

» pg. 2 From the president's desk:
Ferguson, Detroit, and America

» pg. 6 Doc's recent reading
on the Southern Baptist
Convention and higher
education

» The latest
announcements and
news

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Why the Socialist Option for Urban Problems Will Never Work



Christopher Brooks is a Summit faculty speaker and author, economist, Christian apologist, and pastor in urban Detroit, Michigan. As a pastor who understands the power of

*God's justice, he's worked tirelessly to further the biblical worldview in his urban context, building healthy relationships between people of every race, nationality, and socio-economic class. With the riots in Ferguson, Mo., and the growing anger around race relations in the U.S., we thought this excerpt from Pastor Brooks' recent book *Urban Apologetics* and his presentation at Summit's 2014 Adult Conference would provide thoughtful insight into the issue.*

*From *Urban Apologetics* by Christopher Brooks, ©2014, published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, pages 139-144. Used by permission.*

Karl Marx, in *The Communist Manifesto* (originally published in 1848), summarized his narrative of the world by proclaiming that "the history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle."¹ In another writing he goes on to declare war on religion, in particular Christianity, by asserting that "religion is the opium of the people."² His writings convey a deep intelligence, certainly, but an even deeper hostility to religion. For Marx, God did not exist and thus could not rescue humanity. Yet he realized that humanity was flawed and that, as the great English historian Lord John Acton once observed, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."³ This means that man cannot be self-governed because our nature is corrupted and, given the opportunity, we will dominate one another and pursue personal success



at the expense of the weak.

Marx and his socialist contemporaries realized the dilemma that they were trapped in: the vicious cycle of those with power enslaving those who lacked strength of voice or resources. So the answer for them was a just government that would force the rich to share their goods with the poor. In the socialist mind, the underlying assumption is that the wealthy have amassed their possessions through oppressive means and on the backs of the multitudes of working poor. Again, in the words of Marx, "The history of all ... society is a history of class struggle." If God is not an option for our salvation and we are haunted by the knowledge that we desperately need a savior, then we will turn to the state as our Messiah.

The problem with this solution is that humans run the state. There are no governments that are truly theocratic and free

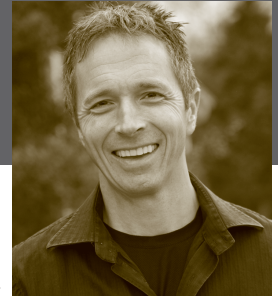
from the impulses and influences of corrupted human beings. So the history of socialism in every place it has been applied is that it has produced more oppression and poverty for those it aims to help. The stories of governments robbing their own people of the most basic necessities — of food, water, shelter — are told by countless millions who have been subjected to this form of flawed economics. Sadly, the predominant and most forceful approach to economic equality in urban communities has been shaped by Marxism. The rhetoric of most socially concerned politicians and community activists is laced with the speech of class warfare and the offer of an ever-growing government that will rescue individuals from their pain.

Not only is socialism a failed economic model, but it is also an attack against God. No longer are people encouraged to look to the Lord for their salvation; rather, they are told that God cannot help you, but government can. Without a doubt, government has its place, and we should all hope for righteous leaders who will act justly. However, we must guard ourselves from developing a governmental dependency. This risk is just as great for the rich as it is for the poor. Whenever we expect government to ensure outcomes instead of simply guaranteeing opportunities, we have replaced God and become dependents of the state, whether we are rich or poor.

So what is the solution? In my opinion no one speaks more eloquently and biblically on these issues than Father Robert Sirico, cofounder and president of the Acton Institute, and Dr. John Perkins, founder of the Christian Community Development Association. Both men have a profound understanding of the gospel and how the Christian worldview can produce

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



Reading about the shooting of Michael Brown and the subsequent riots in Ferguson, Mo., brought back a lot of unsettling memories.

Born in Detroit, I lived most of my first 10 years in a suburb adjoining Detroit's city limits. In 1967, our city dissolved into riots in which 43 people died, more than 1,000 were injured, and 2,000 buildings were destroyed. I was just a tiny child when it happened, but even I could sense the anger and fear that wrapped each conversation, every trip to the store or to Tigers stadium.

My friends and I responded to our parents' wariness by acting tough. Before I even needed all the fingers on one hand to display my age, I knew how to raise my middle finger and choose words that would curdle the ears of any adult. I was offered hard drugs for the first time at age 7, and I remember watching police remove the body of our neighbor after he died from a drug overdose. I vividly recall slipping under my bed in panic at the sound of a gunshot in the street.

My parents left Detroit just before I turned 10 years of age. It was a mass exodus. Between 1967 and 2000, half of Detroit's residents abandoned the city. The rioters in Detroit — and Newark and Los Angeles and presumably those in Ferguson, Mo., as well — thought they were bringing justice. Instead, they terrified people, destroyed property, and severed the already hemorrhaging artery of trust that makes community possible.

When cities come unraveled, everyone with the means to do so leaves. Only the poorest and most vulnerable remain, poorer and more

vulnerable than ever. Some say such problems inevitably result from urbanization. But like it or not, cities are the future. In 1800, only 3 percent of the world's population lived in cities. By 2050, it is estimated two-thirds of the world's population will live in large cities.

Imagine this: six billion people packed together with others of different racial groups, religious affiliations, and political opinions. Think of the daily challenges of protecting our

“If a biblical worldview is true, it is true even for thorny issues of race relations and poverty and urbanization and government corruption.”

Dr. Jeff Myers

families from crime, of making a living or getting food, or even of providing basic health care and sanitation.

The Bible is our only hope. Aside from embracing a biblical commitment to the dignity of each person, servanthood, and economic stewardship, the world's experiment in urbanization will continue to be a disaster. Loving our neighbor will increasingly mean seeking the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29:7).

If a biblical worldview is true, it is true even for thorny issues of race relations and poverty and urbanization

and government corruption. And we can make a bigger difference on those issues than we realize. In a *Leadership Journal* article titled “To Transform a City,” Pastor Timothy Keller wrote that the tipping point for community change is somewhere between 5 percent and 15 percent of the population.¹ Christians make up far more than 5 percent of the population, even in urban areas. If they will live out their Christian convictions in their neighborhoods, they can restore hope and peace.

It's already happening, even in places like Detroit. According to economist and pastor Chris Brooks, whose thoughts are featured in these pages, Christians are leading the way in Detroit's comeback. He told me that the church I attended growing up, which was nearly abandoned for many years, is now the center of a city-wide prayer movement. Too, hundreds of people are participating in Pastor Brooks' intensive apologetics conferences.

At present, many of our cities are Exhibit A of secularism's headlong descent into hopelessness. Yet this is not inevitable. First John 4:18 says, “Perfect love casts out fear.” God cares about cities. We should too.

Please join me for our 2015 Summit adult conference March 8-13 and meet the legendary Christian apologist Josh McDowell, as well as Naghmeh Abedini, whose husband is being held as a prisoner for his faith in Iran. Go to www.summit.org to secure your seat.

Notes

1. Timothy Keller, “To Transform a City,” *Leadership Journal*.net, March 7, 2011, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2011/winter/transformcity.html?start=1>

urban apologetics

continued from page 1

economic shalom among the poor. Father Sirico is noted for his view that those who truly care about economic justice for the poor must ask themselves what type of economy would best help the poor. A bad economy will always produce bad results, especially for the financially powerless. In Sirico's opinion, Christian capitalism has proven to be the most effective means for helping ensure financial freedom for all. He states, "Capitalism offers wide ownership of property, fair and equal rules for all, strict adherence to the rule of ownership, opportunities for charity, and the wise use of resources."⁴

To some this may sound naively optimistic, but Father Sirico spells out and explains his philosophy of the virtues of a market-based economic approach in his book *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*. The underpinnings of his view on what makes an economy just and good is a right cosmology. Our cosmology is our belief on how the world has been created and the practical principles that should impact the way we live as a result of these beliefs. For Father Sirico, cosmology begins with the fact that an all-powerful and all-good God who has created the universe has also made man with intrinsic dignity and in His image. Therefore, a moral economy is built upon two pillars: first, cultivating humanity's dependence upon God as creator and sustainer; second, a moral economy, which preserves a person's intrinsic dignity by ensuring equality of opportunity, not equal outcomes.

Over time, wealth redistribution and one-way charity only cause people to feel incapable of providing for themselves. Dignity is derived from the right to enjoy the happiness that comes from earned success. True prosperity and empowerment come when a person is

given equal access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities, and is allowed to achieve based upon one's own hard work and ingenuity. I am not advocating for a rugged individualism, rather a community that shows its compassion by ensuring that everyone will have the right to learn and work. I am also mindful of the balanced admonishment found in Galatians 6:2-5, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ... But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load."

Notice the way the apostle Paul balances the call for Christians to advocate for a compassionate community that acts justly by helping those who are in a weakened or vulnerable condition, while at the same time discouraging an unhealthy reliance on others by upholding the responsibility we each have for self-sufficiency. As apologists who care deeply about a world that is socially just, these are the things we should fight for. We should oppose any barrier that lim-

"The free economy is a dream worthy of our spiritual imaginations."

Father Siricio

its a person's ability to be educated and employed. But we should also stand against the type of toxic charity that creates generation after generation of government dependency. A governmental policy that curbs a person's affluence by forcing the reallocation of their hard-earned income is both unbiblical and

unhelpful to the poor.

I realize that for some this sounds an awful lot like the greedy capitalism that produced the 2008 economic collapse. Suffice it to say that any approach to economics can go terribly off course and become harmful when selfishness rules the day. The only remedy is for Christians to promote an economic model that doesn't lose sight of God. My assumption is that a person who produces and manages wealth with the full awareness that she was created by a moral God and will one day have to give an account to Him on how she used the resources that He blessed her with will behave more honorably and mercifully. She will also be a more careful steward of her money, even her charitable giving, making sure that she is investing in the people and projects that will have the greatest impact on humanity for the glory of God.

This type of financial vision has great potential for helping the poor rise out of poverty and the rich to voluntarily distribute their wealth to causes that will bring about justice for all. Father Sirico said it best: "Capitalism, rightly understood and pursued, has lifted untold millions out of abject poverty and allowed them to use skills and talents they would never have discovered, and to build opportunities their grandparents never dreamed were possible. The free economy is a dream worthy of our spiritual imaginations."⁵

The Power of Applied Compassion

Having much in common with Father Sirico philosophically, Dr. John Perkins challenges us even further in the area of application. As a man who came back to Mississippi after leaving and finding success in California, Dr. Perkins has dedicated his life to transforming broken communities with the

See **urban apologetics** page 4

urban apologetics

continued from page 3

love of Christ and effective compassion. Unfortunately, he has found that many Christians are guilty of giving lip service to justice but being unwilling to roll up their sleeves in tangible ways. To cure this, he has established certain core values that govern the Christian Community Development Association, one of which is a commitment to “relocation.”⁶ This is simply a recognition of the fact that one of the greatest challenges in our urban communities is the escapism that has led many to leave the inner city in search of success, thereby creating a vacuum of leadership. Perkins encourages Christians to move into and to work in the poorest communities in America. He is convinced that our presence will bring about transformation from the inside out. But it will never be accomplished if we continue to operate

with an “arm’s length” mentality.

If we were to summarize the methods of these two voices for justice, we would say that economic freedom for the poor can only be achieved in a free economy where gifted leaders are committed to living among those whom they serve and advocating for fairness in opportunities for education, employment, and entrepreneurship. Our willingness to embrace this philosophy as urban apologists will produce results and overcome any barrier that attempts to limit the credibility of our message. Our examination of the major ethical, religious, and social challenges to the gospel has revealed that in order to be an effective witness for Christ, we must embody the truth that we believe and never shy away from giving an answer to anyone who asks us for a reason for

the hope that lies within us! And this we will do with gentleness and respect.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1967), 62.
2. Karl Marx, *Early Political Writings*, ed. by Edward J. O’Malley (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57.
3. John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887, in *Historical Essays and Studies*, ed. by J. N. Figgis and R.V. Laurence (London: Macmillan, 1907), 504.
4. Robert Sirico, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2012), 6.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Christian Community Development Association, accessed March 12, 2014, www.ccca.org/about/ccd-philosophy.

Christopher Brooks’ Summit Adult Conference 2014 Address:

What you think about God and his creation are the two most important aspects of who you are. You can’t have a corrupt root system and get righteous fruit from it. I love Summit because they know how to marry orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right living).

Today I’m talking about how the gospel of Jesus Christ brings freedom to cities. Throughout scripture, we see that God has a heart for people in cities. Adam had his Eden, Jesus had his Jerusalem, David had his Bethlehem. Paul said, “I have to get to Rome.” Chris Brooks has his Detroit.

What city has God placed on your heart? Ask the Lord, “How can I be an agent of love, salvation, transformation, and freedom here.” Look around and ask, what does this city need to be

liberated from? What do the people of the city need to experience freedom from?

My burden is for Detroit. I tell people all the time, I’m not in Detroit by force, I’m in Detroit by choice. In Detroit, we face brokenness every day. Brokenness creates bondage. It’s not just an urban problem. It’s a universal, ubiquitous problem. Devaluing human life produces a bondage of violence.

It also creates a bondage of dependency. I live in a city that, much to our shame, receives about half a billion dollars in food stamps every year. Part of the reason I stand strongly against an aid-based solution to the problems of the poor is because I’ve seen the dependency it’s created. If a young man grows up in a home where his mother received food stamps, and his grand-

mother before that, then what does he expect?

Those of you called to help the economically down-trodden, ask yourself, “What is really working?” Don’t let sentimentality drive you. Look at people as individuals and figure out what brings empowerment. Never do for someone else what they have the capacity to do for themselves, because it strips them of dignity.

Here are five things we can do to bring the gospel to our cities:

Embrace the power of a city theology. Tim Keller says, “Christians should strive to be known for their love for cities, their commitment to justice and mercy, and their love for their neighbors.”

I’m conservative, but I think we of-

See **Brooks’ address** page 5

Brooks' address

continued from page 4

ten spend more time on what we are against rather than what we're for. Great ideas capture the heart through human stories. We need to tell stories of how the gospel transforms cities. Oftentimes our liberal friends win their arguments not because they're right but because they specialize in human stories.

Embrace the power of common grace. Gabe Lyons says, "What the church is missing is the theology of common grace ... the grace that causes us to say like the Psalmist, the Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all, and all he has made." In my community, what does the grace of God look like when it's applied to my atheist or Muslim neighbors or drug-dealers? Does God have any grace for them?

The number one reason why most people don't want to do evangelism in Muslim communities or in urban poor communities like Detroit is fear. And it's not just a black fear; there's a white fear as well. As a pastor, I'm always encouraging people to not be afraid. Part of the problem is we have a fear-based fight-or-flight mentality. When you have a love-based metanarrative of the world, the goal is not to conquer your neighbor but to love and influence them into a relationship with Christ.

Last summer, we renovated many houses and gave away a house to a single mom who is a school-teacher with two children. Part of my job during the project was to walk up and down the street and pray for people. I came up to this drug-dealer who had two cell phones going. I introduced myself as Pastor Brooks, and he tells the guy on the phone, "I gotta go. A pastor just came to visit." I asked if I could pray for

him, and in our conversation he says, "You know what we need around here? More good guys like you." I told him he could be that guy; he didn't have to import one. We talked for an hour, and began a relationship. The only way I could have that conversation is for love to cast out fear.

Embrace the power of the Christian worldview. The Bible is the story of the whole world. Chuck Colson said,

The Christian worldview is more consistent, morally rational, and more workable than any other belief system. It beats all other contenders in giving credible answers to the great questions any other worldview must answer. Questions like, where did we come from, what is the human dilemma, what can we do to solve the human dilemma? The way that we see the world guides the way we work to change the world.

Here's what he's saying: The Christian worldview, when put up against other worldviews, always wins. Christians have to go from defense to offense.

Embrace the power of created calling. Andy Crouch says, "Christians should be known for cultivating what is best for human culture. ... We should be known as creators, people who dare to think and do something that has never been thought or done before, something that makes that world more welcoming, thrilling, and beautiful."

What are you doing to make your community more welcoming, more thrilling, and more beautiful?

Jeremiah 29:4-7 says,

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles

whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce; take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Are you building houses, families, businesses, and gardens in your community?

Embrace the power of collaboration. Vince Lombardi, the great football coach, says, "Individual commitment to a group effort, that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." None of us can do this alone. Get involved in your local church, that's where you leverage relationships. We can do more together than we can apart.

Acts 16:9-10 says, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

I encourage you to pray until you get a vision of where God wants you to minister. Just as the Macedonian man was crying out "please come help us," there are groups in your own backyard that are crying out for help. We should see our communities as people God wants to save.

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.

Southern Baptist Convention/Sexual Orientation

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A gathering of Southern Baptists here opened this week with Albert Mohler, stalwart head of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, apologizing for “denying the reality of sexual orientation,” but saying orientation “can change.”

It closed with a pastor saying “no one goes to hell for being homosexual,” but he added Christians must remind gay friends and family members that “the day of judgment is coming.”

The statements from the largest and one of the most conservative Protestant denominations made waves in the religious and gay communities. Some praised the Southern Baptist Convention for softening its tone and message when discussing homosexuals. Critics complained that nothing really had changed.

But others who attended said a shift was taking place. In private meetings and one-on-one encounters during the week, Southern Baptists and gay-rights advocates said they established relationships they hope will carry both sides through a time of deep cultural change, particularly as the church navigates issues such as the increasing acceptance of

same-sex marriage.

Southern Baptists remain firmly opposed to homosexuality, citing biblical authority, and see the legalization of gay marriage as proof of the deterioration of Christian values. Some evangelicals and Baptists outside the SBC have begun advocating change — raising questions about interpretations of biblical prohibitions and supporting Christians in same-sex relationships. Though SBC pastors this week, while suggesting greater engagement with gays, reiterated the practice of homosexuality is a sin.

Southern Baptists and gay-rights supporters had clashed before this week, in print and online, but rarely had direct personal contact.

“Everyone’s talking about each other. We needed to start talking to each other,” said Andrew Walker, director of policy studies for the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, which hosted the three-day conference.

Though gay-rights advocates and Christians who back same-sex marriage weren’t invited to speak, a small group attended to observe and meet informally with Southern Baptists, including Mr. Walker.

“What’s significant is not the content of the meetings, but that there were meetings at all,” said Justin Lee, executive director of The Gay Christian Network. “It allowed us to humanize one another and form relationships.”

Both groups noted that each side faces pressure from its constituents, who may see such meetings as paving the way for an accommodation they don’t support. “No one ceded their ground on any issue,” Mr. Walker said. “Neither side was brandishing the white flag.”

One night, Mr. Walker and more than a dozen Southern Baptists and gay-rights advocates gathered in a suite away from the ballroom where more than 1,300 attendees met for the public portion of the conference.

The meeting “exceeded both sides’ expectations as far as cheerfulness, friendliness, and authenticity of the conversation,” Mr. Walker said. “We disagreed, but we disagreed very well.”

Southern Baptists have complained they are often portrayed unfairly by gay-rights supporters as bigots, out of touch with modern culture. The personal meetings “help defy caricature,” Mr. Walker said.

Some gay-rights advocates at the conference said their greatest worry is for teens growing up in strict evangelical households who may be shunned by their families for coming out as gay.

While the private meetings offered hope, advocates said, they were disappointed by speech in some public sessions, including from Christians who described themselves as “struggling with same-sex attraction.”

But many SBC pastors and leaders encouraged Baptists not to shun gay, lesbian, and transgender — or LGBT — people, as well as gay family members.

In a sign of the practical struggles Baptists face, some of the conference focused on advice. “What if you get invited to a same-sex wedding ceremony?” Russell Moore, president of the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, was asked. “In that case, I would not attend the wedding. I would attend



a look at our world

continued from page 6

the reception,” he said. In that way, he said, a Baptist could say, “I love you and I’m here with you. I disagree with you, but I love you.”

Mr. Mohler, head of the theological seminary, said he hoped the conference would make Christians “motivated to be unafraid to engage with LGBT persons.” Mr. Mohler this week met with Matthew Vines, an openly gay Christian author who argues the Bible doesn’t prohibit lifelong same-sex marriage.

“I think all evangelical Christians are having to learn anew how to discuss these issues,” Mr. Mohler said

“It’s not like anyone is suddenly pro-gay,” said Mr. Vines. But, “it feels like a new era.”

— Tamara Audi

The Wall Street Journal

October 31, 2014

Higher Education

Christian colleges value accreditation from secular agencies as a quality assurance mechanism, but also because without it their students will lose federal financial aid and may have trouble gaining acceptance to graduate school. So accreditation is a potential weapon in the hands of agencies influenced by the agenda of gay rights activists. This worries some education leaders in the wake of news from Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., while others say there’s nothing to fear.

The Gordon story, in brief: Gordon President, Michael Lindsay, bravely joined some other Christian leaders in signing a letter to President Barack Obama asking for religious exemptions to a proposed ban on federal funding for institutions that “discriminate” against LGBT employees. In September, the

Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), one of six regional accrediting agencies, asked Gordon for a report about whether its conduct policy forbidding “homosexual practice” meets NEASC’s requirement for “nondiscriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement.”

NEASC President Barbara Brittingham told me, “We didn’t have any problem with any other part of the school’s policies,” which also include prohibitions of sex outside marriage, drunkenness, blasphemy, profanity, theft, and dishonesty. She also said, “We accredit Boston College, which is a Jesuit school, and they only want Jesuits to teach theology. We have no problem with that.”

When asked why Gordon should have to produce a special report regarding its opposition to homosexuality, Brittingham said, “How society thinks about LGBT people has changed drastically in the last 15 years or so, and Gordon seems to be saying that one group of people can do certain things, but another group of people cannot.” She also said NEASC has a good relationship with Gordon and that withdrawal of accreditation could not happen next September, when the report is due. She said the worst possibilities at that time would be some form of probation or a more formal inquiry. Later, she emailed me about the probation issue and said, “I was speaking hypothetically in the general sense, not about Gordon College.”

David Brown, a professor at Northland International University, says, “Leaders in Christian higher education are keeping a close watch on what is hap-

pening at Gordon. ... They were anticipating this as a falling of the first domino, and they aren’t surprised it happened in Massachusetts.” Brown noted that NEASC “pinpointed one action of one leader on a topic on which good people differ, and threatened the entire future of a fine school.”

But a statement from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities said, “NEASC has been clear in its communication that Gordon’s accreditation is not at risk. The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires accreditors to respect institutional mission, and in the case of religious institutions, their religious mission specifically.” Mary Ellen Petrisko, president of the Accrediting Commission for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, told me, “I do not believe that the Gordon College situation is the beginning of a trend that will endanger the accreditation of religious schools.”

Withdrawal of accreditation is very rare and has been done only once by NEASC since 1988 — in 2010, when a school had serious financial problems. But this is also the first time that an accrediting agency has demanded a report in relation to rules concerning homosexuality. So questions remain: Will Christian colleges be evaluated based on consistency with their own mission and values, or will they be judged by someone else’s? And if accrediting agencies demand changes, will those colleges give in?

— Dave Swavelly

World Magazine

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For more information visit www.summit.org/conferences/adult

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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 7

Literature

Three-fourths full or one-fourth empty? I recently read one new Christian book that blasts William Shakespeare for sub-Christian thinking, but then received Leland Ryken's *Shakespeare's Hamlet* (Crossway, 2014), an 83-page analysis that high-school and college students should consume. He notes that Shakespeare's plays "assume the same kind of reality the Bible does with such Christian beliefs as the existence of God and Satan, heaven and hell, good and evil, and punishment for sin."

Ryken, for more than 45 years a Wheaton professor of English, lists the providential events that happen in the second half of *Hamlet*: a traveling troupe of players visits so Hamlet can get them to perform the mousetrap scene; he passes by the door of Claudius as the murderer is kneeling in prayer; Polonius rather than Claudius is behind the curtain; Gertrude happens to grab the poisoned chalice. Ryken says another author could have made these all chance occurrences, but "Shakespeare (as always) shows his theological allegiance by turning the chain of events in the direction of Christian faith in God's providence."

Ryken points out that when Hamlet's friend Horatio entreats him to back out of the Act V duel, Hamlet replies, "We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If [death] ... be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all." Hamlet rejects pagan notions of fortune telling, alludes to Jesus' famous remark about God's care even for sparrows, and becomes, in Ryken's words, "an example of Christian courage."

Ryken also notes that *Hamlet*

declares "the existence of an unseen spiritual world ... in addition to the physical world in which we live." And for those who want to see the play as well as read it, Ryken says the 1987 BBC production of *Hamlet*, with Derek Jacobi and Claire Bloom, is the best film version.

—Marvin Olasky

World Magazine

November 1, 2014

Whence come the principles of modern liberal societies — "liberal" in the classical sense of devotion to human liberty, with a private sphere protected by natural rights, the equal moral dignity of individuals, freedom of conscience, and a limited state? When and how did Western societies come by such foundational ideas of human freedom?

One usual account is that the Renaissance and the Enlightenment drove such discoveries, that in the several centuries from Machiavelli to Mill, the Western mind (in Jefferson's words) "burst the chains" of "monkish ignorance and superstition," with outmoded religious beliefs being at least modified and often jettisoned in favor of "the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion." Prior to modernity, in this account, all is gloom and oppression.

A variant of this view is to exalt the ancient cities of Athens and Rome, the birthplaces of both republican government and political philosophy, as early exemplars of freedom and secular government. Then the thesis is that Renaissance humanists and early modern theorists came up with the new doctrine of natural rights, but only in an encounter with the thought of the ancient pagans, shunting the "dark ages" of Christendom to the sidelines.

Not so fast, says Larry Siedentop in *Inventing the Individual*. In this wide-ranging work of intellectual, cultural, and political history, Siedentop, an emeritus Oxford fellow, argues that liberalism, secularism, human equality and natural rights, the social contract, and the shielding of the private from the public and of society from the state should not be treated as innovations of modernity in either of these ways. Instead we should understand these essential features of the modern West as products of Christianity itself.

For Siedentop, "Christian moral beliefs emerge as the ultimate source of the social revolution that has made the West what it is." The peculiar insights and commitments of Christianity took many centuries of development to unfold in all their dimensions. But it is notable that Siedentop draws his story to a close with the 15th century: The foundations of liberalism were in place before the Renaissance and Reformation, before Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke, before the Enlightenment and the revolutions of the 18th century. Rarely does a revisionist history topple so many pillars of conventional understanding.

And rarely has it been done so well. Siedentop writes with a clear elegance, in over two dozen pithy chapters that move the reader briskly through almost two millennia of history. He begins in the ancient pagan world of Greece and Rome, where religion was essentially a family cult, where the city was built on a polytheistic "confederation of cults," and where notions of human equality had essentially no political or moral purchase. This closed world is burst open by Saint Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles who "wagers on human equality," preaching a

a look at our world

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

salvation available to all — and therefore also a conscience in each human being, a moral agency and responsibility resting in each human soul. The most important relationship in each human life, for Paul's Christian evangelism, is not the son's or daughter's relation to the family, or the citizen's relation to the city, but the individual's relation to God. These individuals, like the God in whose image they are made, are free. Thus they have claims on their fellow men, in ethics, law, and politics, claims untrammelled by questions of rank, status, family, or membership in cult or tribe.

This was explosive stuff. The noble hero and the great prince were supplanted by the humble saint, lifted to glory by his obedience to the divine law of charity. The poor had the same access to grace as the rich — perhaps more access. Social identities took a back seat to basic human dignity and moral equality. Western men — and women — entered “a world in which individual conscience rather than assigned status provided the foundation for social relations.” Dignity now attached even to work, which the ancient pagans had disdained. And the ambiguities of Christian belief and doctrine gave new impetus to the cause of learning.

Siedentop's tale radiates outward and ranges forward into the foundations of the medieval city, the death of slavery in Christendom, improved understandings of marriage, property, and corporate organization, the struggle for the “liberty of the Church,” the development of canon and civil law, the evolving notion of a sovereign state, and the conversion of the classical idea of natural law into the medieval (no, not the modern) idea of natural rights.

Major figures in the story include Augustine, Charlemagne, Pope Gregory VII, Gratian, Abelard, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Each of them played a role in advancing the cause of equal freedom and dignity for “all souls,” helping to clear a space where the individual could stake his claim against the pretensions of “superior” birth, “natural” authority, or the refinements of reason. And with them all Siedentop seems comfortably at home, wearing his learning lightly, while candidly relying also on favorite historians old and new: Fustel de Coulanges and Guizot in the 19th century, Peter Brown and Brian Tierney in the 20th.

This is not a flawless book. My non-specialist eyes spotted a careless error about the Resurrection in one place, an oddly inverted reading of Plato's *Republic* in another, and a superficial understanding of what the author calls American “fundamentalism” in the conclusion. But these are small defects in a book that is extraordinarily rich in explaining the central developments of Western civilization.

As challenging as Siedentop's book will be to academics in various schools of thought, it also contains very important insights for people engaged in the public square, especially where religion and politics intersect. For those who champion the cause of “secularism,” it will be a salutary shock to learn that the very idea of the secular is a Christian one — that in the Christian ideas of the individual, of the conscience, and of the Church as the body of Christ lay all the predicates for a politics of freedom, of individual choice, and of limited state authority occupying a sphere separate from religious authority.

The modern heirs of medieval liberalism, taking a more atomistic and utilitarian line than their forebears, create, in Siedentop's view, a “liberal heresy” that “deprives liberal secularism of its profoundly moral roots.” Hence the “embarrassment” of contemporary Europeans as they thrust away any recognition of the Christian foundations of their civilization. They have privileged the secular over the religious, and made enemies of two institutions — church and state — that grew up together as brothers. But “secularism is Christianity's gift to the world,” Siedentop says, and it is not a doctrine of “non-belief or indifference” but a way of supplying “the conditions in which authentic beliefs should be formed and defended.” Those who raise the banner of “secularism” while they attack religious belief as retrograde, irrational, or tyrannical are sawing off the limb on which they sit.

Those on the religious side of our culture wars, who rightly worry about contemporary liberalism's corrosive effect on moral norms of conscience and its increasing attachment to statism, should imbibe Siedentop's caution not to mount a counterrevolution against liberalism or secularism properly understood. Far from there being any fundamental incompatibility between the Christian faith and political doctrines of human equality, natural rights, and individual choice, the latter should be recognized as the offspring of the former.

One hears in certain Christian intellectual circles today a note of despair that the American experiment in liberalism has run its course, and the view that our political order has had, from its very birth, a predisposition of implacable hostility to Christian faith and the

a look at our world

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

moral character of society, a hostility becoming more and more apparent in our time. The American Founders, in this account, did not “build better than they knew”: They built with termite-infested timbers, and we know it now because the house is falling down around us.

But the American Founding did not spring full-grown from the brow of John Locke (about whom much more could be said both pro and con). Nor is the anti-monkish ignorance of Thomas Jefferson our only ancestral idea. The political doctrines of our Founders’ liberalism sprang also from the sturdy faith of John Witherspoon, from the theology of Jonathan Edwards, from the natural-rights teachings of medieval canonists and philosophers, from the insights into the free human will of Saint Augustine, and from the *caritas* for all souls that we see in the letters of Saint Paul. We would do well to remember whence we really came, to recover our own story, and to tell it all over again.

—Matthew J. Franck
The National Review
November 17, 2014

Abortion

“On November 4, 2014, Tennessee voters by a solid margin backed Amendment 1, a measure that gives state lawmakers more power to restrict and regulate abortions.”

—*The Tennessean*
November 5, 2014

On Nov. 1, 1835, Davy Crockett left his Tennessee home and headed to Texas, where four months later he died at the Alamo. This Nov. 4, the eyes of pro-lifers and pro-aborts throughout the United States will be on Tennessee, as Volunteer

State residents decide whether to allow the state’s legislature to debate passage of laws protecting unborn children.

Fourteen years ago, the Tennessee Supreme Court tried to cut off such debate by declaring that the state’s constitution demands a “right to abortion.” With neighboring states such as Alabama and Mississippi increasing their protection of some unborn children during those years, Tennessee has become an abortion destination: One out of four abortions in Tennessee now kills an out-of-state baby.

The Tennessee ballot this November features “Amendment 1,” which would reopen the debate. The amendment declares that “nothing in this Constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of an abortion,” and asserts that the legislature is free to pass laws concerning abortion.

At least 20 county governments have approved resolutions backing Amendment 1, but the pro-abortion side is out-fundraising pro-lifers. The campaign to defeat Amendment 1 took in more than \$1.5 million in July, August, and September, while proponents raised \$631,576. On Oct. 10, the pro-abortion side had \$1.6 million on hand and planned an aggressive get-out-the-vote and television ad campaign.

The list of anti-Amendment-1 contributions is heavy with Planned Parenthood affiliates. The April/May/June published statement, for example, included \$189,500 from Planned Parenthood of Middle and Eastern Tennessee, \$50,000 from Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest (Seattle), and other large contributions from Planned Parenthood groups in southern California, Massachusetts, Kansas/Missouri, and

Southern states.

Referendum opponents portray themselves as defending an Alamo of abortion liberty against hordes of fanatics — but along with their television buys they benefit from free publicity in magazines such as *Mother Jones*, which headlined a recent article, “The Nation’s Biggest Abortion Battle Is Playing Out in Tennessee.” In reality, they look more like Santa Anna.

Another reality check: Passage of Amendment 1 would bring about nothing radical, since the U.S. Supreme Court allows only minor changes in the abortion regime. Some lives would be saved, though, through likely legislation such as a 24-hour waiting period to reduce abortion coercion, informed consent requirements so that women have accurate information regarding fetal development, and inspection of abortion facilities that would reduce the number of southern-fried Gosnells.

—Marvin Olasky
World Magazine
November 1, 2014

UNCW has long been committed to a philosophy of multiculturalism, which suggests that all truth is relative. (But who knows if that’s really true!) It is the kind of worldview that allows us to turn a blind eye to evil simply by denying that evil exists. It also allows us to maximize sexual liberty by renouncing all forms of moral judgment. Unfortunately, two of UNCW’s feminist administrators have veered off the script and become moral crusaders in the name of “reproductive justice”—much to the embarrassment of the hire administration (author’s note: that last ms-spelling was intentional as was the sarcasm).

a look at our world

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

After putting on UNCW name tags to show that they speak for the university, Amy Schlag and Katie Peel decided to pose in public for a photo op in front of a large sign reading “Good Women Have Abortions.” The picture, which features the husband and wife couple (they were “married” in Massachusetts) also shows them high-fiving in front of the sign in a show of their mutual support for the killing of innocent children.

Schlag and Peel are familiar names to those who regularly read my column. Schlag is the director of the LGBTQIA Resource Office at UNCW. Peel is the director of the WRC at UNCW. Both expend considerable taxpayer resources celebrating abortion and lobbying for various leftist causes. This isn’t the only time they have come out (no pun intended) in actual favor of killing innocent children. They routinely celebrate abortion. They also demand that taxpayers back their decidedly pro-murder position.

On October 22, Schlag and the LGBTQIA Resource Office sponsored a NARAL event on campus. The event was promoted by her office through the use of “Abortion Providers Are Heroes” fliers, which were printed at taxpayer expense and posted around campus. The event specifically praised doctors who murdered innocent children in the womb back when it was illegal to do so. And, yes, they actually characterized the dismemberment of innocent children trapped in the womb as an act of heroism. Those are their words, not mine.

The problem is not that taxpayer resources were used to fund this particular event. The problem is that NARAL is getting special treatment that other official student groups are not getting.

UNCW has 12 official student political groups. Of those 12, only one has the official backing of a university office with its own budget line. The group is the NARAL student group. The office is the WRC, which recently announced that it is officially “affiliated” with the NARAL group. Now, Peel’s husband, Amy Schlag, is providing additional funding through the LGBTQIA Resource Office.

This isn’t the first time Schlag has teamed up with the WRC in an effort to encourage students to get abortions and to later praise the students for doing so. When Schlag was co-director of the WRC, she sponsored an event where “I Had an Abortion” t-shirts were sold to students. Yes, you heard that right. UNCW students were actually encouraged to wear t-shirts boasting that they had killed their own children.

Nor is this the first time Schlag has promoted the idea that abortion doctors are heroes. Last year, her office sponsored a film celebrating the life of George Tiller, the slain partial birth abortionist. In Schlag’s view, even those who murder fully developed babies are heroes. We are no longer simply withholding moral judgment from these people. We’re actually praising their actions as “heroic.”

Like any good wife, Katie Peel is right there with Amy praising the act of murdering helpless children in the womb. In a recent email promoting her favorite student group, Peel called NARAL a “reproductive justice” group. Calling NARAL a reproductive justice group is about as insane as calling NAMBLA a sexual liberation group.

For the record, I did not mean to compare NARAL to NAMBLA. That would not be fair to NAMBLA members who only seek to rape children in order to justify

their sexual choices. NARAL members seek to murder children in order to justify their sexual choices. That’s even worse.

To put this all in perspective, take a moment to consider the kind of self-loathing it takes to actually believe that “good women have abortions.” Do Schlag and Peel really think their mothers are bad people for having them instead of killing them? If so, they need to be sent to counseling centers, not put in charge of diversity centers.

The time has come for our new interim chancellor (chancellor@uncw.edu) to step in and put an end to all of this taxpayer funded moral inversion. Good interim chancellors abort bad administrative offices. They don’t let them continue to reproduce.

—Mike Adams
Townhall.com

October 30, 2014

Higher Education

Christian colleges value accreditation from secular agencies as a quality assurance mechanism, but also because without it their students will lose federal financial aid and may have trouble gaining acceptance to graduate school. So accreditation is a potential weapon in the hands of agencies influenced by the agenda of gay rights activists. This worries some education leaders in the wake of news from Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., while others say there’s nothing to fear.

The Gordon story, in brief: Gordon President, Michael Lindsay, bravely joined some other Christian leaders in signing a letter to President Barack Obama asking for religious exemptions to a proposed ban on federal fund-

a look at our world

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

ing for institutions that “discriminate” against LGBT employees. In September, the Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), one of six regional accrediting agencies, asked Gordon for a report about whether its conduct policy forbidding “homosexual practice” meets NEASC’s requirement for “non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement.”

NEASC President Barbara Brittingham told me, “We didn’t have any problem with any other part of the school’s policies,” which also include prohibitions of sex outside marriage, drunkenness, blasphemy, profanity, theft, and dishonesty. She also said, “We accredit Boston College, which is a Jesuit school, and they only want Jesuits to teach theology. We have no problem with that.”

When asked why Gordon should have to produce a special report regarding its opposition to homosexuality, Brittingham said, “How society thinks about LGBT people has changed drastically in the last 15 years or so, and Gordon seems to be saying that one group of people can do certain things, but another group of people cannot.” She also said NEASC has a good relationship with Gordon and that withdrawal of accreditation could not happen next September, when the report is due. She said the worst possibilities at that time would be some form of probation or a more formal inquiry. Later, she emailed me about the probation issue and said, “I was speaking hypothetically in the general sense, not about Gordon College.”

David Brown, a professor at North-

land International University, says, “Leaders in Christian higher education are keeping a close watch on what is happening at Gordon. ... They were anticipating this as a falling of the first domino, and they aren’t surprised it happened in Massachusetts.” Brown noted that NEASC “pinpointed one action of one leader on a topic on which good people differ, and threatened the entire future of a fine school.”

But a statement from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities said, “NEASC has been clear in its communication that Gordon’s accreditation is not at risk. The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires accreditors to respect institutional mission, and in the case of religious institutions, their religious mission specifically.” Mary Ellen Petrisko, president of the Accrediting Commission for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, told me, “I do not believe that the Gordon College situation is the beginning of a trend that will endanger the accreditation of religious schools.”

Withdrawal of accreditation is very rare and has been done only once by NEASC since 1988 — in 2010, when a school had serious financial problems. But this is also the first time that an accrediting agency has demanded a report in relation to rules concerning homosexuality. So questions remain: Will Christian colleges be evaluated based on consistency with their own mission and values, or will they be judged by someone else’s? And if accrediting agencies demand changes, will those colleges give in?

—Dave Swavely
World Magazine
November 1, 2014

Homosexuality

“This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.”

—Genesis 2:24

“If a man sleeps with a man as with a woman, they both committed an abomination.”

—Leviticus 20:13

“Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty for their perversion.”

—Romans 1:27

“In the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them committed sexual immorality and practiced perversions.”

—Jude vs. 7

“Mr. Mohler [Southern Baptist Theological Seminary] this week met with Matthew Vines, an openly gay Christian author who argues the Bible doesn’t prohibit lifelong same-sex marriage.”

—Tamara Audi

Editor’s Note: Not only does the Bible speak to the subject of homosexuality, but the science of biology also speaks to it. And if that isn’t enough for the serious thinker, what about Immanuel Kant’s Categorical Imperative: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, *will that it should become a universal law*. Defenders of homosexuality have three strikes against them before they come to bat.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A gathering of Southern Baptists here opened this week with Albert Mohler, stalwart head of the Southern Baptist Theological

a look at our world

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

Seminary, apologizing for “denying the reality of sexual orientation,” but saying orientation “can change.”

It closed with a pastor saying “no one goes to hell for being homosexual,” but he added Christians must remind gay friends and family members that “the day of judgment is coming.”

The statements from the largest and one of the most conservative Protestant denominations made waves in the religious and gay communities. Some praised the Southern Baptist Convention for softening its tone and message when discussing homosexuals. Critics complained that nothing really had changed.

But others who attended said a shift was taking place. In private meetings and one-on-one encounters during the week, Southern Baptists and gay-rights advocates said they established relationships they hope will carry both sides through a time of deep cultural change, particularly as the church navigates issues such as the increasing acceptance of same-sex marriage.

Southern Baptists remain firmly opposed to homosexuality, citing biblical authority, and see the legalization of gay marriage as proof of the deterioration of Christian values. Some evangelicals and Baptists outside the SBC have begun advocating change — raising questions about interpretations of biblical prohibitions and supporting Christians in same-sex relationships. Though SBC pastors this week, while suggesting greater engagement with gays, reiterated the practice of homosexuality is a sin.

Southern Baptists and gay-rights supporters had clashed before this week, in print and online, but rarely had direct personal contact.

“Everyone’s talking about each other. We needed to start talking to each other,” said Andrew Walker, director of policy studies for the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, which hosted the three-day conference.

Though gay-rights advocates and Christians who back same-sex marriage weren’t invited to speak, a small group attended to observe and meet informally with Southern Baptists, including Mr. Walker.

“What’s significant is not the content of the meetings, but that there were meetings at all,” said Justin Lee, executive director of The Gay Christian Network. “It allowed us to humanize one another and form relationships.”

Both groups noted that each side faces pressure from its constituents, who may see such meetings as paving the way for an accommodation they don’t support. “No one ceded their ground on any issue,” Mr. Walker said. “Neither side was brandishing the white flag.”

One night, Mr. Walker and more than a dozen Southern Baptists and gay-rights advocates gathered in a suite away from the ballroom where more than 1,300 attendees met for the public portion of the conference.

The meeting “exceeded both sides’ expectations as far as cheerfulness, friendliness, and authenticity of the conversation,” Mr. Walker said. “We disagreed, but we disagreed very well.”

Southern Baptists have complained they are often portrayed unfairly by gay-rights supporters as bigots, out of touch with modern culture. The personal meetings “help defy caricature,” Mr. Walker said.

Some gay-rights advocates at the conference said their greatest worry is for teens growing up in strict evangeli-

cal households who may be shunned by their families for coming out as gay.

While the private meetings offered hope, advocates said, they were disappointed by speech in some public sessions, including from Christians who described themselves as “struggling with same-sex attraction.”

But many SBC pastors and leaders encouraged Baptists not to shun gay, lesbian, and transgender — or LGBT — people, as well as gay family members.

In a sign of the practical struggles Baptists face, some of the conference focused on advice. “What if you get invited to a same-sex wedding ceremony?” Russell Moore, president of the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, was asked. “In that case, I would not attend the wedding. I would attend the reception,” he said. In that way, he said, a Baptist could say, “I love you and I’m here with you. I disagree with you, but I love you.”

Mr. Mohler, head of the theological seminary, said he hoped the conference would make Christians “motivated to be unafraid to engage with LGBT persons.” Mr. Mohler this week met with Matthew Vines, an openly gay Christian author who argues the Bible doesn’t prohibit lifelong same-sex marriage.

“I think all evangelical Christians are having to learn anew how to discuss these issues,” Mr. Mohler said.

“It’s not like anyone is suddenly pro-gay,” said Mr. Vines. But, “it feels like a new era.”

—Tamara Audi

The Wall Street Journal
October 31, 2014

a look at our world

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

Jackie Hill-Perry considers herself not merely an agent of change, but its embodiment as well.

A Christian spoken-word poet from Chicago, Ms. Hill-Perry professes to be a former lesbian — a change she ascribes to God.

God, she says, “not only changes your affections and your heart, but He gives you new affections that you didn’t have.” Now married to a Christian man, the 25-year-old poet is pregnant with the newlyweds’ first child, which is due Dec. 13.

Her debut spoken-word album “The Art of Joy” will be released for free on Nov. 4 by Humble Beast record label.

Ms. Hill-Perry’s experience runs counter to pronouncements by gay rights groups that exclaim sexuality as an inherent, immutable characteristic. What’s more, her assertions come amid wide-ranging reports about the psychological dangers of so-called “reparative therapy,” which aims to change the orientation of homosexuals.

But she remains steadfast in her belief that anything is possible with God as she meets criticism — and outright contempt — for speaking out about her experience. And thanks to her nearly 65,000 followers on social media, as well as encouragement from famed Baptist theologian John Piper, Ms. Hill-Perry’s story has been far-reaching.

“The word of God itself, apart from Jackie Hill, testifies that people can change,” she said in a July 2013 report on Wade-O Radio, a syndicated Christian hip-hop broadcast based in New Jersey.

She was criticizing a lyric in rapper Macklemore’s Grammy Award-win-

ning song “Same Love” that says, “And I can’t change even if I tried, even if I wanted to.”

“I think we’ve made God very little if we believe that He cannot change people,” Ms. Hill-Perry said on Wade-O Radio. “If He can make a moon, stars, and a galaxy that we have yet to fully comprehend, how can He not simply change my desires?”

Thousands of people on social media shared her comments — with approving or condemning remarks of their own. She estimates that about 40 percent of the messages she has received have been negative.

“On Twitter, this girl wrote me like 15 different tweets, pretty much saying that I was delusional, in denial, and brainwashed,” Ms. Hill-Perry told *The Washington Times*.

After she married Preston Perry, another Christian spoken-word poet, in March, another Twitter critic accused them both of being gay and marrying to “play God to a bunch of ignorant people.”

Ms. Hill-Perry says she was sexually abused by a family friend when she 5. Around the same time, she experienced gender confusion that had coalesced into an attraction to women when she turned 17. She became sexually active with her first girlfriend, and then another. She became a regular at gay clubs and at gay pride parades in St. Louis.

While lying in bed in October 2008, she reflected on her lifestyle and had an epiphany that she addressed in her spoken-word piece “My Life as a Stud”: “Then, one day, the Lord spoke to me. He said, ‘She will be the death of you.’ In that moment, the scripture for the

wages of sin equal death finally clicked.”

“What I had been taught in church until the age of 10 coincided with the truth in my conscious that a holy God and just God would be justified in sending me, an unrepentant sinner, to hell,” she said, “but also that this same God sent His son to die on my behalf and forgive me if only I believe.”

She left her girlfriend and returned to church. The next year, she met her future husband at the first spoken-word event where she performed “My Life as a Stud.” Over time, she lost her attraction to women and gained an attraction to Mr. Perry, whom she began dating three years later.

Now pregnant with a girl, Ms. Hill-Perry is concerned her daughter will face persecution for sharing her beliefs by the time she reaches 25 years old.

“I think we’re moving toward a time in our society when, in the next 20 to 25 years, Christians are going to see a massive amount of persecution when it comes to the topic of homosexuality, and there will be no such thing as tolerance for Christianity,” she says. “[People will believe that] if you’re a Christian, you are a horrible human being, period.”

“The true church of Jesus Christ will still stick to the Scriptures,” Ms. Hill-Perry says. “Now, those buildings that have people in them where the authority of God doesn’t trump their own feelings and emotions, I see a whole bunch of turning away from the faith — turning away from truth.”

—David Daniels
The Washington Times
November 3, 2014

a look at our world

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

Constitution

Some skeptics today like to argue that the founding fathers purposefully left God out of the Constitution. They say that a “Godless Constitution” was the intended design of the document — and they’re wrong.

First of all, the authors of the Constitution not only mention God, they even mention that Jesus is God. They do this in the ratification clause. This was done “in the Year of Our Lord” 1787.

But some skeptics object. Yet law professor John Eidsmoe, author of the book *Christianity and the Constitution*, notes in response to their objection: “Saying this [ratification] clause is not really part of the Constitution is like saying the attestation clause is not part of a will.”

The general response of the skeptic is to dismiss the “Year of Our Lord” as just a custom. Custom, shmustom. The leaders of the French Revolution, who really did espouse a *secular* Enlightenment philosophy, changed their *calendar* a couple years after America’s Constitution in order to explicitly repudiate Christianity, so that time would not be measured in “the Year of Our Lord.” (About a dozen years later, Napoleon restored the Christian calendar.)

To understand America’s founders, we have to realize what Dr. Michael Novak of American Enterprise Institute has said. He observed that thinkers we call men of the “Enlightenment” are really of two sorts. There are those who believed in God and those who didn’t.

The French Revolution was history’s first secular revolution — and, incidentally, spilled rivers of blood. They chose to follow the unbelieving thinkers of the “Enlightenment” — e.g., Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, David Hume. But

our founders quoted those men of the “Enlightenment” who believed in the Lord — e.g., Montesquieu, John Locke, Sir William Blackstone.

In his *The Spirit of Laws*, Baron Montesquieu wrote: “We shall see that we owe to Christianity, in government, a certain political law, and in war a certain law of nations — benefits which human nature can never sufficiently acknowledge.”

I used to have a Sunday school teacher who became born again while earning his Ph.D. at Yale. He studied John Locke in depth. Locke not only wrote his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, which was influential to our nation’s founders, but he also wrote *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. As my teacher read Locke in his own words, he came to embrace Christ.

Sir William Blackstone, the great British jurist, was important to our founders and is still quoted by the Supreme Court sometimes. Blackstone wrote of “the law of nature and the law of revelation” — like “the laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” in our Declaration of Independence.

The two key founding documents in American history are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The first explains *why* we exist as a nation. Not only does the Declaration mention God four times, most importantly it says that our rights come from the Creator.

The Constitution explains *how* we exist as a nation — how we are to function. The Constitution is predicated on the Declaration. When skeptics claim the Constitution doesn’t mention God (which it does, in the ratification clause), they ignore that the latter is predicated on the former.

There were 55 men who assembled in what we now call the Constitutional Convention. Research shows that 50 to 52 of those men were members in good standing of Trinitarian churches. Many of them were even presidents and founders of Bible societies.

Certainly, Benjamin Franklin was not a Trinitarian, nor a member of such a church. Yet after weeks of wheel-spinning at the convention, on June 28, 1787, Dr. Franklin delivered a speech, asking them how it is that they had forgotten to seek God’s help.

He said, “In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor.”

He went on to say, “I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth — that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”

He asked that they pray. A variation of his request for prayer was accepted — so on July 4, they all attended worship together at a local Christian church and prayed together. After they met, much of the acrimony had died down; and they were able to produce the Constitution. And again, Franklin was one of the least religious/orthodox of our nation’s founding fathers.

Some of today’s skeptics say that that *any* mention of God in government is “unconstitutional.” That ironically would make the Constitution itself “unconstitutional”! I don’t think so.

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 16

—Jerry Newcombe
Worldnetdaily.com
November 11, 2014

The recent, questionably unconstitutional moves by the City Council of Houston to subpoena the sermons of five area ministers, as well as internal correspondences dealing with social issues, should have the American Civil Liberties Union and everyone else who believes in free speech and religious freedom up in arms.

We as Americans must guard every aspect of our Constitution and recognize when it is being threatened. One of the great dangers in America today is extreme intolerance in the name of tolerance. For example, in this Houston case, it is presupposed that the pastors in question may have said something that was objectionable to the homosexual community. In order to prove that we are tolerant of the homosexual lifestyle, we as a society allow gays to be intolerant of anyone who disagrees with them in any way. Of course, gays should be able to live in any manner they choose as long as it does not infringe on the rights of anyone else. And of course, ministers should be able to preach according to the dictates of their conscience as long as they are not forcing others to listen. This concept of “live and let live” is an essential ingredient of harmonious living in a diverse society. We cannot pick the side that we want to castigate for intolerance while letting the other side get away with it without comment.

Perhaps it is time for Americans to take an honest look at what it means to live peacefully in a diverse society composed of people with many different points of view. This requires true toler-

ance, which includes being capable of listening to people with views that might differ from yours.

Many of us who are Christians have strong beliefs that inform our thinking on many issues, but in no way should those beliefs lead us to demonize or treat others unfairly. The same applies to Muslims, Jews, every other religious group, and atheists. When our universities attempt to shield students from hearing the opinions of those with whom the administration disagrees, they are not only being intolerant but are teaching the next generation those same destructive ideas that will eventually dissolve the cohesiveness of our society, leading to our downfall.

Perhaps a dose of maturity on all sides would put an end to the mindless name-calling and baseless accusations against those with whom we disagree and instead lead to civil discourse that can be constructive. After all, it is frequently easier to learn from those with whom we disagree than from those with whom we always agree. Also, conversation erases many misconceptions that drive hatred. That is the reason that famed community organizer Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, stated that you should never have a conversation with your adversaries, because that humanizes them, and your job is to demonize them. When your agenda is to fundamentally change a society, it can be a much easier task when you stifle conversation and debate.

Our Founders were very concerned about free speech and religious freedom because they came from countries where these basic elements of American life were compromised. The First Amendment to the Constitution was

carefully crafted to preclude the imposition of laws and ordinances that trample on these rights. The Houston issue goes far beyond free speech and homosexual rights. It warns us of what can happen if we are not vigilant in guarding our hard-won freedoms. Fortunately, a firestorm of immediate protests appears to have at least temporarily rolled back what was an egregious assault on all Americans, whether they realize it or not.

We can never allow civil authorities to censor or control the content of religious sermons, or we will eventually become a completely different country with far fewer rights than we currently enjoy. Freedom is not free, and those who do not jealously guard it will lose it.

—Ben Carson

The Washington Times

October 27, 2014

Are the people of the United States owed at least the opportunity to make an argument, before philosopher-kings in robes change the meaning of their Constitution? We would have thought so. Are they owed an opinion that at least takes a stab at rational justification for the most consequential change in law, politics, and culture inflicted on them by the federal courts in a generation? We would have thought that too.

But the justices of the Supreme Court ducked these responsibilities in October, denying appellate review of decisions by three federal circuit courts to impose same-sex marriage on five states. This choice nearly immediately brought the number of states with same-sex marriage to 24 — only a few of them having chosen it democratically — and that number will rapidly climb to 30 when these three circuits impose their

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 17

redefinition of marriage on the remaining states in their jurisdictions. At that point, with a new meaning of marriage reigning in the majority of the country, it will be very hard to turn back.

The Supreme Court set this train in motion in 2013. Justice Kennedy and the Court's liberals struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act, finding its attempt to protect the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman unconstitutional because — well, he never quite got around to explaining what part of the Constitution it violated. Federal courts took the ruling as an invitation to find all the old marriage laws unconstitutional on various theories. The Court now refuses to say whether the laws do or do not violate its understanding of the Constitution.

Under the Supreme Court's rules, four of the nine justices can accept a case for review. Why weren't there four justices willing to review these cases? The simplest explanation is that so far there has been no "circuit split," with contrary rulings from different federal appeals courts. But that's more an excuse than an explanation here: The justices take plenty of cases in the absence of such division, if they think they're important. And what could be more consequential than whether the people get to decide the legal meaning of our society's most fundamental institution?

The four conservative justices, fearful of what Justice Kennedy will do if he has the chance, seem to prefer kicking this particular can down the road for now. That strategy probably can't be sustained until the next Court vacancy during a Republican administration, but what else — they might think —

can be done right now? The four liberal justices, on the other hand, may not be ready to foist same-sex marriage on the whole country, fearing the backlash that would be caused by a transparently political ruling that could not be connected to the text, history, or principles of our Constitution. Their choice to shrink from taking this step may be the best thing about this bad news.

And we do think the American people will have cause to regret same-sex marriage. To disconnect marriage from sexual complementarity is to redefine it so completely that other principles are lost. The divorce revolution has damaged both permanence and fidelity as basic features of marriage — but with marriage redefined so that child-rearing is no longer central to its reason for being, they begin not to make sense. Neither does limiting marriage to couples, or even forbidding marriage between the closest blood relations. Polygamy and "polyamory" are therefore the next obvious developments.

Indeed, the redefinition of marriage undermines its fundamental purpose: to steer people toward patterns of sexual behavior that facilitate the flourishing of the children that sex sometimes produces. If its purpose is instead to facilitate the emotional happiness of adults, it is hard to see why the government should be involved or why a formal institution is necessary.

We have never really had a debate over these ideas about marriage, for various reasons. Conservatives too often rested their case on tradition and majority sentiment, which proved worthless when majority sentiment turned against tradition. The media have covered the is-

sue thoughtlessly: Many outlets have adopted the phrase "marriage equality" as though it were a neutral description of what is at issue. And the courts, above all, short-circuited the debate by pretending that the country had already adopted same-sex marriage in principle when it ratified the Fourteenth Amendment.

The redefinition of marriage is often said to have served the cause of liberty. Yet defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman restricted nobody's freedom. Same-sex couples were free to live as they chose; they lacked only official recognition of their unions. The new dispensation, on the other hand, comes with actual threats to the freedom of association and religion.

In that new dispensation, constitutional legitimacy comes from a confluence of the polls and the dominant opinion of judges rather than from following the established process of law-making. The courts — first state courts, then lower federal courts, and finally the Supreme Court — have not made us a freer or more equal country, just a less self-governing one.

—Judicial Activism, Judicial Abdication

National Review

November 3, 2014

Climate Change

"The sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emitted from the Holuhraun eruption has reached up to 60,000 tons per day and averaged close to 20,000 tons since it began," notes Pall Stefanson in a September 25 report for Iceland Review Online. "For comparison, all the SO₂ pollution in Europe, from industries, energy production, traffic, and house heating, etc.,

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 18

amounts to 14,000 tons per day.”

And the Holuhraun eruption, which began in late August, is but one of many active volcanic eruptions that Iceland, the land of fire and ice, has been experiencing lately. A few miles away, Iceland's Bardarbunga volcano is also causing concern. A September 12 report for Iceland Review Online noted that SO₂ from the eruption was four times the previous record and that residents were complaining of sore throats, stinging eyes, and headaches from the sulfur pollution.

Weather.com reported that sulfur fumes from the Icelandic volcanoes are even bothering people on Norway's coast 800 miles away.

Anthropogenic Global Warming vs. Volcanic Global Cooling?

A report by the (U.K.) *Express* speculated that a major Bardarbunga eruption could bring on a mini ice age.

“Icelandic volcano could trigger Britain's coldest winter EVER this year,” ran the *Express* headline, while the subtitle warned: “BRITAIN could freeze in YEARS of super-cold winters and miserable summers if the Bardarbunga volcano erupts, experts have warned.”

According to the *Express* report,

Depending on the force of the explosion, minute particles thrust beyond the earth's atmosphere can trigger DECADES of chaotic weather patterns.

Tiny pieces of debris act as billions of shields reflecting the sun's light away from earth, meaning winter temperatures could plunge LOWER THAN EVER before while summer will be devoid of sunshine.

The first effect could be a bitterly cold winter to arrive in weeks with thermometers plunging into minus figures and

not rising long before next summer.

The Icelandic Met Office has this week warned of “strong indications of ongoing magma movement” around the volcano prompting them to raise the aviation warning to orange, the second highest, and sparking fears the crater could blow at any moment.

The region has also this week been hit by a magnitude-four earthquake — the strongest for almost 20 years, officials said.

The British Met Office said the effects of an explosion on Britain's weather depends on the wind direction in the upper atmosphere.

Spokeswoman Laura Young said: “If the upper winds are north-westerly, it will have an effect on our weather. If the upper winds are westerly then it won't.”

The newspaper's sensationalizing aside, Iceland's volcanic activity might — in rational minds — serve to draw attention to the natural variables (volcanoes, ocean currents, solar activity, clouds, water vapor, etc.) that dwarf the human impact on climate. Australian scientist Ian Plimer — geologist and volcano expert, professor of geology at the University of Adelaide, and professor emeritus of earth sciences at the University of Melbourne — is one of the many scientists who have tried to inject sensible consideration of the effect that volcanoes and earthquakes contribute to the production of atmospheric CO₂.

In a 2009 Op-Ed in *The Australian* titled “Vitriolic climate in academic hot-house,” Dr. Plimer wrote:

To demonise element number six in the periodic table is amusing. Why not promethium? Carbon dioxide is an odourless, colourless, harmless natural gas. It is plant food. Without carbon,

there would be no life on Earth.

The original source of atmospheric CO₂ is volcanoes. The Earth's early atmosphere had a thousand times the CO₂ of today's atmosphere. This CO₂ was recycled through rocks, life, and the oceans.

Through time, this CO₂ has been sequestered into plants, coal, petroleum, minerals, and carbonate rocks, resulting in a decrease in atmospheric CO₂.

The atmosphere now contains 800 billion tonnes of carbon as CO₂. Soils and plants contain 2000 billion tonnes, oceans 39,000 billion tonnes, and limestone 65,000,000 billion tonnes. The atmosphere contains only 0.001 percent of the total carbon in the top few kilometres of the Earth.

Deeper in Earth, there are huge volumes of CO₂ yet to be leaked into the atmosphere. So depleted is the atmosphere in CO₂, that horticulturalists pump warm CO₂ into glasshouses to accelerate plant growth.

Our planet has about 1,000 volcanoes on land, such as Holuhraun and Bardarbunga, but most of our volcanoes are under the sea. “Some 85 percent of volcanoes are unseen and unmeasured, yet these heat the oceans and add monstrous amounts of CO₂ to the oceans,” notes Dr. Plimer. “Why have these been ignored?” he asks.

In a video lecture at the Institute of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Adelaide (which can be viewed here), Professor Plimer notes that the more than 10,000 earthquakes that occur each year release massive amounts of CO₂ that has been sequestered in the various mineral formations. CO₂ is but one of many variables that affect the climate, and its effect is very slight in com-

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 19

parison to many other factors. Moreover, man's contribution of CO₂, SO₂, and other greenhouse gases is relatively minor when compared to the contributions from natural sources.

— William F. Jasper
The New American
October 20, 2014

So-called liberals love to belittle those who don't unwittingly buy every wild climate assertion — especially those pretending that human economic activity is at the root of all ills on the planet. Such heretics are disparaged as “deniers.” Yet, when it comes to the science involved, the accusers have rare intelligence — as in, they rarely show intelligence.

Consider the difference between “carbon” and “carbon dioxide.” Back in the day, as those of us of a certain age are wont to say, it was a rare junior-high science student who confused the substances. These days, however, it has become near religious dogma that hazardous global warming is the product of emissions from power generation using hydrocarbon-based fuels. This point was among several mentioned in a recent piece by Bob Carter and Tom Harris. (Carter is former professor and head of the School of Earth Sciences at James Cook University in Australia. Tom Harris is executive director of the Ottawa-based International Climate Science Coalition.)

As they wrote, “even prime ministers and presidents now misuse ‘carbon’ as a shorthand for ‘carbon dioxide,’ and then label it a pollutant to boot.”

Actually, continued Carter and Harris in the *Washington Times* for September 30, carbon dioxide is environmentally

beneficial; it is the elixir of life for most of our planetary ecosystems, and to label it as a pollutant is, therefore, grotesque rather than merely just wrong.

[Moreover,] the amount of carbon dioxide produced by human industrial processes is less than 5 percent of natural emissions from the atmosphere and ocean. [And] most important of all, despite carbon dioxide being a greenhouse gas, no evidence exists that the amount humans have added to the atmosphere is producing dangerous warming, or, indeed, any measurable temperature rise at all.

Making matters worse, with the possible exception of halitosis, virtually all human heartbreaks large and small have been linked by prominent politicians and activists to climate change — and excitedly hyped as newsworthy by the mass media. How dispassionate do you think was *Newsweek's* recent diatribe on the subject? The piece was titled: “Ebola and Climate Change: Are Humans Responsible for the Severity of the Current Outbreak?”

Then there was the “report” on CNBC.com by Terry Tamminen that was titled “Hey UN — It's Time for Action on Climate Change.” Tamminen is a former secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency and a co-founder of the R20 Regions of Climate Action, so you just might be able to guess his slant. To buttress his case, he cites a psychologist who says that “Stone Age” brains are responsible for our being so self-interested and short-sighted not to recognize environmental threats.

The Media Research Center (MRC), which ably keeps track of such matters, has taken note of one such absurdity

after another. The center has the specifics of the various media attributions linking climate change to, among other phenomena, a claimed boost in the number of wildfires in California; melting ice in the Antarctic allegedly causing the Earth's gravity to shift; the potential loss of red hair in Scotland; professed increases in UFO sightings; a supposed danger to the existence of pasta in Italy; an unsubstantiated reported increase in the spinning rate of the planet; and a purported explosion in the number of large gatherings of walrus.

Yet, as Matthew Johnson of the MRC has pointed out, discussing the contention of that claimed record walrus “haulout,” there is evidence of large-scale walrus gatherings dating “all the way back to 1604.” The Associated Press “reported similar gatherings of walrus in 2007, 2009, and 2011 — some near the same location as the current haulout on the coast of the Chukchi Sea.” As part of the accounts conveyed by the major television networks, he noted, there were claims that the ice was melting, thus causing the walrus to seek out land. “But according to the Aug. 30, 2014, Daily Mail (U.K.), the Arctic ice cap expanded for a second year in a row, growing extensively.”

Activists would have us believe that only the ill-informed or ignorant could hold beliefs other than their own. Indeed, the oh-so-esteemed Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. recently opined that climate skeptics should be imprisoned, comparing such unenlightened souls to war criminals.

On the other hand, disabusing that notion, one finds (among many others who could be cited) a former NASA

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 20

scientist who is willing to publicly describe global warming as “nonsense” and to disagree that climate change is a man-made problem, saying it is “absolutely stupid” to blame recent floods in the U.K. on human activity. Les Woodcock, an emeritus professor of chemical thermodynamics at the University of Manchester, made those remarks to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Noted the professor: “The term ‘climate change’ is meaningless. The Earth’s climate has been changing since time immemorial. ... The theory of ‘man-made climate change’ is an unsubstantiated hypothesis.”

Still, isn’t Kennedy from a famous family? And didn’t he marry a movie star?

Guess whose comments got more media coverage?

Perhaps it is the track record of the alarmists that should be drawing more attention? The Daily Signal’s Brett Schaefer has had the temerity to check how some of those doom-and-gloom predictions have panned out. He writes:

Remember when former Vice President Al Gore warned in 2007 that the Arctic “could be completely gone in the summer in as little as seven years”? Instead, the Arctic ice cap has grown substantially and is more than 40 percent larger than in 2012.

Remember the U.N. Environment Program prediction that climate change would lead to 50 million refugees by 2010? Apparently, UNEP hopes that you don’t, because it quietly scrubbed its website of the prediction when those climate refugees failed to materialize.

Then there were the other warnings about the weather. Schaefer, a fellow in international regulatory affairs at the

Heritage Foundation, continues:

The U.N. World Meteorological Organization released videos of “weather reports from 2050” that predicted dire weather, including a forecast for the U.S. that highlighted temperature spikes, mega-droughts, and massive flooding from distant hurricanes.

The wheels have fallen off all of these predictions. As stated by Roger Pielke Jr., an esteemed climate scientist who testified before Congress last July: “It is misleading, and just plain incorrect, to claim that disasters associated with hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, or droughts have increased on climate timescales either in the United States or globally.”

It turns out that most warmist beliefs are based solidly on fatuous fictions.

How about all the climatic catastrophes, triggered by man’s activities, that we keep hearing about? (Telling signs at the recent climate march in New York said “Flood Wall Street,” for example, and “Stop Capitalism. End the Climate Crisis.”) Well, unsurprisingly, propagandists are misusing the truth. Consider some actual facts, as summarized by Benjamin Zycher of the American Enterprise Institute (in somewhat abbreviated fashion here):

- There has been no trend in the frequency of strong (F3 to F5) tornadoes in the United States since 1950.
- The number of wildfires is in a long-term decline.
- It has been eight years since a Category 3 or higher hurricane landed on the U.S. coast; that long a period devoid of an intense hurricane landfall has not been observed since 1900. The 2013

Atlantic hurricane season was the least active in 40 years, with zero major hurricanes.

- There has been no trend in the frequency or intensity of tropical cyclones, and global cyclone activity and energy are near their lowest levels since reliable measurements began by satellite in the 1970s.
- There is no long-term trend in sea-level increases.
- The Palmer Drought Severity Index shows no trend since 1895.
- Flooding in the United States over the last century has not been correlated with increases in greenhouse gas concentrations.

Hmm. That sure sounds different from the emissions at the “People’s Climate March,” where demands were that we press governments to regulate “a world safe from the ravages of climate change.”

This is, unfortunately, not a debate where the best argument wins. Power politics — including controlling economies by fiat when legislating doesn’t work — is what is involved. Even if one grants that it would be a good thing to mitigate climate change, the positive results of the proposed solutions would be insignificant, especially when compared to their expense.

A real climate scientist, Patrick Michaels, has explained how little would be accomplished through the use of the regulatory blunderbuss. The Environmental Protection Agency’s own computer model, noted Michaels in the *Daily Caller*, “easily shows that President Obama’s proposed regulations would reduce global warming by around 0.02 of a degree Celsius by the year 2100. Actually, the true number is probably even

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 21

smaller because that calculation assumes a future rate of warming — there hasn't been any for 17 years now — quite a bit higher than it is likely to be."

The fact that the move won't do much, however, doesn't mean it won't be costly. It will hurt. And that is the plan — though that part is not being emphasized by the White House.

As pointed out by Nicolas Loris, an energy and environmental specialist, the administration and its activist allies have been considering various ways to implement their schemes; these include cap-and-trade programs, additional regulations, and outright tax increases. Each would attempt to restrict emissions and "inflict higher energy costs on American families and businesses." As a result, families would pay more to use less electricity. The costs would reverberate throughout the economy as affected industries pass higher costs onto consumers. Simply put, consumers would consume less and producers would produce less, resulting in income cuts, jobs destroyed, and lost economic output.

The economic pain stemming from the EPA's regulation would spread throughout the country, but some would be harmed more than others. A tax that increases energy prices would hit America's poorest families the hardest. The median family spends about five cents out of every dollar on energy costs, but low-income families spend about 20 cents.

... Particularly alarming is the damage the EPA regulations would inflict on America's manufacturing base.

President Obama would like Americans to believe our most urgent threat is climate change caused by human-gen-

erated power production. If he gets his way, we are more likely to discover that the true threat is a government eager to use any excuse to usurp power.

— William P. Hoar
The New American
November 3, 2014

Nuclear Fusion

Nuclear fusion could provide virtually unlimited amounts of energy for the world. But the problem of harnessing fusion reactions for practical applications has been an elusive one for decades, never progressing beyond the experimental stage — until now.

Last month, *Aviation Week & Space Technology* reported on a nuclear fusion concept being developed at Lockheed Martin's famous "Skunk Works" R&D lab. The device, called the Compact Fusion Reactor (CFR), is reported to be conceptually "small and practical enough for applications ranging from interplanetary spacecraft and commercial ships to city power stations."

The current state of the art in fusion reactors, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), now under construction, is not expected to be online until the late 2020s. *Aviation Week's* report states that the ITER, with a power output of 500 megawatts, will cost an estimated \$50 billion, will measure around 100 feet high, and weigh 23,000 tons.

Lockheed's CFR, by comparison, will generate around 100 megawatts, but fit into a transportable unit measuring 23 x 43 feet.

"That's the size we are thinking of now," said Thomas McGuire, an aeronautical engineer in the Skunk Work's

Revolutionary Technology Programs unit in an interview with *Aviation Week*. "You could put it on a semi-trailer, similar to a small gas turbine, put it on a pad, hook it up, and can be running in a few weeks."

Fuel for the CFR is plentiful. It runs on deuterium and tritium. Deuterium is derived from seawater, and tritium is obtained from lithium in a breeding reactor. Although the tritium is radioactive, you don't need much of it to run the reactor, which means there's no risk of a nuclear meltdown.

Unlike current nuclear reactors that operate using nuclear fission, fusion reactors don't generate radioactive waste. Once a CFR fusion reactor reaches the end of its useful life, users can dispose of its radioactive parts much as they dispose of medical waste today.

"There is no long-lived radiation," says McGuire. "Fission reactors' stuff will be there forever, but with fusion materials, after 100 years then you are good."

Lockheed Martin plans to have a working CFR prototype in five years, and a full production unit in 10.

—Michael Cochrane
World Magazine
November 5, 2014

Cuba/Human Trafficking

Western cultures don't approve of human trafficking. Yet it's hard to find any journalist, politician, development bureaucrat, or labor activist anywhere in the world who has so much as batted an eye at the extensive human-trafficking racket now being run out of Havana. This is worth more attention as Cuban doctors are being celebrated for their

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 22

work in Africa during the Ebola crisis.

Cuba is winning accolades for its international “doctor diplomacy,” in which it sends temporary medical professionals abroad — ostensibly to help poor countries battle disease and improve health care. But the doctors are not a gift from Cuba. Havana is paid for its medical missions by either the host country, in the case of Venezuela, or by donor countries that send funds to the World Health Organization. The money is supposed to go to Cuban workers’ salaries. But neither the WHO nor any host country pays Cuban workers directly. Instead the funds are credited to the dictatorship, which by all accounts keeps the lion’s share of the payment and gives the worker a stipend to live on with a promise of a bit more upon return to Cuba.

It’s the perfect crime: By shipping its subjects abroad to help poor people, the regime earns the image of a selfless contributor to the global community even while it exploits workers and gets rich off their backs. According to DW, Germany’s international broadcaster, Havana earns some \$7.6 billion annually from its export of health-care workers.

This is big business, which if it weren’t being carried out by gangster Marxists would surely offend journalists. Instead they lap it up. In an October 24 interview with World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, CNN anchor Christiane Amanpour lighted up when she talked about Cuba’s health-care workers in Africa. “Cuba clearly has something to teach the world in its rapid response, doesn’t it,” Ms. Amanpour gushed. Mr. Kim agreed, calling it “a wonderful gesture.”

What the Cuban workers in the line of the Ebola fire are being paid remains a

state secret. But human trafficking is not new for Havana nor is it limited to the medical profession. In October 2008, a federal judge in Miami ruled in favor of three Cuban workers who claimed they, along with some 100 others, had been sent by the regime to Curaçao to work off Cuban debt to the Curaçao Drydock Co. The plaintiffs described horrific working conditions for which they were paid three cents an hour.

The Christian Science Monitor reported at the time that the company “admitted that the Cuban workers’ passports were seized and that their unpaid wages were deducted from the debt Havana owed the company.” Tomas Bilboa of the Cuba Study Group in Washington told the paper that “these types of violations are not out of the ordinary for the Cuban government.” Their attorney told the paper that back home in Cuba, after they cried foul, their family members lost jobs and access to schooling and suffered harassment from gangs.

Making medical professionals an export product is provoking a doctor shortage in Cuba, which is exacerbating widespread privation in health care. A humane government might turn its attention to this domestic misery, but there’s no money in that. Instead, Cuba sells the labor of health professionals abroad even in the midst of persistent dengue and cholera outbreaks on the island.

Cuban doctors are not forced at gunpoint to become expat slaves, but they are given offers they cannot refuse. As Cuban doctor Antonio Guedes, who now lives in exile in Madrid, told the German DW, “Whoever does not cooperate may lose his job, or at least his posi-

tion, or his son will not get a place at university.” As with the workers in Curaçao, the regime keeps health-care workers under constant surveillance and confiscates their passports. Something about that doesn’t sound voluntary.

When given the chance, many of those trafficked have fled. In the last two years alone almost 3,100 Cubans have taken advantage of a special U.S. visa program that recognizes the exploitation of Cuban health professionals sent to third countries. As punishment, the regime prohibits their families from leaving Cuba to see them. Getting certified to practice medicine in the U.S. can be long and arduous.

Doctors’ groups in Brazil have pressured the Brazilian government to demand that Cuba raise the slave wage it was paying some 11,000 Cuban health workers in that country. But last week Brazilian federal prosecutor Luciana Loureiro Oliveira said there is evidence that Havana still keeps at least 75 percent of the money designated by donors as salaries. She called this “frankly illegal” because it violates Brazilian labor law and said the Cubans should be paid directly.

That would be the end of Cuban do-gooding in Brazil.

—Mary Anastasia O’Grady
The Wall Street Journal
November 10, 2014

Wastebook

This year’s Wastebook does not show the \$5,210 that the State Department tried to spend on a blowup, human-size foosball field for an embassy in Belize.

But the fact that the project isn’t in Sen. Tom Coburn’s annual report on

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 23

ridiculous spending choices is probably one of the biggest victories of the report, because it means the State Department canceled the project after the senator's staffers asked about it.

It's the other 100 projects in the report — including subsidies for professional sports stadiums and grants to study gambling monkeys — that the Oklahoma Republican said should have taxpayers steaming.

Plenty of lawmakers talk about rooting out government waste, but Mr. Coburn makes a cause of it. He deploys staffers to peruse newspapers and dig through government websites to spot the tens of billions of dollars in pork, boondoggles, and extravagance that have contributed to the government's trillions of dollars of debt.

Mr. Coburn is retiring at the end of this year after a decade in the Senate, meaning the 239-page, meticulously footnoted volume he is releasing Wednesday will be his final Wastebook as senator. His departure is raising questions about who, if anyone, will pick up his oversight banner.

"To bureaucrats and politicians, none of this is waste, which is why the only way to stop wasteful Washington spending is by shining a light on it whenever and wherever it occurs, even if it is in your own state — especially when it is in your own state," Mr. Coburn told *The Washington Times*. "That is why I think every member of Congress should issue their own version of Wastebook so we can debate and set our national priorities every year."

The Times was allowed to watch some of the decision-making behind this year's report as the senator and his staff talked

through the projects, debated the order of the 10 most wasteful and drafted the report's cover. This edition is designed to mimic the salacious supermarket tabloids in a commentary on how ridiculous some of the projects have become.

Leading this year's edition is \$19 million in salaries that the government paid to workers who were suspended from their jobs, usually because of misconduct that would have resulted in outright firing at a private company. Other highlights include the \$50,000 spent to study whether sea monkeys' swimming changes the flow of oceans, \$450,000 that the Homeland Security Department spent on high-end gym memberships for staffers whose federal health insurance already pays for gym benefits and the increasing number of veterans who get disability payments by claiming sleep apnea at a cost Mr. Coburn said could reach \$1.2 billion.

All told, Mr. Coburn identifies \$25 billion in waste from the 100 projects.

Butterfly Farms

Although everyone in his office from interns on up contributes ideas, Mr. Coburn is the one driving Wastebook. He spots items throughout the year and fires them off in emails collected by his legislative director, Roland Foster.

By the time Wastebook rolls around, the authors have more than enough items. The senator is a tough critic, shooting down write-ups when he thinks expenses could be justified or demanding details for proof that the government is truly profligate.

That was what Mr. Coburn was doing on a busy afternoon in September while other senators were rushing to finish business. Senate Majority Leader Harry

Reid, Nevada Democrat, was closing up shop before sending lawmakers home for two months of campaigning before the midterm elections.

Mr. Coburn had meetings stacked up and reserved time to speak on the Senate floor, but he was going over the early write-ups of some of the Wastebook projects with Mr. Foster, staff attorney Patrick Bailey, and Keith Ashdown and Chris Barkley, who are the staff director and assistant staff director for Mr. Coburn on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

The senator insists on highlighting projects from his home state of Oklahoma, figuring it's only fair. He encountered one on butterfly farming, a \$500,000 Agriculture Department grant to a town on an Indian reservation to help tribe members start raising and selling butterflies.

The \$500,000 is enough to provide every member of the town a starter kit and still have more than \$300,000 left over, Mr. Coburn calculated. As of August, however, just 50 of the 845 tribe members had signed up.

The tribe wasn't convinced it wanted to do the project until it learned it could obtain federal funding — which is exactly why the money is not a good expense, the Wastebook concludes.

"I can't imagine 300 people are going to be employed raising butterflies in Oklahoma," the senator tells his staffers in one meeting.

Not every project is a victory. One left on the cutting floor this year involved Pentagon sponsorship of a video game festival. Mr. Foster spotted an advertisement for the festival on the subway and pursued the project, but in the end

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 24

wasn't able to get the Defense Department to disclose a cost figure.

Agencies are increasingly balking at cooperating with fiscal watchdogs like Mr. Coburn who believe they have a right to know how the government is spending their money.

His office now enlists the Congressional Research Service, with in-house research staff, to make some of the inquiries. Mr. Coburn also asks for help from the Government Accountability Office, the chief investigative arm of Congress.

This year, Mr. Coburn had the GAO investigate the tens of millions of dollars doled out to federal employees on "paid administrative leave" — meaning they collect salaries even as many are on suspension for misconduct.

"Wastebook is like a scavenger hunt. It does not require a law degree or even years of D.C. experience, just some common sense and dedication with a leader who takes his role as a representative of taxpayers seriously," Mr. Foster said. "If a 22-year-old intern can do this, why can't a chairman of a powerful committee with a staff of dozens and a budget of millions?"

'The Real Deal'

The State Department's human-sized foosball game says a lot about how Wastebook is compiled.

One of Mr. Coburn's staffers saw the project posted on USASpending.gov, a website that resulted from a bill sponsored by Mr. Coburn and Sen. Barack Obama in 2006. The foosball system was one of a few game purchases posted by the State Department.

Mr. Coburn's staff fired off an email with questions to the State Department. The department promised to look into

the project, and a day later quietly posted a change order to USASpending.gov canceling the expense.

It turns out the project was intended for the U.S. Embassy in Belize and was supposed to be used as a management tool for leadership training and team-building. But when Mr. Coburn flagged it, department officials reconsidered.

A State Department official even praised Mr. Coburn, saying Secretary John F. Kerry, a former senator himself, admires Mr. Coburn's work.

"He was sincere as they come and cared about getting results, not grabbing headlines," the official said, asking for anonymity to discuss the item. "So it wasn't a surprise when Sen. Coburn asked his staff to tip off the department about a request an embassy had made to purchase a human foosball table for a few thousand dollars."

The official said nothing was inherently wrong with the foosball system and team-building exercises, but it wasn't a good use of money with belt-tightening throughout government.

"Sen. Coburn gave us the heads-up, the order was canceled, and Sen. Coburn quietly got a good result for everyone instead of blasting out a press release to score political points," the State Department official said. "It was just a class act by a genuine steward of the taxpayer dollar. It reaffirmed for Secretary Kerry that Coburn was the real deal."

'This Can't Be Good'

Not all federal agencies are as appreciative of Mr. Coburn's work. One agency he has battled is the National Technical Information Service, a Cold War-era agency that acts as a clearinghouse for government reports.

After the Government Accountability Office reported that many of the documents the service sells to other government agencies are available online free of charge, Mr. Coburn demanded explanations. He then found out the agency was selling his reports, too, causing him to demand an end to the "ridiculous situation."

The information service crafted a reply — but pointedly didn't thank him for his inquiry, figuring that would sound "somewhat disingenuous."

"I recommend that NTIS not thank the senator," Gail Porter, chief of public affairs at the agency, told her colleagues in emails editing the draft reply. The emails were obtained by *The Times* through open-records requests.

The National Science Foundation also has been a frequent Coburn target — particularly the agency's funding for political science research. Last year, Mr. Coburn managed to win an amendment that effectively halted federal funding for political science papers, though the prohibition was dropped this year.

Political scientists were enraged at Mr. Coburn's move and mounted a fierce campaign to defend their funding, insisting that taxpayer funding was a mark of its importance.

The academics also took personal umbrage at Mr. Coburn. Several of them jokingly blamed the senator when fire alarms forced an evacuation of the hotel at this year's American Political Science Association convention in Washington.

The association didn't respond to a request for comment about its battles with Mr. Coburn.

Wastebook is just one of Mr. Coburn's projects. He was one of the first to sound

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 25

a warning about bungled care at Veterans Affairs clinics and issued a scathing report last year blaming Congress for overwhelming the National Park Service with low-priority projects, leaving the agency struggling to maintain some of its natural treasures.

His masterpiece, however, may be a 2012 report by the permanent subcommittee on investigations exposing a Social Security disability fraud ring in West Virginia.

"I imagine for an agency, getting a call from Coburn's investigators is like getting a call from *60 Minutes*: This can't be good," said Bruce Reed, a former top official in the Clinton and Obama administrations. Mr. Reed worked with Mr. Coburn on the deficit commission run by former White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles and former Sen. Alan Simpson.

Mr. Reed praised Mr. Coburn's work, saying his reports on government waste provide a blueprint for anyone looking to see how the government sometimes goes off the rails in its spending decisions.

"Washington is full of politicians who love to talk about waste. Coburn sends his team to go find it and name names, and that makes all the difference," Mr. Reed said.

—Stephen Dinan
The Washington Times
October 27, 2014

Calvinism/Free Will

The apparent tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will has been a point of study and discussion — and, sadly, of contention — among sincere Christians for centuries. Some have

taken the approach of C.I. Scofield, that these are two truths that must both be accepted but that cannot be reconciled. "Both are wholly true, but the connecting and reconciling truth has not been revealed." In apparent agreement, James M. Gray, a past president of Moody Bible Institute, suggested that "no one finite mind could hold God's ... sovereignty and man's free agency ... both equally at the same time. How necessary, however, that both be duly emphasized!"

Likewise, William L. Pettingill wrote, "God insists upon His sovereignty and also upon man's responsibility. Believe both and preach both, leaving the task of 'harmonizing' with Him." In a similar vein, A.T. Pierson, although a leading Presbyterian, declared that both "the sovereign will of God and the freedom of man" are taught in Scripture and that "if we cannot reconcile these two, it is because the subject is so infinitely lifted up above us. Man is free. ... Thus the last great invitation in God's Book is an appeal to the *will*." R.A. Torrey agreed that we should not "try to explain away the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the sovereignty of God [and] the freedom of the human will."

Unfortunately, neither John Calvin nor many of his followers today have been willing to accept both sides of this biblical teaching. The result has been devastating in its consequences for the gospel: that man can only reject Christ; he cannot accept and believe in Him unless he is sovereignly regenerated by God. Calvinism refuses to accept what so many great evangelists have recognized is vital. Edgar Mullins expresses very well the essential balance that is missing:

Free will in man is as fundamental a truth as any other in the gospel and must never be canceled in our doctrinal statements. Man would not be man without it, and God never robs us of our true moral manhood in saving us. ... The decree of salvation must be looked at as a whole to understand it. Some have looked at God's choice alone and ignored the means and the necessary choice on man's part.

A Commendable but Mistaken Zeal

Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton assure us that "the sovereignty of God is ... the most basic principle of Calvinism ... the foundation upon which all [including Christianity itself] is built." Loraine Boettner agrees: "The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God." Such fervor for God's sovereignty is commendable. However, Calvinists have mistakenly made God the effective *cause* of every event that occurs: "Whatever is done in time is according to his [God's] decree in eternity." But would a Holy God decree the evil that fills man's heart and the world today? Surely not!

Calvinism denies to man any real choice concerning *anything* he thinks or does. C.H. Spurgeon referred to "a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of [human] responsibility." The Calvinist mistakenly believes that if man could make a genuine choice, even in his rebellion against God, it would be a denial that God is sovereign. Thus God must be the cause of all sin, beginning with Adam and Eve. Boettner argues, "Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 26

counsels of God.” That unhappy conclusion is necessitated by a concept of sovereignty that is required neither by the Bible nor by logic.

We have noted the admission by some Calvinists that man is free to respond to God. At the same time, however, the doctrine of Total Depravity requires that he can respond only negatively and in opposition to God. Of course, that is not freedom at all. Philip F. Congdon points out:

Classical Calvinists may talk about man having a “free will,” but it is a very limited freedom! That is, a person may choose to reject Christ — all people do — but only those who have been elected may choose to accept Him. This is no “free will”! Are the open invitations to trust Christ in the Bible actually a cruel hoax? I don’t think so. Are all people free to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior for their sin? Yes. That is why the call to missions is so urgent.

Freedom to Rebel but Not to Repent?

How can there be any real freedom of choice if only one kind of choice can be made, and one, at that, which has been decreed eternally? To call this “free choice” is a fraud. It is, however, the only “freedom” Calvinism can allow. Arthur W. Pink favorably quotes J. Denham Smith, whom he honors as a “deeply taught servant of God”:

I believe in free will; but then it is a will only free to act according to nature. ... The sinner in his sinful nature could never have a will according to God. For this he must be born again.

Nowhere does the Bible support such a statement; and this is one of Calvinism’s most grievous errors. Were Abraham and Moses “born again,” i.e., re-

generated? Isn’t that a New Testament term? What does Smith mean by “a will according to God”? Even Christians don’t always do God’s will. A desire to know God? Surely all men are expected to seek the Lord while He may be found. That God promises to be found by those who seek Him must imply that the unregenerate can seek Him.

Nor does it help the Calvinist to say that man can only will and act according to his sinful nature and against God. How could it be God’s will that man defy His law? If sinful acts are admitted to come from genuine choice, then we have the same challenge to God’s sovereignty that the Calvinist cannot allow. Either man has a free will, or his sin is all according to God’s will. As we have seen, the latter is exactly what Calvin himself taught and many Calvinists still believe, making God the author of evil.

Could it be that Adam’s nature was actually sinful, though God pronounced him “good” when He created him? How else, except by free will, can his sin be explained? The Calvinist escapes free will by declaring that even the sin of Adam and Eve was foreordained and decreed by God. Pink argues, “God foreordains everything which comes to pass. His sovereign rule extends throughout the entire Universe and is over every creature. ... God initiates all things, regulates all things.” Then why did Christ tell us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth ...” if all is already according to God’s will and decree?

It is fallacious to imagine that for God to be in control of His universe He must foreordain and initiate everything. In fact, it would deny His omniscience and omnipotence to suggest that God

cannot foreknow and control what He doesn’t foreordain, decree, and cause. Here again, Calvinists are trapped in contradictions. Another leading Presbyterian theologian, A.A. Hodge, recognized the severe consequences of that extremist view of God’s sovereignty: “Everything is gone if free-will is gone; the moral system is gone if free-will is gone.” At the same time, however, he declared: “Foreordination is an act of the ... benevolent will of God from all eternity determining ... all events ... that come to pass.”

Confronting a Vital Distinction

For the Calvinist to uphold his extreme view of control, God must be the cause of man’s total depravity and the negative response it produces. There is no way to escape this conclusion. If God were not the cause of man’s sin, man would be acting independently of God, and that cannot be allowed for *anything* in the Calvinist scheme. It follows, then, that “He [God] could ... have prevented it [the fall and entrance of sin into the world], but He did not prevent it: ergo, He willed it.” Thus one must conclude, “It is even biblical to say that God has foreordained sin.”

The only way, however, to defend God’s integrity, love, and compassion in a world filled with sin and suffering is to acknowledge that He has granted to man the power to choose for himself. It is thus man’s fault and by his own free choice that sin and suffering are the common experience of all mankind. God has provided full forgiveness of sins on a righteous basis, and will eventually create a new universe into which sin can never enter — a universe to be inhabited by all those who have received the Lord

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 27

Jesus Christ as Savior. God is exonerated and man alone is to blame for sin and suffering. Such is the teaching of the Bible, as we shall see in depth.

Calvinism rests upon a mistaken view of what it means for God to be sovereign. Edwin H. Palmer tells us that God predestines untold multitudes to everlasting torment “for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures.” Obviously, God could show His sovereign power over His creatures in many ways other than by decreeing their eternal damnation, a fate surely not required by sovereignty.

The Bible teaches that God sovereignly — without diminishing His sovereignty — gave man the power to rebel against Him. Thus, sin is man’s responsibility alone, by his free choice, not by God’s decree. Calvinism’s basic error is a failure to see that God could sovereignly give to man the power of genuine choice and still remain in control of the universe. To acknowledge both sovereignty and free will would destroy the very foundations of the entire Calvinist system.

This false view of God’s sovereignty is the Calvinists’ only justification for God’s saving only a select group and damning the rest. If one asks how a loving God could damn millions or perhaps billions whom He could have saved, the answer is that it “pleased Him so to do.” If one persists and asks *why* it pleased Him, the response is that the reason is hidden “in the mystery of His will.”

Free will does not diminish God’s control over His universe. Being omnipotent and omniscient, God can so arrange circumstances as to keep man’s rebellion from frustrating His purposes. In

fact, God can use man’s free will to help fulfill His own plans, and He is thereby even more glorified than if He decreed everything man does.

Hear It From Calvin and Calvinists

In his classic, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, Palmer writes, “Although sin and unbelief are contrary to what God commands (His perceptive will), God has included them in His sovereign decree (ordained them, caused them to certainly come to pass). ... How is it that a holy God, who hates sin, not only passively permits sin but also certainly and efficaciously decrees that sin shall be? Our infinite God presents us with some astounding truths.”

“Astounding” is the wrong adjective. What Palmer admits astounds even him, a man who dogmatically defends this doctrine, is *appalling* to non-Calvinists, including even non-Christians. Palmer expounds further upon this outrageous doctrine:

All things that happen in all the world at any time and in all history — whether with inorganic matter, vegetation, animals, man, or angels (both the good and evil ones) — come to pass because God ordained them. Even sin — the fall of the devil from heaven, the fall of Adam, and every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history, including the worst sin of all, Judas’ betrayal of Christ — is included in the eternal decree of our holy God.

[If] sin is outside the decree of God, then the vast percentage of human actions ... are removed from God’s plan. God’s power is reduced to the forces of nature. ... Sin is not only foreknown by God, it is also foreordained by God. In fact, because God foreordained it, He

foreknew it. Calvin is very clear on this point: “Man wills with an evil will what God wills with a good will.”

There is neither biblical nor rational support for such dogma. Surely God in His infinite power and foreknowledge could fit into His plan even the most rebellious thoughts and deeds of mankind. He is perfectly able to frustrate, prevent, or use man’s plans and deeds to fulfill His will, and He can do so without destroying man’s ability to exercise free choice. To make God the author of sin is to blasphemously misrepresent Him.

Limiting God

Why would an infinitely holy God ruin his own creation by purposely creating sin? Why invent the elaborate story of “casting fallen angels out of heaven”? Why cause mankind to sin in order to “forgive” them? How would that glorify God? Instead, in Calvinism God becomes like the person who sets a forest fire so he can “discover” it, put it out, and be a hero. It also turns God into a fraud who pretends that Satan, though God’s own intentional creation, was His enemy. How absurd!

Yet Calvinists persist in this unbiblical and irrational doctrine, which they imagine defends God’s sovereignty but actually diminishes it: “If God did not foreordain all things, then He could not know the future. God foreknows and knows all things because He decreed all things to be.” On the contrary, God does not have to decree human thoughts and actions to foreknow them. He knows all beforehand because He is omniscient.

—Dave Hunt

Berean Call

November 1, 2014

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 28

Education

“Connecticut governor Dannel Malloy’s commission on the Sandy Hook massacre is the predictable rogues’ gallery of public-sector unionists, left-wing academics, and minions of the education bureaucracies, and they think that they have put their finger on what went wrong in the life of mass murderer Adam Lanza: homeschooling. They are using the Sandy Hook massacre as a pretext for demanding a practically proctologic level of state oversight of Connecticut homeschoolers. Lanza was briefly homeschooled at the end of his high-school career, when his mother was overwhelmed by the challenges of dealing with her mentally ill son and had been utterly failed by the same public institutions that Malloy wants to cast as homeschoolers’ overseers. (He was still very much a part of the government’s education system, though, attending student-group meetings at the nearby public high school.) Homeschooling had not one thing to do with Lanza’s rampage, and neither public oversight nor officially credentialed expertise did a thing to stop it. Lanza had been seeing public-school therapists since kindergarten and had received treatment at no less an institution than Yale. The government-school unions and their political affiliates hate homeschooling for the same reason they hate school choice: They are monopolists, and they will not endure competition. And if they have to politicize the murder of 20 children to have their way, they will.”

—*The National Review*
November 3, 2014

Africa/Ebola

Here’s how my Aug. 11, 2003, column began: “Anyone who believes President Bush’s Africa initiative, including sending U.S. troops to Liberia, will amount to more than a hill of beans is whistling Dixie. Maybe it’s overly pessimistic, but most of Africa is a continent without much hope for its people.” More than a decade has passed since that assessment, and little has changed to suggest a more optimistic outlook. Now Ebola threatens the very existence of the West African nations Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Moreover, the deadly disease is likely to spread to neighboring nations.

Each year, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Heritage Foundation* publish an “Index of Economic Freedom,” which measures economic liberty around the world. Mauritius is the only one of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to rank among the 10 freest economies in the world. Botswana is the second-freest African country, followed by Cape Verde. South Africa used to be near the top but has since declined. Of the other sub-Saharan countries, 11 are rated as “repressed” and 26 are “mostly unfree.” Eight of the world’s 20 least free economies are in Africa’s sub-Saharan region.

Poverty is not a cause but a result of Africa’s problems. What African countries need the West cannot provide. They need personal liberty. That means a political system in which there are guarantees of private property rights, free markets, honest government, and the rule of law. Africa’s poverty is, for the most part, self-inflicted. Some people might disagree because their college professors taught them that the legacy of

colonialism explains Third World poverty. That’s nonsense. Canada was a colony. So were Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong. In fact, the richest country in the world, the United States, was once a colony. By contrast, Third World countries such as Ethiopia, Liberia, Nepal, and Bhutan were never colonies, yet they are home to some of the world’s poorest people.

There’s no complete explanation for why some countries are affluent while others are poor, but there are some leads.

Rank countries according to whether they are closer to being a free market economy or whether they’re closer to having a socialist or planned economy. Then rank countries by per capita income. Doing so, we will find a general, though not perfect, pattern whereby those having a larger measure of economic freedom find their citizens enjoying a higher standard of living. Also, if we ranked countries according to how Freedom House or Amnesty International rates human rights protections, we’d find that citizens of freer market economies enjoy a greater measure of human rights protections. You can bet the rent money that the correlation among free markets, wealth, and human rights protections is not coincidental.

With but few exceptions, most African countries are worse off now than they were during colonialism, both in terms of standard of living and in terms of human rights protections. Once a food-exporting country, Zimbabwe recently stood near the brink of starvation. Sierra Leone is rich in minerals — especially diamonds — has highly fertile land, and is the best port site in West Africa, but it has declined into a state of utter despair.

a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel, continued from page 29

Africa is the world's most natural-resources-rich continent. It has 50 percent of the world's gold, most of the world's diamonds and chromium, 90 percent of the cobalt, 40 percent of the world's potential hydroelectric power, 65 percent of the manganese, and millions of acres of untilled farmland, as well as other natural resources. Before independence, every African country was self-sufficient in food production; today many depend on imports, and others stand at the brink of famine.

Though there's a strong case for us to help with the Ebola crisis, the worst thing Westerners could do to Africa would be to send more foreign aid. Foreign aid provides the financial resources that enable Africa's grossly corrupt and incompetent regimes to buy military equipment, pay off cronies, and continue to oppress their people. It also provides resources for the leaders to live lavishly and set up "retirement" accounts in foreign banks.

—Walter E. Williams
Townhall.com
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