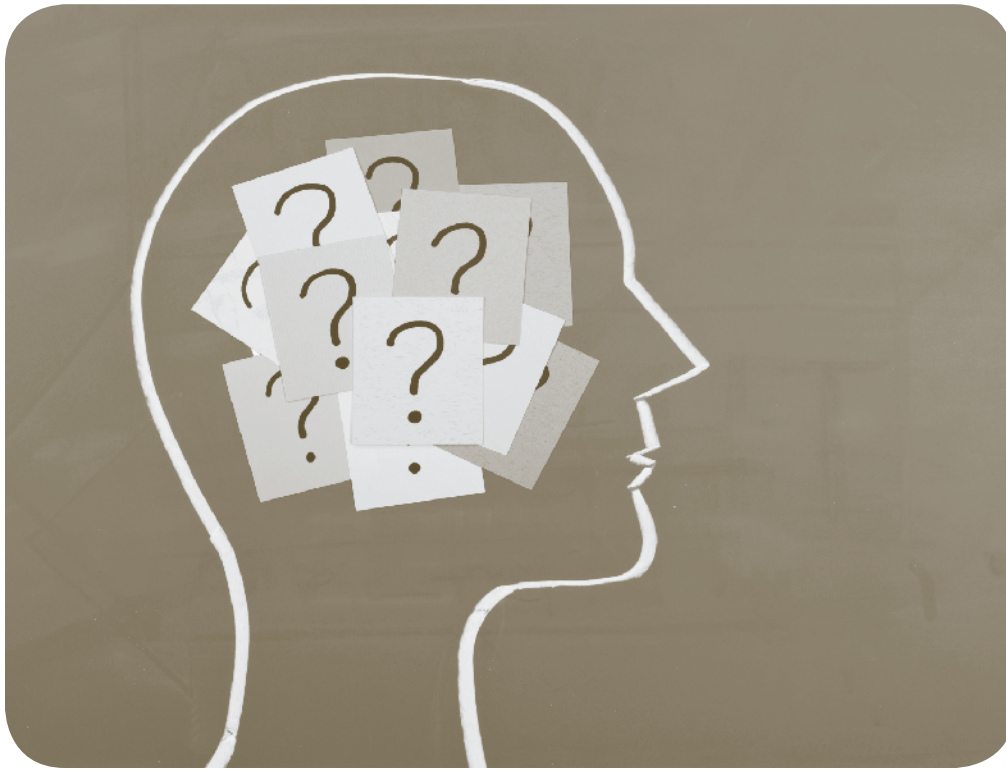


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How Do We Know What's Really Going On?



the top two movies at the box office were *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3D* and *Django Unchained*, two “sadistically” and “disturbingly” violent films.¹ Metaxas continued:

“The idea that such movies are playing so soon after the Newtown tragedy is beyond the pale. And what does it say about us? The fact that they are playing to packed houses is itself a nightmare. Hollywood has set an ugly tone and has aided and abetted the worst in our national character.”²

The onslaught of narcissistic, dishonorable violence portrayed in video games, films, television shows, and books has certainly been ground into the fabric of our culture, dragging all of us through the mud. But as long as we misdiagnose society's ills, we'll never be able to address the behavior they have wrought.

Three Questions to Ask of Culture

Just as we engage individuals within a culture by asking questions, assessing culture itself begins with questions. The ongoing abortion debate serves as an excellent case study; that millions of lives are lost each year to abortion should be a grave concern for all Christians. How can we retake the rhetorical high ground from pro-abortionists, who have framed the public debate about abortion around the language of choice and women's freedom? What deeper questions does the abortion debate pose, and how do the opposing sides answer those questions? Summit speaker and Colson Center Fellow John Stonestreet advises students to engage cul-

Cover Story

When in doubt, don't say it. That's the lesson the notoriously disciplined Mitt Romney learned the hard way when, in front of a private group of donors, he accused 47 percent of Americans as being “takers.” It was all too easy for Romney's opponents to point out how many retirees and military veterans were in that percentage. In a culture poised for rhetorical class warfare, his attempt at engagement had the opposite of its intended effect.

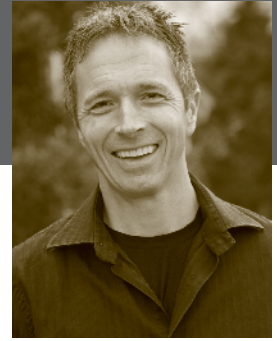
In the June 2011 *Journal*, we encouraged readers to engage the culture, as difficult and intimidating as that can be. But if we don't first properly assess culture,

we won't possess the insight required to engage it winsomely and wisely. If a doctor misdiagnoses his patient, he has little hope of curing her. So it goes for Christians called to be salt and light.

Ever since the tragic slaughter in Newtown, Connecticut, last December, the topic *du jour* has been gun control. In all the calls for a larger government presence in people's lives and the vilification of law-abiding gun owners, many cultural and political elites have missed the underlying issues that lead to depraved acts of violence. Just weeks after Newtown, writer, commentator, and Summit friend Eric Metaxas called attention to the fact that

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



It was a made-for-television moment. The president signed the executive orders and passed out hugs to the adoring children looking on. Sternly glaring at the camera, he said:

“Ask [your elected representatives] what’s more important — doing whatever it takes to get an “A” grade from the gun lobby that funds their campaigns, or giving parents some peace of mind when they drop their child off for first grade.”

One could complain about the manipulation. About the “If you’re not with me, you’re with the murderers” attitude. But the president’s strategy seems to be working for him. Stunningly, a strong majority of Americans agree with the president.¹

Those of us who invest our lives in young people are heartbroken over the Newtown, Connecticut, massacre and the fear and insecurity with which so many young people live every day. But what if guns are not the problem? What if blaming guns actually moves us further from a true solution?

Many Americans suspect our problem is a moral one. Those who say so aloud, though, are swiftly and self-righteously condemned: “How dare you imply that the problem is within?”

“Until America sees its problems as symptoms of a worldview battle, things will continue going from bad to worse — especially for the rising generation.”

Dr. Jeff Myers

Undaunted, Walter Williams is one who spoke up anyway: “Customs, traditions, moral values and rules of etiquette, not laws and government regulations, are what make for a civilized society.”²

Until America sees its problems as symptoms of a worldview battle, things will continue going from bad to worse — especially for the rising generation.

Summit exists to help students get to the heart of the issues so they can live godly lives and become courageous leaders speaking the truth to a world wallowing in self-deception.

The year 2013 is decisive in whether we will turn the tide. We have a chance. Young adults are increasingly disenchanted with liberal secularism. By the way, did you know Obama’s youth vote slipped by 11 percent in 2012? No other group changed that drastically.

Winning takes a sacrifice of time, energy, and resources. But the payoff is huge. When students come to a 12-day Summit course, their eyes are opened. They understand. They grow in confidence and maturity. They learn to discern the false ideas that would take them captive.

Here’s a quick before-and-after analysis about Summit:

Before Summit

Today’s young adults are:

- Unprepared for opposition. Only 1 in

6 understands the counterfeit worldviews arrayed against them.

- Unable to mount a defense. Only 1 in 5 feels prepared to defend it as such.
- Failing at spiritual disciplines. Only 1 in 3 claims to have a strong devotional or prayer life.
- Alienated from God. Only 1 in 2 students feels close to God.

After Summit

Summit grads reported statistically significant growth in:

- Level of Christian commitment
- Feeling of closeness to God
- Devotional life
- Prayer life
- Church attendance
- Sharing of faith
- Understanding of a Christian worldview
- Understanding of other worldviews
- Confidence in the truth of a Christian worldview
- Ability to explain their beliefs
- Ability to defend beliefs under challenge
- Preparation for higher education.

There has not been a better time to prepare young leaders. Your support and prayers mean so much — together we are turning the tide!

Notes

1. “Polls show what Americans think about gun control laws,” January 25, 2013, <http://blog.constitutioncenter.org/2013/01/composite-poll-reveals-what-americans-think-about-gun-control-laws/>.

2. “Are Guns the Problem,” Walter Williams, Human Events, January 16, 2013, <http://www.humanevents.com/2013/01/16/walter-williams-are-guns-the-problem/>.

Assessment

continued from page one

“The Church’s call is not just to critique and analyze; we are to produce value in our vocations, relationships, and communities.”

ture by asking three questions when assessing cultural artifacts (songs, books, films, shows), trends, and phenomena.

1. What’s really going on?

This seemingly simple question aims to get at the heart of the matter under scrutiny: “Does this have a pedigree?” Stonestreet asks. “Is there a history here?” To listen to modern-day abortion proponents, you’d think abortion exists because women needed a way to equalize the economic and vocational playing field: abortion is a necessary act of mercy toward women, they claim. In fact, though, abortion is rooted in a long history of eugenics. Stemming all the way back to the ancient world, babies were aborted (or even left to die after birth) out of social convenience. Later in the 20th century, Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger made the issue one of race: “there should be national sterilization for certain dysgenic types of our population who are being encouraged to breed and would die out were the government not feeding them.”³

So does abortion’s pedigree tell us that it’s a benevolent act of mercy, or does it indicate something more depraved: that it’s really about snuffing out the lives of those whom some regard as sub-human for their own convenience?

2. Why is it going on?

Undergirding all cultural trends, phenomena, and artifacts are worldview questions: who are we, where did we come from, who is God? To understand

what is happening we need to get to the heart of why a particular trend or event is taking place.

The questions ultimately being answered by pro-abortionists are those of our human identity. More and more of the public is seeing that the fetuses killed in abortion are humans, not blobs of cells and tissue. Even pro-abortionists are publically admitting this. *Salon* staff writer Mary Elizabeth Williams recently wrote an op-ed admitting as much and taking her pro-choice argument one step further: “I believe that’s what a fetus is: a human life. And that doesn’t make me one iota less solidly pro-choice.” Later in her piece, she frames her position with surprising clarity: “And I would put the life of a mother over the life of a fetus every single time — even if I still need to acknowledge my conviction that the fetus is indeed a life. A life worth sacrificing.”⁴

Williams reveals the heart of the abortion debate: which humans are worth sacrificing, and who gets to decide? Williams’ answer to the question “Why is this going on?” is this: human life is expendable for the sake of convenience, and those being inconvenienced decide whose lives to sacrifice.

3. Where does it take us?

The next question to ask is, if the trend or cultural phenomenon in question is fully realized, where does this take us? What are the end results?

If the pro-abortion stance fundamentally (even if tacitly) posits that

convenience trumps life, where do we stop? As we pointed out last year in the Rapid Response “Abolition of the Person,” attempts by pro-abortionists to limit this sentiment are ultimately arbitrary.⁵ In history, when those in power begin deciding that other people are expendable, the result is a holocaust. And laws can never save us — in places like Soviet Russia, the law simply increased the efficiency with which Marxists’ bloody plans were carried out.

Gaining Insight Is Key

We each have a decision to make. When we face certain trends and movements, will we withdraw or will we engage? People’s actions — which make up culture — do not happen in a vacuum. They come from a view of and for the world, realized or not. Assessing the cultures in which we live — and subsequently the worldviews embodied by cultures — requires deep thought, patience, and commitment to understanding those with whom we disagree, according to writer Matthew Lee Anderson. Anderson is working on a book about this very topic. He advises that before we attempt to engage, we first try to understand. “A good deal more patience is essential to exploring the foundation of things,” he said. One of Doc Noebel’s favorite sayings — “If you want to be a leader, you’ve got to be a reader” — complements and confirms Anderson’s thinking. “If we read people we disagree with starting with the stance that we’re obviously going to disagree from the outset, we’ll actually not be able to understand them at all,” Anderson argued. “Reading them

See **Assessment**, page 4

Assessment

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charitably is massively important.”

We Need to Be Culturally Literate

If we are to be culturally literate, we need to be able to do two things: “read” and “write.” The Church’s call is not just to critique and analyze; we are to produce value in our vocations, personal relationships, and communities.

John Stonestreet orients his teaching on this matter around three “re” words used frequently in Scripture: renewal, restoration, reconciliation.

• **Renewal** — Part of “writing” in the culture means we are responsible for renewing certain aspects, namely our own thinking. Paul admonished us to “... be transformed by the renewal of [our] mind...” (Romans 12:2). How can we renew our mind? As C.S. Lewis argued in *The Abolition of Man*, we can train our mind the same way we train any other muscle. Through Christ, what is marred by the curse of the Fall can be renewed.

• **Restoration** — Many of our institutions need restoring, perhaps the most important being the institution of the family. Restoration begins by asking, “What is the proper role of the family in society?” Other institutions that speak deeply into culture but that need restoring include business (Is it just to make money, as some would argue?) and government (What is its proper role?). Cultural engagement must include the restoration of cultural institutions to their proper roles and order.

• **Reconciliation** — At perhaps the most foundational level, if the tide of a wayward culture is to be turned, we must be willing to reconcile individual relationships. It’s not enough to acknowledge we have broken relationships. Cultural literacy includes seek-

ing to reconcile those relationships, no matter who or what caused their brokenness. Though the reconciliation of individual relationships may seem insignificant, it is the starting point for gaining traction for cultural engagement. Furthermore, God commands us to do so (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Wanting to change culture and knowing how best to do it are two different things, but both are commanded of the Church. Just as we should understand the positions of our interlocutors when the time for dialogue comes (see the June 2012 *Journal*), understanding the broader culture in which we live is a necessity. Doing so requires careful thought, deep questions, and a willingness to work in our own spheres, obeying the example of Christ and the early Church.

Notes

1. “Light a Candle Against Violence,” Eric Metaxas, BreakPoint, January 9, 2013, <http://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/breakpoint-commentaries-archive/entry/13/21196>.
2. Ibid.
3. “Planned Parenthood Founder Margaret Sanger Was Not so ‘Pro-Choice,’” Jennie Stone, LiveAction Blog, September 14, 2011, <http://liveaction.org/blog/racist-planned-parenthood-founder-margaret-sanger-was-not-so-pro-choice/>.
4. “So what if abortion ends life?” Mary Elizabeth Williams, Salon.com, January 23, 2013, http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so_what_if_abortion_ends_life/.
5. “Rapid Response: Abolition of the Person,” Summit Ministries, March 19, 2012, <http://www.summit.org/blogs/summit-announcements/rapid-response-the-abolition-of-the-person/>.

Summit News & Notes

» Summit is beginning a major update of David Nobel’s landmark worldview curriculum *Understanding the Times*. To keep up with the project and offer comments, follow Dr. Jeff Myers’ blog “The President’s Desk” at www.summit.org.

» Did you know you can receive regular updates and resources from Summit, including *The Journal*, via email? To sign up for Summit’s email updates, go to www.summit.org and click on **EMAIL SIGNUP**.

» Online registration for summer student conferences is now open. To register, go to www.summit-registration.org. To take advantage of our Early Bird Discount, register by March 31.

a look at our world

news and commentary



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

Marriage

The advice columns of newspapers are good windows into the conscience of a culture. There you will find a field guide to what is considered socially acceptable and unacceptable. One of the advice columnists for the *Washington Post*, Carolyn Hax, is consistently sensible and solid in her suggestions. Straightening out busybodies, drug abusers, interfering in-laws and ungrateful children with equal aplomb, she's usually a pleasant read with the morning coffee.

But not always. A recent response to a letter from "Grandmother-to-be" provides an example of the collapse of social wisdom on the subject of marriage and child-bearing. "My 26-year-old son's girlfriend — of four months — is pregnant," wrote grandma. "I have very mixed emotions about this, mainly because he just met her, and I do not know her. They work and live across the country. I am disappointed in their behavior. How do I tell my friends the news? I am embarrassed."

If I were an advice columnist, I would start with the reminder that telling one's friends is a low priority at the moment, while acknowledging that feeling ashamed of her son (not the young woman, as she has no relationship with her and thus cannot justifiably feel disappointed in her) is understandable under the circumstances.

Next, I would have pointed out that

since the couple will be parents, the very highest priority should be to encourage them to marry as soon as possible. A shotgun wedding? Obviously not. Those days are gone. But for all concerned — most particularly for the unborn child — a stable family is now essential.

Hax indeed began by dismissing the friend worry but with a very different emphasis. "There's a child on the way, and this is your big concern? ... American adults overwhelmingly choose premarital sex ... Plus, birth control isn't perfect, so you have statistical permission not to single this couple out for shaming."

Well, if shame was still attached to getting pregnant outside of marriage, it would be no bad thing. But fine, Hax seemed to be going in the right direction with the next sentence.

"Any big concern belongs with the stability of the home that will welcome this baby ..." But then, instead of recommending an immediate and tasteful elopement, she wrote, "If they plan to raise the baby as a couple ..."

If? For so many 21st century Americans, that's the way it's done. A child on the way will not affect the couple's decision about marriage. They may move in together. They may not. She may move into her mother's house. He may visit every day — for a while. She may try to raise the child by herself. It may not be her first or his. The fate of the relationship is regarded

as utterly separate from the fact of the child's existence.

Many, many young adults who already have babies and toddlers will explain that they "aren't ready" for the commitment of marriage, or that they haven't found the right person. How have we managed to get so confused?

The collapse of marriage among the lower and lower-middle classes is rapidly tapping our national strength. Women from wealthier families get it. They basically wait until they're married to have babies. They know that two parents create stability, financial security and the social structure to optimize the chances of rearing

"The collapse of marriage among the lower-middle classes is rapidly tapping our national strength."

Mona Charen

happy, healthy and productive new citizens. The illegitimacy rate among women with college educations, while it has tripled since 1960, is still only about 8 percent. By contrast, 67.4 percent of illegitimate births were to women with less than a high school diploma in 2006, and 51.4 percent were to women with only a high school degree.

The failure to marry on the part of the lower and lower-middle classes, not the tax code, Wall Street or competition from China, is what is aggravating inequality in America.

The toll is incalculable. In every way

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a look at our world

news and commentary, continued from page 5

that social science can measure — school performance, drug abuse, unemployment, suicide, poverty, depression, dependence on government handouts, mental illness, violence and far more — children raised by single parents (especially when their parents never married) are at a severe disadvantage. The failure to form families is devastating our schools, exacerbating inequality and diminishing happiness on a grand scale.

So, yes, “Grandmother-to-be” should be worried — not about what to tell her friends — but about what will become of her grandchild if his/her parents choose to join the ranks of the great unwed.

— Mona Charen
The Washington Times
December 3, 2012, p. 34

Ethics

Here’s one usage of the term gentleman: The gentleman helped the fallen lady to her feet. Here’s another, one we might hear from a newscaster or a police spokesman: Tonight we report on the arrest of two gentlemen who raped, sodomized and murdered an 80-year-old woman.

During earlier times, to be called a gentleman meant one was honest, brave, courteous and loyal. Today “gentleman” is used interchangeably in reference to decent people and the scum of the earth.

Much of today’s language usage demonstrates a desire to be nonjudgmental. People used to shack up; now they cohabit or are living partners. Few young women of yesteryear would have felt comfortable to publicly declare they slept around. Unmarried women used to give birth to a bastard; later, this was upgraded to an illegitimate birth or a nonmarital birth. In many instances, unwed mothers

proudly hold baby showers celebrating their illegitimate offspring, and the man, if known, who sired the baby is referred to as “my baby’s daddy” or sometimes as “my baby daddy.”

Homosexual marriages, which are not a basic human survival trait, were unheard of; today, in some jurisdictions, homosexual marriages have legal sanction. To be judgmental about modern codes of conduct is to risk being labeled a prude, racist, sexist or a homophobe. People ignore the fact that to accept another’s right to engage in certain peaceable, voluntary behavior doesn’t require moral acceptance or sanction.

Another measure of social deviancy is reflected by the excuses and apologies that are made for failures and how we make mascots out of social misfits, such as criminals and bums. The intellectual elite tell us that it’s poverty or racism that produces criminals, as opposed to a moral defect. We call bums homeless people. That suggests a moral equivalency between people who have lost their homes in a fire or natural disaster and people who choose to be social parasites; therefore, neither group is to be blamed for its respective condition. People who are very productive members of our society, such as the rich, are often held up to ridicule and scorn.

Think back to former President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky and the nation’s response that “it was just about sex.” Therefore, it was no big thing for the president and his men to become involved in witness tampering, perjury, obstruction of justice and a White House-organized attack on Kenneth Starr, an officer of the court. Most Americans thought removal from office was too harsh for Clinton’s lawlessness.

That kind of lawlessness helped estab-

lish a precedent for lawless acts by President Barack Obama. His most recent was an executive order that suspended legal liability for young people who are brought to our country illegally by their parents. He also repealed the legal requirement that welfare recipients must work, by simply redefining “work” to include other things, such as going to classes on weight control. Then there are waivers from Obamacare for favored allies — waivers that offend the principle of equality before the law.

Whether the president’s actions were good or bad ideas or not is irrelevant. What’s relevant is whether we want to establish a precedent whereby a president, who has no constitutional authority to repeal parts of congressional legislation, can grant special favors and rule by presidential decree like Third World tyrants.

I don’t hold President Obama completely responsible for his unconstitutional actions. It’s the American people who are to blame, for it is we who have lost our morality and our love, knowledge and respect for our Constitution, laying the foundation for Washington tyranny. It is all part and parcel of “defining deviancy down,” which is the term former U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan coined in 1993 to describe how we’ve switched from moral absolutes to situational morality and from strict constitutional interpretation to the Constitution’s being a “living document.” Constitutional principles that do not allow one American to live at the expense of another American are to be held in contempt. Today’s Americans have betrayed the values that made us a great nation, and that does not bode well for future generations.

— Walter Williams
FrontPage Magazine
November 7, 2012

Guth's Path to Iowa Capitol Began with Summit

On April 3, 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court reached a monumental decision: it upheld a lower court decision allowing same-sex marriage in the state. Without deliberation in the state capitol and with no opportunity for voters to have their say at the ballot box, Iowa became the third state to allow same-sex marriage.

Shortly thereafter, Dennis Guth, a grain and hog farmer and father of five in Klemme, Iowa, received a call from a frustrated and shocked neighbor: "We just can't do nothing," the neighbor told him. Now almost four years later, Dennis finds himself holding a position he had never envisioned or aspired to: he's a state senator just beginning his first term in office.

Dennis's road to the Iowa Senate actually began thirteen years ago in Colorado Springs at Summit's Adult Conference. After hearing about Summit on a Focus on the Family radio broadcast, Dennis and his wife, Margaret, signed up for the conference, which turned out to change their lives and the lives of their family. "We didn't even know the word *worldview* until we became acquainted with Summit," Margaret said recently. "The conference was great. It gave me confidence in realizing that Christianity is right on; we don't have to go out there and mumble our way through answers."

Since attending their first conference in 2000, the Guths made efforts to take advantage of every weekend worldview event Summit sponsored. Four of their five children have attended summer student conferences, and their youngest is coming this summer. Margaret said an understanding of worldview and culture has changed



Dennis and Margaret Guth

the intellectual dynamic of the whole family. "It's helped our kids think outside the box to help consider and analyze what's coming to them through all the various media," she said. "Somehow here in our culture we have just separated everything, but everything we do affects everything else; what we do in private affects the public, and what we do in public affects our private lives."

Their understanding of worldview has also pushed the Guths to do more reading and researching, especially of contemporary cultural issues. "Those who are informed are going to be the mouths for society," Margaret said. So when the Iowa Supreme Court made its decision in 2009, Dennis began researching the issue and became involved in grassroots activism. Finally, a group of fellow homeschool fathers he had been mobilizing with urged him to run for public office.

Margaret said she's not sure Dennis would have considered running had it not

been for what they learned in their years of involvement with Summit. "We became a little bit more comfortable being movers and shakers in small ways," she said. "It pushed him in a quiet way to become active and not just passively sit. It's been a tough road and has really put him out of his comfort zone. But if we don't do something, who will?"

Dennis echoed his wife's sentiment. "I decided it was wrong to do nothing, and I jumped in to see what God might do through me," he said. "It has been quite an adventure, and I'm glad I stepped out in faith."

Even though Dennis finds himself in the minority party in the Iowa Senate, he's quietly working to build coalitions around biblical ideas, such as crafting solid pro-life legislation. And even though it may be a long road trying to turn the tide of some major cultural trends, Margaret credits Summit for this family journey that began thirteen years ago.



American Christian College
dba Summit Ministries
PO Box 207
Manitou Springs, CO 80829

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**INSIDE: Do you know the three
questions that get to the heart of
the issues plaguing America?**

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know **what** you believe. know **why** you believe it.
learn how to **discern** truth. learn how to **defend** it.



student conferences
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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel

Economics

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

Nothing is sacred, not even the mortgage and charitable deductions, which some are recasting as “loopholes.” Ending the mortgage deduction when the housing market is finally showing signs of recovery would be like giving a cancer patient strychnine to make him feel better.

Even worse would be ending the charitable deduction, for the simple reason that this deduction encourages private sector benevolence, which the federal government under Barack Obama treats as pesky competition.

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

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

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

That's a fine arrangement when voluntary, such as in families, churches and private charities. However, when imposed by force—and socialism is always accompanied by force since it violates human nature—it is soft tyranny masquerading as

charity.

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

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

Social Security removed the advantage of having children, since it guarantees income based solely on age (and previous employment). Someone who has no children gets the same amount as someone who had six children who grew up to pay into the system, thus supporting the childless retiree. Children are very expensive, as any parent can tell you. Social Security makes having them less advantageous. Of course, Social Security has allowed millions of older Americans to live in at least minimally comfortable circumstances. Political talk of privatizing any aspect of Social Security is hazardous, and any hint of ending Social Security as we know it is political suicide. Americans have come to count on Social Security, so the challenge is how to sustain it without bankrupting the next generation.

The same can be said of Medicare, Medicaid and many other enormous federal programs. The advantages are obvious, but the downsides are not so

obvious – except for America's \$16 trillion-and-growing debt. To pay for all this, the average American family's tax burden has risen from a mere 2% of income in 1948 to something approaching 40 percent when all taxes are accounted for.

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

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

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

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

In 2009, Harvard economics Prof. Martin Feldstein warned that Obama's plan to target charities could severely hurt nonprofits:

“President Obama's proposal to limit the tax deductibility of charitable contributions would effectively transfer more than \$7 billion a year from the nation's charita-

a look at our world

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

ble institutions to the federal government.”

Taken together, a massive increase in government aid to paid “volunteers” and reducing incentives for charitable giving are a double-barreled shotgun aimed at the private sector.

— Robert Knight
Townhall.com
December 26, 2012

In seeking to avoid the “fiscal cliff,” President Obama and congressional Democrats say they want a “balanced approach” to deficit reduction. But to the President, “balance” apparently means \$7 in tax hikes and fees for every \$1 in actual spending cuts. He must see that if we go over the cliff, the impacts will be starkly uneven. The defense budget will be disproportionately affected—\$492 billion in cuts from defense (accounting for 43 percent of sequestration cuts), \$322 billion from non-defense discretionary spending (28 percent of cuts) and \$171 billion from entitlement spending (15 percent of cuts), according to The Heritage Foundation.

Not only is Social Security – one-fifth of the federal budget – exempt from sequestration, even in negotiations to avoid sequestration, Democrats have taken it off the table. “We are not going to mess with Social Security,” says Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-WV.) That’s because “Social Security is not currently a driver of the deficit,” according to White House spokesman Tim Carney.

“Social Security does not add one penny to our debt — not a penny,” agrees the Democrats’ Senate Whip, Dick Durbin.

BUNK

The Congressional Budget Office reported in October that Social Security has been increasing the deficit since 2010,

and its net cost will grow ever larger in the future. Even President Obama’s own fiscal 2013 budget shows (see page 208) that Social Security will add more than \$100 billion to the deficit this year, rising to more than \$200 billion by 2022. According to these figures, Social Security will contribute \$1.6 trillion to deficits (and thus the national debt) over the next decade.

Reid, Durbin and other Democrats argue that these shortfalls are paid out of the \$2.6 trillion accumulated in the Social Security “trust fund” since Ronald Reagan’s Social Security reform of 1983. The problem is that there is no money in the trust fund.

As the Social Security Administration (SSA) explains: “Tax income is deposited on a daily basis and is invested in ‘special-issue’ securities. The cash exchanged for the securities goes into the general fund of the Treasury and is indistinguishable from other cash in the general fund.”

Special issue securities are “certificates of indebtedness” or bonds available only to the trust funds. When SSA redeems these special issues, the money must come from somewhere: The federal government must (1) raise taxes, or (2) cut other spending, or (3) borrow from the public, including foreign investors such as China. The last option doesn’t actually pay off the debt; it merely transfers it from off-budget “intra-governmental debt” to on-budget public debt.

The Government Accountability Office reports that intra-governmental debt now totals \$4.7 trillion, of which 57 percent is held by the Social Security trust funds. In other words, Social Security currently accounts for about \$2.7 trillion of the gross national debt.

This figure may understate the prob-

lem: A Working Paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that “an additional dollar of surplus in the trust funds is associated with a \$1.50 decrease in the federal funds surplus.” That 2004 study concluded that “workers 15 years from now will have to pay off the obligations in the trust fund through increases in other taxes and cuts in other government services.”

Even that situation will last only as long as the trust fund itself. In 2004, the Social Security Trustees projected that that fund would last another 40 years – until FY 2044; in 2012, the Trustees reported that it would be exhausted by FY 2033 – just 20 years from now (FY 2013, which began last October). In just 8 years, the estimated date of exhaustion moved 11 years earlier. If the projected date of exhaustion continues to collapse at that rate, the trust fund won’t last another decade.

— Mark LaRochelle
Human Events

December 17, 2012, p. 26

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

Allison is the former CEO of Branch Banking and Trust, the nation’s 10th largest bank. He assembles evidence that shows that our financial crisis, followed by the Great Recession, was caused by Congress, the Federal Reserve, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae and was helped along by the

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Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama White Houses.

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

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

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

It's this market discipline of profits and losses that many businesses seek to avoid. That's why they descend upon Washington calling for government

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

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

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

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

That's putting his money where his mouth is, not sacrificing principle for the sake of earnings.

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

Marxism-Leninism

CARSON CITY, Nev. — A Nevada legislative panel has decided it's high time to repeal a state law that allows job discrimination against communists.

The 12-member Legislative Commission unanimously decided this week to introduce a bill at the 2013 session that would repeal a law that was passed in 1951 during the anti-communist fervor of the Cold War.

The law allows employers to reject job applications from communists and their sympathizers, and to fire any communists in their workforce.

Legislative staffers told the Las Vegas Review-Journal (<http://bit.ly/QhNngV>) that the law has somehow remained on the books, even though Congress repealed similar federal laws in 1971. It's unknown whether the law has ever been enforced.

The law was passed during an era of renewed fears that Communists were infiltrating all walks of American life, concerns that gained the national stage with hearings conducted by U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. Thousands of Americans, including entertainers, teachers, union activists and government employees, were scrutinized and often accused of being Communists or sympathizers.

At the time, Nevada politics was dominated by anti-communist U.S. Sen. Patrick McCarran, D-Nev., who secured passage by Congress of a bill creating the federal Subversive Activities Control Board.

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The law required the registration of communist-front organizations with the U.S. attorney general, and paved the way for states to approve their own anti-communist laws. Congress later abolished the board.

— Elko, Nevada *Daily Free Press*
November 26, 2012, p. B8

Is it just me, or does Kwanzaa seem to come earlier and earlier each year? And let's face it, Kwanzaa's gotten way too commercialized.

A few years ago, I suspended my annual Kwanzaa column because my triumph over this fake holiday seemed complete. The only people still celebrating Kwanzaa were presidential-statement writers and white female public school teachers.

But it seems to be creeping back. A few weeks ago, House Minority Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., complained about having to stick around Washington for fiscal cliff negotiations by accusing Republicans of not caring about “families” coming together to bond during Kwanzaa. The private schools have picked up this PC nonsense from the public schools. (Soon, no one will know anything.)

It is a fact that Kwanzaa was invented in 1966 by a black radical FBI stooge, Ron Karenga – aka Dr. Maulana Karenga – founder of United Slaves, a violent nationalist rival to the Black Panthers. He was also a dupe of the FBI.

In what was ultimately a foolish gamble, during the madness of the '60s, the FBI encouraged the most extreme black nationalist organizations in order to discredit and split the left. The more posterous the group, the better.

By that criterion, Karenga's United Slaves was perfect. In the annals of the

American '60s, Karenga was the Father Gapon, stooge of the czarist police.

Despite modern perceptions that blend all the black activists of the '60s, the Black Panthers did not hate whites. They did not seek armed revolution (although some of their most high-profile leaders were drug dealers and murderers). Those were the precepts of Karenga's United Slaves.

United Slaves were proto-fascists, walking around in dashikis, gunning down Black Panthers and adopting invented “African” names. (That was a big help to the black community: How many boys named “Jamal” are currently in prison?)

It's as if David Duke invented a holiday called “Anglika,” which he based on the philosophy of “Mein Kampf” – and clueless public school teachers began celebrating the made-up, racist holiday.

Whether Karenga was a willing dupe, or just a dupe, remains unclear.

Curiously, in a 1995 interview with Ethnic NewsWatch, Karenga matter-of-factly explained that the forces out to get O.J. Simpson for the “framed” murder of two whites included: “the FBI, the CIA, the State Department, Interpol, the Chicago Police Department” and so on. Karenga should know about FBI infiltration. (He further noted that the evidence against O.J. “was not strong enough to prohibit or eliminate unreasonable doubt” – an interesting standard of proof.)

In the category of the-gentleman-doth-protest-too-much, back in the '70s, Karenga was quick to criticize rumors that black radicals were government-supported. When Nigerian newspapers claimed that some American black radicals were CIA operatives, Karenga publicly denounced the idea, saying, “Africans must

stop generalizing about the loyalties and motives of Afro-Americans, including the widespread suspicion of black Americans being CIA agents.”

Now we know that the FBI fueled the bloody rivalry between the Panthers and United Slaves. In one barbarous outburst, Karenga's United Slaves shot to death two Black Panthers on the UCLA campus: Al “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins. Karenga himself served time, a useful steppingstone for his current position as a black studies professor at California State University at Long Beach.

Karenga's invented holiday is a nutty blend of schmaltzy '60s rhetoric, black racism and Marxism. The seven principles of Kwanzaa are the very same seven principles of the Symbionese Liberation Army, another charming legacy of the Worst Generation.

In 1974, Patricia Hearst, kidnap victim-cum-SLA revolutionary, posed next to the banner of her alleged captors, a seven-headed cobra. Each snake head stood for one of the SLA's revolutionary principles: Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba and Imani – the exact same seven “principles” of Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa praises collectivism in every possible area of life – economics, work, personality, even litter removal. (“Kuumba: Everyone should strive to improve the community and make it more beautiful.”) It takes a village to raise a police snitch.

When Karenga was asked to distinguish Kawaida, the philosophy underlying Kwanzaa, from “classical Marxism,” he essentially said that, under Kawaida, we also hate whites. (Kawaida, Kwanzaa and Kuumba are also the only three Kardashians not to have their own shows on the E! network.)

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While taking the “best of early Chinese and Cuban socialism” – excluding, one hopes, the forced abortions, imprisonment of homosexuals and forced labor – Karenga said Kawaïda practitioners believe one’s racial identity “determines life conditions, life chances and self-understanding.” There’s an inclusive philosophy for you.

Kwanzaa was the result of a ’60s psychosis grafted onto the black community. Liberals have become so mesmerized by multicultural nonsense that they have forgotten the real history of Kwanzaa and Karenga’s United Slaves – the violence, the Marxism, the insanity.

Most absurdly, for leftists anyway, they have forgotten the FBI’s tacit encouragement of this murderous black nationalist cult founded by the father of Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa emerged not from Africa, but from the FBI’s COINTELPRO. It is a holiday celebrated exclusively by idiot white liberals. Black people celebrate Christmas. (Merry Christmas, fellow Christians!)

Sing to “Jingle Bells”:

Kwanzaa bells, dashikis sell
Whitey has to pay; Burning, shooting, oh what fun
On this made-up holiday!

— Ann Coulter

Front Page Magazine
December 27, 2012

Secularism

A civil liberties group is getting ready to take legal action against the town of Brentwood for reciting the Lord’s Prayer in council meetings — a practice the group says is unconstitutional.

The Washington-based group, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the invocation violates the First Amendment by giving Christianity preference over other religions.

Brentwood Mayor Roger E. Rudder said that the prayer is a time-honored tradition in his town of roughly 3,000 people.

“As far as I can remember being in this town, we’ve always started our council sessions with a prayer,” he said. “We don’t question anyone of what faith they are.”

Americans United has sent three letters asking the Town Council to stop the prayer this year. They have not received a response.

“I’m very offended by the fact that they even sent me a letter,” Mr. Rudder said.

The first letter was sent in April after a complaint received from a Brentwood resident. The letter asked the five-member council to end the practice or revise it to allow other religions’ prayers.

Earlier this year, the council incorporated a moment of silence into the sessions.

“When we begin our meetings, those who wish to pray can say a short prayer,” Mr. Rudder said. “Others can observe a moment of silence.”

In a follow-up letter sent in September, Americans United said despite the moment of silence, the Lord’s Prayer was still recited. The group threatened to take legal action.

“That is still imposing a Christian prayer on the audience and that’s improper whether they couple it with a moment of silence or not,” said Ayesha Khan, legal director at Americans United.

After two months of no change, Americans United sent a third letter Wednesday asking the town for public records — including council agendas and minutes, legal opinions, complaints and correspondence — relating to the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer.

Ms. Khan said the group will use this

information to build a lawsuit. If there are no changes, she said a lawsuit will be filed early next year. She said she hopes the conflict can be resolved without a lawsuit, which would be both divisive and expensive.

“I don’t care if they respond,” Ms. Khan said. “I care if they change the practice.”

The practice is unwelcoming to non-Christians and could lead them to “easily conclude that their interests aren’t represented by the council,” she said.

Mr. Rudder said he has not received complaints from community members.

“The residents called me and told me they hope I would not stop opening all meetings with a prayer,” he said. “It’s tradition. We’ve continued to do what we have always done.”

Ms. Khan said the lack of complaints to City Hall is not surprising.

“A person in the minority feels intimidated about speaking up,” she said.

— Shivan Sarna

The Washington Times
November 19, 2012, p. 11

Abortion

The newly re-elected Obama administration should promote contraception as a human right, domestically and throughout the world, a veteran House member said Wednesday as a new report on global family-planning was released.

“What the presidential election result means is that millions of women here in the United States will continue to receive family planning services through Planned Parenthood, and the United States will continue to fund the important programs of the U.N. Population Fund,” said Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, New York Democrat.

Women and men everywhere need

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access to education, counseling and services on birth control and legal, safe abortion, she said.

"This is a human-rights issue," Ms. Maloney added. "I think that was the fundamental lesson to draw from our elections here in the United States."

The congresswoman's remarks coincided with the release of a report on global family planning by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The State of World Population Report 2012 says 222 million women of reproductive age in developing countries need affordable birth control, including abortion services, and if an additional \$4 billion was directed to meet this need, the costs for maternal and newborn health care could fall by more than \$11 billion a year.

"Family planning has a positive multiplier effect on development," said Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, executive director of UNFPA.

"Not only does the ability for a couple to choose when and how many children to have help lift nations out of poverty, but it is also one of the most effective means of empowering women," he said.

Moreover, Dr. Osotimehin said, family planning is a human right — not a privilege — and therefore any type of obstacle to it "must be removed."

Janice Shaw Crouse, senior fellow of Concerned Women for America's Beverly LaHaye Institute, expressed concern about the UNFPA report's statements about "ensuring universal access" to family planning.

It's "another way of saying that any disagreement is to be squelched; that freedom of religion and freedom of speech are irrelevant when family planning 'rights' are at stake," said Mrs. Crouse.

The UNFPA report also did not delve

into reported abuses in China, such as incidents in which family-planning officials dragged Chinese women into clinics and forced them to submit to abortions or sterilizations.

"UNFPA is very, very strongly committed to the right of individuals to choose family planning when they want to use it, and it works closely with the Chinese government to ensure that the national family planning program is as voluntary as possible," said Margaret Greene, lead author of the UNFPA report, said on a media conference call.

Family planning needs to be voluntary, agreed Sarah Craven, chief of the UNFPA's Washington office. "Engaging in China is a difficult task," she said, "but we continue to push that human-rights agenda forward, as we do in any country that we work in around the world."

"Forcing a woman to terminate a pregnancy that she wants is clearly wrong but so is forcing a woman to continue a pregnancy that she does not want," said Susan Cohen, director of government affairs at Guttmacher Institute.

But Reggie Littlejohn, whose Women's Rights Without Frontiers opposes China's one-child birth policy, said the UNFPA report's title, "By Choice, Not By Chance," was ironic.

"What about the 600 million women in China who are unable to 'decide on the number and spacing of [their] children,' not because they lack access to contraception but because they will be forcibly aborted if they get pregnant without a birth permit?" she asked.

Moreover, the UNFPA report explicitly calls for family-planning services for women who are young and single, but it doesn't address China's law forbidding

births to single women and its efforts to perform abortions on women who break that law, said Ms. Littlejohn. Practices such as these are "state-sponsored violence against women," she added.

Dr. Osotimehin praised a London summit on family planning held in July, during which donors including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged \$2.6 billion in funding for family planning. Another \$2 billion was pledged by leaders of developing countries. These funds will be used to make voluntary family planning to around 120 million girls and women in 69 developing countries by 2020.

"This is a positive step forward. However, we need to do more, much more," he said, urging spending around \$8 billion a year for family planning.

According to the UNFPA report, the five countries where modern contraceptive products are most commonly used are China, United Kingdom, Portugal, Norway and Costa Rica. In the United States, contraceptive prevalence is about 73 percent; those countries are all 80 percent or higher.

The countries where modern contraceptives are most rarely used, at 5 percent or lower, are Somalia, Chad, Angola, Eritrea, Guinea and Niger.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
November 19, 2012, p. 13

Sociology

Female Marine officers are unlikely to join the infantry anytime soon, in part because of a lack of volunteers for the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course, which was opened to women in September.

Only two of about 80 eligible female Marines have volunteered for the course — a grueling, three-month advanced

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regimen conducted at Quantico, Va., that was opened to women to research their performance.

Of the two female volunteers, one washed out on the first day, along with 26 of the 107 men, and the other dropped out two weeks later for medical reasons, a Marine Corps spokesman said.

The research effort was launched after the Pentagon opened to women more than 14,000 jobs that could place them closer to front lines and combat.

The Marine Corps wants to test at least 90 more women in the course before making any decision about women serving in infantry roles, the spokesman said.

Getting 90 more female volunteers may be difficult. About 125 female officers each year enter the Basic School, a prerequisite and candidate pool for the Infantry Officer Course, the spokesman said.

Since September, women in every new class of the Basic School have been given the opportunity to volunteer for the Infantry Officer Course, and they will continue to be offered the chance, he said.

A Marine Corps spokeswoman said no women have volunteered for the next Infantry Officer Course, which begins in January.

Testing and evaluating

The Marines have yet to implement the research option for female enlisted Marines who volunteer to train at the Infantry Training Battalion, the all-male advanced regimen at the Corps' School of Infantry at Camp Geiger, N.C., a spokeswoman said.

The research is part of efforts to gather information that could help guide decisions on what opportunities can be opened to women.

The Pentagon ordered the services to issue a progress report on the jobs it

opened to women and to look into other areas, including the infantry, that could be opened to women.

Those reports and research are to be sent by the end of this month to Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, who will issue any policy changes and recommendations to Congress.

Since May, the Marine Corps also has been testing women's endurance and strength.

Tests include lifting a 72-pound machine gun above their heads while wearing a 71-pound rucksack, marching 12 miles in less than five hours carrying a 71-pound rucksack and evacuating a mock casualty weighing about 200 pounds.

The scores will be used to compare male and female performance and to gauge whether the current combat fitness test and physical fitness tests are appropriate measures for combat fitness.

Female Marines interviewed by The Washington Times said they are nervous and excited about the outcomes of the research, which could decide the future of women in the Corps.

Although the two female volunteers for the Infantry Officer Course did not complete it, there will be others who will, they say.

Only new female lieutenants are offered the chance to volunteer for the Infantry Officer Course. This has upset some senior female officers, who say they would jump at the chance and might better handle the stress of being the only woman in an intense, all-male environment than brand-new female officers.

All created equal?

The senior women attribute the lack of female volunteers to the fact that they would not be assigned to infantry jobs

even if they complete the course. Successful candidates would have to return to their previously assigned jobs.

They are also worried about the impact made by a female combat engineer whose article in the Marine Corps' official magazine questioned whether women can stand the physical strain of combat and received national attention.

In a July article in Marine Corps Gazette titled "Get Over It! We Are Not All Created Equal!" Capt. Katie Petronio said she suffered from restless leg syndrome, severe muscle atrophy and infertility resulting from 10-month and seven-month deployments, respectively, to Iraq and Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, she commanded 30 Marines who were building patrol bases in Helmand province, one of the most dangerous areas at that time.

"At the end of the seven-month deployment, and the construction of 18 [patrol bases] later, I had lost 17 pounds and was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome (which personally resulted in infertility, but is not a genetic trend in my family), which was brought on by the chemical and physical changes endured during deployment," Capt. Petronio wrote.

Capt. Petronio discussed her article on CNN, upsetting female Marines by appearing in uniform and not mentioning that she was about five months pregnant at the time. She gave birth in October.

Corps leaders say they are aware of sensitivities and hope to get past the hyperbole with facts-based research, a spokesman said.

The Corps also will submit the results from a servicewide online survey of active-duty Marines and some reservists about their experiences with female Marines and

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the potential challenges of opening more units and positions to women.

After this, “I’ll be able to look Congress, secretary of defense, secretary of the Navy in the eye and say, ‘Sir, this is my recommendation when we’re all through,’” Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James F. Amos said in August.

— Kristina Wong
The Washington Times
December 3, 2012, p. 23

History

Previous civilizations have been overthrown from without by the incursion of barbarian hordes. Christendom has dreamed up its own dissolution in the minds of its intellectual elite. Our barbarians are home products, indoctrinated at the public expense, urged by the media systematically stage by stage, dismantling Christendom, depreciating and deprecating all its values. The whole structure is now tumbling down, dethroning God, undermining all its certainties. All this, wonderfully enough, is being done in the name of health, wealth, and happiness of all mankind. That is the basic scene that seems to me will strike a future Gibbon as being characteristic of the decline and fall of Christendom.

I could go on giving details, but you can very well fill in for yourselves: the internecine conflicts between the Western nations, the decline of Western power and influence, the collapse of the British Empire into which I was born. We used to boast that it was an empire on which the sun never set; now it’s become a commonwealth in which the sun never rises. That’s how far we’ve moved. I must also leave you to analyze the cultural decline of Western art and literature. In the cycle of a great civilization, the artist begins as a priest and

ends a clown or buffoon. Examples of buffoonery in twentieth century art, literature, and music are many: Dali, Picasso, John Cage, Beckett.

— Malcom Muggeridge
The End of Christendom
p. 17, 18

I expect that you’re all familiar with Plato’s image of the shadow in a cave. The people in the cave saw shadows passing by and mistook these shadows, supposing that the shadows were people and that the names they gave them were real. I feel that is an image of our existence. Our television is an outward and visible sign of this fantasy with which we preoccupy ourselves.

Many people here has asked me how it was I ultimately came to be convinced that Christ was the answer. It was because in this world of fantasy in which my own occupation has particularly involved me, I have found Christ is the only true alternative. The shadow in the cave is like the media world of shadows. In contradistinction, Christ shows what life really is, and what our true destiny is. We escape from the cave. We emerge from the darkness and instead of shadows we have all around us the glory of God’s creation. Instead of darkness we have light; instead of despair, hope; instead of time and the clocks ticking inexorably on, eternity, which never began and never ends and yet is sublimely now. What then is this reality of Christ, contrasting with all the fantasies whereby men seek to evade it, fantasies of the ego, of the appetites, of power or success, of the mind and the will, the reality valid when first lived and expounded by our Lord himself two thousand years ago? It has buoyed up Western man through all the vicissitudes and uncertainty of Christendom’s centuries, and

is available today when it’s more needed, perhaps, than ever before, as it will be available tomorrow and forever. It is simply this: by identifying ourselves with Christ, by absorbing ourselves in his teaching, by living out the drama of his life with him, including especially the passion, that powerhouse of love and creativity — by living with, by, and in him, we can be reborn to become new men and women in a new world.

— Malcolm Muggeridge
The End of Christendom
p. 53, 54

Islam

At the height of the Nazi Holocaust, the wretched human cargo spilling out of cattle cars onto the platforms of Auschwitz was immediately subject to a brutal selection by the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, whose flick of a finger to the left meant immediate death in a gas chamber; to the right, slave labor and slow death from starvation or disease.

Fast forward to 2012 Nigeria, where a latter-day incarnation of selection has been used—this time not against Jews, but against Christians.

Nigeria is the most populous black nation on earth. Among its chief blessings are oil and a large array of religious, tribal and language groups. Yet conflict, violence and terrorism are part of reality there, too.

Recently a new line of inhumanity was crossed. In October, armed attackers, presumed to be members of Boko Haram, an Islamist terrorist group with links to al Qaeda, invaded the Tudun Wada Wuro Patuje area, entering the off-campus housing of the Federal Polytechnic State University.

The attackers called students out of their rooms and asked for their names. Those with Christian names were shot dead or killed with knives. Students with

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traditionally Muslim names were told to quote Islamic scripture. The selection completed, at least 26 bodies were left in lines outside the buildings.

The attack was a pogrom, the victims of which were African Christians, not European Jews. To be sure, it lacked the scale and scope of Hitler's total war against the entire Jewish people. The Boko Haram seem content to burn churches and to maim and murder those—including other Muslims, but especially Christians, by the scores—who would stop the spread of their version of Shariah law in Nigeria alone.

But is this where it ends?

Think again. To classify these outrages as nothing more than tribal and territorial ones with a veneer of religion is a moral outrage. We are dismayed that Johnnie Carson, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs, sanitized the intentions of this murderous group while giving a "Live at State" online interview in September. "The bulk of the Boko Haram movement is . . . trying to do everything in its power to show that the government is ineffective in the defense of its people and in the protection of government institutions," Mr. Carson said. Two months before he spoke, Boko Haram had claimed responsibility for the murder of dozens of Christians in the city of Jos—just one of many such attacks.

In earlier times, armies clashed over territory. Objectives were clear, as was the identity of the "enemy," lurking beyond a defined border. Nowadays people in too many parts of the world are taught to identify as the enemy neighbors who are indistinguishable from themselves, save by their beliefs. They have to be "selected" before they can be butchered. What-

ever the original cause of a conflict, once religion becomes the driving ideological tool, it is no longer just about oil reserves or farmland.

Today, Islamist extremists' rage has the power to transform small, local conflicts into infernos that can snuff out lives thousands of miles away. Threatened targets of religious hatred today include Hindus, Sunnis, Shiites, Bahais and Jews, but the most widely menaced are Christians. A Pew Forum study last year found that Christians are persecuted—by independent groups or governments—in 131 of the 193 countries in the world.

We cannot cure religious strife, but we must take action to forestall ever-increasing murder and mayhem in the name of God. International bans against blasphemy, offensive cartoons and videos will do nothing to stem the tide.

For starters, religious leaders, human-rights organizations and the United Nations must lobby all governments to establish laws that guarantee protection from violence to religious minorities within their own borders. That is a Herculean task, which must be led by the United States. In his second term, President Obama can steer a new course for U.S. foreign policy that links future foreign aid to Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and beyond to this basic human right.

If America fails to exercise leadership, it will further embolden those who invoke God's name to murder and maim families in their houses of prayer and, as in Pakistan earlier this year, young girls who dare dream of an educated future. Theological manipulators of hatred will not be deterred unless and until they face the long arm of international action.

We must, and we can, ensure that the

faithful attending a mosque on Friday, a synagogue on Saturday or a church on Sunday can be confident that they'll return home safely. We urge the president to use the next four years to protect not religions, but the religious, wherever they may be.

— Abraham Cooper, John Huffman,

Yitzchok Adlerstein

Wall Street Journal

December 22-23, 2012, p. A15

Marriage

"In the fight for the family, the very notion of being – of what being human really means – is being called into question," the Pope said in Italian during an end-of-year speech.

"The question of the family ... is the question of what it means to be a man, and what it is necessary to do to be true men," he said.

The Pope spoke of the "falseness" of gender theories and cited at length France's chief Rabbi Gilles Bernheim, who has spoken out against gay marriage.

"Bernheim has shown in a very detailed and profoundly moving study that the attack we are currently experiencing on the true structure of the family, made up of father, mother, and child, goes much deeper," he said.

He cited feminist gender theorist Simone de Beauvoir's view to the effect that one is not born a woman, but one becomes so – that sex was no longer an element of nature but a social role people chose for themselves.

"The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious," he said.

The defence of the family, the Pope said, "is about man himself. And it becomes clear that when God is denied, human dignity also disappears."

a look at our world

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

On Monday, the Vatican's newspaper described laws on gay marriage as an attempt at a communist-like "utopia", a day after tens of thousands of demonstrators turned out in France to support legalising both marriages and adoption for gay couples.

France's parliament is to debate the government-backed "marriage for all" bill early next year.

With President Francois Hollande's Socialists enjoying a strong majority, the bill is expected to pass despite vehement opposition from the right and religious groups.

— telegraph.co.uk
December 22, 2012

Homosexuality

Some animals are homosexual, said the young man, mentioning two male penguins who reportedly raised a chick together, though the one news story we saw did not say whether the two were, um, romantically involved. Conservative activists had long used the supposed absence of such actions among animals as a moral argument against such actions by humans, which seemed unwise and has proven to be so.

Their understanding of the Fall was deficient, and their identification of "natural" confused a way of thinking about who

we really are and how we ought to act, with "natural" meaning the life we observe in nature. Using that logic, homosexualist activists now invoke these animals as a moral argument for the good of human homosexuality.

"Duh," noted our friend Gregory Laughlin of Samford University's law school, who grew up on a farm. "I've seen two boars 'together.' So what? Animals also viciously kill one another, even their own kind. Does that make murder 'natural' and, therefore, licit among humans?"

It gets worse: "Many animals have multiple sex partners, and the male is often uninvolved in caring for his offspring. Does that make adultery, promiscuity, and paternal abandonment 'natural' and, therefore, licit among humans?"

"Animals go into a frenzy when fed, pushing others out of the way and even trampling others to get to the food. Does that make greed, gluttony, covetousness, and theft 'natural' and, therefore, licit among humans?"

And there's that verse about the dog returning to its vomit . . .

— *First Things*
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