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Rebuilding Marriage: Where Is the Hope?



Cover Story

The push for same-sex marriage has succeeded beyond anyone's expectations for one simple reason: Americans quit caring about marriage as an institution. Like Jacob throwing away his birthright for a pot of stew, Americans have become apathetic about the one institution without which civilization cannot survive. They've lost the plot and forgotten what marriage is for and why it's good.

But there's hope. Summit's new video course, *The Good of Marriage*, is destined to be the most engaging, controversial — and hopefully most watched — course we've produced. It combines a hard-hitting analysis of where we are, a captivating look at God's design for marriage in Genesis, a revelation about why marriage is under attack today, and insight on what we can do in our homes and churches to rebuild a culture of marriage.

Rebuild Marriage in Our Local Churches

A few years ago Greg Smalley noticed weeds sprouting up amongst the healthy grass in his yard. Smalley, who works as the executive director of Marriage and Family Formation at Focus on the Family, went to a hardware store, picked up a bottle of weed killer, and drenched the eyesores. A day later the weeds remained — along with brown grass Smalley had inadvertently killed. He tried again, and again killed more healthy grass. His wife finally told him to speak with a professional before he killed their whole yard and left nothing but the weeds. So, off he went for professional help.

"What he said I'll never forget, because it so perfectly applies to marriage," Smalley recalls. "You don't go after the weeds. You want to grow the healthy grass around them. That healthy grass will kill the weeds. It'll choke out the weeds."

Divorce rates, climbing cohabitation rates, and growing opinions that marriage is obsolete are *symptoms* that the institution of marriage is sick. But it doesn't need a professional trauma team — it needs everyday Christians to cast an exciting new vision for healthy marriages in our churches and let those models inspire hope and healing. A key way to do that, Smalley says, is marriage mentoring.

Smalley, who's been married more than twenty years and has four children, credits mentoring with saving his young marriage. The son of well-known counselor Gary Smalley, he was completing a master's degree in counseling and about to begin work on a Ph.D. Yet, two years into their marriage, Smalley and his wife were struggling: they couldn't figure out a way to resolve conflict. "I'm one more argument from my wife leaving me," he remembers



Is There Any Hope for Marriage?

Filmed at the beautiful Glen Eyrie Castle in Colorado Springs, Summit's new video course, *The Good of Marriage*, makes a fast-paced, fun, and fact-filled case for man/woman marriage as well as for love, sex, kids, work, purpose, and care for creation.

This course is perfect for Christians of all ages, single and married alike. *I sincerely hope you'll order this four-lesson course right away and show it to as many people as you can.*

“The Savior of the world will be known; his plan will be accomplished.”

Dr. Jeff Myers

Why? Because traditional marriage is the basis of a free society and it is dying. A 2011 Pew Foundation study said 40 percent of Americans believe marriage is obsolete.¹ The proportion of married adults is steadily trending downward.² Seventy percent of 18-29-year-olds support same-sex marriage.³

The question, “Is there any hope for marriage?” is nested in a larger question, “Is there any hope for humankind?” The answer, based on the gospel as presented in the book of Genesis, is an emphatic yes.

In announcing the curse on the serpent, God said the offspring of the woman would crush Satan's head. This implies two things: a Savior will come to

destroy Satan's work. Meanwhile, all the woman's offspring, as they live in obedience to God, will trample on what Satan is trying to do.⁴ As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under *your* feet.”⁵

In spite of millennia of human failure, death has been met on the field of battle and turned back through the death and resurrection of Christ. C.S. Lewis put it like this in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*:

*“If the witch knew the true meaning of sacrifice, she might have interpreted the deep magic differently. That when a willing victim who has committed no treachery, is killed in a traitor's stead, the stone table will crack, and even death itself would turn backwards.”*⁶

Many hymns have incorporated this understanding of redemption. W.Y. Fullerton, a protégé of Charles H. Spurgeon, wrote:

*I cannot tell how He will win the nations,
how He will claim His earthly heritage.
How satisfy the needs and aspirations,
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory,
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown,
And some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour
When He the Saviour, Saviour of the world,
is known.*⁷

The Savior of the world will be

known; his plan will be accomplished. In this hope we can stand strong for what is right, including man/woman marriage. This is what we intend to do at Summit, and we are honored that you would stand with us in encouragement, prayer, financial support, and spreading the word about resources such as *The Good of Marriage*.

Notes

1. “Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married—A Record Low,” December 14, 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low/>
2. Mark Mather and Diana Lavery, “In US, Proportion Married at Lowest Recorded Levels,” Population Reference Bureau, September 2010, <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2010/us-marriage-decline.aspx>
3. “Same Sex Marriage Solidifies Above 50%,” Gallup Politics, May 13, 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/162398/sex-marriage-support-solidifies-above.aspx>
4. The word “offspring” or “seed” (Hebrew: *zera*) means one person who epitomizes the group or a whole line of descendants as a group. It is deliberately flexible enough to refer to one — the savior — as well as to the many. See Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 35-37.
5. Romans 16:20, ESV. Emphasis added.
6. C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 94.
7. William Y. Fullerton, “I Cannot Tell Why He, Whom Angels Worship,” 1920. Sung to the tune of “Londonderry Air.”

Editor's Note: To order *The Good of Marriage*, see the insert placed in this issue of *The Journal*. Or go to www.summitcourses.org/marriage for more information.

thinking. He was also aware how obvious their marital problems were to others. When an older woman from their church called looking for Smalley's wife, he cracked a joke about her being gone. "Boy, Greg, I'm so sorry to hear that," the woman replied. "My husband and I were afraid this was going to happen." She thought they had really separated.

Suggested Reading

THE RING
MAKES ALL THE
DIFFERENCE



The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation and the Strong Benefits of Marriage

GLENN T. STANTON

The Ring Makes All the Difference

by Glenn T. Stanton
Available at Summit's bookstore:
summit.org/store.

That's how Smalley defines marriage mentoring: a more-experienced couple investing in a less-experienced couple.

For churches wanting to make marriage mentoring part of their DNA, Smalley has several suggestions:

1. Get pastors and pastoral staff on board with developing marriage mentoring. "If there's no real church leadership, it's really hard," Smalley said. "I just don't think it can work."

That sparked a mentoring relationship between the Smalleys and the older couple, and they still keep in touch, two decades later. Mentoring was as simple as a relationship, Smalley said. The older couple asked questions, offered experiences from their own marriage, and prayed for the Smalleys.

2. Identify experienced couples interested in mentoring less-experienced couples. This is key, Smalley said, because the church needs to mobilize internally for a culture of healthy marriage to grow. Otherwise pastors burn out trying to do it all on their own.

3. Train marriage mentors. Summit's *The Good of Marriage* curriculum is a great start for understanding why marriage is a cornerstone of God's design for humans. Focus on the Family also offers online training with marriage counselors Les and Leslie Parrott.¹

4. As mentor couples work with younger couples, let mentoring grow organically within the church. Smalley said he's seen programs that have strict schedules and materials and others that are far less formal. The key is to do whatever works best for the couples in a given church. "It's not about advice-giving, and it's not a counseling session," he said. "It's listening, praying for, sharing resources, answering questions. It's doing relationship together."

In Summit's new *The Good of Marriage* course (see the insert for more details or go to summit-courses.org/marriage), Dr. Jeff Myers outlines five action steps for living redemptively in light of God's plans for marriage and family:

- 1. Redeem singleness**
- 2. Promote godly marriage**
- 3. Commit to purity of body & mind**
- 4. Love kids**
- 5. Be reconciled to one another**

We think if more Christians practice these principles — and understand *why* the biblical model for marriage is good for individuals, families, and societies — we may see a new culture of marriage flourish. We should keep advocating for legal protections for man/woman marriage and for children

Online Marriage Resources from Summit

» Asking, "What's next for marriage?" after the Supreme Court losses? Go here: <http://goo.gl/M2ARSO>

» Under pressure from loved ones or coworkers to defend traditional marriage? Go here: <http://goo.gl/iBKa7e> and here: <http://goo.gl/2bWJsA>

» Want to know how marriage affects debate over public policy? Go here: <http://goo.gl/OUUp00>

— and for the religious liberty for Christians to safeguard that view of marriage. But politics alone cannot win this. Change begins in our own homes, churches, and neighborhoods.

Rebuild Marriage in Our Own Backyards

In 1987, before TV shows like *Will and Grace* and *Glee* won ratings battles, and long before same-sex marriage was a serious political issue, activists Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill wrote "The Overhauling of Straight America" in *Guide Magazine*.² They outlined a step-by-step media strategy to erase the stigma from homosexuality; their goal was to desensitize Americans to gay culture. Christians would do well to

See **marriage**, page 4

turn the guide on its head and overhaul a culture that no longer values the historical understanding of marriage. But instead of beginning in the media, that battle has to start — literally — in our own backyards.

Re-sensitize children and young adults to non-biblical examples of marriage. The first step in Kirk and Pill's guide was to "Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible" in order to normalize homosexuality. Young adults and children need to be *sensitized* to the fact that they are being *desensitized* to models of marriage and sexuality outside the biblical model. If your kids see such examples in media, point it out to them and help them understand why that particular example runs counter to biblical marriage and sexuality. Emphasize that until very recently, this was not regarded as normal.

Teach children how to honor marriage, even at a young age. Smalley pointed to Hebrews 13:4: "Let marriage be held in honor among all..." That proved to him that even young children can begin to understand what makes a healthy marriage and why it's important. At bedtime, parents can tell their kids that the time Mommy and Daddy have by themselves helps strengthen their marriage. The same goes for date nights, when a crying 4-year-old may not want to let Mommy and Daddy walk out the door. Helping kids think about their parents' marriage creates a home culture in which marriage is revered, Smalley said, and where the whole family has a part to play in honoring marriage.

Build relationships with neighbors and be willing to both model marriage and have hard discussions about marriage with them when appropriate. Chances are we all know a handful who think Christians are bigots for support-

ing the biblical view of marriage. Just as relationship-building is the best model for marriage mentoring, it's also the best model for becoming marriage apologists. If Smalley is right, and the best way to kill weeds is with healthy grass, people will naturally be interested in seeing healthy, loving marriages. It's part of God's design that they are so compelling. If in conversation you're accused of being a bigot or a racist for supporting biblical marriage, here are some responses you can use:

- "A bigot is a person with strong and prejudiced views who will not listen to the opinion of others. Are you willing to listen openly to my point of view?"
- "I don't appreciate being called a racist just because I don't share your point of view. Hundreds of thousands of people fought and died for the right of people with dark skin to be considered fully human. Isn't it a little pretentious for another group to try to hijack that history based on who they're attracted to sexually?"
- "Interracial marriage bans were wrong because they restricted marriages that were based on the one universally-accepted criterion for marriage: partners were of the opposite sex. Same-sex marriage blows up that definition altogether. You can't compare the two."

There Is Hope

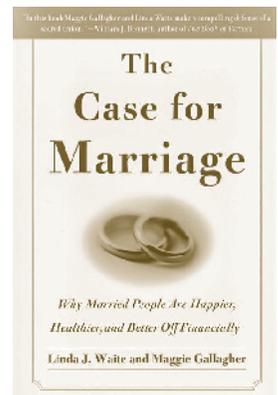
Just as the pro-life movement is finally making significant progress decades after *Roe v. Wade*, it may take decades before a flourishing culture of marriage is rebuilt. Same-sex marriage wasn't the beginning of the West's marriage problems; it's merely the logical outcome of the sexual revolution, no-fault divorce, abortion on demand, and an overall change in worldview regarding sexual ethics.³ But there is hope. As Jeff My-

ers says in *The Good of Marriage*:

God designed marriage. The family was His idea. And it's still good. We have before us an opportunity to be restorers of the family as God designed it. It has everything to do with how we live as single people or married people. It affects home life, work, childrearing, and stewardship of our time and talents. It affects public policy and citizenship.

And most important, it is our opportunity to glorify God through our lifestyles, making the most of every opportunity in the troubling days in which we live.

Suggested Reading



The Case for Marriage
by Linda J. Waite and
Maggie Gallagher
Available at Summit's
bookstore:
summit.org/store.

Notes

1. For more information about Focus on the Family's marriage mentoring program, go to http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/strengthening_your_marriage/mentor-ing_101.aspx.
2. Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill, "Overhauling Straight America," *Guide Magazine*, November 1987, http://library.gayhomeland.org/0018/EN/EN_Overhauling_Straight.htm.
3. For an excellent explanation of this idea, see Rod Dreher's "Sex After Christianity," in *The American Conservative*, April 11, 2013, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/sex-after-christianity/>.

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.

Marriage

In his Sunday sermon this weekend in Kazan Cathedral in Moscow, Patriarch Kirill, Primate, of the Russian Orthodox Church, warned against the extraordinary rise in many western countries of the homosexualist movement. Kirill said that the trend of legalizing "gay marriage" is "a very dangerous sign of the apocalypse."

“... the responsibility of the Church is to say it is a sin before God.”

Thorbjorn Jagland

It "means people are choosing a path of self-destruction," he said. He said he supports the recently passed national ban on homosexualist propaganda that has prohibited the Gay Pride festivities that have become a prominent feature of national life elsewhere.

"Lately, we have enormous temptations, when a number of countries opting for sin is approved and justified by the law, and those who, acting in good conscience, are struggling with such laws imposed by a minority, being repressed," Kirill said.

He added that everything must be

done to prevent the approval of sin "on the spaces of Holy Russia." Otherwise, "the people are embarking on the path of self-destruction."

The sermon came the Sunday following the passage in Britain of the Cameron government's so-called "equal marriage" bill. Religious leaders and democracy campaigners both strenuously warned the government that its passage would seriously threaten foundational democratic freedoms.

Colossal forces have set out "to convince us all that the only value is the freedom of choice," said the patriarch, "and no one has the right to infringe on that value, even when a person chooses evil, even when a person chooses a socially dangerous behavior."

Even the most perfect laws, however, cannot eradicate corruption, lies, evil and confrontation, he said: "These can be eradicated only by the person who has made a free choice in favor of the good."

In recent months, Kirill's has emerged as the strongest and most uncompromising religious voice in Europe against the apparently unstoppable political juggernaut of the international homosexualist movement. His comments yesterday follow his warning at a meeting in Moscow in May this year with Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjorn Jagland, where he said, "Today we have a very dangerous development, the laws regarding same-sex marriages and adoption of their children which go against the moral nature of man."

"If people choose this lifestyle," the Polish news service Interfax quoted him saying, "it is their right, but the

responsibility of the Church is to say that it is a sin before God."

What the Russian Orthodox Church is concerned about, Kirill said, "is not the fact of the existence of this sin — it has always existed. But we are deeply concerned that for the first time in the history of the human race sin is being justified by law. This opens up the prospect of a dangerous development, which will contribute to the moral degradation of society."

— Hilary White
LifeSiteNews.com
July 22, 2013

Religious Liberty

There are famously no atheists in foxholes, but some conservatives say that the American military is not giving a fair shake to soldiers, sailors and Marines who want to practice their faith and express their beliefs more openly.

The Family Research Council and more than a dozen other conservative and pro-family groups this month announced a renewed push in Congress for stronger legislative protection for religious military personnel to combat what they say is a threat to religious liberty in the nation's armed forces. A report from the Family Research Council documented a range of events in the military — such as one in which an Air Force officer was told to remove a Bible from his desk — that the group said exposed a "growing hostility to religion."

Critics say the charges are overblown and are part of a covert move to promote evangelical Christianity within the ranks, but the coalition says it has collected

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a number of examples of violations of religious liberty and expression inside the military.

“There is a growing list of cases and incidents that point to the fact that religious liberty in our nation’s military is under attack,” said Family Research Council President Tony Perkins.

One event detailed in the report described a soldier who was reprimanded for serving fare from Chick-fil-A — known for its owners’ strong Christian beliefs — and for making statements related to the federal law on same-sex marriage at his promotion party. Religious leaders have had invitations to speak at military events abruptly withdrawn, and military personnel have been ordered to remove religious signs and symbols.

Rep. John Fleming, Louisiana Republican, proposed an amendment last month to the 2014 defense authorization bill that specifically protects the “actions and speech” of religious personnel, rather than just their “beliefs.” The third-term lawmaker said the amendment was needed because chaplains feel restricted in how they can pray and preach, and officers are being warned not to display their faith openly.

The Obama administration issued a statement opposing Mr. Fleming’s amendment, saying it limited the ability of commanders to address “potentially problematic speech and actions within their units” and would have a negative overall effect on military units. But the full House supported the amendment and a similar provision, co-sponsored by Sen. Ted Cruz, Texas Republican, and Sen. Mike Lee, Utah Republican, has been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The drive is being met by a counter-campaign from secular activists, who have proposed reform to fight what they say is a growing religious activism that pushes Christianity onto military personnel with different beliefs.

Jason Torpy, president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, said the complaints of hostility to religion in the military are in reality an example of “Christian privilege” that leads to the religious oppression of non-Christians.

“From a position of alarmism, they have caused a lot of unnecessary fear and concern within and outside the military,” said Mr. Torpy, an Iraq War veteran who identifies himself as a humanist. “They’ve pushed for Christian privilege under the guise of religious freedom.”

Faith activists cite concern that religious soldiers and personnel will be unable to exercise their beliefs freely without fear of retaliation or damage to their careers. Ron Crews, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, which is a part of the Family Research Council’s new coalition, said he recently learned of a commander who is worried of being subject to punishment because he “could not in good conscience” cut the cake at a gay pride event.

“He gave them the space for their event, allowed them to have the event, but said, ‘I cannot participate.’ There are some in the military who would see that as an opportunity for a complaint because the commander was showing prejudice against the group, but in actuality he was just exercising his faith conscience,” said Mr. Crews, a retired chaplain who served in the U.S. Army for 28 years.

Some in the religious community

disapprove of the focus on Christianity. The Rev. Sarah Lammert of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a liberal religious organization that stresses ethical living and human worth, said the Family Research Council’s report is simply a fundraising attempt and Mr. Fleming’s amendment is “unnecessary.”

“I think the rights of Christian chaplains are already protected. And in fact, the numbers of Christian chaplains in the military far outreach the demand for those particular faith groups. It’s disproportionate,” said Ms. Lammert. “No one faith should be given a spotlight over the others.”

Ms. Lammert said the concerns of Christian military personnel are a non-issue and that the real challenge for the military will be to protect the rights of gay troops and to promote more religious and gender diversity within the military.

In a statement emailed to *The Washington Times*, Pentagon spokesman Nate Christensen stressed that the Defense Department celebrates religious diversity and that military personnel have the full right to exercise their religious beliefs, as long as doing so does not negatively affect the military’s mission or other individuals’ rights.

“Even then, the department seeks a reasonable religious accommodation for the service member. In general, service members may share their faith with other service members, but may not forcibly attempt to convert others of any faith or no faith to their own beliefs,” Mr. Christensen said.

— Annie Z. Yu
Washington Times
July 22, 2013, p 13

Wax Steps to the Forefront of Cultural Conversations

In the run-up to the 2012 election when conservative candidates made gaffe after gaffe when talking about abortion, one of Trevin Wax's Gospel Coalition blog posts, "10 Questions a Pro-Choice Candidate Is Never Asked by the Media" went viral, instantly making Wax one of the most influential Christian voices of his generation.

For Wax, writing is one of those things he "cannot not" do. "Whatever I do, writing will be part of it," he said. "I would write books even if no one read them." That no one would read them is unlikely, though, given that Wax is such a respected voice in Christendom.

Along with his popular Gospel Coalition blog, Wax is also a contributor to *Christianity Today*, *The New York Times*, and *Baptist Press*. The author of four books, he now develops small group curricula for LifeWay Christian Resources and is working on a Ph.D. in missiology.

"Ideas have consequences, and ideas don't just come in nonfiction books."

Trevin Wax

Much of his intellectual formation came from his 1999 session at Summit and, specifically, David Noebel. "It wasn't that he taught me *what* to think on all these things; he opened my mind to learn *how* to think on all these



Trevin Wax
things," Wax said.

Wax came to Summit when religious pluralism was bubbling up as a hot topic. While so many popular voices were claiming no religion is superior to any other — nor does it have the right to claim to be — the open, honest discussion at Summit helped Wax sort out his own thinking at a time when he silently struggled with that question. "It ignited my intellect," he recalled. "It helped me understand that ideas have consequences." Having his "mind stretched" for two weeks at Summit laid the groundwork for future pursuits. Wax returned home to teach worldview curriculum and *Understanding the Times*.

During college, seminary, and several years spent in Romania, Wax

became an avid reader — and not just of nonfiction. Books like *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Les Miserables* have shaped his understanding of God and the world. Though he's written three nonfiction books, he recently released his first work of fiction: *Clear Winter Nights: A Journey into Truth, Doubt, and What Comes After*, a short dialogue between a grandfather and a young man struggling with his faith.

Seeing how personalities like Brian McLaren and Rob Bell gain influence by knowing how to talk to masses — even though their messages often run counter to what Scripture says — has pushed Wax to be more concerned with how Christians use storytelling to communicate the biblical worldview. "Ideas have consequences, and ideas don't just come in nonfiction books," he said. "This is an area that we need to do work in. You can make a case that Hollywood is more influential than Washington, D.C."

Wax's writing has already positioned him in the vortex swirling around many cultural controversies, but he stresses that it isn't just leaders and writers who need to be involved. Wax points out that divisive cultural issues — like the marriage debate — require all of us to be thinking Christians. But he also cautions perspective: "Remember that political and cultural engagement are of great importance, but they are not of ultimate importance. Be able to maintain perspective and know that no matter what happens in the U.S., the Kingdom of God is going to go on."



American Christian College
dba Summit Ministries
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Manitou Springs, CO 80829

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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

Abortion

How many people would pass up an invitation to be honored by the president at the White House?

Matt Birk, for one.

Birk, who played center for the Super Bowl champion Baltimore Ravens, got that invitation along with the rest of his team. But he had a problem: a recent speech where President Obama said, “God bless Planned Parenthood.”

“I have great respect for the office of the presidency,” said Birk. But he’s also active in the pro-life movement, and that took precedence. “I couldn’t endorse that (statement) in any way . . . For God to bless a place where they’re ending 330,000 lives a year? I just chose not to attend.”

It’s not Birk’s first public stand on a moral issue. He spoke up for marriage in two states’ elections last fall, and penned an eloquent op-ed for the Minneapolis Star Tribune in October. “Marriage redefinition will affect the broader well-being of children and the welfare of society,” he wrote. “As a Christian and a citizen, I am compelled to care about both.”

Birk, who spent a career protecting quarterbacks, retired after last season. But it looks like he’s still protecting the things that matter most. May he keep it up for many years to come.

— *Citizen Magazine*
August 2013, p.8

When the Rev. Thomas Vander Woude learned about a young couple planning to abort their unborn baby that had been diagnosed with Down syndrome, the priest reached out and offered a deal: Deliver the child and he

would help find an appropriate adoptive family.

But he had to act fast.

The woman, who has not been identified for her privacy and her protection, was just shy of six months pregnant and lives in a state that prohibits abortions past 24 weeks — which meant he had a short time to find a family willing to make a lifelong commitment.

So Father Vander Woude, the lead pastor at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Gainesville, Va., approached a volunteer who helped manage the church’s social media pages, and she posted an urgent plea on Facebook early Monday morning.

“There is a couple in another state who have contacted an adoption agency looking for a family to adopt their Down Syndrome unborn baby. If a couple has not been found by today they plan to abort the baby. If you are interested in adopting this baby please contact Fr. VW IMMEDIATELY,” the post read. “We are asking all to pray for this baby and the wisdom that this couple realize the importance of human life and do not abort this beautiful gift from God.”

The post asked people to call the church’s office after 9:30 a.m. Monday or to email Father Vander Woude.

No one expected the response they received.

“When we got in and opened up around 9:30, it was nearly nonstop. All day long, we were receiving phone calls from people who wanted to adopt the baby,” church staff member Martha Drennan said. “Father Vander Woude has gotten over 900 emails in regard to

the baby.”

The offers were narrowed to three families, which the unborn child’s parents are reviewing with the help of an adoption agency.

Ms. Drennan said the church received phone calls from all over the United States and around the world, including from England, Puerto Rico and the Netherlands.

“I think it is a wonderful use of social media, that word can so quickly get all over the country and even to foreign countries and that the people who see the value of life are stepping up and saying, ‘I will take that baby and raise that baby as mine,’” Ms. Drennan said. “It was a beautiful witness all day long that so many people wanted this child and believed in the dignity of that child — Down syndrome or not.”

The president and founder of the International Down Syndrome Coalition, Diane Grover, stressed the importance of informing couples who are considering abortion for babies with Down syndrome that adoption is a viable option, pointing to the fast and overwhelming response her organization received about this one unborn child as an amazing example.

“When [couples are] in that position, a lot of people wonder if their child [with Down syndrome] would actually get adopted,” Ms. Grover said. “There’s a lot of people waiting, and we are happy to always help.”

David Dufresne, a seminary student who plans to become a priest next year, volunteered to help the overwhelmed church staff take calls.

“I was taking calls for about three hours straight, just talking to people

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who are willing to adopt this little baby they never knew about until that morning,” Mr. Dufresne said. “I mean, all day long, just receiving phone calls from people who were so generous and within a couple minutes made a life-changing decision. I was really inspired by the goodness of people and what they would do to save a life.”

— Annie Z. Yu

The Washington Times
July 15, 2013, p. 13

Homosexuality

ROME—When Pope Francis said he wouldn’t judge gay priests, he opened the door to a new era of reconciliation within the Roman Catholic Church, which has struggled for decades to confront the presence of homosexuality in its ministry.

The pontiff was traveling aboard a turbulent overnight flight to Rome from his first overseas trip—a journey marked by his plain-spoken appeals to Catholics to reground the church in grass-roots ministry—when he broached the delicate issue of how the Catholic hierarchy should respond to clerics who are gay, though not sexually active. In doing so, he departed from the posture that has long shaped papal thinking on gay priests.

The pontiff met with reporters for 80 minutes on the flight from Brazil.

“Who am I to judge a gay person of goodwill who seeks the Lord?” the pontiff told a news conference in response to a question. “You can’t marginalize these people.”

Pope Francis reaffirmed church teaching by referring to homosexual acts as a sin. But he wielded his formidable bully pulpit to shift the tone of how the

church regards homosexual orientation at its highest ranks.

The pope returned to the Vatican from a weeklong visit to Brazil, where he was given a rock-star reception as an estimated three million people flocked to a Sunday Mass on Rio de Janeiro’s Copacabana beach.

Analysts said that show of support is likely to strengthen his hand as he confronts myriad challenges, including alleged corruption at the Vatican bank and the sexual-abuse crisis.

The pontiff said women couldn’t be ordained as priests, because the issue had been definitively settled by Pope John Paul II. However, he said he wanted to develop a “theology of the woman,” in order to expand and deepen their involvement in the life of the church.

Never before had a pope spoken out in defense of gay priests in the Catholic ministry, said Vatican analysts, and past popes have traditionally treated homosexuality as an obstacle to priestly celibacy. In 1986, the Vatican defined homosexuality as an “objective disorder,” and in 2005 Pope Francis’ predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, formally barred men deemed to have “deep-seated homosexual tendencies” from entering the priesthood.

Pope Francis “is showing a deep respect for the human condition as it is, instead of approaching things in a doctrinal way,” said Alberto Melloni, a church historian.

“This isn’t a change in the church’s teaching,” said Rev. James Bretzke, a theology professor at Boston College. “What’s important is the change in style and emphasis.”

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York echoed the pope on Monday, saying a priest’s homosexuality “wouldn’t matter to me as long as one is leading a virtuous and chaste life.” But, he added, “My worry is that we’re buying into the vocabulary that one’s person is one’s sexual identity and I don’t buy that and neither does the church.”

Stephen White, a fellow in the Catholic Studies Program at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., said the pope “cut through a great deal of distrust between the church and people of same-sex attraction,” adding that he doesn’t anticipate that the pontiff’s comments will cause a rift within the church.

The pope’s remarks drew cautious praise from gay-rights groups, who welcomed his change in tone.

“This could be the opening of a door or a window,” Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of Boston-based DignityUSA, an organization of gay and transsexual Catholics.

Ross Murray, director of news and faith initiatives at GLAAD, an advocacy organization, said while the pope’s words are helpful, he remained skeptical of what will happen in practice.

Pope Francis met with reporters on the plane for 80 minutes, and he mused at length on one scandal that erupted on his predecessor’s watch: a secret Vatican report leaked to the Italian media purporting that homosexual Vatican clerics had formed a “gay lobby” that was secretly pulling the strings inside the Holy See.

The Argentine pontiff said he had discussed the findings of the internal Vatican report with Pope Benedict, who

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resigned in early February. The German pope emeritus, Pope Francis said, had given him documentation and testimony from the internal report prepared by three cardinals before he stepped down.

The pope carefully drew a distinction between the possibility of pressure groups existing inside the Vatican—which he defined as a “problem”—and the potential presence of gay priests within Vatican ranks.

“You have to distinguish between the fact of a person being gay, and the fact of a lobby,” the pope said. “The problem isn’t having this orientation. The problem is making a lobby.”

The comments cut to the core of one of the most challenging issues facing the Catholic priesthood. Data measuring the prevalence of homosexuality in the priesthood is limited. A poll of Roman Catholic priests across the U.S. the Los Angeles Times conducted in 2002 found that 15% of priests described themselves as homosexual or leaning toward homosexuality.

Bishops who run local dioceses have long been divided over whether to accept gay priests who are chaste. While some bishops are tolerant of homosexuality, the Vatican’s ban on gay men entering the priesthood has forced many clerics to keep their sexuality hidden from superiors. For bishops, the issue boils down to if “you got a priest you know is gay but isn’t active is that a problem for you or not?” said John L. Allen of the National Catholic Reporter. “For this pope the answer is ‘no.’”

In Africa, one of Catholicism’s fastest-growing regions, church officials expressed doubts that openly gay priests would be welcomed by their flocks.

“Here the issue is a taboo,” said Ben Asorow, director of communications for the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.

The pope’s remarks on homosexuality were prompted by a reporter who asked the pontiff to comment on a report in an Italian magazine alleging Battista Ricca, a Vatican monsignor promoted by Pope Francis, engaged in gay sexual relationships years ago when he was posted overseas at a Vatican embassy in Latin America. The monsignor, who has never publicly commented, remains in good standing with the pope, said a senior Vatican official.

In one of his first moves as pope, the pontiff appointed Msgr. Ricca as interim overseer of the Vatican’s bank while a special commission weighs its future. For years, the bank has faced allegations from Italian prosecutors and regulators that its internal controls weren’t strong enough to guard against money laundering. On Sunday, Pope Francis suggested he was keeping all options on the table, from transforming the bank into a charitable fund to shutting it down entirely.

“I don’t know how this story is going to end,” the pope said.

Msgr. Ricca is tasked with acting as Pope Francis’ eyes and ears at the Vatican’s bank while the commission forges ahead. The pope said he ordered a preliminary investigation of the monsignor after rumors began to swirl about the cleric’s purported sex life. The inquiry “found nothing,” the pope said, without elaborating on the investigation or its findings.

The pope, who said he was too tired to take questions on his way to Brazil,

appeared indefatigable during the trip home. He dispensed reading tips—advising reporters to “read and reread” Fyodor Dostoyevsky—and discussed his plans to visit Jerusalem on his next overseas trip.

Through it all, he maintained a Zen-like state of calm, even as the plane hit turbulence and the seat-belt lights flashed.

— Stacy Meichtry
Wall Street Journal
July 30, 2013, p.1

A scandal that dogged the Vatican in the weeks leading up to Pope Francis’s election reemerged this week after the pontiff was quoted in a memo from a church group discussing the existence of a “gay lobby” within Vatican ranks.

Since his election, Pope Francis has been under pressure to move forward with an overhaul of the Roman Curia, the Vatican administrative body. A year before resigning in February, Pope Benedict XVI ordered three cardinals to conduct an extensive internal investigation into published leaks that raised questions about the Curia’s conduct, including alleged financial impropriety.

Benedict locked the investigation’s findings in a safe so that only his successor could read them. Days before he stepped down, however, Italian media reported that the inquiry had revealed the existence of a “gay lobby” of sexually active Vatican clerics. The Vatican swiftly denied that the inquiry mentioned such a group, and the issue faded from public view with the election of a new pope.

On June 6, Pope Francis met inside the Vatican with members of the Latin

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American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious Men and Women, known as CLAR by its Spanish acronym, and discussed the report commissioned by his predecessor, according to a CLAR memo on the meeting.

“The ‘gay lobby’ is mentioned, and it is true, it is there. ... We need to see what we can do,” Pope Francis is quoted as saying in the memo, which was leaked to Chilean website, Reflection and Liberation. CLAR issued a statement late Tuesday confirming the authenticity of the memo while emphasizing that it had been written from memory by the meetings’ attendees.

“The Presidency of CLAR deeply regrets the publication of a text referring to the conversation held with the Holy Father Francis in the course of a meeting on this past June 6,” CLAR’s leadership said in the statement.

A Vatican spokesman didn’t deny the reports of Pope Francis’s remarks to CLAR, but declined to confirm them.

Since his election, Pope Francis has made Curia reform a priority, appointing a special advisory group of cardinals from around the world to help him draw up a plan to modernize one of the world’s oldest bureaucracies.

Pope Benedict’s papacy was overshadowed at times by infighting and dysfunction within Vatican ranks—tensions that exploded into public view when the pontiff’s former butler leaked sensitive documents to an Italian journalist documenting power struggles among top Holy See officials and internal complaints that the Vatican was mismanaging its finances. The Vatican confirmed the authenticity of the documents.

“In the Curia, there are also holy people, really, there are holy people. But there also is a stream of corruption, there is that as well, it is true,” Pope Francis is quoted as saying in the CLAR memo.

The pope told the group that concern about the Curia had been one of the leading concerns among cardinals meeting secretly in the run up to the conclave that elected him, according to the memo.

“The reform of the Roman Curia is something that almost all Cardinals asked for in the Congregations preceding the Conclave. I also asked for it,” the memo quotes the pope as saying.

The pope, who has a plain-spoken and humble leadership style that has won him praise around the Vatican and beyond, then acknowledges that he cannot overhaul the Curia on his own, the memo quoted him as saying.

“I cannot promote the reform myself, these matters of administration... I am very disorganized, I have never been good at this. But the cardinals of the Commission will move it forward,” he is quoted as saying.

— Stacy Meichtry
Wall Street Journal
June 13, 2013, p. A13

In his Sunday sermon this weekend in Kazan Cathedral in Moscow, Patriarch Kirill, Primate, of the Russian Orthodox Church, warned against the extraordinary rise in many western countries of the homosexualist movement. Kirill said that the trend of legalizing “gay marriage” is “a very dangerous sign of the apocalypse.”

It “means people are choosing a

path of self-destruction,” he said. He said he supports the recently passed national ban on homosexualist propaganda that has prohibited the Gay Pride festivities that have become a prominent feature of national life elsewhere.

“Lately, we have enormous temptations, when a number of countries opting for sin is approved and justified by the law, and those who, acting in good conscience, are struggling with such laws imposed by a minority, being repressed,” Kirill said.

He added that everything must be done to prevent the approval of sin “on the spaces of Holy Russia.” Otherwise, “the people are embarking on the path of self-destruction.”

The sermon came the Sunday following the passage in Britain of the Cameron government’s so-called “equal marriage” bill. Religious leaders and democracy campaigners both strenuously warned the government that its passage would seriously threaten foundational democratic freedoms.

Colossal forces have set out “to convince us all that the only value is the freedom of choice,” said the patriarch, “and no one has the right to infringe on that value, even when a person chooses evil, even when a person chooses a socially dangerous behavior.”

Even the most perfect laws, however, cannot eradicate corruption, lies, evil and confrontation, he said: “These can be eradicated only by the person who has made a free choice in favor of the good.”

In recent months, Kirill’s has emerged as the strongest and most uncompromising religious voice in Europe against the apparently unstoppable

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political juggernaut of the international homosexualist movement. His comments yesterday follow his warning at a meeting in Moscow in May this year with Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjorn Jagland, where he said, "Today we have a very dangerous development, the laws regarding same-sex marriages and adoption of their children which go against the moral nature of man."

"If people choose this lifestyle," the Polish news service Interfax quoted him saying, "it is their right, but the responsibility of the Church is to say that it is a sin before God."

What the Russian Orthodox Church is concerned about, Kirill said, "is not the fact of the existence of this sin - it has always existed. But we are deeply concerned that for the first time in the history of the human race sin is being justified by law. This opens up the prospect of a dangerous development, which will contribute to the moral degradation of society."

— Hilary White
LifeSitenews.com
July 22, 2013

Islam

There are no words adequate to the horrific attack on a group of schoolchildren in Nigeria carried out by the johadist Boko Haram outfit — a partner to the Algeria-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb — which claimed the lives of about 40 children and teachers in early July. The jihadists set fire to the school and then shot children as they tried to escape; many were burned alive. It was the third attack by the group, whose name means "Western education is forbidden," on a school this summer.

Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, released a video after the attacks promising that they would continue. "We are going to burn down the schools if they are not Islamic religious schools for Allah," he warned. "The Koran teaches that we must shun democracy, we must shun Western education, we must shun the constitution." President Bush was relentlessly mocked for saying, of al-Qaeda et al., "They hate our freedoms." But he was right.

— *National Review*
August 5, 2013, p. 12

Marxism

What to do when the two stars of the academic left collide? Grab the popcorn and sit back: The professoriate is engaged in a raucous family feud, complete with mutual accusations of charlatanry and bitter recriminations.

It started when Noam Chomsky, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology linguist and leftist icon, denounced the jargon-ridden, French-inspired cultural studies that prevail in the humanities.

"I'm not interested in posturing—using fancy terms like polysyllables and pretending you have a theory when you have no theory whatsoever," Mr. Chomsky told an interviewer in December. "There's no theory in any of this stuff, not in the sense of theory that anyone is familiar with in the sciences or any other serious field."

Then he turned the knife: "Žižek is an extreme example of it. I don't see anything to what he's saying."

Mr. Chomsky was referring to the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who is a celebrity of sorts in academic circles. His knack for combining pop-

culture references with insights drawn from the likes of Marx and Freud—"Jurassic Park' is a chamber drama about the trauma of fatherhood"—has inspired a cultish following on campuses over the past two decades. The Chronicle of Higher Education has dubbed Mr. Žižek "the Elvis of cultural theory," and there is even an International Journal of Žižek Studies devoted to his thought.

Mr. Chomsky's remarks went unnoticed until this summer, when they were picked up by bloggers and received a wider circulation. Mr. Žižek fired back earlier this month. "Chomsky, who always emphasizes how one has to be empirical," he told a panel at the University of London. "Well, I don't think I know a guy who was so often empirically wrong."

Depending on their inclinations, readers might be tempted to root for one over the other. But the truth is the professors are both right.

Regarding Mr. Žižek, it is "hard to see anything to what he's saying."

On the war on terror: "We are entering a new era of paranoiac warfare in which the greatest task will be to identify the enemy and his weapons. . . . And is not the obverse of this paranoiac omnipresence of the invisible war its desubstantialization?"

On Hitler: "The problem with Hitler was that he was 'not violent enough,' his violence was not 'essential' enough. Hitler did not really act, all his actions were fundamentally reactions, for he acted so that nothing would really change, staging a gigantic spectacle of pseudo-Revolution so that the capitalist order would survive."

On toilets: "The Anglo-Saxon lava-

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tory acquires its meaning only through its differential relation to French and German lavatories. We have such a multitude of lavatory types because there is a traumatic excess which each of them tries to accommodate.”

Regarding Mr. Chomsky, he is “often empirically wrong.”

For instance, there was the infamous 1977 Nation magazine essay—co-written with the economist Edward Herman while Pol Pot’s butchery was raging—in which the authors poo-hooped “alleged” Khmer atrocities in Cambodia and credited claims “that executions have numbered at most in the thousands” and “that these were localized in areas of limited Khmer Rouge influence and unusual peasant discontent.” (Some 1.7 million Cambodians were exterminated by Khmer genocidaires.)

Mr. Chomsky on life behind the Iron Curtain: “In comparison to the conditions imposed by U.S. tyranny and violence, East Europe under Russian rule was practically a paradise.”

On Pearl Harbor: “It’s well understood that the Japanese attack on the colonial outposts of the United States, England, and Holland was in some respects highly beneficial to the people of Asia.”

On 9/11: “Obama was simply lying when he said . . . that ‘we quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by al Qaeda.’ Nothing serious has been provided since. There is much talk of bin Laden’s ‘confession,’ but that is rather like my confession that I won the Boston Marathon.”

The Chomsky-Žižek feud shows no sign of a truce. On July 21, Mr. Chom-

sky struck back, calling Mr. Žižek’s recent charges “sheer fantasy.” This prompted one blogger to plead: “Can the left please stop cannibalizing each other?” What, and spoil the fun?

— Sohrab Ahmari
Wall Street Journal
July 29, 2013, p. A1

President Obama on Thursday received Vietnam’s president, Truong Tan Sang, at the White House. The Vietnam War that once caused bitter division among the American people is long over. There is a strong case for continuing the reconciliation between the U.S. and Vietnam, and for cooperating, as Mr. Obama said, on trade, military-to-military dealings, disaster relief and other matters.

But continuing to repair relations with Vietnam shouldn’t extend to the U.S. president reviving a favorite line of attack by Vietnam War protesters from half a century ago: that North Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh was inspired by America’s Founders in his wars to take over the country. Yet in the White House news release after Thursday’s meeting, Mr. Obama is quoted saying that “we discussed the fact that Ho Chi Minh was actually inspired by the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution, and the words of Thomas Jefferson.”

One can imagine the wily Ho Chi Minh laughing from his grave. Once upon a time, antiwar activists in America called him “the George Washington of Vietnam.” Now the U.S. president is taking a similar line.

Ho Chi Minh was no Washington or Jefferson; he was a committed

Marxist-Leninist, trained in the 1920s at Moscow’s famed Lenin School.

During World War II, Vietnam—a French colony—was taken over by Japan, and toward the end of the conflict, with Japan in retreat, a power vacuum developed. Ho Chi Minh, leading the Viet Minh communist guerrilla group, saw a chance to seize power before the French could restore colonial rule. He needed allies and knew that the American president, Franklin Roosevelt, had a reputation for being anti-French and anti-colonial. Thus began Ho’s courtship of the U.S. by citing the Declaration of Independence and appealing to the American ideal of liberty.

His aim, according to Ho’s biographer, William Duiker, was to “induce the United States to support the legitimacy of his government, rather than a return of the French.”

In reality, Ho was a “disciplined Communist, who had “proved time and again his profound loyalty to Communism,” according to the ex-communist German revolutionary Ruth Fischer, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1954. She had known him in Moscow in the 1920s when he was receiving his training.

Ho didn’t get the U.S. support he sought, but he still succeeded in his national takeover, proclaiming himself president of a provisional government in what he called the Vietnam Democratic Republic. In October 1945, just how democratic the republic would be became clear: Ho ordered the slaughter of his political opponents, including 50,000 of the then-powerful Trotskyist communists. During a trip to Paris in late 1945, Ho told the French Socialist

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leader Daniel Guerin, “All those who do not follow the line which I have laid down will be broken.”

In his own writings during the war, Ho Chi Minh stressed that the revolutionaries had to have a “tactical, flexible attitude towards the national bourgeoisie,” but as for the Trotskyists, “there can be no compromise, no concession.”

Ho’s posturing as a Jefferson-inspired lover of independence failed to dupe the U.S. in the 1940s. Let’s be generous and assume that antiwar protesters in the 1960s and early 1970s didn’t know any better when they bought into his fiction. Let’s give President Obama the same benefit of the doubt. But let’s also retire the idea that Ho Chi Minh had the slightest interest in the Declaration of Independence except as a tool he once deployed hoping to achieve his communist goals.

— Ronald Radosh
Wall Street Journal
July 27 2013, p. A13

Global Warming

It may come as a surprise to many, but modern science has very little to say about most of the weather we observe on a daily basis. Here are a few quotes to demonstrate what I’m talking about.

“Scientists are still puzzled as to what triggers a spark during a thunderstorm. The latest attempt to answer the question only adds to the intrigue. It seems hard to believe that we still don’t understand what causes lightning during thunderstorms – but that’s a fact.”
– BBC’s Phillip Ball

Yep, scientists can’t tell you what causes lightning to form. However, they claim that they can predict what the global climate will be nearly a century

from now.

How about tornadoes?

“We don’t know if a particular storm will produce a tornado so the truth is we really don’t know what causes a tornado. We do know the necessary conditions needed for tornado formation.” - Steven A. Ackerman and Jonathan Martin, professors in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at UW-Madison.

And what about clouds?

Climatologists are remarkably mum on the subject of clouds. While they have plenty of theories about cloud formation, virtually none of them address why clouds appear as they do. Obviously an attractive and repulsive force is necessary for the water droplets in a cloud to stick together cohesively the way they do. There is only one obvious force that meets this requirement, and it’s not dark matter.

A few scientists have seen the light, or should I say charge? A recent study by Giles Harrison and Maarten Ambaum, from the University of Reading, found that the electrical connection between Earth and its surrounding electrified plasma environment may play a much larger role in driving Earth’s weather than anyone previously realized.” Particularly interesting is the possibility that space weather changes could affect weather in the lower atmosphere, “Harrison notes in a recent *PhysicsWorld* article.

“The realization that the electrical heartbeat of the planet plays a role in the formation of layer clouds indicates that existing models for clouds and climate are still missing potentially important components,” adds Ambaum.

“Understanding these missing elements is crucial to improve the accuracy of our weather forecasts and predicting changes to our climate.”

That article was from this past March. Does anyone think the climate models predicting doom for the planet have incorporated this finding into their research? I doubt it.

The Earth’s weather is obviously highly electrical. From lighting storms to cloud cohesion, the electrical forces of weather are on display for all to see. However, the vast majority of climate scientists want nothing to do with electricity. Electricity screws up their models and injects a climate driver that they can’t model nor predict. Harrison should be nominated for “Understatement of the Year” with his comment.

In fact, Harrison and Ambaum aren’t the only climatologists to see a connection between Earth’s weather and space. Looking at hurricanes, a recent study by N.V. Isaev et al, noted that, “In some cases the ‘typhoon eye’ is formed over the tropical depression zone in the ionosphere, that is, the region with sharply decreased plasma density and pressure is observed a day and more prior to the moment when it happens in the atmosphere.” The ionosphere is a region of electrified plasma on the edge of space that surrounds the planet.

Professor Gerald Pollack, University of Washington, has presented findings that demonstrate the water molecule has some amazing electrical properties that science is only now starting to uncover. Pollack’s lecture will blow your hair back. For example, I bet you didn’t know you that you can

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create a battery using water and piece of polymer. You can view Pollack's presentation here: [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

Pollack's work with water casts some serious doubt on the climate models presently held up as gospel by the academic community. Pollack contends that the like-likes-like electrical properties of water create a colloid crystal structure in clouds, giving them the cohesive shapes we observe. The science he presents to back his case is nothing short of stunning.

Bill Nichols, a scientist for the National Weather Service, also has some serious issues with current theories of weather and climate that fail to incorporate the electrical nature of Earth's solar environment into their models. Quoting Nichols, "the present model suck." Nichols contends that the majority of Earth's weather is electrically driven, and the space surrounding the Earth plays a large role in that process.

Nichols notes that weather formations can appear homogeneously out of nowhere, with no thermodynamic drivers, other than the Sun. This obviously indicates a strong correlation between weather and the Sun that goes ignored in climate models, but fits very well with Pollack's findings about water.

Further, Nichols talks about the dozen or more atmospheric and oceanic oscillations that have been identified. Of particular interest is the Pacific Decadal Oscillation. Contrary to Wiki's claims, this oscillation is poorly explained by "tropical forcing and extra-tropical processes." This oscillation of temperature is statistically perfect across the entire Pacific ocean over the time frame of decades. There's just no possible way

that can be explained by local thermodynamic drivers. I'll bet my bottom dollar that we see a matching oscillation taking place in the ionosphere. The data shows that the atmosphere goes with or leads the changes in the oceans, discounting the oceans as being primary drivers of weather and climate, as our climate models assume today.

— Michael Suede
Libertariannews.org
July 23, 2013

Atheism

Is America losing its faith in religion? The answer would seem to be yes, judging by polls and news stories lately. Gallup announced in May that 77% of Americans believe that religion is losing its "influence on American life." Reporting online about the Gallup results, The Blaze said the poll "suggests that America's slide toward secularism continues to gain steam."

In March at the Faith Angle Forum in South Beach, Fla., a paper by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life was presented bearing the title "The Decline of Institutional Religion." The presentation followed up on Pew research that gained wide publicity last fall indicating that the fastest-growing "religious" group in America is made up of those who say they have no religion.

According to Pew, 8% of Americans in 1990 gave their religious preference as "none." By 2007, that response had nearly doubled to 15%, and in 2012 the "no religion" response had climbed to 20%. Earlier this year, an analysis of the General Social Survey by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago tracked a similar trend, also citing the 20% no-religion response.

Many interpret the numbers to mean that America is heading down the secular road. In a survey published this month by the Pew Research Center, 48% of Americans say the growing number of "people who are not religious" is a bad thing for American society (and only 11% say it is a good thing).

But I disagree with the notion that the U.S. is heading toward becoming as unchurched as much of Europe. One reason is that saying you have "no religion" is not the same as disbelieving in God. Many people who say they have no religion are simply saying they have no official religious affiliation. They may actually have strong personal beliefs. The increase in the "no religion" group may also be an illusion caused by the rising nonresponse rate to survey studies.

Consider: The proportion of Americans who claim to be atheists has not increased even slightly since Gallup first asked about belief in God in 1944. Back then, 4% said they did not believe in God, and 3% or 4% give that answer today.

Most of those Americans who are reported as having no religion are not unreligious but only unaffiliated, and some of them even attend church. They do not belong to any specific denomination, but probably most of them would agree that they are Christians, had they been directly asked that question.

A far more important indicator, as many recent studies—including the Baylor National Religion Surveys—have found, is that those who say they have no religion are surprisingly religious. Most say they pray, and a third even report having had a religious experience. Half of these respondents who would be

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considered by survey takers to have “no religion” believe in angels.

So even if the proportion of Americans with no professed religion is rising, that does not translate into an increase in irreligiousness. But it may well be that the proportion of nonreligious Americans is not even increasing, and remains far smaller than recent surveys reveal.

When I was a young sociologist at Berkeley’s Survey Research Center, it was assumed that any survey that failed to interview at least 85% of those originally drawn into the sample was not to be trusted. Those who refused to take part in the survey or could not be reached were known to be different from those who did take part. Consequently, studies were expected to report their completion rates.

Today, even the most reputable studies seldom reach more than a third of those initially selected to be surveyed and, probably for that reason, completion rates are now rarely reported. The Pew Forum researchers are to be commended for reporting their actual completion rates, which by 2012 had fallen to 9%.

Given all of this, only one thing is really certain: Those who take part in any survey are not a random selection of the population. They also tend to be less educated and less affluent. Contrary to the common wisdom, research has long demonstrated that this demographic group is the one least likely to belong to a church.

As the less-affluent and less-educated have made up a bigger share of those surveyed, so has the number of those who report having no religion. That would help explain why, during this

whole era of supposed decline, Baylor surveys find that the overall rate of membership in local religious congregations has remained stable at about 70%. Hard to write a headline about the lack of change. Sometimes, though, no news really is good news.

— Rodney Stark
Wall Street Journal
July 5, 2013, p.9

Secularism

For at least the last hundred years, the world’s most dynamic religion has been neither Christianity nor Islam.

It is leftism.

Most people do not recognize what is probably the single most important fact of modern life. One reason is that leftism is overwhelmingly secular (more than merely secular: it is inherently opposed to all traditional religions), and therefore people do not regard it as a religion. Another is that leftism so convincingly portrays itself as solely the product of reason, intellect, and science that it has not been seen as the dogma-based ideology that it is. Therefore, the vast majority of the people who affirm leftist beliefs think of their views as the only way to properly think about life.

That, in turn, explains why anyone who opposes leftism is labeled anti-intellectual, anti-progress, anti-science, anti-minority and anti-reason (among many other pejorative epithets): leftists truly believe that there is no other way to think.

How successful has leftism been?

It dominates the thinking of Europe, much of Latin America, Canada, and Asia, as well as the thinking of the political and intellectual elites of most of the world. Outside of the Muslim

world, it is virtually the only way in which news is reported and virtually the only way in which young people are educated from elementary school through university.

Only the United States, of all Western countries, has resisted leftism. But that resistance is fading as increasing numbers of Americans abandon traditional Judeo-Christian religions, lead secular lives, are educated by teachers whose views are almost uniformly left-wing and are exposed on a daily basis virtually exclusively to leftist views in their news and entertainment media.

And when there is resistance, the left declares it “extremist.” Merely believing that marriage should remain defined as it has been throughout recorded history, as between a man and a woman, renders you an extremist. So, too, belief that government should be small -- the Tea Party position -- renders one an extremist. Last week, the managing editor of Time Magazine, Richard Stengel, said on MSNBC that the Salafis, the most radical Islamist sect, are “the Tea Party of Muslim democracy.”

Even Christianity and Judaism, the pillars of Judeo-Christian values, the moral value system upon which America was founded and thanks to which it became the world’s beacon of liberty, have been widely influenced by leftism. Many priests, ministers, rabbis and many Jewish and Christian seminaries are leftist in content and Jewish or Christian only in form.

Years ago, I debated one of the most prominent rabbis in the Conservative movement of Judaism on the issue of whether morality must be God-based. The Ivy League Ph.D., yarmulke-

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wearing rabbi argued that God was not morally necessary. If you want to understand why so many Jews vote left while nearly all the Western world's opposition to -- and frequently hatred of -- Israel emanates from the left, one explanation is this: For most American Jews, their religion is leftism, while Judaism is their ethnicity and culture. The Reform, and increasingly the Conservative, movements have, to a large extent, become political movements that use Hebrew and Jewish rituals to equate Judaism with progressive politics.

Within mainstream Protestantism and Catholicism, the same dominance of leftist values exists. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops largely holds the same social and economic views as the Democratic Party and The New York Times editorial page. It differs with the left with regard to same-sex marriage, abortion and religious freedom issues such as those pertaining to Catholic hospitals and government-funded contraception. As for mainstream Protestant denominations, they, too, are largely indistinguishable from leftism. Proof? Ask a liberal Protestant minister to name one important area in which he and leftism differ. Ask a liberal Reform or Conservative rabbi the same question. Their silence will be telling.

The truth is that the left has been far more successful in converting in converting Jews and Christians to Leftism than Christianity and Judaism have been in influencing leftists to convert to Christianity or Judaism.

Finally, leftism has even attained considerable success at undoing the central American values of liberty, "In God We Trust," and "E Pluribus

Unum," supplanting liberty with egalitarianism, a God-based society with secularism, and "E Pluribus Unum" with multiculturalism. (I make this case at length in "Still the Best Hope: Why the World Needs American Values to Triumph" [HarperCollins].)

This triumph of the twentieth century's most dynamic religion -- leftism -- is why, even in the midst of an ongoing recession, the leftist candidate may win. As I wrote in my last column, it's not just the economy, stupid.

— Dennis Prager
Whistleblower
June 2013, p.46

When teenage thugs are called "troubled youth" by people on the political left, that tells us more about the mindset of the left than about these young hoodlums.

Seldom is there a speck of evidence that the thugs are troubled, and often there is ample evidence that they are in fact enjoying themselves, as they create trouble and dangers for others.

Why then the built-in excuse, when juvenile hoodlums are called "troubled youth" and mass murderers are just assumed to be "insane"?

At least as far back as the 18th century, the left has struggled to avoid facing the plain fact of evil -- that some people simply choose to do things that they know to be wrong when they do them. Every kind of excuse, from poverty to an unhappy childhood, is used by the left to explain and excuse evil.

All the people who have come out of poverty or unhappy childhoods, or both, and become decent and productive human beings, are ignored. So are

the evils committed by people raised in wealth and privilege, including kings, conquerors and slaveowners.

Why has evil been such a hard concept for many on the left to accept? The basic agenda of the left is to change external conditions. But what if the problem is internal? What if the real problem is the cursedness of human beings?

Rousseau denied this in the 18th century and the left has been denying it ever since. Why? Self preservation.

If the things that the left wants to control -- institutions and government policy -- are not the most important factors in the world's problems, then what role is there for the left?

What if it is things like the family, the culture and the traditions that make a more positive difference than the bright new government "solutions" that the left is constantly coming up with? What if seeking "the root causes of crime" is not nearly as effective as locking up criminals? The hard facts show that the murder rate was going down for decades under the old traditional practices so disdained by the left intelligentsia, before the bright new ideas of the left went into effect in the 1960s -- after which crime and violence skyrocketed.

What happened when old-fashioned ideas about sex were replaced in the 1960s by the bright new ideas of the left that were introduced into the schools as "sex education" that was supposed to reduce teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases?

Both teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases had been going down for years. But that trend suddenly

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reversed in the 1960s and hit new highs.

One of the oldest and most dogmatic of the crusades of the left has been disarmament, both of individuals and of nations. Again, the focus of the left has been on the externals – the weapons in this case.

If weapons were the problem, then gun control laws at home and international disarmament agreements abroad might be the answer. But if evil people who care no more for laws or treaties than they do for other people's lives are the problem, then disarmament means making decent, law-abiding people more vulnerable to evil people.

Since belief in disarmament has been a major feature of the left since the 18th century, in countries around the world, you might think that by now there would be lots of evidence to substantiate their beliefs.

But evidence on whether gun control laws actually reduce crime rates in general, or murder rates in particular, is seldom mentioned by gun control advocates. It is just assumed in passing that of course tighter gun control laws will reduce murders.

But the hard facts do not back up that assumption. That is why it is the critics of gun control who rely heavily on empirical evidence, as in books like *More Guns, Less Crime* by John Lott and *Guns and Violence* by Joyce Lee Malcolm.

National disarmament has an even worse record. Both Britain and America neglected their military forces between the two World Wars, while Germany and Japan armed to the teeth. Many British and American soldiers paid with their lives for their countries' initially in-

adequate military equipment in World War II.

But what are mere facts compared to the heady vision of the left?

— Thomas Sowell
The Washington Times
July 8, 2013, p. 23