

Want to Win Culture? Focus on Human Flourishing



Cover Story

The American Revolution has had a lasting, positive impact because its leaders focused not on angry vengeance (like in the French Revolution) but on freeing people from the barriers that prevented them from living out their full potential as image-bearers of God. They believed humans were made to create and unleash social, economic, and spiritual potential from which the entire world has benefited.

Whether America's founders were Christians (and most were) is not as important as the fact that their view of humanity can be rationally derived only from a biblical worldview. While America's founders failed to live up to their own expectations on issues like slavery, they set in motion a self-correcting system through which the young nation could grow in its recognition of human dignity.

The founders' focus on human flourishing not only changed America, it changed the world. Many of the cultural battles of our day are being lost because Christians have lost sight of this focus. From a biblical view, "winning" isn't about seizing the reins of power as much as it is creating such a robust vision of a flourishing society that human-crippling worldviews are revealed as the shriveling and anemic perspectives they are.

In this article we'll flesh out the concept of human flourishing and show how the biblical worldview alone genuinely secures it. We'll also explore ways to apply thinking about human flourishing to the issues you face in your community.

Grasping the Language of Human Flourishing

Alone among the most influential worldviews in the world, Christianity claims that

though we have fallen, God created man to embody his creativity, justice, responsibility, order, and compassion. In short, God made man to flourish.

Despite the shattering effects of the Fall, Christ's redemption enables us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that brings blessing to the nations (Genesis 3:6-9). "Human flourishing" is a phrase many Christians now use to illustrate this idea.

Michael Miller, a research fellow at the Acton Institute and director of PovertyCure, explained in an interview that the actual term *human flourishing* was coined by Aristotle. Some think it means to chase after happiness. But, just as the U.S.'s founding fathers meant happiness in a particular context when they invoked the phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Aristotle thought of

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



The devil's greatest lie, both in the Garden of Eden and today, is, "God does not want good for you."

This lie is refuted in the very first chapter of the Bible: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). In Hebrew, the phrase "very good" is "*meod towb*" (pronounced MAY-odd Töve). It means exceedingly, heartbreakingly, abundantly, richly, immeasurably good in a festive, generous, intelligent, charming, splendid way.

“At the heart of human flourishing is a life of involvement — even leadership.”

Dr. Jeff Myers

The English word *flourishing* is based on the ancient Greek idea of *eudaimonia* — the good life. It's not a life of leisure, but a life of fulfillment. God made our first parents so they could take responsibility, be creative, glory in creation, and revel in one another's company. Their flourishing was very much tied to their actual physical presence and work.

Unfortunately, a heresy arose in the early church called "Gnosticism" which said that the fall irretrievably ruined creation and that Christians should shun it and focus only on the spiritual realm. Gnostics even went so far as to proclaim that Jesus did

not really appear in the flesh because that would have been an intolerable corruption of his spiritual being.

The apostles roundly condemned Gnosticism. First John says that anyone who does not proclaim Jesus as having come in the flesh is giving a message that is not from God. And yet it is amazing how many in the so-called postmodern or emergent church hold to tenets of Gnosticism to this day.

At Summit we teach students that their desire for eternity should

cause them to care more about what is going on in this world, rather than less. Thomas Aquinas put it this way: "Grace does not destroy nature, but completes it."¹

At the heart of human flourishing is a life of involvement — even leadership. And at the heart of leadership is a robust love for God. Dorothy Day said:

*We must build up leaders. And the leaders must first change themselves. And the job is so hard, so gigantic in this, our day of chaos, that there is only one motive that can make it possible for us to live in hope — that motive of the love of God.*²

In fact, to Augustine, the cultivation of this kind of love is precisely what attracts others to us: "Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity itself is the soul's beauty."³

Summit instructor John Stonestreet recommends asking four questions to connect our love for God and the life habits that lead to

flourishing:

- **What are my loves?** What do I care about most deeply, based on how I use my time, talents, and treasure?
- **What are my loyalties?** Who or what gets the real me? What causes me to commit my time and energies?
- **What are my longings?** If I continue where I have aimed, where will I end up?
- **What are my liturgies?** What do I worship? What are the rhythms of my life? What are the habits of my life?⁴

Hidden in the answers to these four questions is the secret to a life of flourishing. And in a life of flourishing, we discover what the good life — from God's perspective — is all about.

Notes

1. Thomas Aquinas, Point 928, in Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 320. Originally published by Oxford University Press, 1951.
2. W. Andrew Achenbaum, "The Wisdom of Age: A Historian's Perspective," Distinguished Lecture Series, April 3, 1997 (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Institute on Aging, 1997), p. 9.
3. Augustine, *Augustine: Later Works* (John Burnaby, ed.) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 336.
4. John Stonestreet, "A Worldview That's Big Enough," <http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/changepoint/15359-a-worldview-thats-big-enough>.

flourishing as the pursuit of virtue and excellence, not the mere pursuit of personal pleasure.

Christianity teaches us that excellence and virtue are standards set by God. According to Miller, human flourishing is “a life well lived according to our nature made in the image of God; it seeks the good, the true, and the beautiful.”

The Bible Is the Only Stable Basis of Human Flourishing

Human flourishing is not a Christian term for utopia — the idea that humans can perfect human nature and society by their own works. Utopia is an impossible and ultimately dangerous concept, as the 20th century shows us. Marx and his many followers were chasing utopia. Hitler chased utopia. Many secularists today chase utopia, with similarly murderous results.

Rather, human flourishing is intrinsically tied to the concept of *shalom* in the Old Testament. Theologian Cornelius Plantinga puts it this way:

*The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight — a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens the doors and welcomes creatures in whom he delights.*¹

As journalist Andy Crouch explains, the shalom of creation isn't just for nature itself; it is “designed for the flourishing of exquisitely relational creatures, male and female, who themselves are very good

because they bear the image of a relational God.”²

When Adam and Eve sinned, that shalom, or ability to flourish, was broken. Christ's life, death, and resurrection not only restores our standing before a holy God but also gives Christians the opportunity to seek the shalom we were meant to seek before the Fall, though we know we will never realize it fully this side of eternity.

As Summit faculty member John Stonestreet memorably phrases it, trying to put Band-Aids on the Fall will never produce human flourishing. Christ's redemption allows Christians to seek the fullness and wholeness of existence that God intended us to live with at creation. When we do this, the whole world benefits.

Applying Human Flourishing to the Big Ideas

Human flourishing is an abstract idea, but it comes to life when we apply it to issues such as economics, vocation, creativity, entrepreneurialism, and the family.

Economics. As opposed to the view that sees humans as mere *consumers* who need to be kept alive by secular elites, the biblical view sees humans chiefly as *producers* whose work increases the total economic value in the world, benefiting themselves and others. From a biblical view, work is a good thing, instituted by God before the Fall (Genesis 1:28-30).

So how does this change the way Christians should talk about issues like poverty?

Through PovertyCure, the Acton Institute's Miller seeks to tackle poverty not by merely throwing money at the problem, but by encouraging impoverished communities to produce their own goods

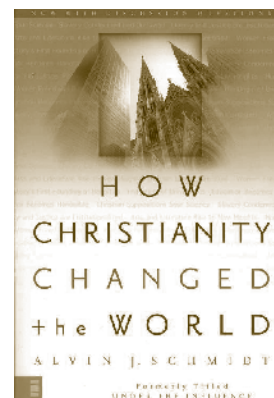
and exports so that they can be self-supporting. Miller says the best question to ask when wanting to help those in poverty isn't, “How do I eradicate poverty?” Rather, the best question to ask is, “How can impoverished people create prosperity?” This Scripturally-faithful approach shows

the biblical worldview to be far more robust and pro-human than secular views.

Vocation, Creativity, Entrepreneurialism. Each of us is gifted in specific ways that lend themselves to a vocation we can exercise for God's glory and in the service of others. Take, for instance, Thomas Newcomen and James Watt. These two men lived in different European countries and in different periods of the Industrial Revolution, but both innovated on previous designs for steam engines in order to make work more efficient. As historian Glenn Sunshine puts it:

... Newcomen and Watt were part of a long line of Christians who produced technological advancements aimed at increasing productivity and eliminating drudgery on the basis of Biblical ideas about work. Those ideas shaped the Western tradi-

Suggested Reading



How Christianity Changed the World

by Alvin Schmidt
Available at Summit's bookstore:

summit.org/store.

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tion even among those who were at best nominal Christians. No other culture had the commitment to the goodness of this world, to the unique dignity of each person, to the value of work and production, and to making work meaningful, and as a result no other culture developed technologies aimed at improving production and benefiting common workers.³

Family. Also present from the very beginning of creation were the unique institutions of marriage and family. Fundamentally, marriage is the stabilizing force for societies here on earth. Marriage and families are the institutions through which we learn virtues and behaviors critical for life in a larger community. Social science research overwhelmingly shows that communities, individuals, and families fail to flourish when the biblical model of marriage isn't the norm.⁴

Four Questions About Flourishing for Your Community

As is often the case, helping others (or ourselves) flourish starts with asking questions. Consider these four questions to focus on flourishing for those in your own community:

- **Is cultural power growing in my community?** When the government keeps unemployed people dependent on handouts, it grows by sucking power away from recipients. When people get job training and become capable of providing for their families and making a contribution to the community, on the other hand, they grow in a kind of power that enables their families and community to flourish.

- **Does my community prize charity or merely “humanitarianism”?** Miller says humanitarianism is the habit of providing handout after handout,

which actually disempowers recipients because it disincentivizes them to be productive. Charity, on the other hand, seeks the good for the other person: that he is able to be productive in his own right.

- **Are people around me reflecting the nature of God?** In whatever their callings, are those around you being set free to demonstrate characteristics of the *imago Dei*: creativity, order, responsibility, kindness, generosity, reconciliation?

- **Who in my community is flourishing?** How can they help others who aren't? Perhaps that looks like a local mentoring program, a church discipleship group, or a monthly get-together of certain people over lunch. Is there a way those who are struggling can learn to prosper from those who are flourishing? How can you facilitate that?

A Practical Example of the Human Flourishing Approach

As a city council member of his town in North Carolina, Summit instructor Dr. Terry Moffitt faced a growing number of sexually-oriented businesses in his community. He successfully took a stand not by giving rousing speeches against sin but by drafting legislation focused on protecting children and families.

The rigorous licensing provisions Moffitt drafted regulated everything from parking to the serving of alcohol to the protection of performers. Because community members saw how the regulations protected the vulnerable, they pushed sexually-oriented businesses to the margins of society and showed their “heroes of free expression” mantra for the

fraud it really was. Most of these businesses shut down and those planning to open decided not to.

The cost was high for Moffitt and his family. He discovered that many of the sexually-oriented businesses were associated with organized crime. His

“meddling” was met with serious death threats. The liberal media piled on with severely critical articles.

But in the end, it was worth it. Moffitt says that the legislation he drafted has been adopted in more than 80 communities across the U.S., restoring honor and decency, protecting children and families, and reducing crime.

Asking “How does this policy affect human flourishing?” helps Christians display genuine concern for their communities and create space for biblical ideas that can bring much-needed transformation.

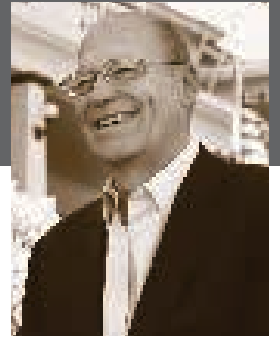
Notes

1. Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 1995, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 10.
2. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, 2008, InterVarsity Press:Downers Grove, Illinois, 105.
3. “Christians Who Changed Their World: Thomas Newcomen (1664-1729) and James Watts (1736-1819),” Glenn Sunshine, *The Christian Worldview Journal*, February 13, 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/the-center/columns/indepth/17439-thomas-newcomen-1664-1729-and-james-watt-1736-1819>>.
4. Summit has written on this topic numerous other times, but for key social research, see www.familyfacts.org.

“... helping others flourish starts with asking questions.”

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 gay marriage controversy in Britain's Anglican Church focused recently on a quite practical question: Can gay and lesbian civil partners both register as parents on a baptismal certificate? When Aimi and Victoria Leggett approached the Rev. George Gebauer of Warsash, England, to have their infant baptized, they requested that Gebauer

"I want it so much — a big lavish ceremony, the whole works."

Barrie Drewitt-Barlow

list them both as the child's mothers. He refused, saying that doing so was illegal and that no child could possibly have two parents of the same sex. Church officials reversed the decision of the retired minister, however. Archdeacon Gavin Collins said "we would be thrilled to carry out this baptism" and to record both parents as mothers.

This baptismal dispute reflects larger fractures over sexuality which threaten to break apart the Church of England globally. The archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has sought

to balance the liberal stance of many Anglicans in Britain, Canada, and the United States with the conservative views of newer, thriving Anglican churches in places like sub-Saharan Africa. Welby, who opposed the legalization of gay marriage as a member of the British House of Lords, recently told a group of evangelical Anglicans that they should "repent" over the history of anti-gay discrimination, and acknowledge that the church was fundamentally out of step with the "revolution" that has transpired in acceptance of homosexuality. He hinted that he had not settled his own opinion about legalizing same-sex marriage.

Parliament approved gay marriage earlier this year, but it allowed dissenting churches to opt out of performing same-sex weddings. That exemption irritates activists and civil partners like Barrie and Tony Drewitt-Barlow, who are suing the Church of England to force all ministers to conduct gay weddings. Barrie Drewitt-Barlow explained that "it upsets me because I want it so much—a big lavish ceremony, the whole works. ... I am still not getting what I want."

The marriage controversies, along with the denomination's ordination of openly gay priests and bishops, have alarmed traditional Anglicans and made global schism more likely. Conservatives led by African archbishops plan to meet in Kenya for a second Global Anglican Future Conference the week of Oct. 21. Ugandan Archbishop Stanley Ntagali recently registered his continuing opposition to Anglicans ordaining and marrying gays, saying that these

practices had torn the denomination "to the deepest level." Kenyan Archbishop Eliud

Wabukala likewise contends that gay activists' "overthrow" of the created order of male and female was just one symptom of the church's spiritual disease.

— Thomas Kidd

WORLD Magazine

October 5, 2013, p. 64

Sexuality

Children in California public schools must be accommodated based on their self-perceived gender identity — which means biological girls may use boys' bathrooms and biological boys may join the girls' cheerleading squads — under a law signed Monday by California Gov. Jerry Brown.

The law goes into effect Jan. 1 and is expected to affect some 6.2 million public school students in kindergarten to 12th grade.

"We are grateful to Gov. Brown for his long-standing commitment to ensuring that all California students are able to attend school without discrimination or harassment. By signing AB 1266, he has made that commitment real for transgender students, who will now have the same opportunities to participate and to succeed as other students," said Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and a female-to-male transgendered man.

Mr. Brown has "sent a powerful message" to youths "letting them know their state and their government fully support them," Equality California,

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Transgender Law Center, the American Civil Liberties of California and the NCLR said in a joint statement.

California laws already prohibit discrimination against transgendered people in areas such as education, and several California school districts were honoring the wishes of transgendered students.

But the School Success and Opportunity Act was needed to ensure that all public school officials cooperate with transgender children in their choices of bathrooms and sex-specific activities, its author said.

Many school districts were not treating transgender students “the same as all other students in the specific areas addressed by this bill,” California Assemblyman Tom Ammiano, a Democrat, said when he introduced AB 1266 with support from the Transgender Law Center and other gay-rights groups.

Under the law, public school students from kindergarten to 12th grade must be “permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil’s records.”

Ashton Lee, 16, recently delivered 5,700 signatures of support for the AB 1266. The school had placed Ashton, a biological female, in an all-girl physical-education class, which didn’t make sense “because I’m a boy,” he told KTXL-TV in Sacramento.

Traditional-values groups opposed the bill, saying it would turn teachers into “identity keepers” and put thousands of “unsuspecting” students “face

to face with opposite-peers in their bathrooms, changing rooms and showers.”

The “school bathroom bill” is “gender insanity,” said the Pacific Justice Institute.

The California Catholic Conference, Capital Resource Institute, Traditional Values Coalition and Concerned Women for America told lawmakers that “one more state law imposing a ‘one size fits all’ politically correct agenda is not a good public policy.”

Instead, they said, decisions about the few students who struggle with gender identity should be handled confidentially — at the local level — to protect the dignity of the child, involve the parents, honor the privacy rights of others, and maintain the good order of the school.

However, lawmakers easily passed AB 1266, making it the first in the nation. According to gay-rights groups, Massachusetts and Colorado have similar statewide policies, and 17 states and the District outlaw transgender discrimination.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
August 19, 2013, p. 25

Economics

There are 300 billion stars in the Milky Way and there are 100 trillion atoms in a human cell. But here’s a number that might even make Carl “Billions and Billions” Sagan faint.

Forget the number of stars and the number of atoms. Let’s look at the number of unfunded government liabilities.

The federal government has been low-balling the public for years on how much debt it actually has, a University

of California, San Diego economics professor says, adding that the real amount is \$70 trillion – not \$16.9 trillion.

Hamilton believes the government is miscalculating what it owes by leaving out certain unfunded liabilities that include government loan guarantees, deposit insurance, actions taken by the Federal Reserve as well as the cost of other government trust funds. Factoring in those fees brings the total amount the government owes to a staggering \$70 trillion, he says.

But surely it couldn’t be that bad. Could it?

He includes the implicit mortgage guarantees of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac: “With the federal government today being the sole owner of Fannie and Freddie, it seems appropriate to consider both the direct debt obligations ... as well as their outstanding mortgage guarantees [which are now treated] as an off-balance sheet liability.” Added together, housing guarantees (\$7.5 trillion), FDIC guarantees (\$7.4 trillion), Social Security (\$26.5 trillion), Medicare (\$27.6 trillion), and other government trust fund liabilities (\$1.8 trillion) come to \$70 trillion. That’s an increase of \$13.5 trillion just since 2006, and is growing by more than \$2 trillion a year.

But as 2016’s leading candidate would say, “What difference does it make?”

— Daniel Greenfield
FrontPage Magazine
August 15, 2013

Hochstetler Goes to Hostile Territory

Chelsea Hochstetler lives and works on the worldview front lines. Educated in anthropology (a field not known for the number of Christians working in it), she'll be teaching English for the next nine months in Indonesia — the country with the world's largest Muslim population. "I am living right now in a fairly isolated area of Indonesia where most people have never seen a Westerner outside of the movies," she recently said. "There are a lot of misconceptions, especially about me as a single white female. Today a man asked me for sex even though I was wearing an ankle length skirt and a long sleeved shirt."

She says being on the front lines is what Summit trained her to do. "I saw studying anthropology at a public university as a challenge to be met, not as something to be afraid of," she said. "Summit gave me the idea that to be a Christian is a way of life, a worldview. I firmly believe that to be true and that I can go into any discipline and apply it in a Christian way."

"I can go into any discipline and apply it in a Christian way."

Chelsea Hochstetler

Hochstetler graduated from the University of Kansas last year and earned a prestigious Fulbright grant. After her time in Indonesia, she hopes to earn graduate degrees and study the problems refugees face.



Chelsea Hochstetler

Her introduction to Summit came when she attended the summer program with a friend. "I had grown up going to Christian events, concerts, revivals, and honestly, they never did anything for me," she recalls. "Spiritual highs' never really happened. That's also what I expected from Summit, but it was so different, and it wasn't just a spiritual high but something that truly changed my life."

What Hochstetler learned that summer was that her faith called her to cultivate the life of the mind. She had been planning to take time off before college, so attending Summit Semester seemed like a perfect fit. And it was. She especially sees the value now, as she is bombarded with questions about Christianity from her Muslim neighbors and clients. Hochstetler says she didn't go into Indonesia as a missionary,

but she's finding herself providing much understanding to people who know little about Christianity. "I am intensely grateful for Summit Semester, especially because it gave me a strong basis and understanding of Christian history and thought and the basic tenets of belief," she says. "That education has been invaluable as I have been in daily dialogue with Muslims."

Hochstetler credits Summit with keeping her committed to Christianity because the summer program, Summit Semester, and even a brief visit to Summit Oxford showed how the biblical worldview affects all aspects of life. "I have no doubt that I would have left the Church altogether had I not been given an intellectual basis for believing and been able to meet truly intelligent people who also happen to be Christians."



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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel

Abortion

The Obama administration said Thursday that it has decided to boost by roughly 20 percent the amount of money it is spending on grants to businesses and organizations that will help Americans sign up for the federal health care law — including Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider.

The 105 “navigator” groups, which will share \$67 million, up from the \$54 million initially announced, will “help consumers apply for coverage, answer questions about coverage options and help them make an informed decision about which option is best for them,” Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said.

Republicans say the money amounts to a “slush fund” for doling out to the administration's political pals and the higher cost shows the government is breaking the budget with the health care law.

Mrs. Sebelius took the additional \$13 million out of another program from the health care law, the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

The money is being awarded to groups and individuals who are being trained to help Americans learn about and sign up for the state-by-state insurance markets that will begin to enroll Americans in several weeks.

House Republicans on the Energy and Commerce Committee said that dipping into one part of Obamacare to boost another shows that the law isn't ready to go into effect.

“Implementation has been anything but smooth with delays and missed deadlines becoming a common

theme. These grants come just 45 days before open enrollment is scheduled to begin, leaving a short training window for the Navigators,” committee Republicans said in a statement.

Mrs. Sebelius has blamed Congress for the shortfall, saying lawmakers have underfunded the law.

Workers within the navigator groups will assist people who shop this fall on one of the 34 insurance markets, or “exchanges,” set up by the federal government alone or through a state-federal partnership.

Grants were awarded to a mix of health care centers, universities and community groups. Branches of Planned Parenthood in Iowa, Montana and New Hampshire received a total of \$655,000, which is sure to raise the ire of Republican lawmakers.

Rep. Diane Black, Tennessee Republican, lambasted the District of Columbia on Wednesday for awarding a \$350,000 grant to Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, D.C., as part of its exchange's in-person assistance program.

Also this week, the Government Accountability Office said it would conduct a comprehensive investigation into the use of federal taxpayer funds that Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers received.

“The federal funding of abortion providers like Planned Parenthood is a serious problem in our country, and one that I have been fighting since I arrived in Congress,” Ms. Black said, adding that the D.C. grant is “a sad reminder that despite assurances from the President when the law was passed, Obamacare will in fact give tax payer

money to abortion providers.”

The announcement Thursday did not apply to 16 states and the District, where officials set up marketplaces on their own.

Every state's exchange is scheduled to begin enrollment Oct. 1 for coverage that takes effect in January.

Groups that received funds are charged with promoting the Affordable Care Act through brochures, conference calls and other outreach efforts and then helping consumers determine whether they qualify for tax credits on the health care exchanges to offset the costs of their premiums.

The navigators also can connect enrollees with benefits such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, officials said.

Opponents of Obamacare say assistance programs tied to the law are ripe for fraud and abuse, because the army of in-person helpers will have access to enrollees' personal data.

On Wednesday, 13 Republican state attorneys general aired their concerns about the assistance programs in a letter to Mrs. Sebelius. Among other complaints, they noted that each navigator's training period had been cut from a total of 30 hours to 20.

Administration officials said they promised “up to 30” hours of training and that the initial 20 hours would be supplemented as needed.

HHS officials said navigators will be subject to “robust” privacy controls. Background checks are not required, but some of the organizations conduct them anyway and some states have laws that will require them.

Federal officials can terminate

a look at our world

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

the grants for noncompliance, which includes fraud and abuse, and organizations must provide quarterly and annual reports on their progress.

The navigators are expected to offer unbiased information and not to have any conflicts of interest with insurers that offer coverage on the exchanges. Officials also looked for organizations that are “culturally competent,” meaning they have the ability to accommodate diverse communities and serve non-English speakers, if needed.

— Tom Howell Jr.
The Washington Times
August 19, 2013, p. 9

Religious Liberty

Christian churches are being warned that if they continue to sponsor Boy Scout troops, they are opening themselves to multiple legal challenges that could affect whether they can “freely preach the Gospel.”

The Boy Scouts of America’s newly adopted membership policy — in which youths no longer will be blocked from joining the Scouts based on “sexual orientation or preference alone” — is “a sweeping change to its core values,” said Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal defense organization.

The policy change has legal ramifications for religious chartering groups, potentially exposing them to lawsuits if they continue to sponsor troops while seeking to maintain the traditional Christian teaching that homosexual behavior is immoral.

What could happen is “somebody would come and say, ‘We want to use your church for a same-sex wedding ceremony,’ and the church would say, ‘Wait, we have a religious belief against

that,’” said Erik Stanley, an alliance lawyer and Eagle Scout.

Most states that have gay-marriage laws also have some kind of “conscience exemption” that does not require churches to perform same-sex ceremonies.

But the rebuttal by such a gay advocacy group would be, “Well no, you don’t — or if you do, you’re not sincere or you don’t follow it, because you allow this Boy Scout troop in, and you had to specifically sign a charter” saying that “you agreed with the BSA policy of allowing in openly homosexual youth,” Mr. Stanley said.

“That’s our basic concern — that it weakens the church’s freedom of religion and freedom of association arguments on that point,” he said, adding that churches may need to separate from the Boy Scouts of America to “protect their right to freely preach the Gospel” and “be a witness to our nation’s youth.”

In response, Deron Smith, a Boy Scouts spokesman, said most of this kind of commentary “is based on speculation” and inaccurately states that the Boy Scouts organization has made a fundamental shift in values or is attempting to cause division within Scouting.

“We believe most people have grown tired of those who seek to use Scouting, an organization whose mission is to serve young people, to advance their own agendas,” Mr. Smith said.

“While a handful of chartered organizations have decided to drop their sponsorship of troops, the new policy has not affected the commitment of the

overwhelming majority of our 116,000 units in the Scouting family,” he said.

Moreover, “in the rare cases when a chartered organization has decided to no longer sponsor the Scouting program, our local council executives have identified another suitable chartered organization,” he said, pointing to photos of Baptist and Christian churches that publicly welcome Boy Scout troops.

Catholic parishes also may stay with the Boy Scouts of America.

The National Catholic Committee on Scouting interprets the new policy to mean that a boy with a same-sex attraction “will not be encouraged or pressured to disclose publicly the experience of such attraction” and will not be denied a rank award or religious emblem, or risk expulsion from scouting, simply for experiencing or disclosing such an attraction, said the Diocese of LaCrosse in Wisconsin.

“As the Holy Father Pope Francis recently stated, ‘same-sex attraction’ alone does not preclude active membership in the Church,” the diocese said.

Despite recent news reports to the contrary, the diocese said, “at this time, there is no reason to believe that the charter of Troop 90 will not be renewed by St. Mary Parish in Altoona.”

Other chartering organizations and troops are decamping from the Boy Scouts of America.

After the organization changed its policy in May, the adult and youth leadership teams at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Ala., prayerfully and carefully assessed its next steps.

Its leaders unanimously decided to end its 52-year-old charter with the Boy Scouts, said senior pastor Harry

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L. Reeder. The Boy Scouts of America “has rendered its commitment to produce young men of virtue and principled leadership unattainable by its embracing sexually immoral and abnormal behaviors as normative and therefore calling good and acceptable what God calls evil and destructive,” the church’s resolution said.

An alternative group to the Boy Scouts of America is holding a conference in Nashville, Tenn., on Sept. 6-7. The group’s new name, policies and other details will be released then, organizers said.

One of the organizers is John Stemberger, who founded OnMyHonor.net this year in an effort to persuade the Boy Scouts of America not to approve changes to its membership policy.

Groups that still oppose the Boy Scouts’ policy because it didn’t go far enough are maintaining their calls for more changes in membership rules. Numerous gay-rights groups, including Scouts for Equality and GLAAD, want the Boy Scouts of America to end its ban on adult gays as volunteers, leaders and employees.

Atheist groups oppose the religious requirements that Scouts revere God and pledge to do their “duty to God.”

Why is the Boy Scouts of America “still choosing to exclude and shun non-religious boys and their families?” Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, asked in June, when the foundation ran an ad with a cartoon of a Scout receiving a medal for “religious bigotry.”

The Secular Coalition for America has asked Congress to bar the use of federal funds to assist any group that

discriminates based on religion, and specifically revoke the federal charter of the Boy Scouts of America.

“We do agree” with the Scouts’ new policy on gay youths, a coalition spokeswoman said Wednesday, “but we would also like for religious discrimination to be removed from their policies as well.”

Lawmakers in California are moving toward passing an unprecedented bill to strip the Boy Scouts of America and other youth-serving organizations of privileged tax status if they discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation.

SB 323, introduced by California State Sen. Ricardo Lara, passed the state Senate and this week passed two Assembly committees. Mr. Lara, who is openly gay, said the Boy Scouts’ change in youth policy in May was not sufficient under his bill because the organization still discriminates against gay adults.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
August 19, 2013, p. 14

Early in his ministry, Chinese pastor Samuel Lamb often kept a small bag with clothes, shoes, and a toothbrush near his front door. The travel case wasn’t for weekend getaways: The leader in China’s underground church movement stayed ready for police to arrest him for his Christian activities.

Lamb didn’t resent it. His life spanned the remarkable surge of Christianity in China over the last half century—and he often said he could summarize his life and ministry in one principle: “more persecution, more growth.”

Lamb, who encountered both persecution and growth in extraordinary ways during his lifetime, died on Aug. 3 at age 88.

Lamb was born in a mountainous region near Macau in 1925. His father was a Baptist pastor, and Lamb began preaching his own sermons when he was 19 years old. By the mid-1950s, Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong began the first waves of persecution against many Chinese citizens, including Christians.

When Lamb refused to register his house church with the government, authorities arrested him in 1958. The sentence: Twenty years of hard labor. Lamb spent most of the next two decades working in brutal coal mines, but he also taught Christianity to others suffering in the camp.

After his release in 1979, Lamb returned to leading a house church in Guangzhou. Attendance swelled, and today some 4,000 people attend four services at the church.

Authorities repeatedly pressured Lamb to register his church with the government. In one 1998 visit to his home, they told him his Sunday school was illegal. He reminded them China was a signatory to UN conventions allowing children to follow the faith of their parents. He also told them he was prepared to go to prison—again—for his faith.

The church remains unregistered to this day, with local authorities allowing it to continue—a dynamic repeated in other parts of China.

In some regions, local authorities still crack down on illegal Christian activity. International Christian Concern

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(ICC) reported multiple raids against churches in northwestern China in July.

Christian leaders say persecutions have helped fuel the growth of the church over the decades. OMF International (formerly China Inland Mission) reports the number of Christians in China in 1949 was 1 million. Today, the group estimates the number at 70 million.

Lamb's church network helped distribute some 200,000 pieces of Christian literature in China over three decades, according to Open Doors. The pastor said being prepared for suffering was key to his ministry. "I can understand Job's victories and Job's defeats," Open Doors quoted Lamb as saying. "My dear wife died while I was in prison. I was not allowed to attend her funeral. It was like an arrow of the Almighty until I understood that God allows the pain, the loss, the torture, but we must grow through it."

Ryan Morgan of International Christian Concern met Lamb last year, and called his death "a momentous occasion" for the church in China. "His life and work are testament not only to the indomitable spirit of our Chinese brothers and sisters," said Morgan, "but to the miraculous ways in which spiritual revival has sprung from what once seemed an almost impenetrable darkness."

— Jamie Dean
WORLD Magazine
August 24, 2013, p. 14

Sexuality

Children in California public schools must be accommodated based on their self-perceived gender identity — which means biological girls may

use boys' bathrooms and biological boys may join the girls' cheerleading squads — under a law signed Monday by California Gov. Jerry Brown.

The law goes into effect Jan. 1 and is expected to affect some 6.2 million public school students in kindergarten to 12th grade.

"We are grateful to Gov. Brown for his long-standing commitment to ensuring that all California students are able to attend school without discrimination or harassment. By signing AB 1266, he has made that commitment real for transgender students, who will now have the same opportunities to participate and to succeed as other students," said Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and a female-to-male transgendered man.

Mr. Brown has "sent a powerful message" to youths "letting them know their state and their government fully support them," Equality California, Transgender Law Center, the American Civil Liberties of California and the NCLR said in a joint statement.

California laws already prohibit discrimination against transgendered people in areas such as education, and several California school districts were honoring the wishes of transgendered students.

But the School Success and Opportunity Act was needed to ensure that all public school officials cooperate with transgender children in their choices of bathrooms and sex-specific activities, its author said.

Many school districts were not treating transgender students "the same as all other students in the specific areas

addressed by this bill," California Assemblyman Tom Ammiano, a Democrat, said when he introduced AB 1266 with support from the Transgender Law Center and other gay-rights groups.

Under the law, public school students from kindergarten to 12th grade must be "permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records."

Ashton Lee, 16, recently delivered 5,700 signatures of support for the AB 1266. The school had placed Ashton, a biological female, in an all-girl physical-education class, which didn't make sense "because I'm a boy," he told KTXL-TV in Sacramento.

Traditional-values groups opposed the bill, saying it would turn teachers into "identity keepers" and put thousands of "unsuspecting" students "face to face with opposite-peers in their bathrooms, changing rooms and showers."

The "school bathroom bill" is "gender insanity," said the Pacific Justice Institute.

The California Catholic Conference, Capital Resource Institute, Traditional Values Coalition and Concerned Women for America told lawmakers that "one more state law imposing a 'one size fits all' politically correct agenda is not a good public policy."

Instead, they said, decisions about the few students who struggle with gender identity should be handled confidentially — at the local level — to protect the dignity of the child, involve

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the parents, honor the privacy rights of others, and maintain the good order of the school.

However, lawmakers easily passed AB 1266, making it the first in the nation. According to gay-rights groups, Massachusetts and Colorado have similar statewide policies, and 17 states and the District outlaw transgender discrimination.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
August 19, 2013, p. 25

Defenders of so-called gay conversion therapies vowed to continue the fight Monday after Gov. Chris Christie signed into law a measure making New Jersey the second state to ban the therapy targeting gay teens who want to change their sexual orientation.

The bill forbids any psychologist, social worker or licensed therapist from counseling children younger than 18 into changing their sexual orientation. California passed a similar law in 2012, outlawing therapists from offering the service for minors.

Gay conversion — or reparation — therapy advocates say the practice can help counsel troubled teens dealing with their sexuality or who express a desire to become heterosexual. But critics claim the therapies don't work, can cause emotional and psychological damage and, in the words of Democratic Assembly member Tim Eustace, an openly gay lawmaker and one of the New Jersey bill's sponsors, amount to "an insidious form of child abuse."

Matt Staver, founder and chairman of the Liberty Counsel, which supports gay conversion therapy, said the group

plans to file suit in the very near future to overturn the New Jersey statute, arguing in part the law is an infringement on parental rights to raise their children the way they see fit, or to seek counseling in the wake of traumatic events.

"The bill is so broad that parents would be prohibited from seeking help for their son who developed unwanted same-sex attractions after being molested by the likes of Jerry Sandusky," Mr. Staver said, referring to the former Penn State football coach convicted of child molestation. Mr. Staver added that the bill provides a "slippery slope of government infringing upon the First Amendment rights of counselors to provide, and patients to receive, counseling consistent with their religious beliefs."

Arthur Goldberg, co-founder of Jews Offering New Alternatives for Healing, which also advocates for gay conversion therapies, said the Legislature and Mr. Christie were misled about the true intent of the new law.

"The decision [to use conversion therapy] should be a joint decision between a parent and child," Mr. Goldberg said. "By the age of 14, children are old enough to know if they want help or not."

The bill, which passed both houses of the Democrat-dominated Legislature in June, presented a political dilemma for the governor, who is seeking a second term in November and is widely thought to be considering a run for the Republican nomination for president in 2016.

The governor said the health risks of trying to change a child's sexual orientation, as identified by the American Psychological Association, trump

concerns over the government setting limits on parental choice.

"I believe that exposing children to these health risks without clear evidence of benefits that outweigh these serious risks is not appropriate," Mr. Christie said. "Government should tread carefully into this area, and I do so here reluctantly."

Political analysts say the decision may hurt the governor with some social conservatives in the GOP political base, but will also solidify his reputation as a pragmatist willing to stake out more centrist positions than some of his potential 2016 rivals.

The gay conversion movement took a hit when Exodus International, a Christian group based in California, shut down last month after 38 years and founder Alan Chambers apologized to gays for the harm he said his group had caused.

Gay groups praised Mr. Christie's decision.

Said Troy Stevenson, executive director of Garden State Equality group, in a statement: "There is no greater achievement than helping to stop the abuse of our youth. [Today's ban] will do just that. It will protect young people from being abused by those they should trust the most, their parents and their 'doctors.'"

— Casey Mutchler
The Washington Times
August 26, 2013, p. 14

The culture war has gone global. And the divisions are not only between, but within nations.

"Suddenly, homosexuality is against the law," wailed Jay Leno. "I mean, this

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seems like Germany. Let's round up the Jews. Let's round up the gays. ... I mean, it starts like that."

Leno was speaking of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Obama eagerly agreed:

"I have no patience for countries that treat gays or lesbians ... in ways that intimidate them or are harmful to them. ... Nobody is more offended than me by some of the antigay and lesbian legislation that you've been seeing in Russia."

Leno and Obama were referring to a new Russian law prohibiting "homosexual propaganda." Moscow is also warning foreigners, including visitors to the winter Olympics in Sochi, that propagandizing for gay rights can get them two weeks in detention. No kisses allowed.

"Medieval," howled The Washington Post. "Mr. Putin's war" on gays and lesbians is "part and parcel of his lapse into xenophobia, religious chauvinism and general intolerance."

Monday's New York Times has a front-page story — "Gays in Russia Find No Haven, Despite Support From the West" — featuring photos of roughed-up protesters.

Our moral and cultural elites have put Putin on notice: Get in step with us on homosexual rights — or we may just boycott your Sochi games.

What this reveals is the distance America has traveled, morally and culturally, in a few short years, and our amnesia about who we Americans once were, and what it is we once believed.

Only yesterday, homosexual sodomy, which Thomas Jefferson said should be treated like rape, was outlawed in many states and same-sex mar-

riage was regarded as an absurdity.

Was that America we grew up in really like Nazi Germany?

In the Catholic schools this writer attended, pornography — let alone homosexual propaganda — would get one expelled.

Was this really just like Kristallnacht?

As Father Regis Scanlon writes in *Crisis Magazine*, in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI reiterated Catholic doctrine that homosexuality is a "strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil," an "objective disorder." That homosexual acts are unnatural and immoral remains Catholic teaching.

Thus, if we seek to build a Good Society by traditional Catholic and Christian standards, why should not homosexual propaganda be treated the same as racist or anti-Semitic propaganda?

We can no longer even agree on what is good and evil.

When Pope Francis said, "Who am I to judge?" he was saying that a sexual orientation is something over which an individual may have no control, dating to birth or infancy. Hence homosexuals ought not to be condemned, but welcomed into the community.

As for homosexual propaganda and acts, that is another matter.

What, one wonders, is the view of those Evangelical Christians who sustain the Republican Party on homosexual propaganda in the public square? Do they agree with the Post? Or do they agree with Putin?

When the Socialist regime of Francois Hollande enacted a law endorsing same-sex marriage, a million French-

men marched in protest in Paris. Is America on Hollande's side, or the side of the protesters?

When the ultra-Orthodox haredim of Jerusalem denounce the annual gay pride parade in the Holy City, whose side is America on?

The Post weeps for the "young women of the persecuted rock band Pussy Riot," who engaged in half-naked obscene acts on the high altar of Moscow's most sacred cathedral.

Had these women crayoned swastikas on the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., would the Post have been so sympathetic?

Putin suggested the ladies try the same stunt in Mecca.

In our late Mideast wars, America has fought for secularist democracy. Yet Christians have suffered horribly, with the murder of priests, the burning of churches, terrorism and wholesale flight.

According to LifeSiteNews, Putin, meeting with Orthodox Christian leaders, urged the world to come together to stop these violent persecutions.

"Especially in the Middle East and North Africa ... the rights of religious minorities are infringed, especially Christians and Orthodox Christians. ... This pressing problem should be a subject of close attention for the entire international community."

Urging America and the West to join with Russia in saving Syria's Christians, Orthodox Patriarch Kirill said their expulsion from Syria would be a "catastrophe" for civilization.

Has Obama ever spoken out so forcefully for international action to save Christians? Has The New York

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Times ever exhibited a fraction of the concern for persecuted Christians it daily exhibits for harassed homosexuals?

What did the Post mean by “religious chauvinism”?

Putin is trying to re-establish the Orthodox Church as the moral compass of the nation it had been for 1,000 years before Russia fell captive to the atheistic and pagan ideology of Marxism.

“The adoption of Christianity,” declared Putin, “became a turning point in the fate of our fatherland, made it an inseparable part of the Christian civilization and helped turn it into one of the largest world powers.”

Anyone ever heard anything like that from the Post, the Times or Barack Hussein Obama?

— Patrick J. Buchanan
The Washington Times
August 19, 2013, p. 30

Marriage

As the debate over gay marriage began heating up, supporters of the idea insisted that it was a matter of basic libertarianism. “Don’t like gay marriage? Don’t have one,” went the bumper-sticker-turned-rallying-cry. Of course, it was never going to be that simple with regard to something as foundational as marriage, and now we are starting to see there are real consequences to being publicly opposed to the practice. In last week’s issue, Mark Hemingway wrote of Christian businesses around the country that have rankled state authorities for the crime of refusing to participate in gay weddings (“The ‘Human Rights’ Juggernaut,” Sept. 9, 2013).

The most high-profile case involves

the seven-year legal battle of a New Mexico wedding photography business that was fined in excess of \$6,000 for refusing to shoot a gay commitment ceremony. State and local authorities have also threatened or fined an inn in Vermont, a printer in Kentucky, a florist in Washington state, and a bakery in Oregon for declining to provide their services in gay weddings and commitment ceremonies. The legal issues involved are not a simple matter of public accommodation, as these businesses all willingly serve gay clients in every capacity other than matrimonial. They just don’t want to be compelled to participate in events of religious significance that run counter to their faith.

Well, in the week since Hemingway’s article appeared, we are sad to report, Sweet Cakes, the bakery in Gresham, Oregon, that was mentioned in the article, has closed its doors. Oregon labor commissioner Brad Avakian told the Oregonian that he hoped to “rehabilitate” Sweet Cakes as one outcome of the state investigation into the matter, but the family that owns the business had long been receiving threats, and activists were already pressuring local vendors not to do business with the bakery. After shuttering the premises, the owners hung a sign on the door that reads, “This fight is not over we will continue to stand strong. Your religious freedom is becoming not free anymore. This is ridiculous that we cannot practice our faith anymore. The LORD is good and we will continue to serve Him with all our heart.”

Upon hearing that the bakery had shut its doors, The Scrapbook recalled an appearance by Andrew Sullivan

on CNN this past June. Sullivan, who through his essays for the New Republic starting in the late 1980s arguably did more than any other individual to advance the cause of gay marriage, was asked about the inevitable clash between gay marriage and religious liberty:

I don’t want anybody’s religious liberty—I want that to be defined as maximally as possible. We do not threaten and we should never threaten the conscientious beliefs of those who disagree with us, but we should welcome their freedom because it’s our freedom too. And so I’m very concerned, actually, that we may become intolerant of people who believe homosexuality is still sinful.

We take Sullivan at his word that he’s very concerned that gay marriage advocates “may become intolerant,” so we hate to break it to him that that’s already the case. For anyone who genuinely believes that people’s beliefs should not be threatened and that religious liberty should be “defined as maximally as possible,” the gay marriage movement has already gone off the rails.

— *The Weekly Standard*
September 16, 2013, p. 2, 3

Gay-marriage advocates are on the move this fall, pressing their advantage in the wake of favorable court rulings and sympathetic public officials.

In some cases, gay couples and officials are not even waiting for laws to change.

“Who’s going to make history?” The Campaign for Southern Equality said in a video about its strategy to find “a local elected official in the South who

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will grant a marriage license to a LGBT couple because it's the right thing to do."

The gay-rights group said its members would be "barnstorming North Carolina" to find such a friendly official; last week, longtime lesbian couple Amanda Hilty and Loraine Allen asked for a marriage license from Madison County Register of Deeds Susan Rector, but she said no, citing state law.

Ms. Hilty and Ms. Allen were hoping Ms. Rector would follow in the footsteps of county clerks in Pennsylvania and New Mexico, who have started issuing marriage licenses on their own authority to gay couples.

On Sept. 4, Pennsylvania state officials are due in court to stop D. Bruce Hanes, register of wills in Montgomery County, from issuing such licenses.

Mr. Hanes said in a legal brief that only the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has power over him.

He said his authority to issue marriage licenses to gay couples came from a legal review of the U.S. Supreme Court's June ruling in the case of *U.S. v. Windsor* — which struck down part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act — and Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane's decision not to defend Pennsylvania's law because she, too, deemed it unconstitutional. "I decided to come down on the right side of history and the law," Mr. Hanes said in July.

Dona Ana County Clerk Lynn Ellins in New Mexico echoed those sentiments as he began issuing marriage licenses to gay couples. "We're open for business. Get 'em while they're hot," Mr. Ellins told KOAT-TV in Las Cruces.

Mr. Ellins, a lawyer, said the New Mexico Constitution doesn't allow dis-

crimination based on a person's sex.

"In my legal opinion, what we're doing is valid," he said. "I just decided it was time to stop waiting and move forward."

On Friday, a second New Mexico clerk started issuing marriage licenses to gay couples — this time at a judge's request.

New Mexico District Judge Sarah M. Singleton told Santa Fe County Clerk Geraldine Salazar that she had to issue marriage licenses to gay couples or appear in court in September to explain why she wouldn't.

Ms. Salazar chose to issue the licenses, including one to Santa Fe County Commissioner Liz Stefanics and Linda Siegle, a lobbyist for Equality New Mexico. She also issued a license to Alexander Hanna and Yon Hudson, the gay men who filed the lawsuit heard by Judge Singleton.

New Mexico Attorney General Gary King said he wouldn't stop clerks from issuing licenses, but warned that courts could find them invalid.

Traditional-values groups are hoping Gov. Susana Martinez will step in.

Close to 2,000 emails have been sent to her to protest such lawlessness, said Christopher Plante, regional coordinator of the National Organization for Marriage.

Beginning with President Obama's decision not to defend DOMA, "there's this idea that with the marriage issue, it's OK to defy the law, it's OK to be a law unto yourself, it's OK that if you're in the executive branch, you'll suddenly become part of the judicial branch and declare things unconstitutional," Mr. Plante said. Now it's "trickled down" to

the clerks.

Mrs. Martinez, a Republican, said she thinks voters — not courts, politicians or "one random county clerk" — should decide issues regarding same-sex marriage.

Next month, court rulings are expected in Illinois and New Jersey that could pave the way to gay marriage. Such lawsuits also have been filed in Arkansas, Hawaii, Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia.

In the political arena, Hawaiian Gov. Neil Abercrombie, a Democrat, may call a special legislative session to permit lawmakers to enact gay marriage. In Oregon, gay-rights activists are collecting signatures to repeal a voter-passed constitutional amendment that permits marriage only between a man and a woman. Gay-rights groups in Florida and South Carolina are planning campaigns against similar state amendments.

In Indiana, where lawmakers have a year to decide whether to let voters speak on gay marriage, a group called Freedom Indiana recently said it would call for them to abandon that course.

— Cheryl Wetzstein
The Washington Times
September 2, 2013, p. 15

The gay marriage controversy in Britain's Anglican Church focused recently on a quite practical question: Can gay and lesbian civil partners both register as parents on a baptismal certificate? When Aimi and Victoria Leggett approached the Rev. George Gebauer of Warsash, England, to have their infant baptized, they requested that Gebauer list them both as the child's mothers. He

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refused, saying that doing so was illegal and that no child could possibly have two parents of the same sex. Church officials reversed the decision of the retired minister, however. Archdeacon Gavin Collins said “we would be thrilled to carry out this baptism” and to record both parents as mothers.

This baptismal dispute reflects larger fractures over sexuality which threaten to break apart the Church of England globally. The archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has sought to balance the liberal stance of many Anglicans in Britain, Canada, and the United States with the conservative views of newer, thriving Anglican churches in places like sub-Saharan Africa. Welby, who opposed the legalization of gay marriage as a member of the British House of Lords, recently told a group of evangelical Anglicans that they should “repent” over the history of anti-gay discrimination, and acknowledge that the church was fundamentally out of step with the “revolution” that has transpired in acceptance of homosexuality. He hinted that he had not settled his own opinion about legalizing same-sex marriage.

Parliament approved gay marriage earlier this year, but it allowed dissenting churches to opt out of performing same-sex weddings. That exemption irritates activists and civil partners like Barrie and Tony Drewitt-Barlow, who are suing the Church of England to force all ministers to conduct gay weddings. Barrie Drewitt-Barlow explained that “it upsets me because I want it so much—a big lavish ceremony, the whole works. ... I am still not getting what I want.”

The marriage controversies, along with the denomination’s ordination of openly gay priests and bishops, have alarmed traditional Anglicans and made global schism more likely. Conservatives led by African archbishops plan to meet in Kenya for a second Global Anglican Future Conference the week of Oct. 21. Ugandan Archbishop Stanley Ntagali recently registered his continuing opposition to Anglicans ordaining and marrying gays, saying that these practices had torn the denomination “to the deepest level.” Kenyan Archbishop Eliud Wabukala likewise contends that gay activists’ “overthrow” of the created order of male and female was just one symptom of the church’s spiritual disease.

— Thomas Kidd
WORLD Magazine
October 5, 2013, p. 64

Islam

In the end Deborah stepped on a plane in Nigeria and stepped off in the United States. Twice refused a visitor’s visa, she received a rare reprieve: U.S. consular officers in Nigeria at the last minute and with little fanfare—they just asked for her passport—granted U.S. passage to the 16-year-old Nigerian, a victim of terrorism.

If you read about Deborah Wakai Peter here earlier this summer (“A battle of wills and ideas,” June 15), you know her story: Boko Haram militants forced the 14-year-old Deborah to watch as they shot and killed her father then brother, and then the terrorists tied her between the two dead bodies. She remained there all night, terrified the gunmen would return. Tuesday’s Children, a U.S. group working since 9/11 with

thousands of children who’ve lost loved ones to terrorism, invited Deborah to attend a summer camp in Pennsylvania. The U.S. embassy said no, fearing that Deborah would not return to Nigeria.

It’s rare for U.S. officials to overturn a visa denial. But after two additional requests, that’s what happened. Her attorney, Ann Buwalda, executive director of the Jubilee Campaign in Washington, told me the reversal “resulted from an overwhelming amount of interest expressed by members of Congress.”

Deborah and I talked via Skype as she sat on the sofa of her host family’s home. At first hesitant, she warmed as we talked about her time in America. She was with teenagers who had lost parents, she said, but “fun” best described camp. They met in small groups in the morning then played games like Ninja Destruction in the afternoon. Her favorite American food—she smiled broadly and closed her eyes as she told me—is “club sandwich.” She made friends from around the world, including Algeria, a country she’d never heard of. She says she will return to her own country knowing more about “leaving everything to God.”

Returning to Nigeria is a sober prospect. Deborah agreed to recount what happened on the night of Dec. 22, 2011. She speaks in a rush of words, unmindful of tears that gather and glisten on her dark cheeks.

When three men knocked on the door of her home in northern Nigeria’s Borno State, Deborah answered. Her father Peter Wakai, a local pastor, was in the shower. Her brother Caleb was home. Her mother Hadiza had traveled to Lagos, so was far away. As prominent

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Christians in an area that's home base to Boko Haram, the family had been attacked before, and Deborah says she recognized one of the men. They asked for her father, dragged him out and shot him. When Caleb tried to stop them, they shot and killed him also. "Why turn to Christianity?" the attackers asked the family over and over. Deborah tried to run, but the men forced her between the bodies of her father and brother. "I was shouting and shouting, but nobody could hear me," she said.

The next morning security forces, summoned by neighbors, arrived and freed her. They pursued the attackers and were successful in capturing at least one of them. When her mother returned, the two fled to Abuja, the capital, where they live now.

But the danger hasn't ended. Hadiza receives text messages and phone calls from militants. "They tell her she should be ready, and say they will come for her to kill her too," said Deborah. Even now, today, I ask? Even while I am here, Deborah said. Having spared Deborah, the militants now say they made a mistake: Hadiza is a converted Muslim, which makes both her and her daughter apostates to be killed.

Why do we Americans persistently underestimate the evil that men do, and the evil of Islamic terrorism? We who lived through its destruction in lower Manhattan now watch as it turns the streets of Cairo into a fiery hell. In parts of Syria Christians dare not leave their homes. The terrorists' dark resolve, to paraphrase Shakespeare, comes hot from hell and slips the dogs of war until carrion men are groaning for burial. It shoots pastors at point-blank range,

leaving their children to watch and suffer. After that, it hunts child and mother, not content with the hundreds who have been slaughtered in between.

Not surprisingly, when Deborah prays she asks, "Lord, give us good dreams tonight."

— Mindy Belz

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September 7, 2013, p. 34

Economics

Several high school and college economics teachers have asked me what they should read to prepare themselves to teach about poverty questions. Good question: Back in the late 20th century, P.T. Bauer's *Equality, The Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Harvard University Press, 1981) and Hernando de Soto's *The Other Path* (HarperCollins, 1989) are all I could have recommended. Near century's end came one more, Darrow Miller's *Disciplining Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures* (YWAM, 1998).

Now, though, our cup runneth over. Here are five worthwhile secular books: Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (Basic Books, 2000); William Easterly, *The Elusive Quest for Growth* (MIT Press, 2001) and *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (Penguin, 2006); Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009).

Publication of books from an ex-

plicitly Christian perspective makes this turnaround even better. Among them are these four: Darrow Miller, *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa* (Disciple Nations Alliance, 2005) and *Nurturing the Nations: Reclaiming the Dignity of Women in Building Healthy Cultures* (IVP, 2012); Udo Middelmann, *Christianity Versus Fatalistic Religions in the War Against Poverty* (Paternoster, 2007); and Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself* (Moody, 2009).

A fifth, Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations* (Crossway), came out this year. It explains what we must know to love those truly in need beyond our borders, and lists the values societies must have to prosper. Among them: Belief in a God who will hold all people accountable for their actions. Belief that God approves of character traits related to work and productivity. Respect for truthfulness, private ownership of property, individual responsibility and freedom, the permanency of marriage, economic development, productive work, and saving rather than spending.

If I were teaching a course on international poverty-fighting, the books I've noted above would be on my required reading list. A host of other books could also make an optional list; for example, *Demons of Poverty* by Ted Boers and Tim Stoner (Micah Enterprises, 2012) shows through the experience of Haiti the mistakes well-intentioned folks make and the obstacles to success. Boers notes that the causes of wealth cannot be superimposed on a culture of poverty that

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includes progress-resistant religion, dysfunctional government, and class-based society.

I wrote in the last issue about a good, just-published book, *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good*, and I'll write in the next issue about another, *Good News to the Poor*. All these welcome works show how Christians are playing a key role in not only anti-poverty action but the debate about poverty. The (London) *Guardian* recently argued, "Development's next big debate will be between technocrats and humanists: Technocrats prioritize material progress; humanists focus on political rights." Christians can appreciate both sides but need to bring in a third dimension, the spiritual.

— Marvin Olasky
WORLD Magazine
September 7, 2013, p. 26

There are 300 billion stars in the Milky Way and there are 100 trillion atoms in a human cell. But here's a number that might even make Carl "Billions and Billions" Sagan faint.

Forget the number of stars and the number of atoms. Let's look at the number of unfunded government liabilities.

The federal government has been low-balling the public for years on how much debt it actually has, a University of California, San Diego economics professor says, adding that the real amount is \$70 trillion – not \$16.9 trillion.

Hamilton believes the government is miscalculating what it owes by leaving out certain unfunded liabilities that include government loan guarantees, deposit insurance, actions taken by the

Federal Reserve as well as the cost of other government trust funds. Factoring in those fees brings the total amount the government owes to a staggering \$70 trillion, he says.

But surely it couldn't be that bad. Could it?

He includes the implicit mortgage guarantees of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac: "With the federal government today being the sole owner of Fannie and Freddie, it seems appropriate to consider both the direct debt obligations ... as well as their outstanding mortgage guarantees [which are now treated] as an off-balance sheet liability." Added together, housing guarantees (\$7.5 trillion), FDIC guarantees (\$7.4 trillion), Social Security (\$26.5 trillion), Medicare (\$27.6 trillion), and other government trust fund liabilities (\$1.8 trillion) come to \$70 trillion. That's an increase of \$13.5 trillion just since 2006, and is growing by more than \$2 trillion a year.

But as 2016's leading candidate would say, "What difference does it make?"

— Daniel Greenfield
FrontPage Magazine
August 15, 2013

'Deficit Day' is here again, marking the day the U.S. government runs out of money and begins adding to the nation's already-enormous debt. Despite the \$2.7 trillion the federal government collects every year from Americans in the form of income, payroll, corporate, estate and excise taxes, as well as tariffs, fees and other sources, on a calendar year basis the money runs out Sept. 25, at around 3 p.m.

Washington is spending at the rate of over \$10 billion per day and from this point until Dec. 31 every dollar it spends will add to the nation's debt—which is already nearly \$17 trillion. (This is a separate calculation from the overall federal debt limit, which will be reached in the next few weeks.)

The closer the government comes to balancing the budget, the further it pushes Deficit Day toward the end of the year. So it's good news that the federal government runs out of money 16 days later this year than last. But the underlying reality is much less rosy: Despite the repeal of the payroll-tax cut—a move that cost the average American family \$1,000 this year—there are still 97 days left in the year for which the federal government has no income.

Income, or no income, the government certainly won't stop spending.

This is not fiscal responsibility. Through the payroll tax, the government has simply raised tax revenues at the expense of people who are already overtaxed. Had the government simply held spending constant from last year, Deficit Day would have been shifted 30 days into the future, not 16. But a politician with more money in his hand is a politician who will soon be on a spending spree.

In the 54 years since 1960, the federal government has managed to achieve a unified budget surplus only six times. And what, you may ask, is a "unified budget?" It's when the government treats the \$33 billion that it will borrow from Social Security this year the same way it treats tax revenue, instead of the debt it is. Imagine borrowing from your IRA while you are still working and call-

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ing the borrowed money income. The government managed to get by without such a fudge only six times in half a century.

This year's Deficit Day of Sept. 25 is the fifth earliest we have had since 1960, which puts current spending in grim perspective. Since 2009, though, Deficit Day has actually crept steadily forward at the rate of about two weeks per year. If that trend continues, we can expect Deficit Day to hit Dec. 31, finally, in about eight years. But that's assuming Washington can go eight years without instituting any new spending.

In a fiscally responsible world, the \$2.7 trillion in taxes the federal government will collect this year would provide a hard limit on spending. But in the world our leaders have created, the federal government will spend over 35% more than this in 2013. After that it will just keep right on spending money it does not have, passing the debt and the hard political choices to citizens yet unborn and politicians yet unelected.

There are only a few possible eventual outcomes if this continues: The government will either print money to pay for its deficits, unleashing unprecedented inflation; it will gut social programs like Social Security and Medicare; or it will dramatically increase taxes on everyone down to, and including, the middle class.

The laws of mathematics can't be rewritten by political desires or "unified budget" accounting gymnastics. Our leaders need to face the truth and get our country's fiscal house in order before Deficit Day becomes Bankruptcy Day.

— James R. Harrigen, Antony
Davies
Wall Street Journal
September 25, 2013, p. A15

Education

Public education curricula in the United States have traditionally been controlled by local and state boards of education, but under newly crafted national guidelines called the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), K-12 public school students across the country may learn essentially the same uniform science curriculum, one that proselytizes for Darwinism.

The drive to nationalize science standards intensified in 2009 when a study found American students had fallen to 23rd in science internationally, ranking behind China, Japan, Germany, and Canada. In 2011 the National Research Council, an arm of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, released its Framework for K-12 Science Education, outlining specific science content and thinking skills that students should learn. The nonprofit corporation Achieve.org coordinated the team that drafted the final NGSS, published in April of this year.

Five states so far—Rhode Island, Kentucky, Maryland, Vermont, and Kansas—have adopted the standards, and states including California, Florida, Maine, Michigan, and Washington will soon be considering them. Proponents argue that nationalized standards will ensure a higher quality of instruction regardless of state or local policies. Critics respond that these national standards weren't developed through a democratic, publicly transparent process. The NGSS drafting process excluded

Darwin-skeptical groups and invited pro-Darwin advocacy groups like the National Center for Science Education.

NGSS makes biological evolution a "core idea" and urges that by the third grade students should be presented with "evidence of common ancestry" of humans and animals. Middle-school students should "infer evolutionary relationships," and in high school they should hear that "common ancestry and biological evolution are supported by multiple lines of empirical evidence."

NGSS requires students to learn that similarities among vertebrate embryos indicate common ancestry, but says nothing about the significant differences between embryos in their earliest stages. A 2010 paper in the world's foremost science journal, *Nature*, explained, "Counter to the expectations of early embryonic [similarities], many studies have shown that there is often remarkable divergence between related species both early and late in development." Under the NGSS, such evidence would be excluded.

Once students hit high school, NGSS has them learning that "similarities in DNA sequences" across different species also support common ancestry. But NGSS does not note that the scientific literature is filled with studies where DNA similarities conflict with the predictions of common ancestry. A 2009 article in *New Scientist*, "Why Darwin Was Wrong About the Tree of Life," observed, "Many biologists now argue that the tree concept is obsolete and needs to be discarded."

Although NGSS encourages inquiry-based learning and lauds "open-mindedness, objectivity, skepticism

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... and honest and ethical reporting of findings,” it downplays those virtues when it comes to teaching evolution. The evolution section does mention, though, that students should “evaluate the evidence behind currently accepted explanations or solutions to determine the merits of arguments,” and that may provide a bit of cover to teachers who emphasize open-mindedness on evolution.

Polls suggest most parents will find the NGSS objectionable not because students will learn about biological evolution, but because they will hear only the evidence for Darwinism and none against it. According to a 2009 Zogby poll, 78 percent of likely American voters agree that “Biology teachers should teach Darwin’s theory of evolution, but also the scientific evidence against it.”

Some states are resisting NGSS. Barbara Cargill, chair of the Texas State Board of Education, says Texas has a “zero percent chance” of adopting the new national standards. This is largely because in 2009 Texas completed an arduous process of updating its own science standards, which now require students to “analyze and evaluate” Darwinian concepts like common ancestry and natural selection.

In other states, teachers who cover required NGSS elements may still have freedom to discuss additional evidence. Tennessee, for example, is one of 26 “leading state partners” that helped draft NGSS, and has pledged to consider implementing them. But last year Tennessee adopted an academic freedom law, encouraging teachers to discuss both the “scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses” of topics like

climate change and biological evolution.

— Casey Luskin

WORLD Magazine
September 7, 2013, p. 45, 46

“You’re home-schooled? That’s bad, right?” Another teenager started off a conversation with me that way recently. We’re both actresses, and we were waiting for a theater rehearsal to begin.

“Bad? Where did you get that idea?” I replied.

“Well, you don’t have any friends, right?”

“I have lots of friends,” I said, laughing to hide my annoyance.

Welcome to the life of a Manhattan home-schooler surrounded by supposedly open-minded liberals.

This was hardly the first time I’ve confronted unsolicited comments about going to school at home. Not long ago, after a ballet class (yes, home-schoolers sometimes sign up to study elsewhere), I mentioned in the locker room that I was being educated by my mother. One of the other dancers said: “No offense, but don’t your parents care about you being socialized?”

When I asked my mom why she chose to teach me, she said: “I did not want to be at the mercy of my ZIP Code.” When you’re from a middle-class family supported by a father who is a minister, chances are you aren’t going to live in a wealthy area and therefore in a good school district.

I’ve gotten used to seeing pained or perplexed reactions when I talk about going to school in my apartment, as if I’m this nerdy, introverted alien. The truth is that my parents wanted to give me the freedom to pursue my passions

so I’d be better prepared for college and career.

Considering how often people mourn the failure of the U.S. school system, it’s remarkable that so many still recoil from the thought of learning at home. They might be surprised to learn that children receiving an education from their parents generally score higher than students in regular school. A 2009 study by the National Home Education Research Institute tracked nearly 12,000 home-schoolers and found that they score an average of 34 to 39 points higher than the average public-school student on standardized tests.

As for home-schoolers’ supposed deficit in socialization, research also shows that teenagers studying at the kitchen table can be more socially adept than their peers in the classroom. In a 2012 report on the social development of home-schoolers, Lisa Bergstrom of the University of Wisconsin found: “Many of these home-schooled children surpass their public school counterparts in all areas of development and are successful in college and in careers.” Contrary to the stereotype, I am regularly in social situations—like that locker room at the dance academy or the karate studio I go to in the East Village.

Although I enjoy figuring out chemistry problems while lying in bed, I do wish I could go to prom or attend a school basketball game. For years, I’ve also secretly desired to do my work on one of those chairs with the little desk attached.

Sure, I don’t know what a home room is. But I do know what goes into

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organizing a church retreat for 50 people. I can balance a budget and navigate an acting audition in New York on my own. The flexibility afforded by home-schooling allowed me to get a focused education while pursuing real-world skills and jobs.

So while others are convinced that home-schooling will stunt me, I take my inspiration from icons like Agatha Christie, Thomas Edison, Venus and Serena Williams, Whoopi Goldberg, Sandra Day O'Connor and Charlie Chaplin—all of whom were taught in their own residences.

— Veronica Andreades

Wall Street Journal

September 9, 2013, p. A13

Global Warming

An unusually cold Arctic summer has resulted in almost a million more square miles of ocean covered with ice compared to the same time last year, bucking predictions that global warming would result in the disappearance of the ice cap by 2013.

According to the MailOnline, Arctic sea ice averaged 2.35 million square miles in August 2013 compared to the low point of 1.32 million square miles recorded in September 2012.

“We are already in a cooling trend, which I think will continue for the next 15 years at least. There is no doubt the warming of the 1980s and 1990s has stopped,” Anastasios Tsonis of the University of Wisconsin told the Mail.

A 2007 BBC report predicted the Arctic would be ice free in 2013, the Mail reported.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, however, continues to insist that global warming has been caused by human greenhouse gas emissions as opposed to natural variability, but according to the Mail, there is mounting evidence that Arctic ice levels are cyclical.

The development has cast doubt on the validity of modeling and predictions of intensified global warming which has already been the basis of recent debate within the scientific community, the Mail reports.

— Melanie Batley

Newsmax

September 10, 2013