee investigation uncovered a flood of counterfeit plans, mostly from China, entering the Defense Department's supply chain. (Phyllis Schlafly warned of this assault in HUMAN EVENTS 10/10/11)

The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing last week proposing an immediate change in defense manufacturing and trade, as suspected counterfeit parts have been installed on U.S. defense equipment, including aircraft deployed to Afghanistan from Raython Co., L-3 Communications Holdings Inc. and Boeing Co.

There have been 1,800 cases where counterfeit electronics were sold to the Pentagon and there were over one million parts involved in these cases, according to the committee, all of which the Defense Department replaced at taxpayer expense.

Building counterfeit electronics in multimillion-dollar aircraft and missile systems could delay missions and could jeopardize the lives of U.S. troops, according to a report by Government Accountability Office released during the hearing.

The GAO created a fake company and purchased 13 electronic companies from China ovet the internet. By last week, seven of the 13 parts were suspected to be counterfeit.

The DOD is training 2,000 personnel to learn to identify fake electronics in a quality-assurance process.

A Chinese representative was missing from the hearing despite the panel's writing to the ambassador asking him to send someone to testify.

A bill is expected to come to the committee floor within the next week.

— Alicia Powe
Human Events
November 14, 2011, p. 7

There was a day when liberals and libertarians appreciated the importance of upholding the freedoms of people and groups with unpopular views. No longer. As government expands, religious liberty is reduced to a special "exemption" and concerns about government coercion are dismissed, in the memorable words of Nancy Pelosi, as "this conscience thing."

"Religious liberty is better seen as more a liberty issue than a religion issue," says Bill Mumma of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. "The more we drive religious and private associations off the public square, the more that space will be occupied by government."

Of course, some might answer that they object to lots of things their money underwrites—say, the war in Iraq. Mrs. Sebelius's HHS rule, however, doesn't involve tax dollars: It involves forcing Americans to spend their private dollars on things they deem unconscionable. How far this is from the understanding in 1776 that the way to uphold liberty and keep these conflicts to a minimum was to keep government small and limited.

A new TV ad from CatholicVote.org features a little girl. "Dear President Obama," she says. "Can I ask you a question? Why are you trying to force my church and my school to pay for things that we don't even believe in?"

It's a good question. Apparently it's not enough that contraception be legal, cheap and available. As Mrs. Sebelius illustrates, modern American liberalism cannot rest until those who object are forced to underwrite it.

— William McGurn
Wall Street Journal
December 13, 2011, p.A19

Islam

Everywhere all over the Western world it's the same story: Muslim groups are growing ever more aggressive in demanding concessions to Islamic law and practice, and Western authorities are responding with eager submission, even when such concessions involve restrictions on long-cherished freedoms. And in every instance, the mainstream media focuses public attention upon those who are determined to resist the advance of Islamic law, as if those standing up for freedom were the problem, not those trying to destroy it.

I've just completed a two-week speaking tour of Australia, hosted by the Q Society, an Australian human rights group. While there, I heard the Q Society's Vickie Jansen report on the situation on the ground in Australia: "La Trobe University has its Muslim-only toilets and prayer rooms. The group Aussie Muslims is campaigning for exclusively Muslim prayer rooms in a western

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Australia hospital on the basis that they need to avoid the idolatry that may occur if they share. Our public schools are adapting to a Muslim Perspectives curriculum project in which, among many other things, not just female-only swimming is recommended for our Muslim students, but exclusively Muslim-only swimming (these are all sounding much like apartheid practices). Some public schools are catering to diversity by ensuring truckshops [cafeterias] are exclusively halal."

This coincides with similar initiatives in the U.S., where (until public attention compelled them to take it down) the Muslim Brotherhood group known as the Muslim Students Association's website featured a "Muslim Accommodations Task Force" page. It included PDFs of pamphlets titled "How to Achieve Islamic Holidays on Campus," "How to Establish a Prayer Room on Campus" and "How to Achieve Halal Food on Campus."

The demands of Muslim groups all over the Western world for separate facilities are in the service of a supremacist ideology that emanates from the Koranic assertions that Muslims are the "best of people" (3:110), while unbelievers are the "vilest of created beings" (98:6). Unbelievers are unclean (9:28)—which leads to the conclusion that Muslims should avoid contact with them. Every capitulation made to demands for Muslim accommodation only feeds these supremacist notions, working directly against the principles of equal justice and equal rights for all.

— Robert Spencer
Human Events
December 12, 2011, p. 17

Christopher Hitchens

Another journalist whose work I greatly admire was arguing with him about God. I had no previous indication that this was the case, but Hitch's sparring partner turned out to be a fervent Christian who was not afraid to be evangelical. It probably helped that he'd climbed halfway inside a bottle of very expensive scotch before he decided to challenge the world's most famous atheist on matters of ontology.

I jumped in where I could to challenge Hitch's lack of faith; even two against one with no voice, it was still a fair fight. He may have been deprived of volume, but he was as intense and brilliant as ever.

Meanwhile, girded by faith and single-malt whisky, my brother-in-Christian-arms was ever more emphatic in his pronouncements. It was both comical and inspiring, like watching Hunter S. Thompson's gonzo attitude deployed in defense of C.S. Lewis's faith.

"D--- it, Hemingway! I need the red letters!" he roared, pounding his fist on the table. The words of Jesus in many a New Testament are printed in red ink, and he was overcome with a desire to read Hitch the Sermon on the Mount. A more studious catechumen might have memorized it; I reached for my iPhone. Preach the Gospel always; when necessary use a Bible app, as St. Francis must have said. Alas, Hitchens's apartment had terrible reception. Put your trust in God, not AT&Ts 3G coverage.

The debate was friendly enough. It helped that where most atheists are quick to assert empirical certainty, Hitchens would readily admit the limits of his own knowledge. In fact, he amusingly reported that when he appeared with fellow celebrity atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, they were frequently irked at his response to inquiries about the after-life: "I don't know."

Still, Hitchens's animosity to religion was palpable. He related the story of how he was told by a group of Presbyterians that because he had been so vocal in attacking his former faith, he would have to get himself "unbaptized" lest he risk even greater damnation than he was already courting.

By now, my wife had joined the argument. She was something of a ringer; she's an accomplished religion journalist and the daughter of Lutheran pastor. Immediately, she laid into Hitch and told him she highly doubted the Presbyterian story for lots of obvious reasons that she eagerly detailed. And even if he had been told that, it's heresy that he should dismiss out of hand. I realized I'd seen that look in Hitchens's eye before. Once again, she had left him speechless.

After the news of Hitchens's death, I opened my email and found the following note in my inbox:

We almost had him that January night, didn't we? Maybe not. Probably not. Definitely not. But let's tell ourselves something sunk in, and took. Facing death has a way of re-ordering your worldview. He might have done things nobody will ever know.

I'd tell my friend the same thing he tried so hard to tell Hitchens around that fateful kitchen table: You've got to have faith. December 15, 2011, may be remembered as the day Christopher

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Hitchens died, but I prefer to think of it as his red letter day.

— Mark Hemingway
The Weekly Standard
December 26, 2011, p. 7

I, too, had some interaction with Christopher Hitchens, who wrote a regular column for Free Inquiry which I always read religiously. An intermediate gave my book Clergy in the Classroom to him, which (I believe) proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Secular Humanism itself is just as religious as Christianity. He never responded so I don't know if there was anything he thought worth commenting on, but it might have softened the conversation. He was certainly one of the major four horseman of the atheistic apocalypse, but now he knows that his atheism is not much help when he meets the Creator of the universe — an event all atheists chalk up to chance and accident. Of course, atheists have always avoided the obvious — God is dead, Hitchens; Hitchens is dead, God.

— David A. Noebel

A few years ago I wrote an article entitled "God, Science and Beauty" which included a quote from Paul Dirac saying, "Physical law should have mathematical beauty." Hence, science includes the concept of beauty in addition to imagination, experimentation, and 'guess work' (Richard Feynmen). The full article may be located on Summit's website. My reason for bringing up the article is because it was my reply to Free Inquiry's disdain for Christianity and its praise for science and reason. It is also germane because of the death of one of its writers — Christopher Hitchens. Free Inquiry and Hitches represent the atheistic point of view and want us to accept their atheism based on science and reason. My retort is quite simple — what science and reason? In an article by theoretical physicist Professor Michio Kaku, he states, "The Standard Model only gives us a crude approximation of the rich diversity found in the universe. (the rest being mysterious dark matter and dark energy)." Dark matter and dark energy, of course, is a euphemism for, "We don't kow!" In other words, we barely know 4 percent of a "crude approximation of the rich diversity found in the universe" and we know basically nothing about the 96 percent of the rest of the universe! Yet, somehow Free Inquiry and Hitchens (and Dawkins, Harris, et. al) want us to believe that science and reason prove that there is no God! Although I'm not a betting man, I bet that right now Mr. Hitchens knows better!

— David A. Noebel

When Christopher Hitchens died this week, I trust that after he did so, something miraculous happened.

That's what my faith tells me.

It's not in good taste to speak ill of someone recently deceased. But in this case, I think Hitchens would approve, or at least shrug it off with indifference, many of the screeds written for or against him.

But, while reading the eulogies about Hitchens I get the feeling, more than anything else, of a life wasted on unbelief.

Everyone dies, and then…that's it… or is it?

Is all that's left behind for a writer like Hitchens a mass of manuscripts and his ability to endure- or not- over the generations?

Hitchens would argue so. But I would argue no.

Because I believe that the things you do in life to bolster faithfulness; the things you do in life to support belief in anything or even something are much more important, either way, than the things you stand against.

Faith is the most important part of life and probably the most neglected.

This is not merely a religious argument. It's an argument against skepticism as an end rather than as a means to something. It's an argument that understands that unbelief requires much more faith than faith does and provides us with little substance.

If Abraham Lincoln had merely been against the spread of slavery rather than also believing in the God-given equality of man, 45 million people could be in slavery today.

But let's get back to Hitchens.

His view of the miraculous is a good example of how faith is the most extraordinary part of human existence.

He dismisses our existence as a mere accident of…well he doesn't know what.

But if we are just an accident that happened, sentient beings with the ability to know right from wrong, of knowing the natural law from right here in our heart, of comprehending our own existence and even rejecting our existence, well that's probably the greatest miracle of all.

Is more improbable that man with knowledge of natural law was created

a look at our world

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by a knowing and loving God or just on accident? It certainly would require a great deal of faith to believe that it was on accident.

I'm not a mathematician, but I'm guessing the odds of me being here, occupying this space and time, on accident, would be quite astronomical.

Reverse engineer the "Infinite Monkey" theory that says that if you have an infinite number of monkeys on an infinite number of typewriters that one monkey will accidentally bang out the Complete Works of William Shakespeare. This is a much-used thought experiment that deals in big number probabilities.

In Hitchens' universe, William Shakespeare was that improbable, infinite monkey, as are you. In fact, in Hitchens universe, Shakespeare is even more improbable than our infinite monkey, because our infinite monkey only accounts for the odds of creating Shakespeare's works, rather than creation of Shakespeare himself.

What atheists would have you believe is the improbable multiplied by infinity by accident.

That's why I think increasingly advances in biology and physics suggest that an accidental creation is the most improbable faith of all.

For example, the theory in quantum mechanics called the Uncertainty Principle- which so far is consistent with what has been observed in physics- increasingly suggests that everything remains only a probability until it is actually observed. Without observation, nothing actually exists.

If that's true- Einstein rejected the possibility of the Uncertainty Principle- none of us really exist nor does the universe exists without an all-seeing being. There is just no other explanation for the universe.

In Hitchens' universe, a universe without an all-knowing being, freed from bonds of both time and space, would suggest that our existence is only a probability, not a reality.

The awareness of our own existence, our self-consciousness therefore makes belief in a sterile universe without a Creator, an unknowable act of faith.

But instead of faith all you are left with is the certainty of doubt.

The lesson you find has the moral authority of a South Park episode.

And none of the humor.

That's not great.

That's an episode of The View.

— John Ransom
Townhall.com
December 17, 2011

Economics

Who is the father of Occupy Wall Street? The question strangely doesn't send the accused rushing to paternity tests for exculpation. But as protesters head for park exits, academics crowd in to claim credit. Feeding on the corpse of Occupy Wall Street will fuel some intellectual's career.

The urban campers drew the attention of such visitors as rapper-professor Cornel West, welfare-rights advocate Frances Fox Piven, and Herbert Marcuse-mentee Angela Davis. But it's not the celebrity academics, but the academics seeking celebrity, who are most active in playing connect-the-dots between their words and the occupiers' deeds.

"I created much of the intellectual foundation for what they do," Harvard law professor and Massachusetts U.S. senatorial candidate Elizabeth Warren claimed this fall. "I support what they do." But since "what they do" at the Occupy Boston encampment included narcotics trafficking, knife-wielding standoffs, rampant thefts, and transforming the Rose Kennedy Greenway into a muddy brownway, Warren's boasts continue to haunt her in her contest against Scott Brown.

A recent University of Pennsylvania conference on Herbert Marcuse imagined Occupy Wall Street as evidence of the Frankfurt School activist-intellectual's posthumous comeback. The Chronicle of Higher Education piece "Occupy This: Is It Comeback Time for Herbert Marcuse?" noted that a few Occupy Philadelphia campers attended the conference and quoted Marcuse's stepson. "Over the last 20 or 30 years, Marcuse was totally missing," Peter Marcuse noted. "Now Marcuse comes from the outside. That was not the case in the 1960s. He's almost an unknown name."

— Daniel Flynn
FrontPageMag.com
December 29, 2011

So there were Hula Hoops, a composting station, facially pierced trustafarians eating quiche, 9/11 truthers and U.S.S. Liberty truthers, the Black Panther Party, a demand that you "define your aesthetic, gather your tribe, and actualize your vision," speed chess, the Grey Panthers (no relation), not one person who correctly define the term

"credit default swap" or "derivative," a tragically droopy woman proclaiming herself "the topless paparazzo," demands to abolish fiat currency, Ron Paulistas and anti-Paulistas, tracts on "species equality" and much jawboning about the occupation's need for less patriarchal styles of decision-making and more matriarchal styles, dark whispers about "psy-ops," a whole lot of angst and wailing about student loans, open calls for a "benevolent dictator," a delegation representing Harvard Men for Economic Justice, a pink unicorn tricycle, a sign reading "The Human Condition Has Gotta Change!" and — I'm not making this up — several renditions of "Give Peace a Chance."

"Carnivals come cheap," Slavoj Zizek, the intellectual world's leading apostle of Marxist-Leninist poitical violence, told the cheering crowd at Occupy Wall Street. "What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal life. Will there be any changes then? . . . We know what we do not want. But what do we want?" Professor Zizek, who is to our national discredit in the employ of New York University, is half right: The protestors do not know what they want, and they do not know what they do not want. That is because they do not understand the nature of the problem that they intuit, in their ignorant way, but cannot think through, lacking the intellectual tools.

"I think we do represent the 99 percent," says Mike, who identifies himself as a black-bloc anarchist, albeit a soft one who votes, and voted for Barack Obama at that. (Black-bloc Anarchists for Obama: Do not expect to be seated at the 2012 convention, guys.) "What we want is economic justice." And what is economic justice? He doesn't know. "Not this."

— Kevin D. Williamson
National Review
October 31, 2011, p. 18

Occupy Wall Street is not yet over, and it's not a religious movement, though some would like it to be.

The protest movement and the world's faith traditions seem, to some, naturally aligned. As Tom Heneghan, religion editor for Reuters, writes: "Religions condemn greed. The 'Occupy Wall Street' protests around the world condemn greed. So theoretically, religious leaders should find common ground with the rallies denouncing the inequalities of capitalism."

Yet few religious authorities have committed their support. If the OWS movement were merely opposed to crony capitalism, or political favor trading, or even executive compensation structures, then it would have broader Christian support. Instead it has focused on increasing taxes and expanding the size and scope of government.

It's not at all clear that this is what the Bible means when it condemns greed. Arguably the OWS movement seizes upon one strand of biblical guidance, the condemnation of greed, but cuts out the rest of the tapestry of biblical counsel. How, for instance, do attacks on "the 1 percent" comport with the commandment not to covet? How would increased government spending, with a staggering debt already, reflect wise stewardship? Or is it true that taking more from "the rich" and giving more to "the poor" would improve the latter's circumstances, instead of undermining incentives to industry and entrenching the poor in dependency?

The list of religious leaders who have spoken in support of the OWS movement is relatively small and absolutely unsurprising. The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church stated on Oct. 23 that OWS "bears faithful witness in the tradition of Jesus to the sinful inequalities of society," and Jim Wallis of Sojourners has embraced OWS protestors as kindred spirits. As Katherine Clark from the Interfaith Center of New York, which has staged services in support of OWS, explains, "the denominations most active with the interfaith service we have been organizing are progressive Protestants."

Income inequality is not an evil. It's a reflection of how the free market assigns values to differences of education, expertise, and effectiveness. Still, should a hedge fund manager make in one year what a teacher would make in a millennium? That's a fair question, and the OWS movement might have occasioned a healthy conversation on whether our free market needs adjustments. Instead, it's devolved into a circus of envy and anti-capitalist sloganeering.

Thus far, the OWS is OMO: one missed opportunity.

— Tim Dalrymple
WORLD Magazine
December 17, 2011, p. 72

On Tuesday, President Obama once again blamed the lack of progress on the budget deficit on Republicans' refusal to raise taxes on their fat-cat

friends and donors—the much-maligned 1%. Yet the top 1% of earners already pay close to 40% of all federal income taxes, a share that is almost double what it was in the 1970s.

Raising tax rates on high incomes, as Mr. Obama proposes, would only cut the deficit by about 6%, even assuming—wrongly—that those higher taxes wouldn't slow the economy.

The much bigger fiscal drain from the wealthy is on the federal expenditure side of the budget ledger: tens of billions each year in grants, loans, subsidies, guarantees and benefits pocketed each year by wealthy Americans as individuals and firms. Any campaign to downsize big government will only succeed if the needed deep cuts in spending are deemed by voters as equitable. In an era of $1 trillion-plus deficits and a $15 trillion national debt, we would like to think that a national consensus could be reached to eliminate handouts to individuals and companies with net incomes above $1 million.

We've long argued that the GOP should lead the charge. Republicans should fight harder to eliminate taxpayer funds for the Export-Import Bank, which makes loans to major Fortune 500 companies like Boeing and General Electric, to solar- and wind-energy companies like Solyndra, and for Department of Commerce subsidy programs to manufacturers and high tech companies.

The left-leaning Environmental Working Group found that among the beneficiaries of various farm programs from 1995-2005 were David Rockefeller and Ted Turner, and companies that own farms such as John Hancock Life Insurance. Last month Sen. Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) put out a report, "Subsidies of the Rich and Famous," that identified tens of billions of dollars of handouts to the wealthy. His report included farm payments under government programs to rock stars like Bruce Springsteen and former professional athletes like Scottie Pippen.

Rather than stand up against all this, Republicans recently allowed the Federal Housing Administration to guarantee home mortgages of up to $750,000. Not many in the bottom 99% can afford such homes.

Meanwhile, President Obama (and many interest groups on the left) continue to defend the tens of billions of dollars that Energy Secretary Steven Chu has doled out to "green companies" and their millionaire investors. Mr. Obama is a big fan of the International Monetary Fund, which bails out banks and financial institutions on a global scale. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has torpedoed all Republican budget proposals to modestly means-test Social Security and Medicare. So billionaire seniors receive full benefits.

We propose a new law: Let's call it The Millionaire Subsidy Elimination Act. It would prohibit anyone with an annual income over $1 million from receiving any government benefits. There's a big advantage to cutting benefits to millionaires rather than raising their tax rates to 40% or 50%. Slashing expenditures would help grow the economy, while raising tax rates would hurt U.S. competitiveness and job creation.

Let us be clear on one point: We do not mean to demean the wealthy. The gratuitous bashing of rich people by the president and so many others in Washington is downright offensive. The United States is an affluent society because Americans reap rewards when they employ their talents, their innovative ideas, their entrepreneurial drive, and their sweat equity in ways that make products or provide services we all enjoy.

The Robber Barons today aren't those who made fortunes by giving people what they want—whether they are Bill Gates, Michael Dell or LeBron James—but those legal bandits who make their fortunes by using political influence to plunder the Treasury.

Washington doesn't create wealth. It reshuffles it. If our calculations—which include corporate welfare and other subsidies reported in a variety of studies including most recently Mr. Coburn's—are correct, there is now more than $200 billion in annual income transfers every year to Americans whose whose incomes exceed $1 million. Washington's myriad subsidy schemes betray the middle class and the poor in ways that sanctimonious politicians who talk incessantly about "fairness" seldom admit to.

We can't think of a better way to disarm the class-warfare crowd in Washington than by calling for zeroing out all subsidies for the rich and famous. Are Republicans smart enough to embrace this idea? Probably not. Would Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi oppose ending welfare to millionaires and billionaires? We'd love to see them try.