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Marijuana Legalization: Panacea or Pandemic?

In 1969, at the end of a tumultuous decade in which social mores were trampled on, free love reigned, and psychedelic rock was in its heyday, only 12 percent of Americans favored marijuana legalization. Nearly half a century later, a majority of Americans (58 percent) believe the drug should be legalized. Two states, Colorado and Washington, have sanctioned the production, sale, and recreational use of marijuana, and at least two more states, California and Alaska, may follow suit in 2014. The cultural impediments to marijuana have slowly dissipated, and now the legal impediments are going up in smoke.

Since an increasing number of Americans consider marijuana use a harmless peccadillo, a rise in pro-marijuana legislation is likely. But what should Christians think about the issue? We at Summit have many libertarian-minded friends, many of them Christians, who think legalization is a step toward greater freedom. After careful study, though, we have come to believe that marijuana legalization will likely damage our moral architecture and result in unforeseen economic costs and public safety risks that threaten the well-being of our communities. If these negative social consequences materialize, as we suspect they will, then we think Christians have a responsibility to study the issue and take responsible action in their communities and at the ballot box.

The Case for Marijuana Legalization

Several factors have contributed to the increased social acceptance of this soft drug and the subsequent push for marijuana legalization.

- 1) Sixty-four percent of Americans believe smoking marijuana is not morally wrong.**

From a moral perspective, Americans are



How Should Christians Respond?

wondering why smoking marijuana, a seemingly harmless act confined to the privacy of one's own home, is considered deviant. Only 35 percent of Americans think smoking marijuana is morally wrong. As a result, more Americans are convinced that the government's efforts to penalize cannabis usage are excessively moralistic. After all, if a brief dalliance with marijuana is morally neutral, then why should the federal government expend valuable resources to curb it?

- 2) A majority of Americans believe pot is less dangerous than alcohol and tobacco.**

Proponents of marijuana legalization dispute not only its immorality, but also its detrimental social effects. According to a recent CNN poll, Americans find pot considerably less dangerous than alcohol and tobacco. If that is the case, the argument goes, why not add marijuana to the list of legal substances? Gallup reports that 38 percent of Americans tried marijuana in 2013. As the number of people who experiment with cannabis rises, so does the number of people who consider a few puffs of a joint to be harmless.

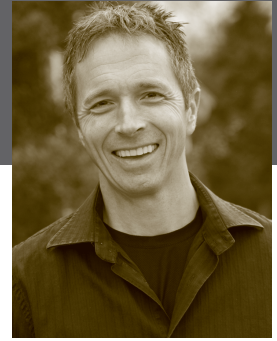
- 3) Eighty-two percent of Americans say the U.S. is losing the War on Drugs.**

Advocates of marijuana legalization believe that the War on Drugs has been a tremendous failure, a wasteful vortex that consumes taxpayer dollars (\$51 billion annually) with little to show for it. "Current policy is not ... reducing drug use," says Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron, "but it's costing the public a fortune." In the last 40 years, the U.S. government has spent \$121 billion to arrest millions of nonviolent drug offenders and \$450 billion to imprison them. Fiscal conservatives are fed up with expensive policing efforts, while social justice crusaders denounce the vast racial disparities in incarceration rates that have resulted.

Relenting on the War on Drugs and regulating the sale of marijuana could result in both budget cuts and tax revenue. In the minds of many, a vote in favor of marijuana legalization is a vote for individual freedom, personal responsibility, and economic prudence.

from the president's desk

a word from dr. jeff myers



The temporary city hall was packed with anxious residents, whispering nervously to one another. City council members sat protectively behind folding tables at the front of the room, gazing passively at the standing-room-only crowd.

When the time came, the mayor invited folks to come to the front to speak. One by one, residents and nonresidents shuffled to the front to express their views about the issue that had consumed all of Colorado's remaining oxygen: whether Manitou Springs should authorize the retail sale of marijuana.

***“... the reality is that
'all politics are local.'”***

Dr. Jeff Myers

In 2012, the citizens of the state of Colorado voted to decriminalize the personal possession of marijuana, and left it up to each community to decide whether or not retail sales would take place within its borders. Manitou Springs was the one remaining community in question in all of El Paso County — all of the other communities had voted against retail sales. This meant that if people in the county were going to buy marijuana legally, they would be buying it in Manitou Springs — or nowhere.

Very quickly, a pattern emerged among those expressing opinions:

Four out of every five were against retail sales, or at least against implementing retail sales without a direct ballot question. All but one of those speaking in favor were from out of town — largely people who had pushed for legalization statewide and felt compelled to tell the citizens of Manitou Springs what they ought to do.

Those speaking against retail sales included the school superintendent, the school board chairwoman, the police chief, the former mayor, all four of Manitou's largest employers (including myself as president of Summit Ministries), the pastor of the Congregational church, local medical doctors, a drug rehab expert, and more than a dozen life-long residents of Manitou Springs.

One of the points I made in my speech was that for the city council's financial expectations to be met, we would have to have around 80,000 pot tourists coming to the community every year. And while the lone retail store would be located several miles away from Summit and thus not a threat to our students, it still rankled me that our leaders were failing to ask the most important question: What kind of people do we really want to attract to our community?

In the end, the city council members voted to sanction retail sales, citing reasons that had all been thoroughly addressed. It was as if they hadn't even been in the same room for the last three hours. How

frustrating.

But there was reason for hope. Even in a town with a reputation as a “Hippie Mayberry,” the vast majority of the residents showed themselves to be thoughtful people concerned with the effects of social policy on the rising generation, and generally conservative in their outlook. I suspect that there will be a referendum on the next ballot, and while it will probably be close, retail sales are quite likely to be overturned.

We must never forget that while the television broadcasts focus exclusively on what is happening in Washington DC, the reality is that “all politics are local.” The wake-up call for our Summit community — and I hope for you — is to not ignore what is going on in your own community. Get to know your neighbors. Engage them in discussion. You might be surprised to see how much of a difference you can make for the kingdom with a handshake and a friendly smile.

And don't forget that in answer to the question, “Who will train the godly, courageous leaders for the next generation?” Summit Ministries' summer programs in Colorado, Tennessee, and now California, stand ready to help. Go to www.summit.org to register online.

Is There a Biblical Perspective on the Marijuana Debate?

Although Christians are often skewered as moralistic dunderheads intent on imposing their values on others, believers do have a responsibility to highlight the ways in which biblical morality provides the most effective framework for human flourishing. When considering the issue of pot legalization, we must take into account the possible effects such legislation might have on the moral and physical health of our country, especially our youth. And despite what the majority of Americans are beginning to think, studies indicate that the cultural and legal acceptance of pot will have a detrimental impact on our moral ecology, mental health, and public safety.

Protecting our Moral Ecology

1 Corinthians 10:23

By promoting and prohibiting certain actions, the law plays a role in teaching what is right and wrong. Through the establishment of a set of rules by which our citizens must adhere, the law helps form our nation's moral ecology, which either guides us toward virtue or away from it. Ideally, our nation's laws would provide incentive to "turn away from evil and do good" (Psalm 34:14). In this particular public policy discussion, we must ask what kind of effect the legalization of marijuana will have on our moral ecology. While the specific act of smoking may not be flagrantly immoral, its cumulative effects on individuals and society might be.

There is no doubt that the legalization of marijuana will result in more widespread usage, especially by those between the ages of 18 and 29. Since character is shaped by action, we need to determine what kind of character we will encourage by lowering legal barriers to the use of marijuana.

Adolescents, more than any other age group, are put at risk by the legalization of marijuana. Studies show that the average age of initiation for marijuana use has been getting younger. According to a UCLA drug policy expert, marijuana produced by state-sanctioned growers will be more accessible to minors, which is unfortunate, because a widely cited study indicates that adolescent-onset users may lose as many as 8 IQ points due to marijuana.

The cognitive difficulties caused by cannabis (slower information processing, loss of attention, reduced memory capacity) are obvious to friends, family members, and teachers. These neurocognitive impairments make it harder for young people to retain knowledge during important learning years. The statistics are clear: If a student has an A on his report card, he most likely does not smoke marijuana. If a student has a D on his report card, he most likely does.

Adolescents who use marijuana are also more likely to skip school, drink excessive amounts of alcohol, and take other drugs. Furthermore, these youths have a greater chance of exhibiting rebelliousness, having poor parental relationships, and engaging in delinquent behavior with like-minded friends. "Do not be deceived," Paul says, "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Substantial statistical research shows that marijuana enthusiasts score higher on scales of neuroticism, which is characterized by anxiety, anger, envy, guilt, and depression. Smokers also exhibit low conscientiousness, which leads to low goal-orientation and low personal-drive.

As David Brooks mentions in his New York Times column on the issue, persistent marijuana use, which is neither admirable nor a source of pride, stifles growth and

prevents people from advancing to higher pleasures, including appreciation of nature and the arts. "The deeper sources of happiness," Brooks writes, "usually involve a state of going somewhere, becoming better at something, learning more about something, overcoming difficulty, and experiencing a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment."

Marijuana, however, encourages stasis. Paul McCartney describes this phenomenon quite nicely in the song "Got to Get You Into My Life," in which he writes, "When I'm with you, I want to stay there." If you, like St. Augustine, believe that the good life is characterized by movement toward God, then spending hours in a drug-induced stupor is antithetical to godly living.

After describing the tremendous heartache caused by her dad ("a pot-smoking hippie"), whose sloth was responsible for her parents' divorce and her poverty-ridden childhood, Leah Allen from *The Atlantic* writes, "I can't help but think that the cool, carefree users of today will be the parents of tomorrow. ... My dad will never stop smoking pot. Sometimes I wonder about the man he might have been, and the lives we all might have had, if he'd never started."

We, as a nation, need to decide what kind of people we want to be. From a Christian perspective, it is clear that widespread recreational marijuana usage is not only damaging to our youth and inimical to familial well-being, but it is also unbecoming of a virtuous citizenry. Thus, preservation of a sound moral ecology requires that our laws continue to discourage the use of pot.

Promoting Public Health and Safety

Proverbs 25:26

Studies show that marijuana legalization will beget undesirable public health consequences, which include:

Increased risk of motor vehicle accidents

Marijuana use more than doubles a driver's risk of being in an accident. This should come as no surprise, considering that marijuana impairs reaction time, information processing, perceptual-motor coordination, motor performance, and tracking behavior. Experimental studies have shown diminished driving performance by those under the influence.

Increased risk of experimenting with other illicit drugs

While Americans may not consider marijuana to be harmful, they still believe hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, are dangerous. But studies show that cannabis use is much more likely to be accompanied by experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drugs. Heavy cannabis users are 140 times more likely to move on to other illicit drugs than people who have not used cannabis before.

Increased crime

Adolescents who use marijuana are more likely to physically attack people, destroy other people's property, and steal merchandise. Amsterdam, where marijuana is legal, is one of Europe's most violent cities, and they are closing some dispensaries because of crime resulting from drug abuse. The RAND Corporation cements the association between marijuana and crime: Sixty percent of people arrested in the United States, England, and Australia tested positive for drug use.

Gauging the True Economic Impact

Proverbs 10:2

Will pot legalization really generate revenue for the state and create jobs, as proponents claim?

Tax Revenue: Tempering Expectations

Although the Colorado Center on Law and Policy estimates that the state will record \$60 million in annual revenue and savings by taxing recreational marijuana, economists at Colorado State University doubt that it will materialize. Jeffrey Miron, the Harvard economist who thinks the current policy is unsustainable, plainly admits that tax revenue may fall well short of expectations. Furthermore, as Charles Stimson writes in a report for the Heritage Foundation, black-market dealers will likely remain in the black market in order to avoid taxation and regulation. Such a scenario would significantly limit any projected economic benefits, which, it appears, will ultimately be negligible. In Colorado, estimated tax revenues from marijuana sales will likely equal a mere three-tenths of 1 percent of the state's budget.

Unemployment and Welfare: The Costs of Legalization

The New York Times reports that "persistent high unemployment (15 percent) among young people is adding up to \$25 billion a year in uncollected taxes and, to a much smaller degree, increased safety net expenditures." One particular study reveals that high levels of cannabis use are associated with poorer educational outcomes, lower income, unemployment, and greater welfare dependence. If marijuana legalization results in greater use, which it likely will (marijuana use among Dutch youth tripled after the drug was legalized), then the costs resulting from loss of productivity, unemployment, and federal assistance may negate increases in tax revenue and nullify the economic benefits of state regulation.

Economics 101: Legalization Will Result in More Users

The price of marijuana could decrease by as much as 90 percent before taxes, if

one RAND study is correct. David Brooks writes, "As prices drop and legal fears go away, usage is bound to increase." While predictions of costs and revenues are being questioned, there is only one economic certainty: The legalization of marijuana will result in more users.

Is Marijuana Use Really a Victimless Crime?

If the law is a teacher, then by legalizing marijuana, we are teaching that a certain kind of lifestyle, characterized by low achievement, lack of motivation, and cognitive impairment, is acceptable. This is an affront to Scripture, which says, "Prepare your minds for action [and] keep sober in spirit" (1 Peter 1:13), for "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is an affront to virtue, which requires self-control, discipline, and delayed gratification. And, finally, this is an affront to the vulnerable young people in our country who will find it easier to use a drug that undeniably limits the likelihood that they will lead truly satisfying lives.

Private acts have public consequences. And, as Christians who adhere to a biblical worldview, we must pay special attention to the consequences of public policy, for the law is part of a vast web of external influences, including families, schools, and churches, that either help us or impede us from leading virtuous and fulfilling lives. The law, by promoting and penalizing certain actions, takes a stance on right and wrong. Through loving, well-reasoned, and persuasive engagement, Christians can contribute to the public debate in order to help ensure that the law's conception of right and wrong is in line with Scripture's.

To see the references for this article go to www.summit.org/resources/the-journal/, open the PDF, and scroll to page 18.

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.

Scripture

One of the wonderful qualities of the New Testament's four Gospels is that they force you either to embrace or reject them. You can study the Gospels as "literature" if you like, but their logic subverts any attempt to treat them as you would treat other literary texts. Hamlet may reach dizzying heights of

“[T]he Gospels offer no easy way to explain away their content.”

Barton Swaim

sublimity and repay a lifetime of study, but it doesn't ask for radical changes in your thought and behavior and has no power to compel them.

Three centuries of critical New Testament scholarship haven't changed this. The Quest for the Historical Jesus, an attempt to interpret the canonical Gospel texts without reference to supernatural explanations, began with German scholarship in the 18th century, gradually took hold of universities and divinity schools elsewhere in Europe and America during the 19th century, and exploded in popularity during the

latter half of the 20th century. Hundreds, probably thousands, of books purporting to explain the identity and intentions of Jesus of Nazareth have been published since the "quest" began in the 1770s; and yet, despite scholars' confident pronouncements about how Jesus went from political revolutionary or peaceable philosopher to Eternal Son of God, the Gospels' claims about him are neither more nor less plausible than they were before.

Skeptical or "critical" New Testament scholarship begins with the assumption that the Gospels' claims about Jesus' miracles and divinity must be false. The denial of the supernatural isn't a conclusion but a prior commitment. Fair enough, but it's not obvious

how these accounts came about if they were fictions. Their authors certainly didn't believe they were fictions: Again and again they offer precise details, almost as if to encourage their original readers to verify the stories. In Mark 10, for example, Jesus didn't simply restore sight to a blind man. He restored the sight of "Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus," and it happened in Jericho. ...

[T]he Gospels offer no easy way to explain away their content. They therefore demand one of two choices. Either they relay things that Jesus actually said and did, in which case he really is who the New Testament claims he is, or they are haphazard collections of deliberately fabricated stories about a man who may have said some extraordinary things in first-century Judea but who has no more claim on your attention than Socrates.

C.S. Lewis, among others, made a similar argument about Jesus' self-descriptions: "Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse." And while that argument has often been dismissed on the grounds that it assumes all the Gospels' quotations of Jesus to be authentic, its logic applies with equal or greater force to the four Gospel texts themselves. Either they are true or they are collections of precious fables. There is no third option. They cannot be somehow factually false but metaphorically true—the human mind rightly rejects that kind of reasoning as highfalutin cant.

— Barton Swaim
The Wall Street Journal
December 24, 2013, p. A9

Religious Liberty

In a recent speech at Georgetown University, a British cabinet minister said some startling things about Christians in the Middle East:

"Across the world, people are being singled out and hounded out simply for the faith they hold ... [Middle Eastern Christians] are rooted in their societies, adopting and even shaping local customs. Yet ... [a] mass exodus is taking place, on a biblical scale. In some places, there is real danger that Christianity will become extinct." ...

The very concept of freedom, including religious freedom, has ancient Christian roots. Contrary to popular perceptions, the precursors for modern

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ideas of liberty are rooted in Jewish scripture and the writings of early Christians such as St. Paul, Tertullian, and Lactantius. Notions of universal human dignity and freedom were developed by Medieval scholastics and Protestant reformers, and were first codified in the American founding. In the late second and early third centuries, Tertullian became the first thinker in history to use the phrase “religious liberty,” and, furthermore, to argue that religious liberty is a human right belonging to all people regardless of class or creed. A hundred years after Tertullian’s invention of the concept, it formed the basis of the Edict of Milan of 313, which granted religious freedom to all sects throughout the Roman Empire.

Early Christians, such as the fourth-century Greek theologian Gregory of Nyssa, developed radical critiques of slavery and sexual coercion. In fact, according to Oklahoma historian Kyle Harper, Gregory was the first person ever to have argued for the basic injustice of slavery. The same high view of human nature and freedom that inspired Gregory leads Coptic Christians in Egypt today to fight for the rights of all people in the current constitutional drafting process, including the rights of atheists. And it leads Christians in India — often joining with non-Christians — to battle against untouchability and the sexual enslavement of women and children.

Even the often-decried missionary activity of Christians in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America has encouraged economic growth, female literacy — a key sign of a successful society — and, in some cases,

democracy itself. National University of Singapore political scientist Robert Woodberry argues that Protestant missionaries catalyzed the global spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely. In fact, Woodberry draws on historical evidence and sophisticated statistical methods to prove that the presence of Protestant missionaries explains about half the progress towards democracy in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. ...

The United States in particular should mount an aggressive diplomatic initiative to convince Middle Eastern societies that they must protect their Christian communities, and ensure that they become equal citizens in both law and culture. If those societies fail in this critical task, the results could be catastrophic — for the Christians themselves, and for the great causes of global peace, freedom, and justice for all people

— Ken Starr, President,
Baylor University
USA Today
December 13, 2013

Abortion

Speaking of Texas, they had a gala ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new abortion clinic in Fort Worth. A Planned Parenthood clinic, it cost \$6.5 million and is “state of the art,” as news reports have said. Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the daughter of the late Texas governor Ann Richards, attended the gala ceremony. In an inter-

esting twist of fate, the abortion clinic is next to an adoption center: the Gladney Center for Adoption. Here we see two completely different views of life, morality, and man. What a difference a door or an address makes.

— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 10, 11

Atheism

A national atheist group has announced that it will be seeking to create “secular safe zones” on college campuses across the country, on the theory that nonbelievers are an embattled and persecuted minority. “Every time the Pledge of Allegiance is said or a sports team says a prayer before a game, secular students are pushed to the margins of society,” the Secular Student Alliance says. What is striking about the so-called secularist movement is not its members’ nonbelief — nonbelievers and skeptics are part of a very long tradition — but its smallness and its meanness. To confess to being threatened by the Pledge of Allegiance is to admit a serious deficit of intellectual confidence in one’s beliefs, or nonbeliefs. The campaign against the phrase “under God” is not inspired by constitutional scrupulosity, but by the desire to engage in cultural vandalism: of the Pledge of Allegiance, of the Ten Commandments, of “In God We Trust,” of such shared traditions as group prayers. Atheists are as safe as anyone else in this country. But they might do with a dose of courage.

— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 12

Law Is Aaron's Mission Field

His second stay in England was nothing like his first. During his first trip across the pond, Aaron Lumpkin studied at Summit Oxford where he devoured the texts of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Dorothy Sayers. These authors, Christians who eloquently address the reality of God, the sorrowful depths of human sinfulness, and the hope of redemption in Christ, reinvigorated Aaron's passion for the biblical worldview. The vibrancy of these works struck Aaron like a ray of hope piercing through the perpetual cloudiness that plagues the historic Oxford campus.

Just four years later, Aaron returned to England. This time, as a Blackstone Fellow interning with the Christian Legal Center in London, Aaron was forced to confront the tragic consequences of a culture and a legal system that spurn those objective truths treated so thoroughly by the authors he encountered at Summit.

In London, Aaron researched English law, drafted memos, and assisted in strategy

“I have never been around a more encouraging, gifted, spiritually mature, and enjoyable group of people.”

Aaron Lumpkin

for both U.K. Courts and the European Court of Human Rights. But what he remembers most is an encounter with a British wedding planner. “I’m sorry,” Lumpkin



Aaron Lumpkin told him resignedly, “but despite your moral objection to same-sex unions, you will certainly lose in court and face human rights charges if you refuse to provide services to any same-sex couple that might seek them.”

The freedom of religion, Aaron indicates, is virtually nonexistent in England, where the government censors Christian speech and prevents Christians from engaging in public displays of faith and worship. As he was forced to come to grips with this fact, though, Aaron had the opportunity to reaffirm a life-altering truth that he first discovered at Summit Ministries: There is no sacred/secular divide. Since biblical truths permeate every sphere of life, law, too, is a mission field. Law, Aaron is proud to say, is his mission field.

He remembers it like it was yesterday. His family loaded up the car and drove together from Mesa, Arizona, to Manitou Springs, Colorado, to drop Aaron and his brothers off at a Summit summer conference, the first of three that Aaron would attend. These summer sessions, Aaron says, “are not just about academic interest

and apologetics ... [they’re] about growing in Christ and loving him more fully.” At Summit, Aaron began to think of law as a ministry and ultimately made a decision to embark on a career path that would enable him to participate in the battle of ideas via law and policy. Aaron fully credits Summit for leading him on his current trajectory.

The wealth of content Aaron imbibed at Summit equipped him to grapple with the ideas and arguments he encountered at Arizona State University, where he double majored in English Literature and U.S. History. During his college years, Aaron returned to Manitou Springs, where he, as a staff member, could invest in students who, like him, had a passion for biblical truth. Reflecting on his experiences at Summit, Aaron says, “I have never been around a more encouraging, gifted, spiritually mature, and enjoyable group of people. ... Living, serving, worshiping, learning, and playing together creates a unique environment that has kept me in Summit’s orbit for almost a decade now.”

Aaron, who has interned in England and worked at the United States Attorney’s Office in Tucson, Arizona, is now in his final semester at Notre Dame Law School. With a deep interest in criminal law, Aaron eventually wants to specialize in prosecuting human traffickers working within the sex trade.

As a Christian in the legal field, he longs to see biblical truths reflected in our country’s legal system. But that won’t happen unless Christians reclaim the culture first. And, Aaron Lumpkin insists, the effort to transform culture starts at Summit.



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a look at our world

from the desk of dr. david noebel

Religious Liberty

In the fall of 1621, some 50 of the Puritans who had left the Old World in search of religious freedom sat down in their tiny thatched hamlet of Plymouth with their Wampanoag neighbors to feast on turkey, venison, corn, and cod. They also gave thanks for surviving their first terrible New England winter, whose cold and privation had carried off half their community.

Continual waves of pilgrims fleeing religious persecution would follow them across the sea. Their sense of providential escape from foreign oppression stayed vividly alive in the American memory, and ultimately helped guide the Founding Fathers to make a revolution and fashion a new kind of government.

Hard as it is to believe at this distance of time, British law once jailed non-Anglican Protestants like the Pilgrims for worshiping as they chose. The law also barred them from the universities and public office. Thousands of Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and others left their native land, bringing to the New World their Dissenting tradition of self-government, individualism, and personal responsibility. They had long run their own congregations, hired and fired their own ministers, read the Bible and freely judged its meaning for themselves. They believed that each individual has a direct relation to God independent of, and higher than, any worldly authority.

As late as the 1750s, Constitution-signer William Livingston was still reminding readers of his influential

magazine, *The Independent Reflector*, how “the countless Sufferings of your pious Predecessors for Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment” drove them “to this country, then a dreary Waste and barren Desert.”

Decades later, Chief Justice John Jay wrote a gripping account of how his grandfather, a French Protestant, had returned home from a trading voyage abroad in 1685 to find his family and neighbors gone, their church destroyed. While he had been away, Louis XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had extended religious toleration and civil rights to Protestants for almost a century. Jay’s grandfather was lucky to be able to sneak aboard one of his ships and, like many others, sail away to freedom in the New World.

With this long history, Americans have had an almost physical thirst for liberty, as people do who truly know its opposite, like Eastern Europeans who once lived under communist tyranny. Long before Emma Lazarus wrote her Statue of Liberty verses about the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, George Washington noted that for “the poor, the needy, and the oppressed of the Earth,” America was already “the second Land of promise” — the Promised Land. It offered, said James Madison, “an Asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion.”

That thirst for liberty led the Founders to revolt when they thought that George III was squeezing upon them the tyranny that had crushed

their forebears. It also led them to hedge their new government with every safeguard to keep them free.

To protect life, liberty, and property from what they called the depravity of human nature — from man’s innate capacity for inhumanity to others — the Founders knew they needed some kind of government armed with power. But since the officials who wield such power have the same fallen human nature as everyone else, who can be sure that they won’t use it to oppress others? Who can guarantee that imperfect men wouldn’t turn even the democratic republic the Founders were creating into what Continental Congressman Richard Henry Lee called an elective despotism?

The Constitution they wrote in the summer of 1787 explicitly limited government’s powers to what they deemed absolutely essential. They divided and subdivided power, and they made each branch of government a watchdog over the others. But they also recognized that constitutions are only what they called “parchment barriers,” easily breached if demagogues subvert the “spirit and letter” of the document.

In the first State of the Union address, George Washington stressed that the ultimate safeguard against such a danger is a special kind of culture, one that nurtures self-reliance and a love of liberty. “The security of a free Constitution,” he said, depends on “teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them.”

a look at our world

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

If citizens start to take liberty for granted, he said, the spirit that gives life to the Constitution will flicker out, for “no mound of parchm[en]t can be so formed as to stand against the sweeping torrent of boundless ambition on the one side, aided by the sapping current of corrupted morals on the other.”

It's that culture of liberty we nourish by recalling that our forebears came to these shores in search of freedom — and by giving thanks that they found it.

— Myron Magnet
The Wall Street Journal
November 27, 2013, p. A13

Evolution

One of the most important yet least-known aspects of Darwin is his racism: Darwin regarded white Europeans as more “advanced” than other human races. While Darwin presumed that man evolved from ape-like creatures, he surmised that some races developed more than others and that the latter still bore simian features. In his book *The Descent of Man*, which he published after *The Origin of Species*, he boldly commented on “the greater differences between men of distinct races.” In his book, Darwin held blacks and Australian Aborigines to be equal to gorillas and then inferred that these would be “done away with” by the “civilised races” in time. He said:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace

the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes ... will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene in a more civilised state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.

— www.naturalselectionand-darwinism.com
December 12, 2013

Evolutionary biologists make poor historians, especially when it comes to Charles Darwin. So intent on preserving the reputation of St. Charles, evolutionists typically do their best to paper-over Darwin's less-than-savory views on issues like race or the application of natural selection to society. British biochemist and theistic evolutionist Denis Alexander runs true to form in a newly posted interview at BioLogos. In the interview, Alexander does his best to disassociate Darwin from the idea of “survival of the fittest,” noting that the phrase was coined by Herbert Spencer rather than Charles Darwin, and that it was then picked up by nasty politicians like Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler, who used it to promote their noxious views.

Alexander is correct that Spencer coined the phrase “survival of the fittest,” and that the idea was adopted by the Kaiser and by Hitler. But he neglects to mention one other important figure from history who embraced the term: Charles Darwin himself. As I

point out in my book *Darwin Day in America*, Darwin eventually described “survival of the fittest” as “more accurate” than his own term of “natural selection,” and he employed the phrase repeatedly in the fifth and sixth editions of *On the Origin of Species* as well as in other works.

Alexander also tries to distance Darwin from the misuse of science to promote racism. Again, he provides a highly redacted version of the historical record. Darwin opposed slavery (to his credit), but he also was a thoroughgoing racist who thought natural selection provided a scientific rationale for why we should expect to see races with different intellectual capacities. In his book *The Descent of Man*, Darwin disparaged blacks and observed that the break in evolutionary history between apes and humans fell “between the negro or Australian and the gorilla,” indicating that he considered blacks the humans that were the most ape-like. [Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1871), vol. I, p. 201] Darwin also predicted that “[a]t some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.” [Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1871), vol. I, p. 201] Darwin's contribution to scientific racism is hard to deny, no matter how much contemporary Darwinists try to rewrite history.

Those who are interested in a more frank exploration of the controversial relationship between Darwin, Darwinian theory, and social Darwinism might want to check out the new documentary *What Hath Darwin Wrought*, which has just been released on DVD and will

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be airing on cable television this fall. The documentary's website can be accessed here.

— John G. West
www.evolutionnews.org
August 31, 2010

Education

Depressing news about black students scoring far below white students on various mental tests has become so familiar that people along different parts of the ideological spectrum have long ago developed their different explanations for why this is so. All may have to do some rethinking, in light of radically different news from England.

The Nov. 9-15 issue of the distinguished British magazine *The Economist* reported that among children who are eligible for free meals in England's schools, black children of immigrants from Africa meet the standards of school tests nearly 60 percent of the time — as do immigrant children from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Black children of immigrants from the Caribbean meet the standards less than 50 percent of the time.

At the bottom, among those children who are all from families with low-enough incomes to receive subsidized free meals at school, are white English children, who meet the standards 30 percent of the time.

The *Economist* points out that in one borough of London, white students scored lower than black students in any London borough.

These data might seem to be some kind of fluke, but they confirm the observations in a book titled *Life at the*

Bottom by British physician Theodore Dalrymple. He said among the patients he treated in a hospital near a low-income housing project, he could not recall any white 16-year-old who could multiply nine by seven. Some could not even do three times seven.

What jolts us is not only that this phenomenon is so different from what we are used to seeing in the United States, but also that it fits neither the genetic nor the environmental explanation of black-white educational differences here.

These white students in England come from the same race that produced Shakespeare and the great scientist Sir Isaac Newton, among other world-class intellects over the centuries. Today, though, many young whites in England are barely literate and have trouble with simple arithmetic. Nor are these white students the victims of racial discrimination, much less the descendants of slaves.

With the two main explanations for low performances on school tests obviously not applicable in England, there must be some other explanation. Once there is some other explanation in this case, we have to wonder if that other explanation — whatever it is — might also apply in the United States, to one degree or another.

In other words, maybe our own explanations need re-examination.

What do low-income whites in England and ghetto blacks in the United States have in common? It cannot be simply low incomes, because children from other groups in the same low-income brackets outperform whites

in England and outperform blacks in America.

What low-income whites in England and ghetto blacks in the United States have in common is a generations-long indoctrination in victimhood. The political left in both countries has, for more than half a century, maintained a steady and loud drumbeat of claims that the deck is stacked against those at the bottom.

The American left uses race, and the British left uses class, but the British left has been at it longer. In both countries, immigrants who have not been in the country as long have not been so distracted by such ideology into a blind resentment and a lashing out at other people.

In both countries, immigrants enter a supposedly closed society that refuses to let anyone rise — and they nevertheless rise, while the native-born at the bottom remain at the bottom.

Those who promote an ideology of victimhood may imagine that they are helping those at the bottom, when in fact they are harming them, more so than the society that the left is denouncing.

We in America have gotten used to vast gaps between blacks and whites on test scores. This was not always the case, in places where there was anything like comparable education.

Back in the 1940s, before the vast expansion of the welfare state and the ideology of victimhood used to justify it, there was no such gap on test scores between black schools in Harlem and white, working-class schools on New

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York's Lower East Side.

You can find the data on pages 40-41 of my article in the fall 1981 issue of *Teachers College Record*, a journal published by Columbia University — that is, if you think facts matter more than rhetoric or social visions.

— Thomas Sowell
The Washington Times
December 9, 2013, p. 31

Race

Oprah Winfrey, who became a billionaire in spite of the best efforts of the Man to keep her down, said in a recent interview that racism explains “in some cases and maybe even in many cases” criticism of Barack Obama, who became president of the United States of America in spite of the best efforts of the Man to keep him down, presumably throughout the course of his prep-school and Ivy League education and on through his *cursus honorum* leading up to his tenure in the White House. “It’s the kind of thing that nobody ever says but everybody is thinking,” Winfrey said. Never mind that this thing that nobody ever says is said by practically everybody sharing Winfrey’s political preferences. Is there anything that better describes the state of American racism than a black [female] billionaire contemplating a black president and seeing a victim of racism? Oprah Winfrey, who became a billionaire in spite of the best efforts of the Man to keep her down, said in a recent interview that racism explains “in some cases and maybe even in many cases” criticism of Barack Obama, who became president of the United States of America in spite of the best efforts

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— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 6, 8

Politics

In Cuba, there is a rap artist named Ángel Yunier Remón Arzuaga, a.k.a. “El Critico” — “The Critic.” The Cuban dictatorship does not take kindly to critics. That’s why Remón is in prison. He has been there since March, without a trial, though with an eight-year sentence. In October, he went on a hunger strike. His wife, Yudisbel Roseyo Mojena, asked American rappers and singers to speak out in his behalf. “I would be grateful a million times over,” she said. She did not have many takers. It would have been especially helpful to have the support of Jay-Z and his wife, Beyoncé, who are close Obama friends and major fundraisers. They celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary this year by vacationing in Cuba about a week after Remón was arrested. After 27 days, near death, Remón suspended his hunger strike. This practice, hunger-striking, is problematic, morally. But prisoners of conscience have been doing it for

many decades, and they do it because vicious regimes drive them to this terrible extreme.

— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 11

On the subject of “under God,” Barack Obama omitted those words when reciting the Gettysburg Address on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. There was a consequent kerfuffle as some of the president’s more energetic critics complained that this was an intentional slight to believers and a sop to his secularist base. Ken Burns, an intellectual princeling of self-regarding liberalism, attempted to quash that criticism, claiming that the president had specifically been asked to deliver the first draft of the address, which does not include the words “under God.” But even if that is true, it is hardly an explanation: Why prefer the first draft to the finished product, the version that Abraham Lincoln actually delivered? President Obama, a man who does not suffer from a deficit of self-esteem, may indeed believe that he is in a position to improve on that other president from Illinois — perhaps he also has some opinions on the revisions that were made to *King Lear*. A wiser man would defer to Lincoln, in word and deed.

— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 12

Culture

On April 3rd, 1965, legendary radio host Paul Harvey issued a warning to America. In this warning, he described what he thought the devil

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should do if the devil wanted to destroy America. Sadly, the truth is that most of what Paul Harvey warned us about back then has now come to pass. ...

If I were the Devil ... I mean, if I were the Prince of Darkness, I would, of course, want to engulf the whole earth in darkness. I would have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree, so I should set about however necessary to take over the United States.

I would begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: "Do as you please." "Do as you please."

To the young, I would whisper, "The Bible is a myth." I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what is bad is good, and what is good is "square."

In the ears of the young marrieds, I would whisper that work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you. I would caution them not to be extreme in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct.

And the old, I would teach to pray. I would teach them to say after me: "Our Father, which art in Washington" ...

If I were the devil, I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten T.V. with dirtier movies and vice versa.

And then, if I were the devil, I'd get organized. I'd infiltrate unions and urge

more loafing and less work, because idle hands usually work for me.

I'd peddle narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. And I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

If I were the devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellects but neglect to discipline emotions ... let those run wild. I would designate an atheist to front for me before the highest courts in the land and I would get preachers to say "she's right."

With flattery and promises of power, I could get the courts to rule what I construe as against God and in favor of pornography, and thus, I would evict God from the courthouse, and then from the school house, and then from the houses of Congress, and then, in His own churches, I would substitute psychology for religion, and I would deify science because that way men would become smart enough to create super weapons, but not wise enough to control them.

If I were Satan, I'd make the symbol of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle. If I were the devil, I would take from those who have and I would give to those who wanted, until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. And then, my police state would force everybody back to work. Then, I could separate families, putting children in uniform, women in coal mines, and objectors in slave camps.

In other words, if I were Satan,
I'd just keep on doing what he's doing

— Paul Harvey

April 3, 1965

Marriage

When the Supreme Court paved the way for universal recognition of same-sex marriage last June, opponents predicted that polygamy would be next. They didn't realize how quickly this would happen.

Less than six months after the high court issued a pair of decisions expanding access to gay marriage and its benefits, a federal judge in Utah has ruled unconstitutional key parts of a Utah bigamy law that makes polygamous cohabitation a crime. The law had been challenged by 44-year-old Kody Brown and his four wives, who, together with their 17 children, star in the reality-TV show *Sister Wives*. The Browns, who used to live in Lehi, Utah (they have since moved to Las Vegas), belong to one of several breakaway Mormon sects that practice plural marriage. (The mainstream Church of the Latter-day Saints formally abandoned polygamy in 1890, shortly before Utah became a state). An estimated 40,000 residents of Utah live in polygamous households.

To be sure, the court ruling, by U.S. District Judge Clark Waddoups, does not legalize polygamous marriage or even invalidate Utah's bigamy law in its entirety. All 50 states have anti-bigamy laws on their books. But Utah's law, apparently uniquely, forbids plural marriages entered into via multiple marriage licenses and also applies to a married person who "cohabits with another person."

The typical practice for breakaway Mormon men, including Kody Brown,

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is to enter into only one legally recognized marriage but to take on additional “sister wives” in “spiritual” unions sanctified by religious ceremonies. Such unions are technically adulterous, but since the state of Utah does not prosecute adultery, Judge Waddoups said there was no “rational basis” for Utah’s criminal law to distinguish between plain old adulterous cohabitation and informal polygamy entered into for religious reasons.

His ruling thus affects only so-called “fundamentalist” Mormons. However, if the decision becomes precedent elsewhere, then it may apply to an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 Muslims in the U.S. who are in similar polygamous arrangements that they believe are permitted by the Quran.

Still, since what can’t be criminally prosecuted is de facto permissible, the plural-marriage toboggan is now positioned firmly downward on the slippery slope. Judge Waddoups’s decision has already been hailed by polyamorists, libertarians, and feminists. In an April article for *Slate*, Jill Keenan argued that legal polygamy “is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice” that would allow women to select among “diverse family arrangements” for the one that suits them best.

Cheerleaders for legalized polygamy should be careful what they wish for. For one thing, “polygamy” almost invariably means “polygyny” — one man with multiple wives, not the other way around. “Polyandry” — one woman with multiple husbands — is extremely rare. It seems to

exist only among isolated Amazonian hunter-gatherer tribes and in parts of rural Tibet, where brothers sometimes marry the same woman in order to keep the property in the family in case one of the brothers dies. You can call that female empowerment — or you can call it the same old patriarchy.

Polygamy invariably favors “alpha” males who can beat down the competition for available women and maintain a lock on the affections of the women themselves. The women also have to be willing to sacrifice being the only object of the attention of their spouse or lover for the glory of being an object of his attention at all.

The evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller, in his 2000 book *The Mating Mind*, described polygyny as a kind of default setting for human societies, and indeed primate societies as well. “[M]ating in our species has always been moderately polygynous,” Mr. Miller wrote. He pointed out that women crave powerful, charismatic, often sexually promiscuous men — the most successful hunters and herdsmen, conqueror-kings such as Charlemagne and Genghis Khan, politicians, rock stars, and even sociopaths such as Charles Manson — because women instinctively reach out to men strong enough to protect them and the vulnerable offspring they bear.

Tune in to *Sister Wives* on TLC or watch a video clip, and you will see exactly this alpha dynamic at work. When Kody Brown sits down to preside benevolently over a family council with his four adoring wives, there is no doubt who is the head of this house-

hold. Upper-middle-class American men, used to constant arguments with their feminist spouses over “gender roles” and whether they’re doing their “fair share” of the laundry and floor-mopping, must envy Mr. Brown.

But as with all things, there is a trade-off. Monogamous marriage, still the paradigm in the West, ensures that a wife is ontologically the equal of her husband — because there are only two of them and they are dependent on each other.

In the biblical story in *Genesis*, God creates Eve as “an help meet” for Adam, because she is the only creature who can fulfill that function. While it is obvious that “surplus” non-alpha men will be losers in any society where polygamy becomes widely acceptable — women will also be losers — harem members instead of helpmeets. This is something that feminists and their male enablers who blithely tout polygamy as another “diverse family arrangement” ought to think about.

— Charlotte Allen
The Wall Street Journal
December 19, 2013, p. A19

Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) has announced it will suspend a policy against same-sex relationships for faculty, as the school enters a “listening period” to review its stance on homosexuality. If the policy change becomes permanent, EMU would become the first member institution of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) to allow practicing gays and lesbians to serve as professors. The school’s board of trustees

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unanimously approved the review.

EMU President, Loren Swartzen-druber, said that the period of reflection would allow the school “to engage in community discussion and discernment over issues that Mennonite congregations — indeed almost all denominations in the United States today — are wrestling with.” The board also reaffirmed EMU’s relationship with the Mennonite Church USA — but that denomination’s “Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective” states that “God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.” Now, faculty candidates at EMU must explain any objections they have to the Confession, and professors must also sign the school’s “Community Lifestyle Commitment,” which prohibits “sexual relationships outside of marriage.” The state of Virginia, where EMU is located, does not recognize same-sex marriages.

The CCCU, which has not commented on EMU’s deliberations, is an association of 119 North American institutions. The CCCU says its mission is “to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.”

The Mennonite Church USA has had its own struggles regarding same-sex marriage. In 2012, the denomination rebuffed attempts to discipline pastor Joanna Harader for performing a same-sex “covenant ceremony.” Instead of suspending her, as some conservative churches had requested, delegates to the Mennonite Church’s Western

District Conference simply noted that her action was “at variance” with Mennonite Church guidelines.

A report commissioned by the Church of England is recommending that Anglicans allow ministers to perform “appropriate services to mark a faithful same-sex relationship,” but not offer formal gay marriage ceremonies. Although the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, noted that the Pilling Report did not represent a “new policy statement,” conservatives worried that it would lead to official church blessings of homosexual unions.

The committee, chaired by former government official Sir Joseph Pilling, said that the “foundation” of their report was the desire to “warmly welcome and affirm the presence and ministry within the Church of England of gay and lesbian people,” including homosexual clergy. They further asserted that the Church needed to repent of homophobia in its ranks.

The report cautioned, however, that conservatives were not by definition homophobes just because they articulated “traditional Christian teaching on same sex relationships.” The Church, the committee said, should also consider continuing scientific advances in understanding homosexual attraction, as well as the dramatic shift of opinion, especially among young people, on gay relationships — but the public’s view should not “of itself determine the Church’s teaching.”

Lee Gatiss, director of the traditionalist Church Society, welcomed an open discussion of the report, arguing that some liberal Anglicans were trying

to change “the gospel into an affirmation of immoral behavior.” Committee member Keith Sinclair, the Bishop of Birkenhead, refused to sign the report, saying he feared the Church was heading toward “cultural captivity” instead of biblical faithfulness. “The Christian Church has consistently taught from biblical times that the sexual holiness ... involves the restriction of sexual activity to the context of marriage between one man and one woman,” Birkenhead insisted.

Recent years have seen growing divisions in the worldwide Anglican Communion, with conservative Anglicans in Africa and elsewhere not embracing homosexual activity.

— Thomas Kidd
World Magazine

December 28, 2013, p. 63

Looking at the research on gay parenting, Mark Regnerus noticed that the samples of most studies were small and unrepresentative, so he collected a sample that was random and large. His team interviewed 15,000 people. Among his findings, published in the journal *Social Science Research* in July 2012, were that children raised by parents with same-sex romantic relationships fared worse than average on various “social, emotional, and relational outcome variables.” A campaign to discredit his work led to an inquiry by the University of Texas at Austin, where Regnerus teaches sociology. UT found no evidence of scholarly misconduct. So an independent journalist, John M. Becker, sued for access to the private correspondence of the edi-

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tor of SSR. In November, circuit judge Donald Grincewicz of Orange County, Fla., ruled in his favor, reasoning that, because the editor is an employee of a public university, the University of Central Florida, his e-mails are public records. The presumed confidentiality of the peer reviews he solicited is now mollified, and scholars and editors are effectively warned against pursuing ideas that could call reigning academic orthodoxies into question. This is a message that does not seem to bother some people.

— National Review
December 16, 2013, p. 12

Gender

A pioneering study has shown for the first time that the brains of men and women are wired up differently, which could explain some of the stereotypical differences in male and female behaviour, scientists have said.

Researchers found that many of the connections in a typical male brain run between the front and the back of the same side of the brain, whereas in women the connections are more likely to run from side to side between the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

This difference in the way the nerve connections in the brain are “hardwired” occurs during adolescence when many of the secondary sexual characteristics such as facial hair in men and breasts in women develop under the influence of sex hormones, the study found.

The researchers believe the physical differences between the two sexes in the way the brain is hardwired could play an

important role in understanding why men are in general better at spatial tasks involving muscle control while women are better at verbal tasks involving memory and intuition.

Psychological testing has consistently indicated a significant difference between the sexes in the ability to perform various mental tasks, with men outperforming women in some tests and women outperforming men in others. Now there seems to be a physical explanation, scientists said.

“These maps show us a stark difference — and complementarity — in the architecture of the human brain that helps to provide a potential neural basis as to why men excel at certain tasks, and women at others,” said Ragini Verma, professor of radiology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

“What we’ve identified is that, when looked at in groups, there are connections in the brain that are hardwired differently in men and women. Functional tests have already shown that when they carry out certain tasks, men and women engage different parts of the brain,” Professor Verma said.

The research was carried out on 949 individuals — 521 females and 428 males — aged between 8 and 22. The brain differences between the sexes only became apparent after adolescence, the study found.

A special brain-scanning technique called diffusion tensor imaging, which can measure the flow of water along a nerve pathway, established the level of connectivity between nearly 100 regions of the brain, creating a neural map of the brain called the “connectome,”

Professor Verma said.

“It tells you whether one region of the brain is physically connected to another part of the brain and you can get significant differences between two populations,” Professor Verma said.

“In women most of the connections go between left and right across the two hemispheres while in men most of the connections go between the front and the back of the brain,” she said.

Because the female connections link the left hemisphere, which is associated with logical thinking, with the right, which is linked with intuition, this could help to explain why women tend to do better than men at intuitive tasks, she added.

“Intuition is thinking without thinking. It’s what people call gut feelings. Women tend to be better than men at these kinds of skills which are linked with being good mothers,” Professor Verma said.

Many previous psychological studies have revealed significant differences between the sexes in the ability to perform various cognitive tests.

Men tend to outperform women involving spatial tasks and motor skills — such as map reading — while women tend to do better in memory tests, such as remembering words and faces, and social cognition tests, which try to measure empathy and “emotional intelligence.”

A separate study published last month found that the genes expressed in the human brain did so differently in men and women. Post-mortem tests on the brain and spinal cord of 100 in-

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dividuals showed significant genetic differences between the sexes, which could account for the observed gender differences in neurological disorders, such as autism, according to scientists from University College London.

For instance, one theory of autism, which affects about five times as many boys as girls, is that it is a manifestation of the “extreme male brain,” which is denoted by a failure to be able to show empathy towards others.

The latest study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, showed that the differences in the male and female “connectomes” develop during the same age of onset of the gender differences seen in psychological tests.

The only part of the brain where right-left connectivity was greater in men than in women was in the cerebellum, an evolutionary ancient part of the brain that is linked with motor control.

“It’s quite striking how complementary the brains of women and men really are,” said Rubin Gur of Pennsylvania University, a co-author of the study.

“Detailed connectome maps of the brain will not only help us better understand the differences between how men and women think, but it will also give us more insight into the roots of neurological disorders, which are often sex related,” Dr Gur said.

— Steve Connor
The [U.K.] Independent
December 3, 2013

Climate Change

Fanciful predictions of all the

deaths that will result from climate change, decades into the future, are regularly thrown into public debate. Less attention has been given to a real statistic from the here and now, released by the Office of National Statistics this week, which shows the effects of one of the policies designed to tackle climate change: high energy prices. It emerged this week that there were 31,000 ‘excess’ deaths in England and Wales last winter, almost a third more than the previous year. Almost all were, in effect, British pensioners who died of the cold.

It’s odd: Britain is a rich country with a massive welfare state — and we know how to heat and insulate houses. We also send millions away in overseas aid. Yet somehow we have failed to find a way to stop our own people dying of the cold. Each winter, we tolerate a death toll which runs into the tens of thousands. Worse, we seem to have become inured to it.

The 2003 heatwave was blamed for 2,000 deaths, and treated as a national emergency. Sir David King, then chief scientific officer, declared that this meant climate change was ‘more serious even than the threat of terrorism.’

Since then, some 280,000 Brits have died from the cold and barely 10,000 from the heat. We have been focusing on the wrong enemy.

Yet still the government seems little bothered by the link between green levies, which are already jacking up our heating bills, and rising winter deaths. Whenever the Climate Change Secretary is presented with the charge that climate levies are hurting the poor,

he always makes the same claim: that one of the main roles of the levies is to subsidise home insulation schemes for low-earners, and that by doing so their energy bills will actually fall. This is a dubious assertion in that it relies on the elderly and the poor all being able to access subsidised insulation schemes. Many cannot.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that by adding the cost of levies onto fuel bills (rather than paying them out of general taxation) the Blair and Brown governments hoped to deflect blame to the energy companies. And the Tories signed up to this agenda by voting for Ed Miliband’s Climate Change Act.

Far from helping the poor, a remarkable amount of money raised in green taxes seems to land at the feet of the rich: wealthy landowners who rent their land to subsidised wind farms, and well-off homeowners who can afford to fit solar panels to their roofs or to invest in ‘green’ central heating systems such as ground-source heat pumps and woodchip boilers. This, in itself, is a scandal. But we are in a situation where people are dying because they cannot afford to heat their homes. That fact that most of the 31,000 who perished last year are over 75 years of age seems to take the political sting out of this scandal. It is as if elderly lives are somehow less valuable.

— The [London] Spectator
November 30, 2013

marijuana references

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