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The Aesthetic: Clues to God's Design for Beauty



Cover Story

LifeWay Christian Store's recent decision to pull the film *The Blind Side* from its shelves because of profanity, violence, and immoral behavior has ignited a debate in Christian circles about the role of art and beauty, and Christians' place in consuming and creating art. There seem to be two camps: those who believe that the value of Christian movies is primarily their effectiveness as a tool for evangelism and those who believe they are an art form, valuable for their own sake, that can reveal God's truth in profound ways. To answer this question we must cultivate an understanding of the biblical worldview of aesthetics — whether objective beauty actually exists and how it

might be known through the moral order and through nature.

Should Christians Care about Aesthetics?

Aesthetics is the study of how beauty both embodies and points the way to truth. What we call art is the physical expression of aesthetic principles. Most Christians are accustomed to truth being communicated propositionally (in a three-point sermon, for example). But artistic truth should be taken seriously as well. Art is powerful in penetrating our minds and spirits. That's why it's easier to recall the tune and lyrics to a theologically rich hymn than to remember the points of a sermon. Good art enables us to appreciate true beauty.

Such is the power of art and beauty that

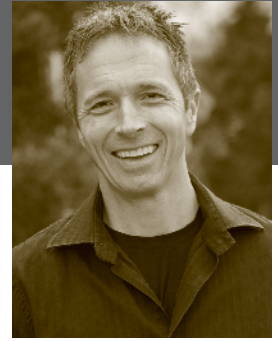
Christian art scholar H.R. Rookmaaker said art itself can be a vehicle for carrying out Christ's commandment to love others. "Love is to make things that are right and fitting, to help our fellow-man, to make this world more beautiful, more harmonious, more suitable for human living, more suitable for expressing that inner beauty and love for which all men are searching — even if, in despair, mankind often breaks it down, even if, in sin, we often destroy beauty and create ugliness," Rookmaaker wrote. "Beauty, as it were, is a by-product of love, of life in its full sense, of life in love and freedom."¹

Does Objective Beauty Exist?

The skeptical philosopher David Hume wrote, "Beauty in things exists merely in the

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



Ancient philosophers believed that the key to attaining wisdom was to comprehend truth, goodness, and beauty. Today, biblically-rooted Christians usually go along with the truth and goodness part, but reject the beauty part outright. Asking “Does objective beauty exist?” is guaranteed to start a rousing debate. Even spiritually mature Christians are reluctant to say “yes.” “Beauty,” most reply, “exists only in the eye of the beholder.”

By insisting that there really is no such thing as objective beauty, believers are

forfeiting one of the most important apologetics arguments for the existence of God. It's called the “aesthetic argument” after the branch of philosophy that deals with beauty and art, and it is highly compelling. Consider these observations:

1 God has positioned human beings to see beauty. Scientists tell us that the human eye is unique in creation for its ability to vividly sense color, texture, contrast, and motion. And we're perfectly positioned on a life-supporting planet in a unique place in the universe ideally situated for observing and marveling at the works of our creator (see Psalm 8:3 for how this causes us to humble ourselves and worship God). God has given us eyes to see, and lots to look at.

2 The orientation to beauty is innate. In graduate school we reviewed studies in which newly born infants viewed pictures of adult faces that had been judged by a panel of adults to be attractive or unattractive. The infants strongly preferred the attractive faces (as judged by the infants'

length of gaze). Somehow these newborns found the “beautiful” faces more interesting without having studied symmetry, proportion, and harmony. It was just something they knew.

3 There is wide agreement about what is beautiful. For my wife's birthday we enjoyed an evening gazing through high-powered telescopes at Venus, Jupiter's moons, the Orion Nebula and the Andromeda Galaxy, which is thought to contain one trillion stars. Not one of our dozens of companions looked at the universe's

wonders and said, “Wow, that's hideous.” Human orientation toward beauty in nature is so pervasive that cranky atheists such as Richard Dawkins are forced to acknowledge it in order to dispute it. In *Blind Watchmaker* Dawkins defines biology as “the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.” How is it that people all over the world and across time seem to agree on what is beautiful in nature?

4 We know ugliness when we see it. When we observe suffering, see people or communities failing to reach their potential, or watch someone “acting ugly” (as we used to say in the South), we somehow sense that this is not as it should be. Is it possible that we have in our hearts an understanding of what is “righteous,” by which we can know that what we're observing is “unrighteous?” Even non-believers get it. Lately I've been following the work of a group called Architects for Humanity — a secular network of architects, engineers, and designers — as they seek to redeem

architecture through aesthetically pleasing as well as functional and sustainable structures. Christians should be at the forefront when it comes to bringing beauty from ashes.

5 The rejection of God leads to an abandonment of loveliness. Compare the great cathedrals, designed in a time when a biblical worldview was assumed to be true, to the lifeless architecture that characterizes “there is no God” secular regimes. When people truly contemplate the awesomeness of our creator, they think, live, and design differently than when they buy into the “function over form” utilitarian impulse.

In his *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* T.S. Eliot argued that a culture is nothing more than a physical manifestation of a group's religion. Most Americans claim to be at least nominally Christian, but the ugliness and shallowness of American culture belie that fact. We must intensify our focus on aesthetics — beauty, symmetry, and design — if we are to bring a true biblical worldview to bear on our society. This calling is especially important in our visual age, when, as Ravi Zacharias phrases it, “People hear with their eyes and think with their feelings.”

Beauty will not, as Fyodor Dostoevsky maintained, save the world. The world is saved by the One whom Isaiah described as possessing “no beauty that we should desire him.” And yet through the terror of Christ's suffering, God intercepted the human descent into ugliness and reconciled us to Himself, the One whose splendor covers the heavens (Habakkuk 3:3). Focusing on that kind of beauty will change how we live every day.

“God has given us eyes to see and lots to look at.”

Jeff Myers

mind which contemplates them.” But the idea that beauty is subjective — “in the eye of the beholder” — is a radical departure from the classical view that beauty is accessible, knowable, and nameable.

Jonathan Edwards attempted to deal with the “subjective vs. objective” question by explaining that there are two categories of beauty: beauties that are “more palpable and explicable” and those that are “hidden and secret.”²² The former category would include such beauties as scenes of nature and musical chords, the pleasing nature of which can be explained mathematically or scientifically as a product of order in the universe. “Hidden and secret” beauty, on the other hand, revolves around rightly ordered relationships — such as a picture of a mother caring for her young child. “These hidden beauties are commonly by far the greatest, because the more complex a beauty is, the more hidden is it,” Edwards wrote. “In this latter sort consists principally the beauty of the world.”²³ To Edwards, then, beauty is objective, but its objectivity is sometimes hard to explain because it is so

richly textured.

To say that beauty is complicated is not to say that it is unknowable, though. In our pursuit of a biblical worldview of aesthetics, we would present two criterion: is it moral and does it tell the truth about the created order?

Clue #1 to Understanding Beauty: Is It Moral?

Dr. Beth Impson, a professor of English at Bryan College and a Summit Tennessee instructor, has wrestled for years with how to define and teach beauty. “I have always struggled,” she admits. “How do we talk about what makes great art? Is it just an aesthetic skill? Where does the idea of morality come in?” This tension came to a head when Impson examined the works of American author Kate Chopin, a talented writer who nevertheless advocated radical feminist ideas such as adultery as a way to strengthen marriage.

Impson’s struggle — how Chopin

could use such beautiful language to communicate such a morally reprobate sentiment — led her to conclude that beauty

of the grandest sort must be morally as well as aesthetically skilled. “No matter how beautiful Chopin’s sentences and

paragraphs are, you can’t recommend it except to discerning readers,” Impson said.

To find moral beauty, Impson says we ought to look to what Scripture says about the scarring effect that moral depravity has on it. Impson points to Ezekiel 16:25 as an example (“At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring”). “Something is morally beautiful if it tells us truths about human nature, truths about the created world, truths about who God is,” says Impson. “[Advocating adultery] is moral ugliness.”

That doesn’t mean that beautiful art should obscure the often ugly effects of the fall. Rather, it’s how those effects are treated that determine the moral beauty of an artistic work. Works like the film *Schindler’s List* or stories by Flannery O’Connor exhibit moral truth by exposing the wretched effects of the fall on the human condition, and in doing so cause us to yearn for that which is morally beautiful. Impson points out that minor chords in a piece of music create dissonance but can actually contribute to the harmony of the piece by creating a longing for resolution.

See **aesthetic**, page 4

“To say that beauty is complicated is not to say it’s unknowable.”

Further Reading on Art and Beauty

- *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts* by Hillary Brand, Adrienne Chaplin
- *Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* by Phillip Graham Ryken
- *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* by H.R. Rookmaaker
- *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Minds, Morals, and Meaning* by Nancy Pearcey
- *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* by George Edward Veith, Jr.
- *Art & the Bible* by Francis Schaeffer
- *On Moral Fiction* by John Gardner

Clue #2 to Understanding Beauty: Does It Tell the Truth About the Created Order?

From a biblical worldview, what counts as aesthetic beauty isn't something we make up ourselves — it's found in the created order. Francis Schaeffer puts it this way in *Art & the Bible*: "The common symbolic vocabulary that belongs to all men (the artists and the viewers) is the world around us, namely God's world. That symbolic vocabulary in the representational arts stands parallel to the normal grammar and normal syntax in the literary arts. When, therefore, there is no attempt on the part of an artist to use this symbolic vocabulary at all, then communication is impossible here too."⁴

Romans 1:20 says that God has made His truth known in creation. Good art is compelling because its very order tells the truth about God, human beings, and nature. Even in our fallenness we are driven to see order of this

sort. Impson sometimes walks into a classroom of students and writes two sentences on the board. Whether or not the sentences have anything to do with one another, her students always try to connect the two. They naturally strive to apply some sort of order. "It's the same thing with art," Impson said. "It's embedded within us."

Why Does All This Matter?

Discussions about aesthetics can be esoteric and academic, but the recognition of what is beautiful, true, and excellent is a discipline that can be cultivated through practice. Whether we like it or not, we're constantly bombarded with something passing itself off as art: music on the radio, television shows and films, novels at the local bookstore, or photos in a magazine. Living discerningly requires us to actively reflect on what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful in each of these situations. If we do, we can appreciate God's created order in new ways. If we don't, we're opening

ourselves up to deception. "Art can reach us in ways that nothing else can, for truth or for falsehood," Impson said.

In the end, making the debate about *The Blind Side* a question of proselytization sells the Christian worldview short. As Christians we ought to discipline our aesthetic understanding — in movies, visual arts, music, and more — to more skillfully communicate truth, meaning, and purpose in a world of squalor, hopelessness, and dejection. It's not about us and our preferences — it's about whether the whole earth might worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness (Psalm 96:9).

Notes

1. H.R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1970) p. 243.
2. Jonathan Edwards, "The Beauty of the World" <http://www.enjoyinggoddministries.com/article/the-beauty-of-the-world/>.
3. See note 2.
4. Francis Schaeffer, *Art & the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1973) p. 40.

The Waldo Canyon Fire Story: God's Provision During a Natural Disaster

As many of you know, the Colorado Springs area was ravaged in June by the worst wildfire in the state's history, right in Summit's backyard.

As of press time, the Waldo Canyon Fire had just been declared 100 percent contained, and it thankfully no longer threatens Summit, local homes, or any other structures. Yet we grieve for the families who have already lost so much. To date, the fire has:

- Burned more than 18,000

acres

- Destroyed 350 homes
- Killed 2 people

Though Summit lost no property or lives, our students and staff's lives were disrupted when we got evacuation orders in the wee hours of June 24. All 300 students, staff members, and our families had to pack up and leave, right in the middle of session 3. Thankfully, Mountain Springs Church in east Colorado Springs housed Summit for the remaining

week of the session, and session 4 was moved to Colorado Christian University in Lakewood, Colorado for its entirety.

Session 5 saw Summit back in Manitou, thankfully.

We thank you all for your continued prayers for Summit and Colorado Springs. We're now investigating the financial impact the fire had on us and finding ways to aid our community.

We praise God for His provision and pray His peace to the victims.

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.

Art

A painting of Che Guevara subtitled "Revolucion!" by a Mexican-American artist was on display for over three months at the International Airport in Reno, Nevada, USA. On May 9 it was taken down by airport officials as originally scheduled. Complaints by outraged airport patrons had nothing to do with this removal.

"The painting of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara will remain on display through May 9 with the other nearly 100 items in the employee art exhibit," was how airport spokesman Brian Kulpin answered the complaints.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara scorned Mexicans as "a rabble of illiterate Indians," jailed artists at a higher rate than Stalin, co-founded the terrorist movement that pulled off among the first and deadliest airplane hijackings in the Western Hemisphere, and craved to nuke the USA.

In November 1958 Cubana Airlines Flight 495 from Miami to Varadero was hijacked at gunpoint by terrorists belonging to Castro and Che's July 26 Movement. The plane crashed in Cuba killing 14 passengers. Che's glowing face greeted thousands of passengers boarding their flights at Reno-Tahoe Airport. How very thoughtful of airport officials!

Actually, in the interest of historical accuracy, I should clarify that Che

Guevara's anti-American blood-lust could have been slaked only by nuking the American patrons of this American airport born before 1962. So he mostly craved to nuke the parents and grandparents of the Americans who patronize, run and fund Reno-Tahoe International Airport. This obviously includes those who awarded 1st place in the airport's Employee Art contest to the Che Guevara iconography on prominent display for over three months.

Earlier this month an American of Cuban heritage who lives in Nevada was the first to complain about the painting, but as usual, to no avail. "Artistic freedom" trumped him to a pulp, as explained by airport officials, and further rationalized by Linda Curcio, chairwoman of the University of Nevada history department.

"Linda Curcio said she was not surprised that a Cuban American such as Paz would be concerned about an image of Guevara," explained the AP story.

"For him, (Guevara) means the Castro regime," she said.

"Guevara's *military tactics* (italics mine) led to the deaths of thousands during revolutions in Cuba, Bolivia and other South American nations. But his beliefs on communism and Latin America's stance in the world appealed to anti-establishment college students in the 1960s, and his iconic image has been portrayed on posters, T-shirts and murals since his death," Curcio said.

"Radical college students may have had posters in a dorm room or worn a beret like (Guevara)," Curcio said. "He was connected to the idea of useful revolt and revolution. For (the artist) it may not be about Cuba. It may be about (Guevara) and student revolt in the U.S."

Leave it to a history department chairman to recite the Castro-concocted talking points on Che Guevara almost flawlessly.

For any University of Nevada students who read Townhall, here's some talking points for any question and answer sessions after your next lecture by professor Linda Curcio:

"In fact, professor Curcio, according to the U.S. embassy, the total military casualties on both sides of the anti-Batista skirmishing in Cuba from 1956-59 actually ran to 152. New Orleans has an annual murder rate *double* that. The famous "Battle of Santa Clara" where Che Guevara earned his eternal martial fame claimed *five* casualties total on *both* sides.

"In fact, professor Curcio, those 'thousands of casualties' at the hands of the Castro brothers and Che Guevara were in no way related to military action. Instead, utterly defenseless men, boys and (and even some women) were bound and gagged and dragged in front of firing squads."

"In fact, professor Curcio, since you're fluent in Spanish, here's an excerpt from Che Guevara's very diaries: 'My nostrils dilate while savoring the acrid odor of gunpowder and blood. Crazy with fury I will stain my rifle red while slaughtering any *vencido* that falls in my hands!' The Spanish word *vencido*, as you know professor Curcio, translates into 'defeated' or 'surrendered.'

"One day before his death in Bolivia, Che Guevara for the first time in his life finally faced something properly describable as combat. He snuck away from the

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a look at our world

news and commentary, continued from page 5

firefight and surrendered with a full clip in his pistol, while whimpering to his captors: 'Don't shoot! I'm Che! I'm worth more to you alive than dead!' In the interest of quality education here at University of Nevada, Professor Curcio, we implore you to assign Humberto Fontova's book as required reading for all history classes."

At any rate, Reno-Tahoe airport passengers must have been comforted to know that an airport employee felt the same affection for the hemisphere's Godfather of airplane hijackings that Leonardo da Vinci felt for Mona Lisa and Andy Warhol for Marilyn Monroe.

And needless to add, if an American of African heritage had complained about a picture of, say, former KKK chieftan David Duke (who killed nobody and hijacked no planes) in the same place it would be ceremoniously taken down and perhaps ceremoniously hurled in a dumpster or burned. Artistic freedom be double-damned.

Then whoever put it up would run the gauntlet of media inquisitions, groveling apologies at every stop. And he'd still probably lose his job.

But then African-Americans vote Democratic at roughly the same rate as Cuban-Americans vote Republican. So none of the usual liberal bugaboos and shibboleths enforcing "sensitivity" in speech and writing apply to this latter minority, for they disparage the Democratic Plantation in word and deed and are thus lepers in MSM eyes.

"The U.S. is the great enemy of mankind!" raved the terrorist who prominently garnished the wall in the airport of Reno, Nevada, USA. "Against those hyenas (Americans) there is no option but extermination! The imperial-

ist enemy (Americans) must feel like a hunted animal wherever he moves. Thus we'll destroy him! We must keep our hatred (against the U.S.) alive and fan it to paroxysm! If the nuclear missiles had remained (in Cuba) we would have fired them against the heart of the U.S. including New York City. "

Che's hate-obsession was actually the U.S. Most of the Cubans he murdered, he murdered because he thought they were affiliated with the U.S. ("U.S.-Backed" Batista, the CIA, etc.). In fact probably 99.5 percent of the men (and boys, and some women) his regime murdered had no affiliation with Batista whatsoever and the vast majority had fought the Batista regime — but alas, as non-communists.

But as usual, most of the people Che Guevara craved to incinerate viewed this Reno Airport issue — as they viewed the Mercedes issue and the Ozzie Guillen issue — as a quaint and silly obsession of hyper-sensitive, loudmouthed and even ungrateful Cuban-Americans.

Maybe former Brazilian President (and friend of Che Guevara) Janio Quadros was on to something when in 1961 he snickered to a confidant that "those Americans are much like women. They have a masochistic streak. The more you slap them around, the more you get out of them."

— Humberto Fontova
Townhall.com
May 14, 2012

Economics

The U.S. federal budget in numbers we can understand:

U.S. tax revenue: \$2,340,000,000,000
Federal annual spending budget:
\$3,590,000,000,000

New annual debt from overspending this year: \$1,250,000,000,000
National debt: \$15,400,000,000,000
Last year's budget cut by Congress:
\$38,500,000,000

Now remove 8 zeros and pretend it's a household budget:

Annual family income: \$23,400
Money the family spends annually:
\$35,900
New debt added to credit cards: \$12,500
Outstanding balance on credit cards:
\$154,000
Total cuts to the family budget: \$385
— WORLD Magazine
May 19, 2012, p. 12

Abortion

The Texas Women's Health Program last year provided \$41 million, much of it federal funds, for services such as birth control and breast- and cervical-cancer screenings. Some \$13 million of that went to 49 Planned Parenthood clinics that don't provide abortions, the clinics said. Clinics that provide abortions, including 14 Planned Parenthood ones, have long been barred from the program.

Texas adopted new rules, effective Tuesday, that cut off funding to all clinics "affiliated" with abortion providers — a move that excludes all Planned Parenthood clinics.

Because of the new restriction, the Obama administration said it no longer would fund the Texas program, but Gov. Rick Perry has said the state could pay for the program itself.

— Nathan Koppel
Wall Street Journal
May 2, 2012, p. A4

Summit Alum Makes a Living Capturing Beauty

For Summit grad Rowan Gillson, every day is an opportunity to encounter God's design and mentor others in how to communicate it through the medium of photography. Just 30 years of age, Gillson's accomplishment as a photographer and entrepreneur have enabled him to travel the world instructing others through the Institute of Photographic Studies (IPS) and equip a rising generation of culture leaders through a nonprofit ministry called World Changers.

Photography is perhaps the most popular and broadly accessible medium today through which people encounter aesthetic truth. It's also a trade Gillson thinks rich with opportunities to relate to others, discuss ideas, and live out the biblical worldview. "I've discovered the camera is either a very effective bridge or a very effective barricade," Gillson said. "As soon as you pull out a camera, people are really interested in who you are and what you're doing. The camera becomes an opportunity for you to connect with people."

Gillson's own ideas about beauty — and what he tries to instill in his photography students during seminars with IPS — were profoundly shaped by his years at Summit. Gillson came as a student in the summer of 2005, stuck around that summer as a staffer, and continued volunteering with Summit through 2010 as time permitted. "Summit helped me understand that if who I am and what I do have meaning, then I can make a difference in the world I live in," he confessed. "Summit's tagline — 'Ideas have consequences' — comes up regularly [in

photography]. I can trace things I see in everyday life back to the ideas."

IPS, which uses Summit's Manitou Springs facilities for several classes throughout the year, is a program that focuses on the technical aspects of the craft: lighting, composition, and color. But Gillson and his staff also talk with students about what makes a particular photograph meaningful — what the photograph is communicating and how its purpose can be communicated better. "We don't take it from an approach of trying to define or describe beauty," Gillson recently explained. "The way it comes out is when we're looking at images. We often use words like 'stronger,' 'more successful,' or 'better.' We're describing the image's impact on a viewer."

So in Gillson's estimation, a particular photo's aesthetic quality comes not only from the use of the technical photographic aspects, but also its teleological fidelity — its purpose. For a standard idea of what general beauty is, Gillson looks to the created order for perspective. "I think it goes back to the nature or character of our designer," he said. "We appreciate, we recognize — even when we don't necessarily know why — loose things we might call God's fingerprints. I think visually we're designed for this world in a way that allows us to recognize common things as beautiful."

Gillson explained that the commonly known "Rule of Thirds" — the idea that visual artifacts are more appealing when the subject of the image is placed where imaginary lines dividing the image into thirds intersect — is a product of God's



Rowan Gillson with his wife, Jocellyn

created order. The idea has its roots in a philosophical and mathematical notion known as the Golden Mean. So the aesthetical standard isn't arbitrary; it's a product of purposeful design.

That's why Gillson emphasizes at IPS that photographers — and artists in general — have a design to their photos, besides static self-expression. "It's the worldview behind the photography that says, 'Yes, there are objective truths. There's reality. There's a meaning to things. The pictures that I take have meaning.'"

And it's for that and its relational potential that Gillson sees photography as an increasingly valuable craft for Christians to take up. "Photography is a legitimate trade," he said. "If we can use it to impact people's lives, that's a really powerful way to impact the Kingdom."



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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel

Origins

Emory University should have had bragging rights for this commencement season: Internationally renowned neurosurgeon and humanitarian Ben Carson delivered the keynote address at the university's 167th commencement on May 14.

Carson (see "Second opinion," April 21) has directed pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center for more than 25 years. He overcame a hard childhood in inner-city Detroit and has become particularly famous for his work in separating twins with conjoined heads. In 2008 he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States. His fifth book, *America the Beautiful*, is now out.

In announcing the honorary degree and keynote speech that Carson would receive and give, Emory President Jim Wagner said, "Few men or women have demonstrated to so inspiring a degree the transformational effect of liberal learning and the humanities. Dr. Carson has transformed lives both inside the operating room and beyond."

But campus bragging about commencement stopped early in May once many faculty members and students learned that Carson has faith in Christ and disdain for evolution. Four Emory biology professors complained to the school newspaper: "Carson argues that...there are no transitional fossils that provide evidence for the evolution of humans from a common ancestor with other apes...and that life is too complex to have originated by the natural process of evolution."

He's right on both counts, but the professors—joined by 160 other faculty members as well as many researchers and students—stated flatly that Carson is "incor-

rect.... The theory of evolution is as strongly supported as the theory of gravity and the theory that infectious diseases are caused by microorganisms. Dismissing evolution disregards the importance of science and critical thinking to society."

Carson has made enormous advances in medicine, and his disbelief in evolution has not hampered him. If he had a similar disbelief in gravity or germ theory, it's doubtful that he could have been such an innovator, since I suspect it's hard to operate when both doctors and patients are floating gravity-less—and I suspect patients don't survive if their surgeons don't scrub.

Carson's problem is not a refusal to engage in critical thinking. His thought crime is critically thinking about an academic orthodoxy. The professors particularly complained about the connections Carson makes between evolutionary theory and ethics: If we're merely the result of evolution, he has said, "You don't have to abide by a set of moral codes, you determine your own conscience based on your own desires." But the history of the past century, and the lifestyle of many campuses, shows that he's right. Because of the new restriction, the Obama administration said it no longer would fund the

— Marvin Olasky
WORLD Magazine
June 2, 2012, p. A11

Environmentalism

Before Facebook's recent initial public offering, the media obsessed over superlatives. It was the largest-ever IPO for a U.S. technology company. It was the third-largest in U.S. history. And now the obsession is over the company's lackluster revenue prospects and possible misconduct by investment bankers involved in the offering.

Missing here is any awareness of the

enormous quantities of electricity Facebook and other data-intensive technology companies require. Those requirements expose a fundamental mismatch between the high-power-density world of Big Data and the low-density electricity production inherent in most renewable energy projects.

In documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on Feb. 1, Facebook said that it stores more than 100 petabytes of information. (That's 100 million gigabytes.) Facebook spreads that gargantuan quantity of data among a handful of warehouse-size data centers filled with servers located in Virginia, California and Oregon. The company's new data center is a 300,000 square-foot facility in Prineville, Ore., that draws 28 megawatts, enough power for about 28,000 homes.

That's not unusual. The power needed by data centers has been a hot topic for more than a decade as local electricity grids have been forced to adapt to huge new loads. Google alone reports that it operates 11 data centers in six states and five foreign countries that require some 260 megawatts of power, enough for 260,000 homes.

As more computing moves into the "cloud"—the network of data centers that deliver information and software to our mobile devices and computers—electricity use is soaring. Data centers now consume about 1.3% of all global electricity. That amount of energy, about 277 terawatt-hours per year, exceeds the electricity use of dozens of countries, including Australia and Mexico.

And that quantity of energy will continue to grow. Intel expects the number of devices connected to the Internet—ranging from smartphones to GPS-enabled locaters on shipping containers—to grow to 1.5 billion by 2015 from 2.5 billion today.

Last month, Greenpeace issued a

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report called “How Clean is Your Cloud?” The environmental group graded a series of technology companies, including Facebook, Apple, Dell, Amazon and others, on the percentage of what it calls “dirty energy” used by their data centers. Greenpeace—which, of course, has a Facebook page—gave the social-media company a “D” for what it calls “energy transparency.” It is also claiming to have convinced Facebook to “unfriend” coal-fired electricity.

Never mind that 40% of all global electricity production comes from coal. Let’s consider what the “clean energy” footprint of one of these big data centers might look like.

Apple has touted its plan to use solar energy to help run its massive new data center in Maiden, N.C. But in a recent blog post (perspectives.mvdirona.com) titled “I Love Solar Power But,” James Hamilton, a vice president and engineer on Amazon’s Web services team, calculated that the 500,000 square-foot facility would need about 6.5 square miles of solar panels.

He noted that setting aside that kind of space in densely populated regions, where many data centers are built, is “ridiculous” and would be particularly difficult because the land couldn’t have any trees or structures that could cast shadows on the panels.

Wind? An average wind-energy project has an electricity-generating capacity of about two watts per square meter. Even assuming that a wind project produces electricity 100% of the time (it won’t), Facebook’s data center in Prineville would need a wind project covering about 14 million square meters, nearly 5.5 square miles, or about four times the size of New York City’s Central Park.

The mismatch between the power demands of Big Data and the renewable-

energy darlings of the moment are obvious. U.S. data centers are now consuming about 86 terawatt-hours of electricity per year, or about 43 times as much electricity as is produced by all the solar-energy projects in America.

“Clean energy” is a great friend for Facebook, Apple and every other energy consumer in America—as long as those consumers don’t use much energy at all.

— Robert Bryce

Wall Street Journal

May 29, 2012, p. A11

Economics

When a friend reminded me this past week that there is not a single nation, on the whole face of the globe, that operates with a genuinely free market economy, I did a double take. Can’t be, I thought.

But he pressed me, offering a free lunch if I could name such a country. Maybe you can help me—but so far, I haven’t claimed the free lunch.

The exchange took me back 20 years to a discussion I had in a city park near downtown Havana, Cuba. An elderly and slightly scruffy gentleman had introduced himself as a retired economics professor, unapologetic to call himself a committed Marxist, and eager to practice his English.

Indeed, my new friend’s English was good enough to draw a sharp picture of his analysis: “You people think mostly about the individual person, and you put a great emphasis on such a person’s freedom. We think mostly about the common good, and our emphasis tends to be more on the benefits to society as a whole.”

Then, because he also wanted to learn a little more about the differences between soccer and American football, I remember our sketching together a football field to illustrate what he had just described. We

penciled in individual rights at one end of the field (my American specialty), and community good at the other (his Cuban specialty). But I worried that this was an overly simplistic view of things. So I emphasized to him, pointing to the American end of the field: “Don’t assume that we’re playing anywhere near this goal line. Most of what goes on in the U.S.,” I stressed, “happens out around the 40 or 50-yard line. The lives individual Americans live take place much closer to midfield than to what you see as the American goal line.”

All of which brings us back to the claim that there’s not a nation anywhere on earth serving as an unambiguous picture of the free market at work. Have you thought of one yet?

To the extent that Americans see themselves as practitioners and beneficiaries of the so-called “market economy,” both honesty and modesty remind us to admit that the society in which we live has been incredibly shaped by a collectivist mentality. Everywhere we turn, through almost every hour of every day, our lives are regulated and shaped by every level of government—and all supposedly for the common good. From this morning’s stop at the gas station, to the labeling on what we picked up at the grocery store, to the interest rate announced by the neighborhood bank, to the words that got bleeped out of this evening’s newscast—in all these and many other situations, someone wasn’t content just to let market forces do their thing. Someone was always jumping in to say: “Let’s give those market forces a little extra help.”

Implicit in all those governmental efforts to “help” market forces do their thing is the sense—maybe we could even call it the hubris—that government has enough intelligence and brainpower to do it

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better than the market would by itself. And maybe that's why we're not left with a single notable example of a free market model that we can all sit back and view and then say: "So that's what such an animal looks like!" Everywhere we go, we always spoil things by jumping in and upsetting the process.

In the United States we haven't been close—for several generations—to creating a test case for a so-called market economy. It's at best a blend, and more and more, in recent years, it's been a blend tilting toward collectivism rather than freedom.

All of which puts a sharp focus on this year's elections. At one end of the playing field, Coach Obama persistently calls us to apply the collectivist playbook to more and more aspects of life. We're getting a pretty vivid example of that experiment.

But for better or for worse, the other model simply isn't there for inspection and review—not in Havana, not in the United States, and apparently nowhere else in the whole wide world.

— Joe Belz
WORLD Magazine
May 29, 2012, p. 3

Most politicians prefer platitudes and happy talk. Think "The fundamentals of the economy are strong," "Prosperity is around the corner," and President Obama's ill-fated "recovery summer." Sen. Tom Coburn, a Republican from Oklahoma, is different.

"America is already bankrupt," he declares bluntly early on in his new book. "Our payments on our obligations — our unfunded liabilities — exceed our income as far as the eye can see," Mr. Coburn continues. "No amount of obtainable growth or tax revenue will be enough."

— W. James Antle III
The Washington Times

May 21, 2012, p. 30

Secularism

A Texas judge has ruled that "imprecatory" prayers, or prayers for another person's harm, are legal so long as they don't result in direct threats or personal damage. Mikey Weinstein, a Jewish agnostic and founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, sued Gordon Klingenschmitt, a former Navy chaplain, whose website allegedly called on supporters to claim Psalm 109 in prayers for Weinstein's demise.

A prayer posted on Klingenschmitt's website (prayinjesusname.org) and on YouTube that cites Weinstein and anti-Christian activist Barry Lynn reads in part, "We bless them but they curse us. ... Let their days be few." District Court Judge Martin Hoffman dismissed Weinstein's lawsuit, but Weinstein, a former Air Force lawyer who served in the Reagan White House, said that "a very aggressive appeal" of the decision was "highly likely." In 2005 Weinstein sued the Air Force Academy for allowing Christian "proselytization," and in 2007 charged the Pentagon for allowing lunchtime Bible studies to take place on its premises (see "One-man offensive," Aug. 25, 2007)—with little result.

— Thomas Kidd
WORLD Magazine
May 19, 2012, p. 68

Beneath all the hypocrisy over constitutional restraints and traditional walls of separation, secular activists and self-styled defenders of "civil liberties" seek to transform American society in a way that our Founders and most subsequent generations would never recognize. They seem eager to defend flag-burning, obscenity and every other form of radical expression, while seek-

ing to suppress emblems of the Christian faith that helped shape the nation since the arrival of earliest colonists.

— Michael Medved
USA Today
May 14, 2012, p. 7A

God Almighty needs an editor, according to a federal judge in Virginia. At least, He does when the Ten Commandments are on government property.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had sued the Giles County school district for posting the Ten Commandments in its public schools, and U.S. District Judge Michael F. Urbanski sent the case to mediation on Monday, suggesting a compromise: deleting the four commandments that mention God.

An Obama appointee, Judge Urbanski also issued a preliminary injunction on behalf of the ACLU in February prohibiting the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors from "invoking the name of a specific deity associated with any one specific faith or belief in prayers given at Board meetings." No word yet on how much this ticked off the local Hittites and voodoo priests.

It's all part of the campaign for "religious equality," in which atheism and tree worship are considered equal (or superior) to the nation's founding faith. The only surprise Monday was that the ACLU didn't immediately object to leaving intact the commandment against adultery.

Among the items displayed alongside the Ten Commandments at Narrows High School are the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower Compact, the Magna Carta, the words to the Star-Spangled Banner and the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom.

Because none of the other 10 docu-

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ments is being challenged, it's obvious that the Ten Commandments are offensive solely because they are religious in origination and remind people of America's dominant faiths, Christianity and Judaism. In a brief filed on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the ACLU says the presence of the Decalogue violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

For 10 years, the Ten Commandments had been posted in a frame in each of the public schools of Giles County. They were gifts to the schools from a local pastor, who thought they would be a good addition in the wake of the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado in 1999.

The displays were not a problem until Dec. 8, 2010, when the Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter to the superintendent demanding that the displays be removed after a single complaint by a student and the student's parent.

The schools tried a variety of solutions, including replacing the Ten Commandments with a copy of the Declaration of Independence. This didn't sit well with many in the community. On Jan. 11, 2011, a meeting was held with about 200 people, including clergy, and a short time later, the school board voted to reinstall the displays.

The commandments were reposted and then taken down again upon the advice of counsel. A local lawyer proposed a display that would include the Decalogue in a historic exhibit about Western foundational law and government.

It's unclear whether the ACLU will accept the judge's offered compromise because the six remaining commandments came from the God Who is not supposed to be mentioned on government property, even though it's part of the universe that He

created.

"We intend to show that the school board cannot simply shroud its religious purpose for posting the Ten Commandments by surrounding it with historical documents," said ACLU of Virginia Legal Director Rebecca Glenberg.

The ACLU's press release notes, "The Ten Commandments are posted on a main hallway at the high school, near the trophy case and on the way to the cafeteria, where it is seen by students every day."

If that's not enough for a sensitive, easily offended student to lose his or her lunch, what is?

According to Liberty Counsel, which is representing the school district, "The Virginia Standards of Learning requires students to know about the foundational principles of civilizations, including the Hebrews, and the foundations of law and government. Secular textbooks published by Prentice Hall and McGraw-Hill trace the roots of democracy and law and specifically refer to the Ten Commandments and many of the documents posted as part of the Foundations Display."

To the ACLU, the other documents are fig leaves:

"Given the history of the School Board's Ten Commandments displays, any alleged secular purpose for the current displays are [sic], and will be perceived as, a sham. The displays were erected with the primary aim of advancing religion."

It's a warped reversal of the ACLU's logic back when it argued that fig leaves like Hugh Hefner's hedonistic "Playboy Philosophy" essays turned his skin magazines into constitutionally protected works of literary merit. Mr. Hefner's primary aim, of course, was to advance pornography (and his wallet) but in the ACLU's world, that's

more than OK. So what if it was a sham?

C.S. Lewis observed that the agenda of the left is to make religion private and pornography public. In Virginia, the ACLU, otherwise known as the devil's law firm, is still doing its best to live down to that demonic goal.

— Robert Knight
The Washington Times
May 10, 2012

Homosexuality

Now that President Obama has "evolved" on the matter of same-sex marriage to the position favored by "enlightened" Americans, this would seem to be a good time for some rhetorical hygiene.

There are modest and civil proponents of same-sex marriage. But the tone of many advocates has been shrill to the point of frothing. The Southern Poverty Law Center, for example, put the National Organization for Marriage and the Family Research Council on its 2010 list of "hate groups" because of their opposition to gay marriage.

A religion professor at a Midwest state university explained Catholic opposition to same-sex marriage and found himself denounced for "hate speech" and fired from his teaching position (he was later reinstated). The Hastings Law School denied funding and recognition to a chapter of the Christian Legal Society because it required its members to conform their sexual behavior to traditional Christian teachings.

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., called the Defense of Marriage Act "a stain on our democracy."

To be sure, there is overheated language among some opponents of gay marriage as well, though not among the leadership. The vitriol on the left arises from one simple source -- the misappropriation of the race analogy. Once you convince yourself that

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same-sex marriage is the great civil rights cause of our time, it then follows logically that opponents are the moral equivalents of racists. That's what gay activist Dan Savage said explicitly:

"We need a cultural reckoning around gay and lesbian issues. There was once two sides to the race debate ... you could ... argue for segregation. You could argue against interracial marriage, against the Civil Rights Act, against extending voting rights to African Americans, and that used to be treated as one side ... of a pressing national debate, and it isn't anymore. And we really need to reach that point with gay and lesbian issues. There are no 'two sides' to the issues about gay and lesbian rights."

Here's a question for Rep. Lewis and Dan Savage and the SPLC and the rest: Does your intolerance for disagreement extend to pre-May 10 Barack Obama? Before Obama evolved back (he had been pro same-sex marriage before he was against it), was he spewing "hate"? When he said, at the Saddleback Church in 2008, "I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian ... it is also a sacred union. God's in the mix." Was that a "stain on our democracy"?

No? Then how about a modicum of respect for those who continue to hold the views that Obama abandoned only yesterday?

Six states and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage. Thirty-two states prohibit it -- some by statute and others by state constitutions. The nation is doing what both Obama and Romney say they prefer, dealing with the question state by state.

Romney's description of the issue as "tender and sensitive" was apt. But it should be possible for mature adults to discuss even

sensitive subjects without descending into name-calling.

My personal resistance to same-sex marriage arises not from any dislike of gays and lesbians but from the belief that traditional marriage is too important to be toyed with. When gays say, "marriage isn't doing well among heterosexuals," they have a point. Heterosexuals are making a mess of marriage. But that's all the more reason to be cautious about adding another blow.

Traditional marriage is recognized and to some degree privileged by society because it performs the most essential task of any civilization -- providing the optimal environment for raising children. Men and women bring different and complementary qualities to parenthood. The genetic tie, which both heterosexual parents have to their children, while not essential (I speak as an adoptive mother), is helpful in maintaining loyalty and support for the long haul. Having parents of opposite sexes gives children male and female role models. And the sexes differ in a thousand little ways that, when blended, tend to redound to kids' welfare. Just to name a few: mothers are more protective, fathers more challenging; mothers are more comforting, fathers more stimulating; mothers are more related, fathers more disciplinary.

Permitting people of the same sex to marry changes the nature of the institution. Rather than the optimal vehicle for raising children, it becomes just the social ratification of the relationship between two adults -- a seal of approval. Having your love validated by the larger society may seem important if you are gay. But marriage, rightly understood, is not really about love. It includes love. But it's really about stability and raising children.

That's what Obama said he believed,

until yesterday. It wasn't bigotry then, and it isn't now

— Mona Charen
The Washington Times
May 21, 2012, p. 31

Currently, men who have had sex with men even once since 1977 are indefinitely deferred from donating blood because of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B in such populations. The ban does not cover lesbians.

The ban is now being questioned because of dramatic improvements in testing blood and because, gay groups say, such a policy is "unduly stigmatizing" of MSM.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
May 21, 2012, p. 18

If Amendment One is defeated in North Carolina, much of the credit will have to go to Todd Stiefel.

Stiefel and his wife Diana gave a \$100,000 matching grant to Protect North Carolina Families, the group fighting the proposed state constitutional amendment to protect legal marriage "as between one woman and one man."

The grant "was fully matched, and then some," Stiefel told me, and came at a critical time, helping to pay for highly effective—and some say highly misleading—TV ads. The Stiefels gave two \$10,000 grants to Equality NC and the ACLU to aid email, social media, and other activities designed to defeat Amendment One.

Stiefel, 37, made his money the old-fashioned way: He inherited it. His great-great-grandfather started a candle and soap company in 1847 in Germany that became Stiefel Laboratories, which the Stiefel family sold to GlaxoSmithKline in 2009 for a

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reported \$2.9 billion.

That's not to say Stiefel isn't a hard worker and a strategic thinker. Raised nominally Roman Catholic, he graduated from Duke University, where he says he lost his faith, then worked in the family business for a dozen years. With his share of the wind-fall, Stiefel became a "freethought activist," serving on the board of—and in 2010 giving \$500,000 to—the Secular Coalition for America, a lobbying group that Stiefel told me is committed to "ending religious privilege."

Stiefel has also given major grants to American Atheists (\$100,000) and the Secular Student Alliance (\$50,000). In 2010 he gave \$20,000 to the ACLU of Mississippi, which used the money to host a high school prom after a school district canceled its prom when a lesbian tried to bring her girlfriend as a date.

Whether he wins or loses the Amendment One battle, Stiefel's money and his affable style—"Ask me anything; I'm an open book," he said—are winning him access and influence. In 2010 he and other leaders of the Secular Coalition for America had a meeting with White House officials to try to "get the government out of faith-based activities."

Stiefel's donations to defeat Amendment One are a fraction of the \$3 million opponents hope to raise, but his money primed the pump—attracting donations from around the nation and moving public opinion. Six months ago, 61 percent of North Carolina voters favored Amendment One. Today, that number has dropped to 54 percent. "This campaign is winnable," Stiefel said. "And we hope to win."

— Warren Cole Smith
WORLD Magazine
May 19, 2012, p. 42

It is one thing to talk about "fairness" when it comes to allowing gays and lesbians to marry; it is quite another to claim biblical authority for such relationships.

President Obama cited the "Golden Rule" about treating others as you would like to be treated, but in doing so he ignored the totality of Scripture and the Lord Himself, who alone gets to set the rules for human behavior.

The president says he is a "practicing Christian." It is difficult to be one while simultaneously holding a low view of the Bible, which his position on several social issues might suggest.

The same Book that informs him about the Person he told Pastor Rick Warren in 2008 is his "Savior," also speaks to the beginning of human life (he has done nothing to limit abortions), fornication between adults of the opposite sex (no word yet on his position on that subject), marriage, and adultery, which the Seventh Commandment and New Testament passages condemn.

I recently wrote that it is becoming increasingly difficult for people who believe the Bible is God's Word to impose their beliefs on those who disagree with them. But it is something altogether different for those who disagree to claim the Bible doesn't say what it says, in effect calling God a liar. President Obama apparently hopes there are sufficient numbers of biblical illiterates -- and he could be right about this -- that either won't notice his sleight of hand, or don't care.

Thousands of years of human history have sustained marriage between one man and one woman. Even human biology testifies to a natural order.

Genesis 2:24 says "...a man shall leave

his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The two shall become one flesh." Jesus, Whom President Obama likes to selectively quote when it suits his earthly political agenda, honored traditional marriage at a wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1). He also reaffirmed the Genesis passage in Matthew 19:5.

Paul, the Apostle of Jesus, wrote in Ephesians 5 about husbands and wives, male and female.

Scripture teaches that the marriage union between a man and woman is an illustration of how Christ and the church are one (Ephesians 5:32). It also teaches that since God made us, conceived of marriage and created sex to be enjoyed within the marital bond, He gets to set the rules and establish the boundaries for human behavior, not because He is a curmudgeon who wants to deny us pleasure, but because He knows what is best for us.

Liberal theologians have tried to modify, or even change, what is contained in the Bible and there are those in our time who are following their example with the issue of same-sex marriage. People are free to accept or reject what Scripture says. What they are not free to do is to claim it says something it does not. In modern times that's called "spin." In an earlier time it was called heresy.

The Apostle John warns in Revelation 22:18-19 about the punishment awaiting anyone who adds to, or subtracts from Scripture. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 has a similar warning. The consequences aren't pretty. There are also warnings not to preach "another Gospel" (Galatians 1:8, 2 Corinthians 11:4, among others).

As he seeks to justify his position on same-sex marriage and other issues that are either questionable at best, or deny Scripture at worst, President Obama might be

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said to be preaching another gospel. This could possibly lead to a fissure in his solid support among African Americans, costing the president votes in November. It will also likely galvanize the culture warriors. Minorities mostly vote for Democrats, but they don't like their faith denied. That could cause some of them to stay home on Election Day, or even vote for Mitt Romney.

The negative reaction the president received from some of the African-American ministers he called last week after declaring his support for same-sex marriage should serve as a prophetic warning.

—Cal Thomas
Townhall.com
May 18, 2012

We know the story well: Barack Obama was for same-sex “marriage” (1996) before he was against it (2004) before he was for it (2012), although in 2008, he was apparently for it and against it (although mainly against it). Based, however, on his strong support for gay activism during his “against” years, it seems clear that he was equivocating in his public opposition to same-sex “marriage.”

But let's say his views really were evolving, as he claims. Either way, whether equivocating or evolving, he has proven himself to be untrustworthy in this very important matter.

Let's first consider what appears obvious to many, namely that Mr. Obama has been anything but straightforward when expressing his views on same-sex “marriage.”

It is now common knowledge that he responded to questions posed by the *Outline* newspaper in 1996 by stating plainly that, “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages.” Flip-flopping in 2004, he explained,

“My religious faith dictates marriage is between a man and a woman, gay marriage is not a civil right.”

In 2008, in the presidential debate hosted by Rick Warren, he stated, “I believe marriage is the union between a man and a woman. As a Christian it's also a sacred union.” That same year, in a letter to San Francisco's Alice B. Toklas Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Democratic Club, Obama wrote that he opposed “the divisive and discriminatory efforts to amend the California constitution” with regard to marriage — quite an odd position for someone who could state that “marriage is the union between a man and a woman.” Why, then, would it be “divisive and discriminatory” to amend a state constitution to protect that sacred union?

Since 2008, Obama has aggressively supported the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, decided to stop defending DOMA, appointed men like gay educational activist Kevin Jennings as his Safe School Czar, and appeared at fundraisers for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), even stating at their dinner in October, 2011 that progress comes when “a father realizes he doesn't just love his daughter, but also her wife.” Yet it is only now that he can tell us that he endorses same-sex “marriage”? No wonder that Joe Solmonese, outgoing president of the HRC, said earlier this week that there was “no doubt in my mind that the president shares these values.” In other words, the president has not been forthcoming in his true position.

But what if Obama's views really have been evolving and he was telling the truth when he said in 2010, “My feelings about this are constantly evolving. I struggle with this”? In my opinion, this would be even more disconcerting than if he were equivo-

cating, since it would mean that his clear and unambiguous statements are subject to change at any time and that his religious convictions are as malleable as a piece of clay.

Let's link together his most salient statements in one long quote: “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages. . . . My religious faith dictates marriage is between a man and a woman, gay marriage is not a civil right. . . . I believe marriage is the union between a man and a woman. As a Christian it's also a sacred union. . . . At a certain point, I've just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married. . . . The thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the golden rule — you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated.”

Remember that these are the words of the man who today is the most influential political leader in the world, and yet his waffling on the marriage issue is painful to behold. And these are the words of a leader who makes frequent reference to his professed Christian faith, first to oppose same-sex “marriage” (“my religious faith dictates”; “as a Christian”), then to endorse it (with reference to “Christ sacrificing himself” and “the golden rule”). How deep could this “religious faith” be? And where was this “religious faith” in 1996 when he unequivocally supported redefining marriage?

I understand, of course, that all of us are on a journey and that, over time, our views can change, sometimes radically. But for a national leader (and President of the United States) to make such extreme shifts, from dogmatically “for” to dogmatically “against” to dogmatically “for,” often in patently self-

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contradictory ways, is to be untrustworthy as a leader. And to refer to one's faith as an important part of the flip-flopping decision making process is to be spiritually double-minded, which is why I say that whether equivocating or evolving, President Obama is wrong either way.

—Michael Brown
Townhall.com
May 14, 2012

"They do that because they were born that way."

If you say that about homosexuals, you are tolerant and realistic. If you say it about blacks, you are racist (unless you're black yourself). If you say it about women, you may or may not be sexist, depending on who is manning (er, womanning) the feminist battle stations. If you say it about men, you just might be a writer for *Esquire*. But if you say it about conservatives, you're a scientist.

Over the past decade, a new fad has taken hold among academics and liberal journalists: call it the new science of conservative phrenology. No, it doesn't actually involve using calipers to determine intelligence based on the size and shape of people's heads. The measuring devices are better — MRIs and gene sequencers — but the conclusions are worse. The gist is this: Conservatives and liberals don't just have different world views or ideas, they have different brains; the right and left are just hard-wired to think differently.

Author Chris Mooney compiles much of this research for his new book *The Republican Brain*, which purports to show that conservatives are, literally by nature, more closed-minded and resistant to change and facts. His evidence includes the fact that conservatives are less likely to buy into global warming, allegedly proving they are not only "anti-science" but innately anti-fact, as well.

"Politicized wrongness today," he writes "is clustered among Republicans, conservatives and especially Tea Partiers."

A liberal partisan

That's an entirely understandable view for Mooney to hold. He's a soaked-to-the-bone liberal partisan. But he crosses the line into pseudoscientific hogwash by trying to explain every political disagreement as a symptom of bad brains. For instance, Mooney claims Republicans have trouble processing reality because Republicans think "ObamaCare" will raise the deficit. No really, stop laughing.

Of course, Mooney believes he's simply going where the science leads. Consider that one of the more famous studies was conducted by liberal researchers at University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) and New York University and published in *Nature Neuroscience*. Subjects were asked to spot the letters M or W on a screen for a fraction of a second. It turns out that self-described liberals did somewhat better on the test than the conservatives.

What does that mean? Well, according to the researchers, it means: "Liberals are more responsive to informational complexity, ambiguity and novelty." Liberals are also "more likely than are conservatives to respond to cues signaling the need to change habitual responses," NYU says.

Translation: Conservatives literally aren't smart enough to be spell-checkers at an M&M factory because they won't be able to understand quickly enough that the occasional W is just an upside down M.

Absurd conclusions

The data might be correct, but as with Mooney, the conclusions are beyond absurd. London's *Guardian* newspaper responded to the study by declaring, "Scientists have found that the brains of people calling themselves

liberals are more able to handle conflicting and unexpected information." The *Los Angeles Times* announced in an editorial that the study "suggests that liberals are more adaptable than conservatives" and "might be better judges of the facts."

Huh? The test didn't measure "informational complexity." It measured informational simplicity. As *Slate*'s science columnist William Saletan notes, the study actually excludes complexity and ambiguity. It measured response times to a rudimentary visual acuity test. Almost by definition, conscious thought isn't part of the equation. My hunch is that Socrates would do very poorly hunting and pecking for Ms and Ws on a screen, too.

Now it's probably true that, on average, there are subtle differences between conservatives and liberals when it comes to cognition. But you don't have to be "anti-science" to see how the scientists are wildly overreaching from the data. Indeed, there's a huge definitional problem. Conservatives resist growth of the state, but that's not the same thing as resisting change. After all, capitalism is among the most powerful agents of change in human history, and conservatives are the ones defending it. Meanwhile, liberals are downright reactionary about preserving the Great Society and New Deal.

A famous study asserts that communist revolutionaries Joseph Stalin and Fidel Castro were political conservatives because they resisted change once in power. If your algorithmic whirligig spits out the finding that Stalin, the global leader of communism for two decades, and Castro, the global dashboard saint of recrudescant left-wing asininity, are "politically conservative" it's time to take the gadget out to a field and smash it with baseball bats like the printer in the movie *Office Space*.

Mooney, who recently explained in a speech that he has given up on the Enlight-

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enment view that we're all open to reason, doesn't seem to realize where he's heading with this nonsense. Never mind that this approach is inherently undemocratic and opens the door to "genetic" explanations for everybody's political views — blacks, women, gays, etc. — it is also self-serving bigotry that allows liberals to justify their own closed-mindedness on the grounds that Republicans aren't even worth listening to. After all, they're just born that way.

— Jonah Goldberg
USA Today
May 1, 2012, 7A

Politics

Rush Limbaugh asked a question last week — and it got me to thinking?

"Who was the first leftist?"

Rush suggested we ought to find him and string him up, but it's probably far too late for that — or it it?

So who was the first leftist?

We could look at the question strictly historically and come up with answers: When was the term "left" as a political position even invented?

If we start there, we begin in 1789, at the time of the French Revolution. Members of the National Assembly divided themselves, according to their political loyalties to the left and right of the president.

One deputy, the Baron de Gauville explained how it happened: "We began to recognize each other: those who were loyal to religion and the king took up positions to the right of the chair so as to avoid the shouts, oaths and indecencies that enjoyed free rein in the opposing camp."

But that's simple semantics.

Perhaps that was the first time the actual ideological labels were used, but the world-view behind them began long before.

It may have begun at the Tower of Babel,

when Nimrod, aptly named, decided he was wiser than God and set out to bring the whole world together in one place in defiance of the wishes of the Almighty. Ultimately, isn't that what the "leftist" philosophy is all about at its core? Wasn't that what the spirit of the French Revolution and those who followed in its footsteps all about?

Yet, the more I think about it, the more I am persuaded the first lefty came well before the story of Genesis 10.

I think it goes back to an earlier event described in Isaiah 14. There was an angel named Lucifer. He was the most beautiful and glorious creation of God. But he was proud. And he wasn't satisfied with his station in life.

So he declared in his heart, much like Nimrod and his followers, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

If there is one thing lefties have in common it is their belief that they don't need God. They don't believe in His rules. They have a common desire to overthrow His reign.

Indeed, I'm hardly the first person to suggest that Lucifer, or Satan, as he became known after being cast down to earth out of heaven, was the first lefty.

In fact, one of the best-known lefties of the 20th century, one whose ideas may be reaching the pinnacle of their effectiveness today, said as much way back in 1972.

That would be the infamous Saul Alinsky. In the 1972 Vintage Books paperback edition of "Rules for Radicals," the inspiration of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton and many others in power today, wrote the following: "Lest we forget at least an over-the-

shoulder acknowledgment to the very first radical from all our legends, mythology, and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and history begins — or which is which), the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom — Lucifer."

That is indeed what most lefties are after — at the end of the day. They want their own kingdom. They don't want any part of God's Kingdom. They seek to devise their own and rule over it. That's the essence of what being a lefty is all about — whether they admit it or not.

Alinsky at least admitted it.

I don't agree with Alinsky about much, but about this he is right.

Lucifer was the first radical, the first rebel, the first opponent of God's order. And even a pedigreed lefty like Alinsky agreed they were kindred spirits.

What's the definition of the term "sinister"? The dictionary tells us it means "threatening or portending evil, harm, or trouble — something bad, evil, base or wicked." An alternative definition, however in every dictionary you check defines it this way: "of or on the left side."

It may be too late to string up Alinsky. It may be too late to string up the agitators of the French Revolution. It may be too late to string up Karl Marx or Josef Stalin or Adolf Hitler (another lefty, by the way) or V.I. Lenin or Mao.

But Satan has been defeated. His days are numbered. His fate is sealed.

So keep that in mind when you get depressed by the politics and cultural madness you see all around you.

— Joseph Farah
The Washington Times
May 14, 2012, p. 36