

- » pg. 2 From the President's Desk
- » pg. 5 Doc's recent reading on economics
- » pg. 7 A new project just for Summit Alumni

- » Student Blog: See what students are up to this summer
- » Find us on Facebook
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Do You Know Why Economics Is a Moral Issue?



Cover Story

Every liberal economic policy is predicated on the assumption that coercive governments are morally superior to free markets. But how would progressives react if they realized the exact opposite is true?

Bad economic ideas lead to bad — and immoral — economic decisions. As the Acton Institute's Dr. Samuel Gregg puts it in *Becoming Europe*, quoting economist Arthur Brooks, the goal of a free market system of economics is not “the endless acquisition of wealth.” Rather, it is human flourishing¹ — our ability to, inasmuch as we can after the fall, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and rule over creation (Genesis 1:28).

The Bible doesn't instruct us on specific

tax policies. Nowhere does it prescribe what percentage of gross domestic product the federal government ought to be spending. But it does give us a framework from which to orient our economic thinking: people are made in the image of God and carry inherent dignity and the ability to produce good things. Economic systems that affirm these truths lead to human flourishing. It's for that reason that the free market system, when coupled with personal virtue and community responsibility, better aligns with a biblical worldview than any other economic system. Christians ought to learn to articulate this: what is immoral is not the free market system, but the diminishment of opportunity and dignity when it is cor-

rupted by greed or destroyed by power.

As *New York Times* bestselling author and Summit faculty member Jay W. Richards recently said in an interview with Summit, “If we, as Christians, care about people, economic reality is something that impinges on people in a thousand different ways. We need to learn something about it.”

Our Economic Responsibility Includes Learning Basic Principles

Aside from basic economic principles like the law of supply and demand or the function of price in a market, two key principles can help us rightly order our economic thinking.

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



Many well-meaning young adults think free markets are hard-edged and callous toward the poor. At Summit, our approach is to help students learn how to be economically productive *and* caring based on two key principles:

1. Brokenness. Psalm 51:17 says, “a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Against worldviews proclaiming humans to be God-like and perfectible, Christianity says we bear God’s image but are broken through sin. As Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert point out, if we fail to grasp the biblical approach we’ll make things worse for the poor, reinforcing their feelings of inferiority and shame, and also worse for ourselves because of the unintended consequences of trying to play God.¹

Simply wanting to do good is not enough, as seen in the example of one popular company with a noble aim of giving away one pair of shoes for every pair a customer purchased. A recent critic, however, has painted the company as a vanity project — enriching its owners by making customers feel less guilty about buying its high-priced products. We shouldn’t dismiss this criticism too quickly. Maybe what people in poverty-stricken countries need is not shoes but jobs. Why not let them make the shoes and earn a living instead? Plus, shoe giveaways might actually make things worse, putting local shoe-sellers out of jobs and making them more dependent on aid.²

Good motives do not always produce

good results, and sometimes they produce bad ones.³ If we fail to understand our brokenness, we risk hurting more than helping.

2. Servanthood. Jesus said if you want to be first, you must be the very last and the servant of all (Mark 9:35). It’s true for all of us — rich, poor, and in between. Joseph Remenyi, a professor at Deakin University in Australia, has found that the only projects that actually alleviate poverty do so by “seeking to improve output per person.” In other words, you help the poor not by giving more to them, but by getting more *from* them.⁴

Saying that the poor are helped by becoming more productive sounds almost impossibly naïve. How can people who have almost nothing produce something? According to secular worldviews, which believe humans are only matter in motion and everything has a natural explanation, they cannot. But if we truly have minds and souls, our ideas matter more than our natural resources.

Contrary to socialist accusations, people in a free market can only succeed by serving. George Gilder says, “Not from greed, avarice, or even self-love can one expect the rewards of commerce, but from a spirit closely akin to altruism, a regard for the needs of others, a benevolent, outgoing, and courageous temper of mind.”⁵

Hand Up Instead of Hand Out

Here’s an example of how brokenness and servanthood can change lives. The

Paradigm Project makes efficient, low-cost cooking stoves to be used in

third world countries where respiratory illnesses linked to inefficient cooking methods are a leading cause of death.

Paradigm Project stoves are made by AIDS orphans in a factory in Kenya, where workers learn to support themselves through a useful trade. Efficient technology enables users to save up to 35 percent on their fuel costs, freeing up money for more productive use. The hours formerly spent hunting for wood are also reclaimed. Mothers and children are being restored to health. Carbon emissions are reduced. Trees are saved. And most remarkable of all, investors in the company *make money* on their investment and are thus motivated to expand the project to even more countries. This isn’t just a win-win. It’s a win-win-win-win-win-win-win.

In economics, as in life, it is better to give than to receive. We must get this message across to students before leftist professors indoctrinate them into developing a redistributionist God-complex and dooming the poor to even greater misery.

Notes

1. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), p. 65.
2. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamespoulos/2012/04/11/toms-shoes-a-doomed-vanity-project/>
3. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), p. 147.
4. Referring to the Joe Remenyi study, *Where Credit is Due* (London: Intermediate Technology, 1990); Herbert Schlossberg, “Destroying Poverty without Destroying Poor People,” in *Christianity and Economics in the Post-Cold War Era* (Herbert Schlossberg, Vinay Samuel, and Ronald J. Sider, eds.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), p. 119.
5. George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2012), p. 27.

“Good motives do not always produce good results, and sometimes they produce bad ones.”

Dr. Jeff Myers

1. Prudence

As Richards says in *Money, Greed, and God*, “Prudence means to ‘see reality as it is and to act accordingly’ to conform your mind, and then your actions, to reality.”² Elsewhere in the book, Richards recounts the story of Bob Geldof, who helped organize movements in the 1980s to fight poverty in Africa, including Live Aid and Band Aid. Those movements have done little to lift struggling nations out of poverty, mostly because they misunderstand what creates prosperity. Geldof’s take: “Something must be done, even if it doesn’t work.”³

Well, his plan didn’t work. Unthinking aid creates lifelong dependence and stamps out the entrepreneurial spirit of whole nations. Though his intentions were good, the outcome was deeply immoral. “We spend too much time focusing on what we mean to do and what we like to do instead of putting serious empirical work into what’s actually going to work,” Richards said in an interview.

2. Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity goes back to medieval thinker Thomas Aquinas. Subsidiarity claims that it is wrong for a “larger or higher association” to step in and try to fix a problem when an institution closer to the issue can act.⁴ So, for example, when a young family finds itself in trouble, it’s inappropriate — even unjust — for the state or federal government to provide aid when extended family members, a local church, or neighbors can help the family in need.

This principle has significant implications for fighting poverty. In the face of federal welfare, poverty rates in the U.S. have remained between 12 and 15 percent for the last fifty years. Prior

to President Lyndon Johnson’s welfare programs, local communities were primarily responsible for taking care of the poor. Poverty was actually on the decline in the years leading up to Johnson’s War on Poverty; federal welfare halted that decline.⁵

Economic Responsibility Also Means Having the Right Cultural Values

In *Becoming Europe* Gregg pinpoints the differences between European economies and that of the U.S., demonstrating how the U.S. can avoid plunging into the sort of economic crises in which Europe currently finds itself. At the root of Gregg’s argument is a study of the cultural values that undergird economic realities. As Gregg puts it, “. . . any given economic setting . . . is influenced by a range of value commitments, ideas, and movements.”⁶ In other words, economies serve as cultural barometers for their respective countries:

*A market economy, for example, relies on processes such as market prices and the exchange of goods and services, institutions such as private property and rule of law, as well as actions such as innovation and economic entrepreneurship. Note, however, how every single one of these economic processes, actions, and institutions assumes a commitment to freedom.*⁷

As Gregg explains, top-down economies necessarily restrict freedom, ignoring prudence and subsidiarity and thus denying essential truths about humans and the *imago Dei*. Ignoring these realities, in turn, creates a negative view of entrepreneurship. A biblical view, on the other hand, begins with God as creator. Bearing his image, we too know how to create. God wants abundance; bearing

Government Welfare: Not the Way to Improve Lives

» When receiving welfare, husbands reduce work hours by 9%; wives by 20%; young males by 33%; singles by 45%

» Every dollar of government income subsidy reduces labor and earnings by 80 cents

» A 10% increase in welfare benefits yields as 12% increase in out-of-wedlock births for women ages 14-22

*Source: Money, Greed, and God, Jay Richards, p. 48.

his image, we are by nature equipped to produce more than we consume.

Thus, coercive economic policies have the effect of suffocating the entrepreneurial impulse. In the European Union 45 percent of citizens preferred to be self-employed, while 46 percent preferred to be an employee. What happens in a nation when a majority of the citizens expect others to take care of them instead of taking responsibility themselves? Interestingly, too much economic despotism may actually cause people to wake up to their servitude. In China, where citizens have lived under

See **economics**, page 4

severe state planning, entrepreneurship is much more highly valued: 71 percent of Chinese citizens preferred to be self-employed, as opposed to 28 percent who said they wanted to be an employee.⁸

So is it possible to avoid Europe's path? Gregg says yes, but only if we affirm five values that stave off an immoral economic despotism and create an environment for freedom and flourishing:

1. Wealth Creation Over Wealth Redistribution. History — and the principle of subsidiarity — shows us that people benefit when they can work to improve their lots themselves. This value affirms the fact that God made people to be co-creators of culture, not passive consumers.

“... any given economic setting ... is influenced by a range of value commitments, ideas, and movements.”

Samuel Gregg

2. Accountability and Transparency: Truth Over Falsehood. In a true market economy, people are held accountable for poor economic decisions by the outcomes of those decisions. A culture of bailouts and corporate welfare undermines this value.

3. Justice: Rule of Law Over Rule of Men. None of these values will amount to much if the government fails to enforce just laws. In addition to

protecting the innocent and punishing wrongdoers, securing justice provides a climate of stability in which wealth creators can reap the rewards of their risk and create greater abundance.

4. Property Rights Over “Dirigisme.” Dirigisme is simply the government stepping into the private sector to directly manage wealth. Leaders who regularly threaten to diminish private property rights create uncertainty, diminish investment, and generate a climate of fear.

5. Hope Over Fear: Openness vs. Defensiveness. Productive people are not the bad guys, and our government ought to stop portraying them as such.

So how do we reclaim the moral high ground from those advocating leftist policies? Bill Whittle thinks he knows. Bill is the “Virtual President” whose mock presidential addresses have gone viral on the Internet for articulating what our president *should* say. Whittle suggests using simple questions to communicate three central components of free market morality: freedom, private property, and virtue:

1. On freedom: ask, “Are you the kind of person who wants to be left alone, or are you the kind of person who likes to tell other people what to do?” Leftists assume that they are so smart that they deserve to coerce the rest of us. But very few people will admit to wanting to be a busybody.

2. On private property: ask, “If you believe in ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his need,’ are you willing to donate your smart phone and other possessions to charity? How can you justify eating every day when others are starving?” Why do they expect

others to make their sacrifices for them?

3. On virtue “Do you believe it is okay to hit someone and take their stuff if they have more stuff than you do?” If it is not okay on a personal level, it’s not okay for governments to do it either. Obviously we all must pay taxes.

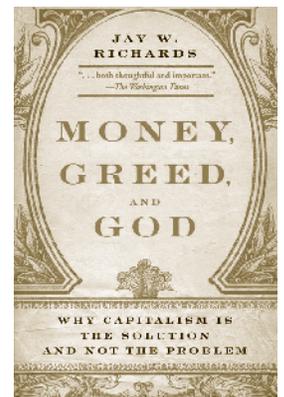
But to base tax policy on jealousy is to institutionalize theft.

People may not have a clear idea of what freedom, private property or virtue are, but when you put these simple questions to them, you’ll leave them thinking. You might even get them to see the moral basis of the free enterprise system.

Notes

1. Samuel Gregg, *Becoming Europe: Economic Decline, Culture, and How America Can Avoid a European Future* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 300.
2. Jay W. Richards, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism is the Solution and Not the Problem* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 46.
3. *Ibid*, 45.
4. *Ibid*, 51.
5. *Ibid*, 47.
6. Gregg, 41.
7. *Ibid*, 8.
8. *Ibid*, 19.

Suggested Reading



Money, Greed & God
by Jay Richards
Available at Summit's
bookstore:
summit.org/store.

a look at our world

news and commentary



Editor's Note: Our President Emeritus, Dr. David Noebel, helps us with research by sending 20-30 pages of clippings of each month's news. To see the complete list of Doc's clippings, go to www.summit.org/resources/the-journal/, open the PDF, and scroll to page 9, or call us at 866.786.6483.

Economics

Suppose you saw a building on fire. Would you seek counsel from the arsonist who set it ablaze for advice on how to put it out? You say, "Williams, you'd have to be a lunatic to do that!" But that's precisely what we've done: turned to the people who created our fiscal crisis to fix it. I have never read a better account of our doing just that than in John A. Allison's new book, "The Financial Crisis and the Free Market Cure."

Allison is the former CEO of Branch Banking and Trust, the nation's 10th largest bank. He assembles evidence that shows that our financial crisis, followed by the Great Recession, was caused by Congress, the Federal Reserve, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae and was helped along by the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama White Houses.

The Federal Reserve, under the chairmanship of Alan Greenspan, created the massive housing bubble by over-expanding the money supply. President Bush and members of Congress, through the Community Reinvestment Act, intimidated banks and other financial institutions into making home loans to people ineligible for loans under traditional lending criteria. They became subprime lenders. Lending institutions made these loans, now often demeaned as predator loans, because they knew they'd be sold to government-

sponsored enterprises (GSEs) Freddie and Fannie.

The GSEs had no problem taking this risky path, because they knew that Congress would force taxpayers to bail them out. Current Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke is following in the footsteps of his predecessor by massively expanding the money supply by purchasing Treasury debt. He is creating prime conditions for a calamity by the end of this decade.

Then there were the crony capitalists, among whom are Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, Countrywide, Bear Stearns, JPMorgan Chase, General Motors and Chrysler. These and many other companies, through the thousands of Washington lobbyists they hire, are able to get Congress to shortcut market forces. Free market capitalism is unforgiving. In order to earn a profit and stay in business, producers must please customers and wisely use resources to do so. If they fail to do this, they face losses or go bankrupt.

It's this market discipline of profits and losses that many businesses seek to avoid. That's why they descend upon Washington calling for government bailouts, subsidies and special privileges. Many businessmen wish not to be held strictly accountable to consumers and stockholders, who hold little sympathy for economic blunders and will give them the ax on a moment's notice. With a campaign contribution here and a gift there, they get Congress and the White House to act against the best interests of consumers and investors. Allison suggests that if our country had a separation of "business and state" as it does a separation of "church and state," crony capitalism or crony socialism could not exist.

Allison says that crony capitalism

should not be our only concern. The foundation for economic collapse 20 to 25 years from now has already been set. Social Security and Medicare deficits, unfunded state and local pension liabilities, government operating deficits, baby boomer retirement and a failed K-12 education system have eaten out our substance.

What I take away from Allison's highly readable book is that our biggest problem lies in the Federal Reserve's ability to manipulate our monetary system to accommodate big government and use inflation to rob Americans. That's why politicians and government leaders everywhere hate a monetary system based on gold. They can manipulate the quantity of paper money, but they can't manipulate the quantity of gold.

Here's a tidbit of information about John Allison, now president of the Washington-based Cato Institute, that speaks to this man's morality as BB&T's CEO, which can't be praised highly enough. His company refused to lend money to developers who acquired land by having the government take it from private owners, euphemistically called eminent domain. That's putting his money where his mouth is, not sacrificing principle for the sake of earnings.

— Walter E. Williams
Townhall.com
December 13, 2012

With the fiscal cliff looming, Washington is looking under every rock for new forms of "revenue."

Nothing is sacred, not even the mort-

continued on page 6

a look at our world

news and commentary, continued from page 5

gage and charitable deductions, which some are recasting as “loopholes.” Ending the mortgage deduction when the housing market is finally showing signs of recovery would be like giving a cancer patient strychnine to make him feel better.

Even worse would be ending the charitable deduction, for the simple reason that this deduction encourages private sector benevolence, which the federal

“As government grows, the private sector wanes.”

Robert Knight

government under Barack Obama treats as pesky competition.

As government grows, the private sector wanes, a situation created by the decline of strong families and abetted by progressive programs designed to make families irrelevant.

When it comes to serving the needy, there are two basic approaches. The first, inspired by Jesus Christ and required in the Old Testament, is sacrificial giving of oneself. This has been the cornerstone of American charity since the nation’s founding, and it remains the most effective way to assist the poor.

The diametrically opposite approach is socialism, in which income is forcibly seized and then redistributed to groups and individuals favored by government officials. Socialism is rooted in the formula from Karl Marx—“from each according to his abilities to each according to his needs.”

That’s a fine arrangement when voluntary, such as in families, churches and

private charities. However, when imposed by force—and socialism is always accompanied by force since it violates human nature—it is soft tyranny masquerading as charity.

Since the 1930s, with the advent of the New Deal, the federal government, along with local and state governments, has taken on more and more functions that were handled by families and faith-based charities. Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society sent this into overdrive, and Barack Obama is intent on nailing America to a third-stage rocket into socialism.

Social Security, the largest government income transfer program, was originally aimed at assisting intact families and widows. Now, it’s an ever-growing tax on employees and employers that has driven a wedge between the generations. How? Because in the past, parents had more children partly to insure that someone would provide for them in their old age.

Social Security removed the advantage of having children, since it guarantees income based solely on age (and previous employment). Someone who has no children gets the same amount as someone who had six children who grew up to pay into the system, thus supporting the childless retiree. Children are very expensive, as any parent can tell you. Social Security makes having them less advantageous. Of course, Social Security has allowed millions of older Americans to live in at least minimally comfortable circumstances. Political talk of privatizing any aspect of Social Security is hazardous, and any hint of ending Social Security as we know it is political suicide. Americans have come to count on Social Security, so the challenge

is how to sustain it without bankrupting the next generation.

The same can be said of Medicare, Medicaid and many other enormous federal programs. The advantages are obvious, but the downsides are not so obvious – except for America’s \$16 trillion-and-growing debt. To pay for all this, the average American family’s tax burden has risen from a mere 2% of income in 1948 to something approaching 40 percent when all taxes are accounted for.

This has forced many mothers into the workplace who would, all things being equal, rather spend the time raising their children. It’s also created a huge market for paid childcare, with the government subsidizing it. Families pay taxes to create a system that offers incentives for them to spend less time with their own children.

On April 21, 2009, President Obama signed a bill, the “Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act,” tripling the size of the federal government’s paid “volunteer” programs, including AmeriCorps. The plan will spend \$5.7 billion over the next five years and \$10 billion over the next 10 years, and put 250,000 paid “volunteers” on the government payroll.

Why would anyone think that government involvement would improve volunteerism? On the Senate floor, Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) warned:

“...Our history shows us when Government gets involved, it tends to take something that is working and make it not work nearly as well. Civil society works because it is everything Government is not. It is small, it is personal, it is responsive, it is accountable.”

— Robert Knight
Townhall.com
December 26, 2012

Summit Announces New Initiative To Serve Alumni

“Summit isn’t just a one-time experience,” says Summit President Dr. Jeff Myers. “We intend to continue walking with our students as they live influential lives in our culture.” Realizing this vision is the goal of Summit’s newest endeavor — the Summit Alumni Network — which will provide Summit grads with ongoing conversations, long-distance training, networking opportunities, and even the invitation to form local Summit alumni groups.

The Summit Alumni Network is headed up by Paige Gutacker, a full-time Summit staffer and alum herself (Summit Tennessee: 2002, 2003). A certified life coach, Paige has a passion for people development and a penchant for actively listening and asking questions to support others’ growth and success. Along with her husband, Paul, Paige co-authored *Cultivate: Forming the Emerging Generation through Life-on-Life Mentoring* with Summit President Dr. Jeff Myers in 2010. “What makes me so excited about building the Summit Alumni Network is how amazing our alumni are,” Paige says. “The opportunity to bring them into dialogue with one another is really thrilling!”

Four Ways You Can Get Involved Now

1. Connect with Fellow Alumni

Online:

- Twitter. Follow @SummitAlumni to get daily links to thought-provoking articles, book reviews, and blog posts. Tweets pose serious questions and provide helpful conversation starters, sparking cultural engagement and theological thinking.

- Facebook. For free resources, key updates, and a place to encourage one another, join the group by going to Facebook and



Paige Gutacker

searching for “Summit Alumni Network.”

- LinkedIn. Search “Summit Alumni Network” in LinkedIn and join for networking and sharing job postings.

2. Gather Locally with Fellow

Alumni: We’re hearing more and more that Summit alumni would love to gather with like-minded peers in their own cities for discussion, study, fellowship, and outreach — even across generational lines, which would offer unique mentoring opportunities. The very first local Summit group started this summer in Dallas, Texas. Will your city be next? Our vision is to see groups sprout up around the country in 2014, and the first step is connecting people locally. Let us know if you’d like to join in at www.summit.org/alumni-groups.

3. Update Your Contact Info: We’re

only as helpful as the data we have. Help us stay in touch with you better by updating your info at www.summit.org/alumni-contact.

4. Get Personal Vocational Feedback:

This summer, the Summit Alumni Network has partnered with Career Direct (a ministry of Crown Financial Ministries) to offer a way of finding meaning and purpose in your God-given design, understanding *why* you are the *way* you are, and getting help at the crossroads.

Career Direct combines a well-tested and validated assessment with an in-depth personal consultation (over Skype) to achieve clarity and confidence in college and career decisions. The one-of-a-kind assessment looks at four key areas of design: personality, skills, interests, and values. Then, the consultant asks insightful questions to filter the test results and offers personalized guidance that truly fits the individual. Summit rounds out the process through special resources designed to increase application and lead to clear next steps.

For now, Summit is focusing on getting this tool into the hands of *students* (ages 16 – college years) so they can recognize and build on their strengths and increase the likelihood of career success and job satisfaction (while minimizing wasted college coursework or dead-end vocations). But if you’re interested in Career Direct as an adult, there’s also an occupational version that we can get you connected to. Email Paige to inquire.

For more details about Career Direct, see page 8 of *The Journal*.

You can contact Paige directly at 719.685.2890 or by email at alumni@summit.org.



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**INSIDE: The next time someone claims
free markets are immoral, here's
how to stop them in their tracks.**

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Apply a biblical understanding of vocation • Steward your abilities
• Understand why you are the way you are • See how your unique
shape fits college/career choices • Gain clarity and confidence •
Identify work you can thrive in • Get help at the crossroads

See page 7 for more details

The Journal is the monthly publication of American Christian College (dba Summit Ministries), a non-profit, educational, religious corporation operating under the laws of the states of Oklahoma and Colorado.

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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 9

To posit the existence of a Creator requires only reason. To posit the existence of a good God requires faith.

— Dennis Prager
The Washington Times
June 24, 2013, p. 30

Algae are among the most abundant creatures on earth, growing rampantly in lakes, puddles, and even aquariums. The word algae usually brings to mind stagnant ponds covered with green sludge. Contrary to their foul reputation, algae are amazingly beautiful, diverse, and vital to life. They fill the seas, whether as solitary individuals or as gently swaying “kelp forests,” which feed an immense variety of hungry ocean-going creatures.

Under the microscope, algae populate a marvelous world of light-gathering, twirling, and spinning creatures. One of the most fascinating is Volvox. Just barely visible as a pale green dot to the human eye, under a microscope they appear like spherical, translucent spaceships, composed of thousands of dancing algae cells, sailing through the water.

A closer inspection shows a small biological wonder, a “colony” of up to thousands of individual “rowing” cells working together to move the floating ship. For decades microbiologists have been baffled how these cells cooperate without a brain or even a single nerve cell to guide them.

Even more puzzling, cells that are separated from the colony look just like any other single-celled algae, with two flagella (spinning whiplike propellers common in many one-celled organisms) and an eyespot (a basic “eye”

which senses light). In a pond or the ocean, these single-celled algae would get lost in the crowd.

But this is not the case with a Volvox. The individual algae cells work together to form a hollow sphere, and they coordinate their flagella so that the Volvox moves in one direction.

How is this possible? You would expect each side of the sphere to cancel the other out. Furthermore, why doesn't every eyespot point the ship in a different direction?

Recently, microbiologists noted that the cells with the most sensitive eyespots line up toward the front of the sphere. Then all the algae cells point their flagella toward the back.

Okay. Amazing. So how does the Volvox turn?

Volvox never stops swimming. It can respond to a change in light by turning quickly; the cells with eyespots nearest the light shut off their propellers and the active propellers cause the Volvox to turn toward the light.

All of this activity requires a complex system of biochemical communication between each eyespot and the flagella propellers. Although Volvox is supposed to be a simple creature, this complex biochemistry and cell-to-cell communication still mystifies scientists. Volvox is just one more example showing how God created his creatures to work together to serve His purposes.

Next time you see pond scum, thank the Lord for these beautiful reminders of His wisdom and provision for all living things (Proverbs 8:30–31)!

— Joe Francis
Answers Magazine
July/September 2013, p. 45

Speaking of death, there's no greater monument to dead things than the fossil record. Neo-Darwinists say the record is evidence of macroevolutionary change over time, but Stephen Meyer in *Darwin's Doubt* (HarperOne) explains Charles Darwin himself was mystified by the sudden appearance of novel and numerous animal forms in the fossil layer now known as the Cambrian. Interpreted by evolutionists to be one of the oldest fossil layers, the Cambrian should display fossils illustrating Darwin's “tree of life,” showing transitional forms branching off a common ancestor. Instead, the Cambrian is more like a green lawn, with all the blades of grass (the animals) sprouting at once.

Meyer, a maverick who helped launch the intelligent design movement, shows how both fossils and theories of genetic evolution fail, by laughable odds, to support the idea of macroevolution by random mutations. Working within a uniformitarian, old-Earth interpretation of the rocks, he argues that intelligent design is the most reasonable explanation for the fossils and complex DNA we observe.

— Daniel James Devine
WORLD Magazine
June 29, 2013, p. 58

Religious Freedom

The recent dedication of George W. Bush's presidential library in Texas briefly rekindled debate about the defining event of his presidency, the Iraq War. The visceral hatred of many for the war and the man having substantially diminished, a more sober assessment of both seemed to prevail in the coverage. In the same news cycle there appeared a seem-

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 10

ingly unrelated event, the abduction of two Orthodox bishops in Syria. In fact, the conflict in Syria and the American invasion of Iraq are linked by a common thread: the failure of the U.S. to consider the effect of its foreign policy on vulnerable religious communities, especially Middle Eastern Christians.

In March 2003, on the eve of war in Iraq, Pope John Paul II dispatched Cardinal Pio Laghi, a senior Vatican diplomat, to Washington to make a final plea to Bush not to invade. Laghi, chosen for his close ties to the Bush family, outlined “clearly and forcefully” the Vatican’s fears of what would follow an invasion: protracted war, significant casualties, violence between ethnic and religious groups, regional destabilization, “and a new gulf between Christianity and Islam.” The warning was not heeded.

Two weeks after the Bush-Laghi meeting, on March 19, 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced. Shortly after combat operations concluded on May 1, the real conflict began. Amid the chaos and sectarian violence that followed, Iraq’s Christians suffered severe persecution. Neither the military nor the State Department took action to protect them. In October 2003, human rights expert Nina Shea noted that religious freedom and a pluralistic Iraq were not high priorities for the administration, concluding that its “diffidence on religious freedom suggests Washington’s relative indifference to this basic human right.” Shea added, “Washington’s refusal to insist on guarantees of religious freedom threatens to undermine its already difficult task of securing a fully democratic government

in Iraq”—more prescience that would be likewise disregarded.

Iraq’s diaspora Christian community in America had also foreseen the danger, and quickly took action, helping thousands of refugees with humanitarian assistance. The Chaldean Federation’s Joseph Kassab, himself a refugee from Baathist Iraq decades before, advocated zealously for their protection. Kassab’s brother, Jabrail, a Chaldean archbishop, helped organize relief in Iraq during the sanctions from 1991-2003, doing “all that he could to help the Iraqi people—Christians and Muslims together.” His brother remained at his post until October 2006, when a Syrian Orthodox priest, Fr. Paulos Eskander, was abducted and beheaded, after which Pope Benedict ordered him to leave Iraq. Fr. Eskander’s murder was part of a campaign that targeted the most conspicuous of Christians—the clergy.

In February 2008, Archbishop Paulos Rahho’s vehicle was attacked after he finished praying the Stations of the Cross in Mosul. His driver and bodyguards were killed. Rahho, wounded but alive, was put into the trunk of the assassins’ car and taken from the scene. He managed to pull out his cell phone and call his church to tell them not to pay his ransom, saying he “believed that this money would not be paid for good works and would be used for killing and more evil actions.” His body was found in a shallow grave two weeks later.

During this campaign of systematic violence, the U.S. military provided no protection to the already vulnerable Christian community. In some instances, the clergy went to local American

military units to beg to for protection. None was given. As Shea noted two weeks later, the administration and the State Department—whose record on Christian minorities and religious freedom leaves much to be desired—still refused to “acknowledge that the Christians and other defenseless minorities are persecuted for reasons of religion.”

A month after the murder of Archbishop Rahho, President Bush addressed the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Joseph Kassab had been invited to pray the Hail Mary and Our Father in Aramaic following Bush’s remarks, an act of solidarity with the Christians of the Arab world. “I had two or three minutes with the president behind the curtains,” Kassab said in a recent interview. “He said he thought you had to fix the whole picture before coming to the other elements. It was disappointing. He knew it was a failure and his administration refused to acknowledge that.”

Rosie Malek-Yonan, an Assyrian Christian who testified before Congress, would call the Bush administration a “silent accomplice” to “incipient genocide.” Anglican Canon Andrew White of Baghdad’s Ecumenical Congregation captured the reality with blunt precision: “All of my leadership were taken and killed—all dead.”

Those Iraqi Christians who fled to America would fare little better in seeking asylum. Many Chaldeans and Assyrians were detained, until their cases were heard, in what an attorney familiar with Chaldean-asylum cases describes as “prisons,” adding that she “never worked on a case where a Chaldean was granted asylum, but I heard that it hap-

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 11

pened.” Throughout these deportation proceedings, the administration and the State Department steadfastly refused to recognize the conditions—which the U.S. had helped to bring about—as “persecution.” In consequence, most were deported.

Ironically, hundreds of thousands Iraqi Christians would find refuge in the quasi-autonomous republic of Kurdistan in the north. “They arrived,” Kassab would note, “with nothing on their backs and the Kurds came to the rescue.” Traveling to the region to assist with resettlement efforts, Kassab observed a Kurdish government willing despite inadequate resources to help the fleeing Christians. The Kurds went to the U.S. government, which they believed was partly responsible for the refugee crisis, to ask for help. “This fell on deaf ears,” Kassab recalls.

Today Iraqi Kurdistan is assimilating refugees from another neighboring country torn apart by sectarian violence: Syria. Among the refugees are more Iraqi Christians, who originally fled to the relative freedom and tolerance of Syria, only to find themselves again fleeing persecution, often hunted by Syria’s rebels. Many of these rebels are members or affiliates of Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network. The Obama administration, bewilderingly, has chosen to support Syria’s rebel groups without any apparent thought of the consequences. The extent of covert support remains unclear, though reports suggest it is significant. As in Iraq, the insurgent campaign in Syria targets priests, the most visible symbols of the Christian faith.

The protection and perseverance of

minority religious communities—indeed, of religious freedom—continues to be a low priority for the Obama administration and the State Department. The U.S. fails to recognize that the Islamist-Wahabbist commitment to eradicating Christian minorities today will result in the extinction of diverse modes of Islam tomorrow, a fact that is not lost on moderate Muslims.

The objective of the Iraq War—to democratize the Middle East—may yet be realized. But democracy in the Middle East is proving less tolerant than the regimes it has succeeded. Unless swift action is taken, these democracies will evolve into bastions of intolerance and violence beyond our comprehension. These democracies will not march ineluctably toward liberty and pluralism, as some naïve optimists continue to forecast despite the evidence, but will end in the ordered barbarism of Saudi Arabia, where punishments include beheading and crucifixion, according to Amnesty International.

When he came to office, President Bush famously scribbled in a report on the Clinton administration’s inaction during the Rwandan genocide, “Not on my watch.” Clinton today admits that inaction in Rwanda is his greatest regret. One day, Bush may look back on the neglect of the Middle East’s Christians with similar regret. Cardinal Laghi would recall that Bush “seemed to truly believe in a war of good against evil,” that his work was providential. “You might start, and you don’t know how to end it,” the prelate warned. In this sense, the Iraq War continues, and with it the deliberate extinction of Middle Eastern Christians.

— Andrew Doran

The American Conservative

July/August 2013, p. 6,7

Culture

Two movements that helped define the last half of the 20th century—feminism and environmentalism—owe much to books that celebrated 50th birthdays in the past year: Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. Both highly readable books also left a legacy of controversy and—critics say—massive destruction.

Take first *The Feminine Mystique*. The idea for the book came to Friedan when she surveyed some of her elite Smith College classmates in preparation for their 15-year class reunion in 1957. She found these mostly rich, mostly white, mostly suburban housewives to be mostly bored, and—according to Friedan—very unhappy. Friedan attributed that unhappiness to the fact that they were wives and mothers: “We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.’”

Friedan ignored other forces contributing to unhappiness, including narcissism, a sense of entitlement, and the rapidly expanding secularization of American culture that colleges such as Smith helped bring about. Culture, like nature, abhors a vacuum, so the hole the departure of religion left in American life rapidly filled with ideologies such as feminism. Author Janice Shaw Crouse, who met Betty Friedan just before Friedan’s death in 2006, found her a “lovely lady” whose “ideas had terrible consequences,” including no-fault

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 12

divorce and legalized abortion.

Rachel Carson's call for ecological awareness also morphed into an ideology with terrible consequences, including a virtual ban of the pesticide DDT in 1972. Until then, 30 years of DDT spraying in North America and Europe had virtually eradicated malaria in developed countries, but Silent Spring's dire (and largely discredited) warnings of cancer in humans and the thinning of egg shells in birds stopped U.S. production and export of the chemical.

The ban on DDT cost thousands of U.S. jobs and "may have killed 20 million children," according to Robert Gwadz of the National Institutes of Health: That's what he told National Geographic Magazine in 2007. Today, nearly 250 million people suffer from malaria, and nearly 1 million people a year die from this preventable disease. Almost 90 percent of malaria cases are in Africa: Paul Driessen, a senior policy analyst with the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow and the Congress of Racial Equality, notes that "this anti-DDT campaign was led by wealthy, white activists from countries that were made malaria-free in large part because of the very pesticides they now target."

It's telling that India and Africa have similar climates, and in the 1940s and '50s had similar rates of malaria, but today the incidence of malaria in India is a fraction of Africa's—in part because when DDT was banned in the United States, production and usage migrated to India, which is now the world's largest producer and its largest user.

— Warren Cole Smith
WORLD Magazine
June 29, 2013, p. 56

Marriage

I oppose same-sex marriage, but I'm much more concerned about the breakup of the heterosexual family. If we can't keep our own marriages together, what kind of moral power do we have to tell other people they ought to be like us? A lot of conservative politicians are on their second, third, or fourth spouse and are talking about traditional values. That doesn't have a lot of power.

— Cal Thomas interviewed by
Marvin Olasky
WORLD Magazine
June 15, 2013, p. 36

The [Supreme Court] decision is a major victory for gay marriage because it means the federal government must now accept same-sex marriage in the 13 states where they are legally recognized. But what happens when a gay couple married in Hawaii, say, moves to Alabama? Which state's law does the federal government then recognize? Soon enough lower courts will declare that laws barring gay marriage to be illegal and the Supreme Court will have to revisit the issue.

Our hope is that Justice Roberts is right about Justice Kennedy's opinion, and that the gay marriage debate can continue to play out democratically in the states. As Justice Scalia writes, such basic moral and social issues are best settled through politics and not judicial ukase."

— Wall Street Journal
June 27, 2013, p. A20

The Supreme Court paved the way for the legalization of same-sex marriage by declaring on Wednesday that

the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was discriminatory against gay married couples.

Yet the court's other major marriage decision Wednesday, by Chief Justice John Roberts, offered a counterbalance: Roberts dismissed California's Proposition 8 case on standing, allowing states to continue to debate the definition of marriage.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing the DOMA opinion with the court's four liberal justices, said that if states recognized gay marriage, the federal government could not deny benefits to same-sex married couples. DOMA had created, according to Kennedy, "second-tier marriages" by not recognizing gay married couples.

"It tells those [same-sex] couples, and all the world, that their otherwise valid marriages are unworthy of federal recognition," he wrote. "It humiliates tens of thousands of children now being raised by same-sex couples."

Justice Antonin Scalia delivered a blistering dissent, saying the Supreme Court was considering itself "enthroned" at the "apex of government" by knocking down a law that Congress passed with strong bipartisan majorities.

"Few public controversies will ever demonstrate so vividly the beauty of what our framers gave us, a gift the court pawns today to buy its stolen moment in the spotlight: a system of government that permits us to rule ourselves," he wrote. "We might have covered ourselves with honor today, by promising all sides of this debate that it was theirs to settle and that we would respect their resolution. We might have

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 13

let the people decide. But that the majority will not do.”

Scalia further eviscerated the structure of Kennedy’s argument, saying the Supreme Court couldn’t both declare that states should decide marriage while telling them that gay marriage was morally right.

“The real rationale of today’s opinion, whatever disappearing trail of its legalistic argle-bargle one chooses to follow, is that DOMA is motivated by ‘bare ... desire to harm’ couples in same-sex marriages,” he said. “How easy it is, indeed how inevitable, to reach the same conclusion with regard to state laws denying same-sex couples marital status.”

Scalia concluded that following Kennedy’s ruling, “it is just a matter of listening and waiting for the other shoe,” in terms of courts declaring state traditional marriage laws unconstitutional.

State laws survive for now, thanks to the second opinion of the day. By dismissing the Proposition 8 case, Roberts’ decision preserves the state constitutional amendment as the law in California, even if California officials decline to enforce it. But the outworking of the DOMA decision in the future will likely overwhelm the Proposition 8 decision.

“This [DOMA] decision is far-reaching, with massive implications for family life and religious liberty,” said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. “The grounding of this decision in equal protection and human dignity means this is not simply a procedural matter of

federalism. This is a new legal reality.”

Some traditional marriage advocates were concerned, but slightly relieved the ruling wasn’t broader.

“The decisions are wrong but things aren’t as bad as they might have been,” said Eric Teetsel, the director of the Manhattan Declaration, a group focused on life, religious liberty, and marriage. “This didn’t do for marriage what Roe and Doe did for abortion. ... It doesn’t change marriage policies in states that define marriage as between one man and one woman. Kennedy did ground it in equal protection, which does give us pause. ... That’s reason for concern, but that’s concern for another day.”

— Emily Belz

WORLD Magazine

June 26, 2013

Economics

Even before the latest Medicare trustees report came out at the end of May, the White House spin masters had already crafted a story to go with it. Medicare’s finances have improved, we’re being told. The trust fund will last longer. The unfunded liability is lower. One of the reasons is said to be ObamaCare.

The core of the new health reform doesn’t kick in until next year, but already it’s improving things for seniors? Here’s the real story:

In their report, the trustees acknowledge that current law envisages dramatic reductions in future Medicare outlays which may be “difficult to sustain.” The president’s new budget also paints a rosy picture of Medicare’s present and future finances.

Yet even with these unrealistic as-

sumptions about Medicare costs, the future looks bleak. The unfunded liability in Medicare, the trustees tell us, is \$34 trillion over the next 75 years.

Looking indefinitely into the future, the unfunded liability is \$43 trillion—almost three times the size of today’s economy. Based on more plausible assumptions, such as those reflected in the “alternative” scenario for Medicare produced by the Congressional Budget Office in June 2012, the long-term shortfall is more than \$100 trillion.

Take one source of optimism that the trustees are compelled to transmit in their latest report. Its predicted expenditures are based on the assumption built into the law that next Jan. 1 there will be a 25% decrease in the fees that Medicare pays doctors. That means that every doctor in America who participates in Medicare will take a 25% pay cut. The reason has nothing to do with ObamaCare. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Congress declared that Medicare physician fees could grow no faster than the economy as a whole. Since then, though, Congress has postponed the cuts on 14 occasions, not allowing them to take place. Why assume things will be different now?

A second problem does stem from ObamaCare. In order to pay for the expansion of health insurance for the young, the new health law calls for steep cuts in the growth of health-care spending on the elderly. Whereas Medicare spending per person in real terms has been increasing at about the rate of growth of real GDP per person plus two percentage points, the ObamaCare law calls for a spending growth rate of GDP plus 0.04%. Assuming this slower

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 14

growth rate will materialize, over the next decade it produces about \$716 billion in savings.

But the savings don't stop there. The health-reform law mandates slower growth in health-care costs forever.

How is this supposed to happen? There have been a number of demonstration projects that were supposed to find more efficient ways of delivering care. But three separate CBO reports have found that these programs—such as the use of electronic medical records and “coordinated care”—don't work to cut costs.

As a result, Medicare will have to resort to a fallback mechanism: more cuts in provider fees. Were these cuts to be implemented, and if Medicare spending grew no faster than the economy as a whole, the problem of Medicare would be solved.

Yet studies by the Medicare actuaries in 2012 show that for this formula to work, the suppression of provider fees would have to be draconian. Medicare fees would fall below the reimbursement rates for Medicaid next year and fall further and further as the years go by. By 2030, for instance, doctors treating Medicare patients would be paid 40% of private health-insurance fees. The Medicare reimbursement to hospitals for inpatient treatment would fall to 60% of the private-insurance level.

From a financial point of view, senior patients will become less desirable than welfare recipients. Medicare's Office of the Actuary is predicting that one in seven hospitals will completely leave the Medicare system by 2020 because of these pay cuts.

This is not a new problem. When

the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010, Medicare's chief actuary, Rick Foster, said the cuts envisioned would damage access to care. Harvard health economist Joe Newhouse predicted that seniors may have to seek health care at the same places frequented by Medicaid patients today—at community health centers and the emergency rooms of safety-net hospitals.

So not much is looking up after all. If Congress caves to political pressure and continues to restore cuts in provider fees, as it has done since 1997, the unfunded liability in Medicare will be far greater than what the trustees are now showing.

Meanwhile, the fiscal gap separating the present value of all future projected federal expenditures—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, ObamaCare, defense, gassing up Air Force One, servicing existing debt, you name it—and all future federal taxes and other receipts is, based on the CBO's projections, a staggering \$222 trillion.

Anyone in Washington who thinks we can keep pretending that there is no long-term fiscal tsunami heading our way should look at that number—and examine his conscience.

— John C. Goodman and Laurence J. Kotlikoff
Wall Street Journal
June 25, 2013, p. A13

Education

It was part of a week of school spirit festivities in Milwaukee that included theme days such as Crazy Hair Day and events were routine for students and parents until the schedule hit “Gender-Bender” Day.

Then parents reacted.

Negatively.

“I do not want to send my son to school dressed like a girl,” one parent told Fox 6 News, which reported on the dispute.

The fight focused on the idea that school officials should not be telling students of grade school age to dress like the opposite sex.

The report from Fox said the school, when confronted by concerns about a “gender-bender” day, did decide to alter the name to “Switch it up.”

But the focus remained the same, said critics.

One mother who held her son home from school that day suggested it created an impossible situation for students – either to go along and dress up as the opposite sex, or to refuse to participate and be pointed out as someone who did not do anything.

Terrence Falks, a member of the school board, defended the activity, saying his own son-in-law remembered similar events in a church school.

But parent Sam Ward said it just teaches children the wrong lesson about gender.

According to the station's report, it happened at Milwaukee's Tippecanoe School. The event was held Friday.

Fox 6 reported members of the student council picked the themes for the various days.

But one mother, who asked the station not to provide her identification, said she was, “Speechless.”

Milwaukee Public Schools issued a statement that taking part was limited to those who volunteered.

There is a long history of introducing and teaching highly charged sexual

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 15

material to children in America's public schools. Probably the biggest promoter of such concerns is the public school industry in California.

In fact, California parents were urged to keep their children home from school on May 22, the state's official day for conducting "exercises" to honor the notorious homosexual activist and reported pedophile Harvey Milk.

In 2009, then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law a day for schools to commemorate the San Francisco activist, who was California's first openly homosexual man to be elected to public office. Earlier that year, President Obama posthumously awarded Milk the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

But SaveCalifornia.com, a non-profit pro-family organization founded by Randy Thomasson, warns Milk is no "role model" for schoolchildren.

Citing a biography of Milk by homosexual San Francisco Chronicle writer Randy Shilts, which served as the basis of a film about the activist, SaveCalifornia.com points out Milk "repeatedly engaged in adult-child sex [and] advocated for multiple homosexual relationships at the same time."

In fact, the book describes Milk's romantic relationship with 16-year-old Jack Galen McKinley (when Milk was 33) and explains the activist "always had a penchant for young waifs with substance abuse problems."

SaveCalifornia.com consequently urged fathers and mothers to demand that teachers, principals and school board members refuse to honor Milk or else they'll keep their children home that day or exit the government schools entirely.

"Parents who hear about 'Harvey Milk Gay Day' are disgusted that this teen predator and sexual anarchist is now the new role model for their children, and schools aren't even notifying them that this happening," Thomasson said in a statement. "Parents must keep their children home from public school on May 22 to guard their kids from the bad influence of 'Milk Day.'"

Yet SaveCalifornia.com warns "Harvey Milk Day" is only one example of how "progressive" politicians are advancing a sexual agenda in California schools.

Among other Democrat-led initiatives was the recent strategy that requires schools to let boys play on girls' athletic teams and utilize the ladies' locker room if they gender identify as girls – or vice-versa for girls identifying as boys.

The bill's author, openly homosexual San Francisco Democrat Tom Ammiano, has been an activist for lesbian, "gay," bisexual and transgender, or LGBT, issues for decades and reportedly became in 1975 the first San Francisco public school teacher to make his homosexuality public. Ammiano later co-founded an LGBT organization with Milk.

Ammiano told the Los Angeles Times some parents may be uncomfortable with their children sharing bathrooms with students of a different sex, but he said, "It's also important to protect our children from prejudice."

By a vote of 46-25, carried without any affirmative votes from Republican lawmakers, the California Assembly passed the bill, AB 1266, which amends Section 221.5 of the state's Education Code as follows: "A pupil shall be permitted to participate in sex-segregated

school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records."

The bill would affect not only interscholastic sports, but also sex-segregated physical education classes.

As WND reported earlier, the Pacific Justice Institute launched a website, GenderInsanity.com, to bring attention to AB 1266 and other issues.

— WorldNet Daily
May 29, 2013