

Apologetics Makes a Comeback

Cover Story

On March 24, thousands descended on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for the Reason Rally, an event headlined by Oxford University evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. Billed as a “coming out” for atheists in America, the rally’s name proved to be misleading; it was more about making fun of people than reasoning with them. “Mock them, ridicule them in public,” Dawkins said of Christians. “Don’t fall for the convention that we’re all too polite to talk about religion.”

The so-called Reason Rally and the aggressiveness of New Atheists like Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens has once again put a premium on the importance of apologetics: the reasoned defense of Christianity, alluded to in 1 Peter 3:15 and Jude 3.

Time to Walk Back into the Public Square

In his biography of Thomas Aquinas (*Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox*), G.K. Chesterton once wrote that while the church needs those who convert heathens to Christianity, it is in greater need of someone to convert Christians to Christianity. According to Greg Koukl, a Summit speaker and founder of the apologetics ministry Stand to Reason, the Reason Rally perfectly illustrates why this is necessary. “There was time when everybody agreed with [Christians],” Koukl said. “But now we are getting beat up in the public square so badly that to me the most important role as an apologist is not to change the minds of the



people in the world but to focus on the body of Christ so it doesn’t give up.” Dawkins’s remarks at the rally reveal the bent of secularists and atheists, Koukl said. “The people at that rally think that Christians are bad and stupid. [Atheists] are angry,” he said.

Koukl spends much of his time now persuading Christians to adopt a “thoughtful Christianity.” “[Without apologetics], Christians’ impact is blunted, and their own confidence suffers,” according to Koukl. “When people get challenged hard in their convictions, they go one of three directions: they get mad or they give up, or they just linger along in a spiritual twilight. Many Christians don’t understand Christianity, which means they don’t understand reality.”

How did things come to such a bad state? Koukl thinks it goes back to the fact that the broad majority of Christians spent most of the 19th and 20th centuries on the sidelines rather than engaging in

the serious intellectual conversations taking place in the West. Challenges were posed to Christianity by the Enlightenment thought of Immanuel Kant, the skepticism of David Hume, the evolutionism of Charles Darwin, and the sociological and psychological theories of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and John Dewey. “Evangelicals largely responded by circling the wagons and taking refuge in their own communities,” Koukl said. “We abandoned the marketplace.”

New Generations Rising: Apologetics’ ‘Three Columns’

The good news is that apologetics is resurging, and among its leaders are Summit speakers such as Koukl, J.P. Moreland, Alex McFarland, Sean McDowell, and others. Headlines like “Apologetics Makes a Comeback among Youth,” “The Changing Face of Apologetics,” and “A New Day for Apologetics” regularly appear in prominent Christian publica-

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers

If you enjoyed our story on the exciting resurgence of apologetics among young adults, there are nine steps you can personally take to help this growing movement gain traction:

1 Dig into God's Word

In John chapter eight Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Truth exists and can be known. But if you want to know the truth, you have to be a disciple of Jesus, and to be his disciple you must abide in his word.

2 Build Your Library

Acquire an excellent library and use it to turn your home into a nerve center for leader development. You never know when the CD, DVD, or book you share with someone will spark life change. Summit regularly offers packages of books, DVDs and CDs at a special price for *Journal* subscribers. Over time you'll build an impressive worldview library for a fraction of the retail cost.

3 Speak the Truth in Love

In the absence of truth-speaking, people default to believing lies. All the equipping in the world is in vain if we don't articulate what we know. I listen to the Summit Lecture Series over and over again, learning how to articulate truth. (www.summit.org/resources/summit-lecture-series)

4 Send Students to Summit

Our recent study of 1,500 Summit graduates shows the profound impact Summit has on students. In February we sent you a 24-page catalog. Sit down over coffee with the parents of an eligible student and share it with them. Yes, kids today are busy, but be persistent. At \$995, Summit is an excellent

value, especially when you consider the spiritual and leadership growth that takes place. (www.summit-student.org)

5 Send High School Graduates to Summit Semester

Summit's program at the breathtaking Wolf Creek Lodge in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, features intensive instruction in biblical worldview from favorite Summit professors Dr. Michael Bauman, Dr. J.P. Moreland, and Dr. Don Williams. John Stonestreet and I also help with the instruction. In both the summer and fall terms students can receive college credit. (www.summit.org/institutes/semester)

6 Send College Students to Summit Oxford

Summit Oxford combines tutorials with Oxford dons, intensive worldview training, and academic and spiritual mentoring. A semester at Oxford University is a life-shaping experience and a boost to students' graduate school and job applications. Summer, fall, and spring terms are available and students earn college credit. (www.summitoxford.org)



7 Help Students form a Ratio Christi Club on Their Campus

Ratio Christi is a campus apologetics club started by Summit grads. It's growing rapidly and doing a wonderful job strengthening students' faith and teaching the art of Christ-honoring cultural engagement. (www.ratiochristi.org)

8 Bring Axis to Your Church or Christian School

Axis is a vibrant biblical worldview ministry that puts Summit graduates in front of your group to move students from apathy to action. It's perfect for a weekend retreat. (www.axisworldview.org)

9 Bring a Group to the "Truth for a New Generation" Conference

North Greenville University in Tiger-ville, South Carolina, will be the site of an exciting worldview and apologetics conference September 28-29. Thousands of adults and teens will gather to hear Josh McDowell, Dinesh D'Souza, Ken Ham, and others. Summit is a co-sponsor and I'll be there along with John Stonestreet, Mark Mittelberg, Brett Kunkle, and J.P. Moreland from the Summit faculty. Participants will be significantly equipped to take an intelligent stand on the vital issues of our day. (www.truthforanewgeneration.com)

"All the equipping in the world is in vain if we don't articulate what we know."

Dr. Jeff Myers

tions.

Today's young apologists stand on broad shoulders, according to Koukl. In the 1970s the "first column" of thoughtful Christians, men like Summit's founder David Noebel, Norm Geisler, and Francis Schaeffer, began challenging the underpinnings of atheistic and secular thought that had pervaded Western culture for so long. From that generation of apologists came a "second column," people like Josh McDowell, Nancy Pearcey, and William Lane Craig, who built upon the intellectual arguments of the first column, appealing to Christians to be confident, conversant, and considerate in their engagement with non-believers.

Now Koukl sees an even greater number in the "third column" of apologists. "These are all the people with boots on the ground," he said. "They're the rank and file in the local churches making a difference." Trained by the second column, this group is working in their spheres of influence — neighborhoods, schools, workplaces — to challenge false notions and rhetoric directed toward the biblical worldview. Koukl applauds Summit as a leading organization in training the next generation of Christian thought leaders.

Rising Generations Present New Challenges, Opportunities

Alex McFarland agrees with Koukl that all Christians — not just scholars or pastors — need to be apologists. That's been the focus of McFarland's ministry, not only as a Summit speaker, but also as director of the Center for Apologetics and Worldview at North Greenville University (Tiger-

The Biblical Worldview Needs a Public Defense

»As of 2009, **61%** of Millennial Americans see nothing wrong with same-sex marriage

Source: LifeWay Research

»The number of Secular Student Alliance groups on U.S. campuses has almost quadrupled in the last 4 years:

2007: **80**

2008: **100**

2009: **159**

2010: **219**

2011: **311**

Source: Secular Student Alliance

»**60.7%** of incoming U.S. college freshmen in the fall of 2011 said abortion should be legal

Source: Higher Education Research Institute

»**26%** of Christians don't think it matters which religion one follows; they all teach the same lessons

Source: Barna Group

»**40%** of Christians said Christians and Muslims worship the same God

Source: Barna Group

» As of 2009, only **9%** of adult Americans have a biblical worldview

Source: Barna Group

» Only **34%** of American adults believe in absolute truth

Source: Barna Group

ville, South Carolina), and as author of several books including *10 Answers for Skeptics*, *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity*, and *Stand Strong: In College*.

McFarland sees the growth in the apologetics and worldview book markets as a sign that more Christians are taking apologetics seriously. He points to the disastrous effects of secular humanism and relativism in both family and public life to explain why the rising generation of adults — often referred to as Millennials — craves answers. "They are a generation that cares about truth," he said. "They've come up in a milieu of 'no absolute truth' and pragmatism, but they know intuitively that there must be truth. They know that a Mother Teresa is different from an Adolf Hitler."

When he interviewed 300 college freshmen for his book *Stand Strong: In College*, McFarland found that whether or not students had a strong handle on their beliefs determined how they lived. McFarland's findings parallel Summit's own in-depth research into its graduates: having a biblical worldview not only makes students more confident, it actually changes how they live — helping them challenge wrong thinking and resist negative peer pressure.

Apologetics in the 21st Century Poses Certain Difficulties

While there are hopeful signs, there is still much work to be done. McFarland recalled his experience hosting "The Big Dig" apologetics

See **apologetics**, page 4

Tips for Talking Truth

Editor's Note: These tips and conversation starters for talking about truth with rising generations were adapted from Dr. Jeff Myers' book Cultivate.

» Embrace Humble Transparency

Be honest about your own struggles with truth and the biblical worldview: "We can't know everything, but there are some things we can be sure of. Let's talk about them."

» Trust God's Sovereignty

Trust God enough to surrender the outcomes of these conversations to him and avoid trying to manipulate the situation: "This is a big issue and I'm glad you're not taking it lightly. I'll pray that God will give you insight."

» Avoid Indoctrination

Leave intellectual space for young people to reach conclusions without forcing the issue: "If you're like me, you have genuine questions and doubts. What are they?"

» Listen in an Engaged Way

No one will listen to us if we are not willing to listen to them: "Tell me more about that. I want to hear what is important to you."

events with Focus on the Family. He found at these large public gatherings that Christian children and teens generally held more conservative views on Jesus, hell, and other theological matters than their parents did, but far more liberal views of sex, homosexuality, and morality in general. To McFarland, this underscores the need for Summit's worldview approach that goes beyond teaching the arguments for God's existence and the truth of the Bible.

The worldview approach undergirds apologetic arguments in two important ways. First, it fleshes out the full implications of biblical truth in a culture that is now nearly completely post-Christian. Second, the worldview approach demonstrates the powerful ability of the Bible to better explain reality than any other belief system. This is especially important for Christian students, who now must be prepared to defend a biblical worldview in every area of life, including sexuality and family life, as well as economics and government.

Meanwhile, secular humanism still maintains its monopoly on the education system, disguising its religious roots and giving students the impression that to disagree with its arguments is to embrace "unreason."

And, like the evangelists of other worldviews, secular humanists now see the importance of winning hearts as well as minds. The Secular Student Alliance — an umbrella group for atheist and secular humanist student groups — attempts to win converts to atheism and disciple them. According to its website, the SSA has doubled in size in the last two years, now reaching more than 300 clubs (see the graphic on page 3).¹

In the end, Koukl emphasizes, the rising generation will have to master both the art of argumentation as well as a spirit of care for non-believers. "The merits of our view are largely obscured by the rhetoric of the other view, of the other side," Koukl said. "It's not enough anymore to have a sound view. One has to be skilled now not just in the reasons, but in the way the reasons are communicated." McFarland agrees and even sees that sentiment as a new paradigm for how apologetics will be regarded in the future. "Beliefs and ideas are free for critique," he said. "But people are valuable and are free to be loved. And I think that's an apologetics."

Notes

1. "An Open Message to Our Supporters," August E. Brunsman IV, Secular Student Alliance, <http://www.secularstudents.org/node/4177>.

Summit Speakers Who Are Today's Apologists

- » **Nabeel Qureshi** — Leader of Creed 2:6, an apologetics ministry aimed at Muslims (www.creed26.com)
- » **The Point with John Stonestreet** — Daily one-minute worldview commentaries heard on over 725 radio outlets (www.summit.org)
- » **Sean McDowell** — Worldview and apologetics speaker and author, focusing on reaching younger generations (www.seanmcdowell.com)
- » **Cross Examined** — Led by Frank Turek, these apologists seek to address why young Christians leave the church (www.crossexamined.org)
- » **Brett Kunkle** — Student Impact Director for Stand to Reason (www.strplace.org)

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. Below is a look at that reading. 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.

Biblical Christianity

"Some Christians — those who happen to have the right talents — should be economists and statesmen, and . . . all economists and statesmen should be Christians, and . . . their whole efforts in politics and economics should be directed to putting 'Do as you would be done by' into action. If that happened, and if we others were really ready to take it, then we should find the Christian solution for our own social problems pretty quickly . . . The job really is on us, the laymen."

— C.S. Lewis

Economics

"Occupy Wall Street appears to have found the appropriate place for its death rattle: Oakland, Calif. The combination of a sympathetic, liberal population, an incompetent city government, and a severely depressed economy made Oakland a focal point through last fall. The hardcore leftists who remain lack a large encampment but continue to engage in illegal and violent demonstrations. Recently, Occupiers broke into City Hall and burned flags, bringing the cumulative damage from their rioting to \$5 million. Nearly 400 of them were arrested. Rather than offering an effective police response, Mayor Jean

Quan has put her trust in calling for the national Occupy Wall Street movement to renounce the rioters in Oakland, which they haven't deigned to do. Always long on fanatical ideas and intolerance but short on other options, the Occupiers may unfortunately be tormenting Oakland for some time to come."

— *National Review*

Feb. 20, 2012, p. 13

Religious Liberty

"Welcome to the real ObamaCare, whereby a handful of leftists in Washington, D.C., impose the views of their big-money donors on more than 300 million Americans. If the Obama mandate for contraception remains intact, then liberals will next demand that Americans pay for other objectionable items that are not really medical care.

We can expect future mandates,

"Obama's directive for abortifacient drugs opens up a slippery slope."

Phyllis Schlafly

under the guise of "health care," to include sex-change operations, late-term abortions, embryonic stem-cell use and a variety of other procedures that many Americans do not support and certainly do not want to be compelled to foot the bill for. Obama's directive for abortifacient drugs opens a slippery slope that would erode the moral authority of religious institutions in America.

Obama and the liberals have overplayed their hand. By baring their teeth, these lackeys for the Left have awakened Democratic voters to the real contempt that liberals hold for religious values.

All 181 U.S. Catholic bishops oppose Obama's mandate, and Rasmussen polling estimates that 65 percent of Catholic Americans also oppose it. There are about 75 million American Catholics, most of whom have traditionally been Democratic voters but wouldn't hesitate to cross party lines to defend their church leaders.

It will be fascinating to see how many Democratic politicians up for re-election this November side with Obama and against religious organizations. Liberals are just fine with throwing some Democratic incumbents overboard to advance far-left



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news and commentary, continued from page 5

goals, just as the enactment of ObamaCare in 2010 cost many Democrats their congressional seats.”

— Phyllis Schlafly
Townhall.com
Feb. 22, 2012

“The Constitution places a ‘wall of separation’ between church and state, and politicians who breach this are Theocrats. Right? Evidently not if you’re a Democrat. Obama aide Valerie Jarrett took to the pulpit in Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church in January to warn the congregation that the jobs of teachers, police, and firefighters ‘are now in jeopardy because [of] Congress — well, let me be specific — because [of] Republicans in Congress.’ Having issued the warning, Jarrett then used the church to host a voter-registration drive. In doing so, she likely caused the church to violate IRS rules that prohibit tax-exempt 501(c)3 organizations from hosting activities that favor one candidate or party over another, or explicitly engaging in politics. IRS enforcement of these rules is skewed in the extreme, and there is a fair debate over whether they should exist at all — but oh, why bother? The lady is a Democrat, and that’s the last you’re ever going to hear about that.”

— *National Review*
Feb. 20, 2012, p. 8

“Our political system is decidedly anti-utopian, which is one reason conservatives love it so.”

Jonah Goldberg

Politics

“Conservatism is a distant cousin of cynicism.

The traditional conservative believes that man is fallen, sinful, flawed. Hence we understand that man cannot leap out of history, cannot begin at Year Zero, cannot create a heaven and earth. This does not mean conservatives cannot be idealists; it simply means we cannot be utopians.

Our political system is decidedly anti-utopian, which is one reason conservatives love it so. It assumes that even the most decent men will act out of self-interest. The Constitution doesn’t deny men’s flaws, but relies upon them. It sets ambition against ambition, faction against faction, in the hope that negatives will cancel out and leave room for wisdom. So while no informed person would call our Constitution cynical, most would agree that its idealism is tempered by the sometimes lamentable constraints of reality.

The Left’s problem is that it has no limiting principle to idealism. It may deny that it is utopian, and some liberals even recognize the folly of utopianism in the abstract. But those same liberals will not tell their idealistic cohorts to abandon utopianism. It is too useful in motivating those who do not so much think their way through politics as feel.”

— Jonah Goldberg
National Review
Feb. 6,
2012, p. 10

“But I just want to point out, you [John King, CNN moderator of

the debate in Mesa, Arizona] did not once in the 2008 campaign, not once did anybody in the elite media ask why Barack Obama voted in favor of legalizing infanticide. OK? So let’s be clear here. If we’re going to have a debate about who is the extremist on these issues, it is President Obama who, as state senator, voted to protect doctors who killed babies who survived abortion. It is not the Republicans.’ (Newt Gingrich)”

— RedState.com
Feb. 23, 2012

“When Barack Obama was campaigning for president in 2008, he declared that marriage is between a man and a woman. For the most part, his position was treated as a nonissue. Now Rick Santorum is campaigning for president. He too says that marriage is between a man and a woman. What a different reaction he gets. There’s no mystery why. Mr. Santorum is attacked because everyone understands that he means what he says. President Obama, by contrast, gets a pass because everyone understands — nudge, nudge, wink, wink — that he’s not telling the truth. The press understands that this is just one of those things a Democratic candidate has to say so he doesn’t rile up the great unwashed.”

— William McGurn
Wall Street Journal
Feb. 21, 2012, p. A17

Summit Semester Integrates the Christian Life

What does it mean to be a Christian interior designer or architect? How does the biblical worldview inform how we design buildings, rooms, and public spaces?

Not many designers are asking these questions, but Caitlin Burke is, and all because of a couple of months she spent at Summit Semester at a secluded, Rocky Mountain hideaway in Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

Summit Semester is a gap-year program that combines excellent worldview instruction, mentoring, and close-knit community to enable college-age students to think deeply about how Christianity touches every aspect of life. It made all the difference for Burke.

"I never was thinking like this before Semester," she said. When Burke graduates later this spring from Arizona State University (ASU), she'll be thinking about pursuing architecture, foreign languages, or working for an organization fighting abortion. These varied interests may seem incompatible, but her Semester experience integrated them into a cohesive vision for a life well-lived. "Before Semester, I was putting each of these things into separate boxes."

Burke started college in the fall of 2008 at ASU. Working toward a degree in interior design, she found herself swallowed up in a school of 70,000 students, nearly anonymous in classes with 200

other people. The courses she took offered fantastic technical instruction in interior design but little else. "You can get an A in the class and learn absolutely nothing," she recalled. "All the while you're asking, 'How does this apply to my life?'"

After her freshman year she returned to Manitou Springs, Colorado, to work as summer staff at Summit's student conferences, having attended as a student the previous summer. At Summit she met others who had gone to Summit Semester, and she noticed a difference. "They were really thoughtful," she said. "They were thinking about how they were living their lives. That was really when I began thinking seriously about Semester. I wasn't being challenged to ask any deep questions of life in my design program."

Burke was interested, but the challenges of college and work life in the 21st century gave her pause; most students nowadays focus on getting a degree as quickly as possible, landing a job, making money, and living for the weekends. But after seeking counsel from a number of trusted advisors, she made up her mind to enroll in Summit Semester.

In the fall of 2010, she spent more than two months living in a close-knit community with 29 other students and the Semester faculty, notably Dr. Michael Bauman. For the first time, she found herself personally wrestling with questions asked throughout history, reading philosophers from throughout the ages, and pondering deep political quandaries. She was getting the education she had longed for at ASU.

And the atmosphere of a Rocky



Summit alumna Caitlin Burke

Mountain lodge was vastly different from the sterile halls of public academia. "It's just twenty-nine other students and me. You eat all your meals together, sit through classes together, and do work projects together. I learned a lot about being selfless there; you can't run away from that."

Burke's initial concerns about delaying her college career proved unnecessary, though, as she's graduating when she had originally planned. But she's far more equipped now — not just for work, but for life itself. "Who was it who said four years was the timeframe you need to go through college and graduate? What if you're a year behind? Maybe that doesn't mean you're behind; it could push you ahead," she mused.

NOTE: An arrangement with Bryan College makes it possible for students to earn up to 12 hours college credit for their Summit Semester experience. Go to <http://www.summit.org/institutes/semester/tuition> for more information.

For information on Summit Semester, go to summitsemester.org.



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CD: "Doing Apologetics" (Gary Phillips) explains how to be more convincing with doubters of Christianity.

DVD: "Evangelizing Biblical Illiterates" (D.A. Carson) offers strategies for talking with those unfamiliar with the Bible.

DVD: "Answers for Atheists" (Calvin Beisner) explains how to cultivate relationships with atheists through meekness.

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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

Sociology

TV actress Cynthia Nixon, who is engaged to another woman, wrote in the New York Times that her homosexuality was a conscious choice, though she conceded that for many people it was not. Her remarks stirred anger in what we are supposed to call “the LGBT community,” who cleave to the strictest generic determinism in regard to human sexual orientation (although, that community being mainly liberals, in regard to absolutely no other behavioral or psychological traits). “We are born this way!” rose the cry. If Ms. Nixon was born homosexual, it took her a long time to realize it. She left her college-sweetheart-boyfriend only at age 37, after presenting him with two children. In fact this trajectory is not uncommon among lesbians. Asked when they realized they were homosexual, males are far more likely to than females to reply: “I’ve always known.” In this respect, as in many others, lesbianism and male gayness are very different phenomena — as different, in fact, as women and men. Human nature continues to resist simple-minded analysis.

— *National Review*
Feb. 20, 2012, p. 13

Origins

Those three books [*The Darwin Economy*, *The Neighborhood Project*, *Religion in Human Evolution*] I’ve just mentioned total over 1,300 pages, but here’s the good news: A playful but profound book by a Virginia historian, Nickell John Romjue, dispatches them in 83 beautifully written pages. I, Charles Darwin (Wheatmark, 2011) has Darwin returning to earth in 2009, at the

apex of his cult, and reeling as he realizes that he got so much wrong. Instead of seeing proofs of “the tree of life,” he reads of the Cambrian Explosion, with so many kinds of life all starting at the same time. The DNA revolution and the complexity of cells startle him.

Worst of all is his study of the 20th century killing fields that grew out of the purportedly scientific dethronement of God. Romjue has Darwin weeping: “I am a founder, I am a destroyer.”

— Marvin Olasky
WORLD Magazine
Feb. 11, 2012, p. 26

Biblical Christianity

Few athletes in recent years have made football as compelling to watch as Tim Tebow. The guy throws wounded-duck passes for three quarters, and still finds a way to win with overtime heroics, even though his player stats suggest that a victory is impossible.

Of course, proclaiming his Christian faith on and off the field has made Tebow controversial to say the least. Sandra Fish, who teaches journalism at the University of Colorado, asks this supposedly provocative question at the Washington Post website: “Tim Tebow: Would we love him if he were Muslim?”

Fish proceeds to draw a baffling parallel. “The lauding of Tebow’s Christianity has me recollecting another Denver athlete who once flaunted his faith, on the basketball court in the mid-1990s, and paid a price for it.” Fish then goes on to tell the tale of former Denver Nuggets point guard Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who, following his conversion to Islam, called the American flag

“a symbol of oppression and tyranny” and received a one-game suspension for refusing to stand for the national anthem. Abdul-Rauf’s actions didn’t win him any new fans. He was traded to Sacramento and left the league two years later.

“But if a Muslim player thanked Allah after every game, ended every interview with ‘praise Allah,’ would we afford him the same respect we give Tebow? Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf knows the answer.”

You got that, sports fans? You’re religious bigots or something. Never mind that two of the greatest and most revered NBA players in history—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Hakeem Olajuwon—were both Muslim. Muhammad Ali made some pretty sharp anti-American critiques, and yet George W. Bush gave him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Funnily enough, in November, sports columnist Jen Engel asked the same question as Fish and arrived at an entirely different answer:

Imagine for a second, the Denver Broncos quarterback is a devout follower of Islam, sincere and principled in his beliefs and thus bowed toward Mecca to celebrate touchdowns. Now imagine if Detroit Lions players Stephen Tulloch and Tony Scheffler mockingly bowed toward Mecca, too, after tackling him for a loss or scoring a touchdown, just like what happened in October.

I know what would happen. All hell would break loose.

Engel goes on to flesh out the likely

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scenario of a furious backlash from her fellow sports columnists, the NFL commissioner being forced to apologize, etc. Suffice to say, Engel has it right and Fish has it wrong.

In the meantime, we would invite Fish and Tebow's detractors to talk to Bailly Knaub. Knaub is a teenage girl from Loveland, Colorado, who has Wegener's granulomatosis, a disease that leads to prolific tumors. Her 70th surgery was the removal of her left lung. Knaub is a big fan of the Broncos QB, so Bailly's cousin surreptitiously wrote a letter to Tebow's foundation.

Tebow was understandably moved, and brought Bailey to the first round of the playoffs, where she watched Tebow throw for 316 yards and deliver a stunning victory on an 80-yard pass in, yes, overtime, against the best passing defense in the league. After the biggest win of his professional career, he told the press: "But the real win, at least I would say today, is being able to comfort a girl who has gone through 73 surgeries before the game and get a chance to go hang out with her now."

The most frustrating thing for Tebow's critics is that nothing about his life or career suggests his Christian charity isn't coming from a place of sincerity or humility, as opposed to being a retrograde expression of narrow-minded tribalism. But the truth is that you don't have to share Tebow's faith to be inspired by his victories — on and off the field.

— *The Weekly Standard*
January 23, 2012, p. 4

Religious Liberty

So the Health Commissar, Kathl-

en Sebelius, has decided that, under Obamacare, religious institutions, like any other employer, will be required to offer their workers free contraception, sterilization, and abortifacients. Well, there's a surprise.

This entirely predictable news was received with stunned bewilderment by Obamaphile rubes such as the Reverend John Jenkins of Notre Dame, who in 2009 gave the president both an honorary degree and his imprimatur in exchange for the promise of a "sensible" approach to conflicts between church and state. Now that they're on the receiving end of Obama's good sense, many of America's Catholic bishops have issued protests, characteristically anguished and handwringing but betraying little understanding of the stakes.

I a land of Big Government, everything else gets real small. In the U.S., the Catholic Church, aside from abortion, is generally on board with the "social justice" agenda. It never seemed to occur to them to ask themselves, If health care is a "human right" in the debased contemporary sense (i.e., not a restraint upon the state — as in Magna Carta — but a gift of the state), then who gets to define what health care is?

Answer: Commissar Sebelius. As government grows, the separation of church and state is replaced by the state as a church — an established religion of sacred secularism that crowds any rivals out of the public square. The Obama administration's distinction — of a "religious exemption" that applies to a building where sermons and sacraments are taking place but not to Catholic hospitals or schools — is explicitly intended

to shrivel the space for religious belief: If you're in, say, the adoption business, you can either offer your services to gay couples or get out of the biz entirely. Either way, the state church wins.

— Mark Steyn
National Review
Feb. 20, 2012, p. 48

But what is it that motivates those on the left? Why do they care so deeply about the kind of insurance coverage Catholic employers provide? It's not as if NARAL and Planned Parenthood devotees are heavily represented in the workforce of Catholic institutions. And you don't see petitions from leftwing pressure groups calling on the church to provide better dental and vision coverage, or mental health benefits. Which would, as a pragmatic matter, be much more helpful for more of the workforce than the contraceptive mandate. No, for the left, the fight isn't about social justice or the proper scope of the state. It's about the contraceptives. It's about sex.

The upheaval of the 1960s was a many-splendored thing, but it produced one permanent orthodoxy for liberalism: an absolute commitment to sexual liberation. As it aged, the left compromised on every other counter-cultural idea from that period—from pacifism to socialism to anti-materialism. The hippies stopped dropping acid and got high-paying jobs in the tech sector. They got married and stopped questioning authority and sent their kids to good schools. They enjoyed lower tax rates and spent their money at the Apple Store and Le Pain Quotidien. But to this day "the central dogma of the baby boomers," as David Frum once wrote

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in these pages, is “the belief that sex, so long as it’s consensual, ought never to be subject to moral scrutiny at all.”

Sexual liberation began with the pill. Enovid was approved by the FDA in 1960 and was originally conceived of as a way to stem world overpopulation. The world, as longtime promoter Margaret Sanger put it in the 1950s, “is going to depend on a simple, cheap safe contraceptive to be used in poverty stricken slums, jungles, and among the most ignorant people.” Only it didn’t quite work out that way. By 1965, 6.5 million American women were taking the pill, most of them white and middle-class. Today, there are about 10.5 million American women on the pill. That might not sound like much, but it’s 28 percent of the universe of women who are “at risk” of pregnancy. Overall, 82 percent of American women who have ever had sex have, at some point, been on the pill.

The pill created the possibility of a world where sex would have no dire consequences. In 1973, *Roe v. Wade* guaranteed it with a universal abortion right that acted as insurance against contraceptive failure. Sex was now free from repercussions even if it did result in pregnancy.

With the logistical consequences of sex conquered, liberals moved on to dismantling the moral consequences. As Frum noted in the early days of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the left had to rally round President Clinton because “you start with an apparently sensible restriction—married presidents shouldn’t have sex with government employees in the Oval Office—and the next thing you know, it’s

back to Nathaniel Hawthorne [and] . . . Puritan New England.” And that can’t be allowed. It was the same absolutist belief which led Clinton to the only unpopular policy stance he ever took on principle—vetoing the partial-birth abortion ban, which an overwhelming majority of Americans backed.

— Jonathan V. Last
The Weekly Standard
Feb. 27, 2012, p. 9

Islam

The Evangelical Left is hosting a “Christ at the Checkpoint” jamboree at the birthplace of Jesus Christ to identify the Savior with Palestinian liberation. This anti-Israeli mobilization will include leading evangelicals from the U.S.

“We are not accusing the Israeli military of putting Jesus at a checkpoint,” insists one disingenuous spokesman, who complains that “some” critics will incomprehensibly interpret it that way. “This is a conference about empowering the Palestinian church.” If so, then why is the conference not less provocatively titled?

Palestinian politicians are often accused of speaking sweetly about peace and co-existence in English to Western audiences but far more stridently in Arabic to their own constituency. Perhaps that same spirit afflicts organizers and defenders of Christ at the Checkpoint.

Another spokesman for Christ at the Checkpoint promises it will challenge the “theology of the land” and the “end times” beliefs of pro-Israel Christians, while advocating a “theology of peace.” But will this theology of peace also challenge Islamists and Palestinian nationalists who reject Israel’s existence

or any future for Jews or Christians outside of subjugation?

Major U.S. speakers at the March 5-9 Checkpoint event in Bethlehem include evangelist Tony Campolo (former spiritual counselor to Bill Clinton), Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter (board member of National Association of Evangelicals and spiritual counselor to President Obama), Chicago megachurch co-founder Lynne Hybels of Willow Creek Community, and popular religious campus anti-war activist Shane Claiborne of The Simple Way in Philadelphia.

Church of England priest and anti-Israel activist Stephen Sizer will also speak, as will Porter Speakman, Colorado producer of the anti-Israel film for evangelicals “With God on Our Side,” plus Gary Burge of evangelical Wheaton College outside Chicago. So too will Ron Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action and Chris Seiple of the Institute for Global Engagement, along with Sang-Bok David Kim, chair of the World Evangelical Alliance.

Christ at the Checkpoint’s official purpose is help evangelicals to seek “peace, justice, and reconciliation” by empowering the Palestinian church and exposing the “realities of the injustices in the Palestinian Territories,” while also challenging Christian Zionism.

“Some have accused the conference as being part of a process of demonization of state of Israel,” admitted conference organizer Alex Awad of Bethlehem Bible College, who is also a missionary supported by the United Methodist Church. “I totally and absolutely reject this accusation,” he declared, insisting Christ at the Checkpoint merely wants

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Israelis and Palestinians to “live in peace and harmony.” Awad further clarified: “We are not anti-Semitic, we are not against Jewish people.” But he admitted: “There may be some criticism of Israel.” No doubt!

Awad implored that criticism of Israel not equate with anti-Semitism. Perhaps this appeal would be more persuasive if Christ at the Checkpoint includes serious criticism of Palestinian authorities and attitudes that persist in denying Israel’s right to exist. And this event would truly convey its desire for “peace” and “reconciliation” if it condemned not just evangelical and Jewish pro-Israel theologies but also critiqued Islamist theology asserting that conquered Islamic lands may never revert to non-Islamic control. But don’t hold your breath. In the mindset of many Christ at the Checkpoint organizers and speakers, a Texas Baptist who believes God still blesses the Jews is more morally culpable for Mideast conflict than a Hamas-supporting Islamist in Nasrallah who believes Allah wants to drive the Jews into the Sea.

“Absolutely this conference will not advocate replacement theology,” Awad also promised, referring to the belief by some Christians that the Church has completely replaced the Jews in God’s eyes. He added: “But there may be some people in this conference who present this point of view.” Again, no doubt. Awad declared of his own Bethlehem Bible College, which is hosting the event: “We don’t believe God replaces people.”

Awad further explained that Christ at the Checkpoint is simply inviting the international community to come see

“our situation” by looking at the “wall,” the “siege,” and the “settlements.” In other words, to examine Israeli injustices but not examine why Israel is unable fully to withdraw when Palestinians are unwilling to accept Israel. The event will not “impose a solution,” Awad promised, but is only hosting theologians to “pray and meditate.” And then the Holy Spirit will lead them into “solutions.” After all, the event has no “agenda.”

Another defender featured on the Christ Checkpoint website promised the event will not offer any “political solutions,” whether “two-state” or “one-state,” i.e. the abolition of Israel as a Jewish democracy. Instead it only urges “equality for all.” Still another defender explained the event was about how to expand the “Kingdom of God among the Palestinians.” But the conference schedule seems heavy on political and social critique and very little on the topics of evangelism and discipleship that typically characterize church conferences focused on expanding the “Kingdom of God.”

A young Palestinian Christian spokesman for Christ at the Checkpoint explained: “We would like to bring Christ to the reality we face.” But that reality focuses exclusively on purported political liberation of Palestinians from Israeli occupation. It is mainly a variant of the liberation theology of the 1970s and 1980s that replaced Christian beliefs about salvation with Marxist demands for political revolution.

“Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah were quite critical of the behavior of ancient Israel and yet, Biblical scholars do not classify them

as demonizers of Israel,” explained Alex Awad in his ongoing defense of Christ at the Checkpoint. So the U.S. evangelicals swarming to Bethlehem largely to criticize Israel and stay mum about Palestinian problems are successors to the prophetic Hebrew tradition of Jeremiah and Isaiah.

American evangelicals are overwhelmingly pro-Israel, not just for idiosyncratic theological reasons. Like most Americans, they notice Israel is democratic and pro-American, offering tolerance to religious minorities, including Christians. Meanwhile, most of Israel’s neighbours are not. Current Palestinian rulers offer little hope that their victory over Israel would advance justice for anyone, much less the tiny and dwindling Palestinian Christian minority.

Christ at the Checkpoint is primarily a public relations scheme to dissuade American evangelicals from pro-Israel views. To succeed, they will have to mount blinders on cooperatively gullible evangelicals, guiding their eyes towards disruptive Israeli checkpoints, while hiding the rest of the surrounding reality.

— Mark. D. Tooley
FrontPage Magazine
Feb. 20, 2012

The Muslim world is threatened by religious fanaticism. The Western world is threatened by secular fanaticism.

Both seek to dominate society and to use state power to do so. Both seek to eliminate the Other — for Islamic fanatics, that means non-Muslim religions and secularism; for secular fanatics, it means Christianity and virtually any

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public invoking of God. The Islamists impose Sharia law; the American Civil Liberties Union and the left generally impose secular law. The Taliban wiped out public vestiges of Buddhism in Afghanistan; the ACLU and its allies seek to wipe out public vestiges of Christianity in America — as it did, for example, in Los Angeles County, when it successfully pressured the County Board of Supervisors to remove the tiny cross from the county seal. A city and county founded by Catholics — hence the name “The Angels” — was forced to stop commemorating its founders because they were religious.

This fanaticism has been on display most recently in the state of Rhode Island. This past Christmas, the governor, Lincoln Chafee, renamed the state Christmas tree a “holiday tree.” Though Christmas is a national holiday, for the secular fanatic, anything Christian — or, as we shall see, anything that relates to religion or God — must be banned from public life.

The latest expression of the secular equivalent of Islamism is the lawsuit brought against a Rhode Island high school, Cranston High School West, for allowing a banner, written by a seventh grader in 1963, to remain hanging on one of the school walls. An atheist student, along with the ACLU, brought the lawsuit and a judge ruled that it is unconstitutional for it to hang in a public school.

To appreciate how fanatical the student, the ACLU and the ruling are, you have to know the words on the banner. So here they are:

Our Heavenly Father

Grant us each day the desire to do our

best, to grow mentally and morally as well as physically, to be kind and helpful to our classmates and teachers, to be honest with ourselves as well as with others.

Help us to be good sports and smile when we lose as well as when we win.

Teach us the value of true friendship. Help us always to conduct ourselves so as to bring credit to Cranston High School West.

Amen

The idea that this prayer violates the Constitution of the United States is as much a mockery of the Constitution as it is of common sense. Only a fanatic can welcome the removal of such a non-denominational, sweet, moral exhortation from a high school wall. America is indeed as endangered by the ACLU as the Muslim world is by Islamists.

Defenders of the judge’s decision point to the U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1962 banning state-mandated prayer in public schools. The parallel is invalid. No student is asked, let alone compelled, to state what is on the Rhode Island high school banner. But arguments citing the Supreme Court ruling serve only to confirm my argument: that secular fanaticism has been taking over America. The New York State prayer that the Warren Court outlawed 50 years ago was as non-sectarian, as morally uplifting and as inoffensive as the Rhode Island prayer.

Here it is in its entirety:

“Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.”

After reading that one sentence, it is intellectually dishonest to maintain that the Warren court’s decision was not an expression of fanaticism. One would

have to deny that there could even be any such thing as secular fanaticism. Indeed, if it could have, the Warren Court would have declared the Declaration of Independence unconstitutional for its citing the Creator.

It is no wonder, then, that Alaska Airlines announced last week that it would no longer dispense along with meals its famous little cards with a verse from Psalms.

There are Americans who think that we are a better society without a state Christmas tree, and without high school students seeing a prayer to be kind human beings, and without the Alaska Airlines attempt to elevate American life in a small — and, again, non-denominational — way.

But the Islamist thinks he is improving Muslim life, too, of course.

— Dennis Prager

FrontPage Magazine.com

Feb. 2, 2012

Environmentalism

Peter Gleick, president of the Pacific Institute and a prominent climate change expert, admitted Monday that he lied. Gleick pretended to be someone else in order to obtain documents from the Heartland Institute, which has challenged mainstream scientific consensus on the role of man in global warming.

Last week, Gleick was the chairman of the American Geophysical Union’s Task Force on Scientific Ethics. Now he isn’t. As New York Times blogger Andrew C. Revkin weighed in, “Gleick has admitted to an act that leaves his reputation in ruins and threatens to undercut the cause he spent so much

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time pursuing.”

Bravo to Gleick for admitting that he lied “in a serious lapse” of his own and “professional judgment and ethics.” At least he had the integrity to own up to his mistake.

But Gleick doesn’t look all that noble when you look at his excuse. In a statement released on The Huffington Post, Gleick said he lied because he wants “a rational public debate.” That’s sort of like Newt Gingrich saying that his extramarital affairs were partially driven by how passionately he felt about this country.

Heartland President Joe Bast accused Gleick of “stealing” internal documents to “embarrass a group that disagrees with his views.” Enviro love the karma here. In 2009, someone leaked emails from the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit that uncovered the vindictive and censorious side of the global-warming community. Climate change activists were reduced to complaining that the emails were leaked. Now Heartland has had to take a bite of that bitter apple.

In addition, Heartland spokesman Jim Lakely charges that one of the leaked documents -- a two-page strategy memo -- is “a complete fake.” It uses the sort of language a true believer in global warming might think skeptics use. The Atlantic’s Megan McArdle “is inclined to believe” Heartland on this.

But Gleick did not admit to faking the memo. Chris Lehane -- the former Al Gore flack who is representing Gleick pro bono -- notes that the two-pager contains “previously unknown facts” since confirmed. Lehane says Heartland should “get off its Trojan high horse and

come clean by explaining the identity of its secret large donor.”

The folks at the Heartland are particularly indignant about Gleick’s vaunted rationale -- that he was “frustrated” at skeptics’ efforts to “prevent this debate” -- because Heartland invited Gleick to a debate. Gleick declined the offer.

He isn’t talking to the media. A representative told me that Gleick would speak to Heartland only if the organization released the names of anonymous donors. That tells me Gleick doesn’t really want a debate; he wants a monologue.

Indeed, in 2001, Gleick told U.S. News & World Report, “The debate is over.”

This is how the global-warming community operates. Activists accuse skeptics of being anti-science and dishonest under the apparent belief that they are honest and analytical. They’re filled with their integrity until they get frustrated. They say that they only want to debate, except the debate is over. Then they wonder why skeptics don’t believe them.

— Debra J. Saunders
Townhall.com
Feb. 23, 2012

Germany’s envirowhackos have gone incendiary, as a former apostle of the climate change religion, Fritz Vahrenholt, has coauthored a new, best-selling book that casts doubts on the shoddy science of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The mean greenies in Germany are so hot at Vahrenholt that they probably ought to charge themselves a carbon tax, or buy on offsetting credit, or just

kick back and relax with a cold drink on a furry polar bear rug in front of a big log fire.

“The left wing German online TAZ here has a weekend article called Climate Skeptics Are Like Viruses,” writes the website No Trick Zone, “which looks at the controversy swirling about Vahrenholt’s ... new skeptic book Die kalte Sonne [The Cold Sun.]” The Taz site includes cute pictures of blood thirsty, meat eating, Coca Cola drinking polar bear cannibals, to emphasize the point: Vahrenholt, bad, polar bears, good. The left uses polar bears as their Little Orphan Annie of global warming. The sun’s out everyday.

The two hypotheses put forward in the book by Vahrenholt and his coauthor Sebastian Lüning are that 1) The UN has purposefully slanted the science to reach a pro-global warming position and; 2) solar activity plays a much more important part in geological warming and cooling than scientists are willing to admit.

“Today, I want new scientific findings to be included in the climate debate,” Vahrenholt told an interviewer from the German Spiegel Online. “It would then become clear that the simple equation that CO2 and other man-made greenhouse gases are almost exclusively responsible for climate change is unsustainable. It hasn’t gotten any warmer on this planet in almost 14 years, despite continued increases in CO2 emissions. Established climate science has to come up with an answer to that.”

Currently the book is Amazon Germany’s number one seller under Environment and Ecology and number

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62 on its Top 100 List.

In part that's because Vahrenholt is one of Germany's best-known environmental activists says the Energy Tribune. "If Al Gore or David Suzuki or NASA's Jim Hansen were suddenly to renounce man-made global warming," says the Tribune's Jim Delingpole, "it could hardly be more surprising. Up until two years ago, Vahrenholt was Germany's Godfather of Green: a green activist and former environment minister for the State of Hamburg."

— John Ransom
Townhall.com
Feb. 22, 2012