

**201008 OBITER DICTA: LATE FEBRUARY 2010**  
**Steven Alan Samson**

**Sunday, February 14**

[http://sports.yahoo.com/olympics/vancouver/blog/fourth\\_place\\_medal/post/Colbert-s-poster-is-uber-American-over-the-top-?urn=oly,219484](http://sports.yahoo.com/olympics/vancouver/blog/fourth_place_medal/post/Colbert-s-poster-is-uber-American-over-the-top-?urn=oly,219484)

Here is Stephen Colbert's Valentine to America's Olympic team -- for some much needed comic relief. Perhaps it is a tongue-in-cheek reminder that our priorities have gotten out of focus.

Happy Valentine's Day. I should add that this is also Shrove Sunday, the day before the Shrovetide in which people traditionally engaged in Spring cleaning and prepared for Lenten fasting. Given the confluence of the Olympics, the celebration of Carnival, and the approaching season of Lent, the modern clash and contradiction of cultures seems as intense and as sharply defined as ever.

So, of course, today's sermon topic (delayed for two weeks because of inclement weather) was especially appropriate. The Bible reading was taken from Luke 18:1-8, which begins: "And Christ told them a parable to the effect that they ought always pray and not lose heart." After drawing connections with Psalm 43 and 2 Cor. 4, the pastor concluded by showing how Luke 18:8 refers us back to the return of Christ as prophesied in Luke 17. So the real question is this: "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth." That is, will He find us faithful in praying (and acting prayerfully) rather than losing heart?

[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/printpage/?url=http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/02/14/the\\_growing\\_dependency\\_agenda.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/printpage/?url=http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/02/14/the_growing_dependency_agenda.html)

George Will summarizes the case against the Progressive Democrats while touching a number of important bases. His article is a good summary of the dangers about which our Founders as well as any number of political scientists and other observers have warned over the centuries. Will's repeat of the number 1,300 has a nice ring of irony to it.

The self-serving Congress described by George Will is a far cry from the conception of Congress endorsed by James Madison in Federalist 57. Rather than acknowledge the limited constitutional purposes of legislation, today's Congress has been aggressively pursuing its own political agenda: "For congressional Democrats, however, expanding dependency on government is an end in itself."

Citing an episode from the history of Rome as told by Livy, Machiavelli related the story of a wealthy man who, after giving away food to the plebeians and earning their acclaim, was killed in the process of being arrested because his demagoguery threatened the liberty of the Republic. As Livy noted, Spurius Maelius had begun "to entertain loftier and unattainable aims; he knew that the consulship would have to be won in the teeth of the patricians, so he began to dream of royalty."

In the last chapter of *Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, Kenneth Minogue began with this same story while raising a troubling question: "Can Politics Survive the Twenty-first Century?" Like a chaconne, the organizing theme of Minogue's book is that politics properly belongs among the arts of persuasion rather than the technology of coercion. In the concluding chapter Minogue avows that threatens our liberty today is a project in which a "single system would replace politics by moral judgement, and would be a perfect society in the curious sense that there would be no crime, greed, or poverty because people would have been perfectly socialized."

Throughout history, Minogue notes, "politics has been the business of the powerful: citizens, nobles, property-owners, patriarchs -- all had power and status. It was essential to the idea of the state, in all its forms, that it should be an association of independent disposers of their own resources. . . . It was precisely because the state was composed of masterful characters that it could not turn into a despotism."

Yet it is this very division of power that Progressives and other humanitarians threaten to overturn. "Political moralism . . . takes the independence of citizens not as a guarantee of freedom but as a barrier to the project of moralizing the world." In this endeavor, the Progressives have some powerful accomplices. Here once again Minogue gets directly to the point: "In the course of the nineteenth century . . . , as the suffrage broadened, welfare came to be as interesting to rulers as war had always been. Foreign enemies, on the one hand, and the poor on the other, were interesting politically because they constituted a reason for exercising dazzling powers of government and administration." As a consequence: "One moral virtue, charity, in a politicized form, expanded to take over politics."

As has been noted by Samuel L. Blumenfeld and other analysts, the humanitarian and perfectionist ambition to replace politics with "political moralism" is what energized Horace Mann and the public education movement he inspired. Among Mann's (and Rousseau's) spiritual descendants was Herbert Croly, one of the chief theoreticians of Progressivism in *The Promise of American Life*. Will's analysis of Croly's attitude is devastating:

"Contemplating with distaste America's 'unregenerate citizens,' he said 'the average American individual is morally and intellectually inadequate to a serious and consistent conception of his responsibilities.' Therefore, Croly said, national life should be a 'school' taught by the government: 'The exigencies of such schooling frequently demand severe coercive measures, but what schooling does not?' Unregenerate Americans would be 'saved many costly perversions' if 'the official schoolmasters are wise, and the pupils neither truant nor insubordinate.'"

Horace Mann affected a more highly elevated tone when he asked in his Twelfth Annual Report (1850) as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education: "Cannot the classes of crimes be lessened, and the number of criminals in each class be diminished?" Never was there a more devoted evangelist for the gospel of salvation through education.

Long after Horace Mann, John Dewey wrote: "I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform." A contemporary of Dewey and Croly, the Rev. Frederick T. Gates, who led John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board, remarked: "Is there aught of remedy for this lack of rural life. Let us, at least, yield ourselves to the gratifications of a beautiful dream that there is. In our dream, we have limitless resources, and the people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands."

There is not a trace of irony in the above statement or anything else expressed in Gates's 1913 paper. He and his patron appear to have embodied the very kind of "false philanthropy" (as Bastiat called it) that led Cincinnatus to have Spurius Maelius arrested for treason against the Roman Republic.

In *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift*, Paul Rahe makes some similar observations about the early twentieth-century Progressives and the later New Deal. Even earlier, Alexis de Tocqueville and Francis Lieber both warned against a "democratic despotism." How insidious is the empire-building dynamic that has grown out of the state's discovery of "dependence!" As Minogue puts it: "the relief of suffering requires us to be managed by experts who require of us a more self-sacrificing attitude to life." Mrs. Grundy seems to be the patroness saint of these Progressive philanthropists.

Let us conclude with a bit of wisdom from a Greek slave, Aesop, "The Dog and the Wolf," which may be found in *The Harvard Classics*.

A gaunt Wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a House-dog who was passing by. "Ah, Cousin," said the Dog. "I knew how it would be; your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why do you not work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?"

"I would have no objection," said the Wolf, "if I could only get a place."

"I will easily arrange that for you," said the Dog; "come with me to my master and you shall share my work."

So the Wolf and the Dog went towards the town together. On the way there the Wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the Dog's neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

"Oh, it is nothing," said the Dog. "That is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up; it chafes a bit, but one soon gets used to it."

"Is that all?" said the Wolf. "Then good-bye to you, Master Dog."

MORAL: Better starve free than be a fat slave

As an addendum to the George Will piece, I wish to add a piece from the *Sunday Times of London*, "Why Euro's woes should scare us all," concerning the proposed bailout of Greece by the European Union:

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/economics/article7026276.ece>

"'The danger is that a lot of people in Brussels see this as an opportunity rather than a threat,' said Mats Persson, director of the think tank Open Europe. 'A decade ago, when the euro was founded, they said that we don't have the tools now, but when a crisis comes along we will be able to take this forward.'"

This sounds very much like Rahm Emmanuel's prescription: "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before."

Imposing the sort of dependency associated with peonage and debt slavery is one of the oldest tricks in the book. The roots of liberty may be traced back to recalcitrant slaves, such as the people of Israel who left Egypt for the land of Canaan and the plebeians of Rome who seceded until their rights were recognized. And we should note that Emmanuel's sword cuts both ways: The American patriots did not let a serious crisis go to waste, either.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article7026317.ece>

Here are more comments by John Christy and Ross McKittrick on the flawed basis for many claims about global warming. McKittrick is quoted as saying: "We concluded, with overwhelming statistical significance, that the IPCC's climate data are contaminated with surface effects from industrialisation and data quality problems. These add up to a large warming bias."

## Monday 15

<http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=Mighty+Washington%3a+The+greatest+President&articleId=87abfdc4-2d8f-4fa2-96c7-f912ea06a93f>

On Presidents' Day let us remember our greatest president, George Washington, loomed largest within the "forest of giant oaks" that presided over the founding. As someone who lives in the shade of a giant oak planted even before Washington was born, I wish to express my appreciation for the dedication of the colonists and patriots who planted the tree of constitutional liberty. May we once again have leaders who will recall us to the Founders' original vision.

<http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.com/2010/02/chasing-our-tails.html#readfurther>

Here are some choice remarks on Islam by Col. Allen West, a congressional candidate in Florida.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/feb/15/biofuels-food-production-developing-countries>

The Guardian cites another report on how the development of a biofuel industry -- fueled in part by anthropogenic global warming fears and heavily subsidized by governments -- is driving up food costs and taking more land out of food production. Here we have yet another case of "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire" via perverse economic and political incentives.

## Tuesday 16

[http://sports.yahoo.com/olympics/vancouver/blog/fourth\\_place\\_medal/post/NBC-gets-slammed-for-running-integrated-movie-pr?urn=oly,219842](http://sports.yahoo.com/olympics/vancouver/blog/fourth_place_medal/post/NBC-gets-slammed-for-running-integrated-movie-pr?urn=oly,219842)

Sports fans appear to be waking up something that Sunday church-goers have known for decades: Nothing is sacred anymore. So now what? People are complaining about having to watch a piece of broadcast payola posing as the lead-in to an Olympic event on NBC? Dudes, look closely at that screen. Why do you think they call it the Boob Tube?

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/ynews/ynews ts1134>

Evan Bayh has been a rising Democratic star for many years: first as secretary while I lived in Indiana, then as governor, and more recently as senator. For him to retire at this point is indicative of how truly dysfunctional Congress has become: in fact, has been for a long time. It reminds me of 1992 when no prominent Democrat was willing to run against George H.W. Bush and, again, of 1996 when a sizable number of Democratic elder statesmen (notably Sam Nunn and Bill Bradley) headed for the exits.

The woes of the Democratic Party probably go back to the McGovern reforms of the early 1970s which, by changing the rules, may have helped ensure McGovern's presidential nomination in 1972. The strong committee chairman system in Congress broke down during the same period -- a victim, in part, of growing opposition to the Vietnam War -- and a subsequent breakdown in party discipline.

<http://wolffhowling.blogspot.com/2010/02/within-past-week-homeland-security.html>

My father passed along this piece on the spreading Salafist influence within Muslim circles. We have a political class and a citizenry that are not informed about the various currents that operate within the larger Islamic world. Has it already become too much to expect our leaders to turn to reliable sources of information? Dysfunctional bickering in the seat of government has so distracted us that we are taking our eyes off the ball. Until we are prepared to distinguish the ideological differences in our own world as well as in the Muslim world we will continue to lose ground in the war on terror.

## **Wednesday 17**

[http://townhall.com/columnists/MaggieGallagher/2010/02/16/the\\_center\\_does\\_not\\_hold?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/MaggieGallagher/2010/02/16/the_center_does_not_hold?page=full&comments=true)

Maggie Gallagher's description of the State of the Culture Wars is right on target. For decades now, our intellectual elites have been manufacturing consent by bewildering Americans with a stunning volley of rapid-fire fungoes batted straight at the hearts and minds of the general public.

"Cultural power, explains Hunter, is the power to 'name reality.' Culture is mostly created in urban centers and spread to the periphery, e.g., Harvard Law School decides that gay marriage is a basic human right, which spreads through judges until it runs smack up into the one source of cultural power in America that is not controlled by urbane centers -- the American people."

"In Europe, the political leaders of the parties respond to this complex of cultural power mostly by submission to it -- it's easier. And then voters are

deprived of choice. Where elite political leaders cooperate to end the culture war by giving in, voters do not get to choose between competing visions."

"But in America, unlike Europe or Canada, leaders can spring up from nowhere, develop their own financial base, form a counter-academy through think tanks and a counter-media with talk radio and Fox News, and finally swarm into primaries to unseat party bosses who try to be an echo, not a choice."

"Do we want to be like Europe? Cosmopolitan, dominated by academic elites, creating the comfort of consensus by shutting down opposition, internationalized, pacifist and dependent, rich but socialist? Or is there something in this thing called America too precious to be lost to government control and the promise of cradle-to-grave safety that comes at the price of liberty and responsibility?"

Gallagher concludes with a wakeup call: "America is a land divided against itself, stuck between two visions of our future, our identity, our very soul." This is an echo of 1 Kings 18:21. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Let us resist the Progressive yea-sayers through the power of negative thinking and exercise our constitutional right to "just say No." *Veto!* "I forbid!" Against the *soixantes huitards* (68ers) of the student rebellion who cried out that "it is forbidden to forbid," let *Veto* be the shout heard 'round the world.

[http://townhall.com/columnists/EdFeulner/2010/02/18/shortchanging\\_our\\_students?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/EdFeulner/2010/02/18/shortchanging_our_students?page=full&comments=true)

Citing an ISI study showing that American colleges are failing to teach civics knowledge, Ed Feulner calls for a return to the principles of our Founding Fathers. Once upon a time, liberty was proclaimed throughout the land, but today we have saddled the heirs of our constitution of liberty with what Henry Adams called *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*. If we wish to reform a highly involuted public education system and return to a shared knowledge of our founding principles, we must pursue something akin to the early modern dissolution of the monasteries and the later establishment of religious liberty during the early Republic. In order to reverse the rampant illiteracy, innumeracy, and *incivisme* (lack of patriotism) produced by the secular priesthood of our state educational establishment, we must demand nothing less than true educational liberty and not continue to resign ourselves to the Deweyan Settlement, that edict of toleration, which assigns private and home education to the back of the school bus.

A century ago the Progressive movement as a whole shifted the focus of American education away from an emphasis on intellectual mastery to a socialization without substance, and from an appreciation of decentralized and constitutionally limited government to the expectation of a centralized and beneficent administrative state. Once that transformation had occurred, public education became a magnet for the sorts of fads and fallacies that Pitirim Sorokin derided in his own field of sociology half a century ago. By then the look-say method had largely replaced phonics. Rudolph Flesch wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read* even more than half a century ago. And to what effect? The Johnny of 1955 could read and write a lot better than his grandchildren do today. Do we really believe that anything better will come of the twelve-year sentence that his great-grandchildren will receive? Is such a system not the very definition and

embodiment of futility? Where faith withers and decadence prevails, all our best efforts devolve - and even dissolve - into the same futility to which creation itself has been subjected.

As for fads and fallacies, Transcendental Meditation (TM) was in vogue when I first taught in a classroom in 1976. So much for the separation of religion and education in the public schools. I was introduced to shiatsu in another public school's in-service training. Can you imagine the outcry that would result if teachers were permitted to poke students' heads with their fingers? One teacher's therapy may be another's child abuse in the classroom. Yet, in the early years of public education, the now-ridiculous science of phrenology was one of the *progressive* fashions of its own day.

When will we ever learn to shut our ears to the Sirens of progress, to the chirping sectaries and other insects of an hour, and return to Kipling's "Gods of the Copybook Headings?" Who will pronounce an anathema against the false priests of what Paul Goodman called our "compulsory miseducation?"

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/the\\_reestablishment\\_of\\_america.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/the_reestablishment_of_america.html)

Herbert Meyers delivers his message - that in the hands of a revitalized electorate "a new broom sweeps out old dirt" - and says it with a gracious and kindly smile. Let us repudiate the Halfway Covenant - the false establishment - of the past century, restore the joists and joints of our federal Constitution, and diligently study to become more discerning of the true. We must ever scrutinize the elect and hold them to the highest standards of virtue.

## Saturday 20

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/the\\_economic\\_crisis\\_is\\_only\\_a.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/the_economic_crisis_is_only_a.html)

A century ago a group of wealthy financiers and Progressive reformers met at Jekyll Island to design the Federal Reserve System, transforming the handcar of the early political economists into the souped-up racecar that drives our today's highly politicized economy. The fiduciary design features a fuel-injection system that drains the wealth of the country through a reverse-engineered umbilical cord. Generations of political opportunists have fought over the controls of this marvel of Hamiltonian invention, all the while clogging the fuel line with liquefied lard drained from the pork barrel that keeps them all in the pink, flush with excess. But Bastiat's Law can no more be repealed than the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Today, a century after the system was so intricately rigged and fitted, our wonderful one-horsepower shay is reaching the end of its run. As Oliver Wendell Holmes observed in "The Deacon's Masterpiece:"

There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,  
A general flavor of mild decay,  
But nothing local as one may say.  
There could n't be,—for the Deacon's art  
Had made it so like in every part  
That there was n't a chance for one to start.

·           ·           ·           ·  
And yet, as a whole, it is past a doubt

In another hour it will be worn out!

<http://www.gettyimages.co.nz/detail/96834730/AFP>

The White House disses the Dalai Lama. Why even invite the man for a visit and a photo op if you are then going to send him out the back door? The uncollected trash on the back stoop is a nice touch. North Dakotans must be snickering about Washington's "Snowpocalyse." A breakdown of city services is an emblem of the times as well as the city where our political Waste Makers never sleep.

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=YzRhODI4NWQ0MGU2NzYxZTQ2YWJiMjc5NWVkYzZmZjI=>

I received word earlier this week about the passing of Arnold Beichman, along with a copy of the tribute by John Podhoretz. Mark Steyn here gleans a bon mot that captures some of his lively personality.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703525704575061123564007514.html?mod=djemEditorialPage\\_h](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703525704575061123564007514.html?mod=djemEditorialPage_h)

Temple Grandin, a research specialist on Aspergers syndrome who has the condition herself, discusses some of the characteristic traits of this "autism spectrum disorder." The tone of Grandin's remarks make it clear that she accepts and greatly values the ways in which she is creatively different and would not wish to be otherwise. This is a hard-earned, highly self-conscious truth that she shares: "you keep learning," she says, "you keep learning how to behave. It's like being in a play; I'm always in a play."

"When I was younger I was looking for this magic meaning of life. It's very simple now," she says. Making the lives of others better, doing "something of lasting value, that's the meaning of life, it's that simple."

## **Sunday 21**

<http://pajamasmedia.com/phyllischesler/2010/02/19/christians-forbidden-to-kill-murderer-if-he-is-muslim/?singlepage=true>

The facts of the case are simple: A man murders a young woman by running over her with a two-ton truck, then flees the country. He is arrested in London and returned to Arizona to stand trial. And what bit of liberal wisdom does the public defender wish to share about the whole matter?

"Billy Little asked the judge to 'take special precautions to ensure the County Attorney's Office wouldn't wrongly seek the death penalty because Almaleki is a Muslim.' Little called for an 'open process (to) provide some level of assurance that there is no appearance that a Christian is seeking to execute a Muslim for racial, political, religious or cultural beliefs,' referring to County Attorney Andrew Thomas' Christian faith."

Astonishing. The racial, political, religious, and cultural stereotypes embedded in these remarks are breath-taking. Why are such sentiments not branded as "racist" by our liberal *bien pensants*? Perhaps murder is not murder when it is a



matter of honor. The prosecution lacks the moral courage to press for the death penalty and the defense claims that the American legal system is, by definition, too biased to deliver justice in a case of Muslim-on-Muslim violence. Is this what passes for a judicial temperament these days? What we've got here is . . . a failure to communicate. Can we deliver justice to the living if we fail to pursue it for the dead?

## Monday 22

[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/02/22/greece\\_and\\_the\\_welfare\\_state\\_in\\_ruins.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/02/22/greece_and_the_welfare_state_in_ruins.html)

The accumulated economic and moral capital of western civilization is being dissipated at the hands of self-absorbed wastrels whose policies are diverting and harnessing our productive energies into the service of an emerging global *nomenklatura*. Although Robert Samuelson fails to finger those most responsible, his survey of the outrageous costs of our welfare states summarizes the pocketbook realities of a Greece (and a Europe) that is committing demographic suicide. Our present-oriented, future-challenged, abortion-driven welfare states are spending themselves into oblivion while decimating our productive capital and perhaps leaving little more than pocket change for the undertaker.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100222/ap\\_on\\_re\\_us/us\\_the1000\\_mile\\_commute](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100222/ap_on_re_us/us_the1000_mile_commute)

Here is another sign of the times: a father who commutes 1000 miles a week from Wisconsin to Kansas and back again in order to support his family. Many immigrant families, legal and illegal both, suffer even longer absences as they become dependent upon remittances from family members who work in El Norte. One irony is that, in both cases, these are the very sort of people who could lay the foundations for vibrant economies back home if only given half an opportunity. How long will we ordinary Americans refuse to recognize the larger picture and take bold, resolute action against corrupt political structures that distort labor markets here and everywhere else?

Here in central Virginia we have people making a much shorter daily commute from Charlottesville and its environs to DC. I used to make a five-hour, 250-mile commute from Gresham to Eugene, Oregon, while I was taking classes toward my doctorate. People will make sacrifices for the sake of a better future for their families. But how accurately do we count the costs, including our assessment of the long-term human toll?

Today I lectured on the economic and demographic costs to Eastern Europe of decades of postwar Soviet domination. By the time the West knew it had won the Cold War, it had already begun nestling down for a long demographic winter of its own making. East Europeans, of course, reacted joyfully to the sudden removing of the chief obstacles to economic growth, but the bad habits of regressive socialism are hard to break. Today, two decades later, it is increasingly apparent that the Cold War may yet yield the full measure of devastation it so long seemed destined to produce. The European Union's empire-building ambition to assert economic and political sway over the underdeveloped East, while attempting to preserve a generous welfare state in the increasingly senescent West, is a recipe for disaster. As Europe settles in for a long winter's nap, it

is being confronted with the reality of a fiscal Cold Spell that may portend a new Ice Age. What will happen when the ice-sheathed, debt-ridden dominoes of the European East and South start to cascade?

[http://townhall.com/columnists/GeorgeWill/2010/02/21/blinded\\_by\\_science?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/GeorgeWill/2010/02/21/blinded_by_science?page=full&comments=true)

Only half in jest, George Will now observes how Anthromorphic Global Warming (AGW) has become a religion, the establishment of which is forbidden by the First Amendment. For too long the Warmists seem to have subscribed to Harry Truman's adage: "If you can't convince them, confuse them." But now that the political heat is being turned up, they need to be reminded of something else Harry Truman said: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

## **Tuesday 23**

[http://townhall.com/columnists/MikeAdams/2010/02/23/ideology\\_to\\_die\\_for?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/MikeAdams/2010/02/23/ideology_to_die_for?page=full&comments=true)

Mike Adams has a sharp eye for the absurd, a sharp ear for cant, and a sharp pen for deflating the bloviators of PC.

## **Wednesday 24**

[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/anatole\\_kaletsky/article7039987.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/anatole_kaletsky/article7039987.ece)

Quoth Chicken Little: The sky is falling! Obama's parley tomorrow is either the beginning of the end for the whole world or the end of the beginning, according to the Times of London.

## **Friday 26**

<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/spengler/2010/02/23/for-this-they-make-a-living/>

I read this piece a few minutes after I opened today's mail, in which I received a recording of piano concerti by Victor Bendix and Rudolph Simonsen. I do not need to be convinced that tonal music is easier to follow. I have given up on the few pieces I have of the relatively atonal music I have acquired. I would be happy to part with my Maxwell Davies quartets and Robert Simpson symphonies. In the case of Joly Braga Santos, I am not yet ready to part with the sixth symphony because of his first four symphonies (I especially love the fourth. And his fifth symphony (written after his formal conservatory studies) still largely adheres to traditional tonality.

## **Saturday 27**

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/prosecuted\\_for\\_saving\\_a\\_girls.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/prosecuted_for_saving_a_girls.html)

Pamela Geller discusses recent developments in the Riqfa Bary case. The pastor who helped her flee from Ohio to Florida last year is under investigation. The

seventeen year old girl, whose life was threatened by her father, remains in protective custody under rather unfavorable circumstances.

<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=168869>

The drumbeat for war in the Middle East continues to intensify. The cooperation between Iran, Syria, and Turkey suggests a strategy of encirclement against Israel. Who else will join when push finally comes to shove?

<http://www.worldthreats.com/?p=2155>

Ryan Mauro's editorial comments on the dangers of fundamentalist Christianity show a lack of real familiarity with the subject, but he correctly focuses on Ahmadinejad's obsession with his role as the self-proclaimed forerunner to the Mahdi. Lee Harris's 2002 piece, "Al-Qaeda's Fantasy Ideology," should be read by anyone who wishes to understand the fantastic character of the radical Islamic ideology. Adolf Hitler was likewise a fantasist, as Steven F. Sage shows in *Ibsen and Hitler*.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/bill-and-hillary-driving-the-left-into-a-ditch/?singlepage=true>

An interesting New Hampshire-based analysis of Bill Clinton's strategy to resurrect his political fortunes.

<http://www.worldmag.com/webextra/16398>

Paul Kengor commented on this piece in a column posted on Townhall today. Does Hillary's right-hand know what her left-hand has been doing -- or neglecting to do? Were her comments at the National Prayer Breakfast about the now long-defunct Mother Teresa home in DC just another example of hypocrisy -- or was she simply out of touch?

I received David Kupelian's *How Evil Works* in yesterday's mail. The first chapter is entitled "Why We Elect Liars as Leaders." Great title. Kupelian's previous book was *The Marketing of Evil*. Great book.

## **Sunday 28**

[http://townhall.com/columnists/SteveChapman/2010/02/28/safe\\_toyotas,\\_and\\_other\\_surprises?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/SteveChapman/2010/02/28/safe_toyotas,_and_other_surprises?page=full&comments=true)

Steve Chapman examines the safety record of Toyota and describes what would be obvious to the general public if the congressional hearings weren't so busy throwing dust in people's eyes. Statistics show that Toyota's safety record exceeds those of all but three other car manufacturers. In all but a handful of car accidents, the real hazard on the roadway is the driver. In other words: Cars don't kill people. People kill people.

So what can we say about the show trial being held on Capitol Hill? Starting with compulsory arbitration and other regulatory devices of the New Deal era, our domestic automobile industry has progressively lost its competitive edge. Now

that the top American car manufacturer has been effectively nationalized, it appears that we should be more concerned about the gradual absorption of the car industry by the government.

We should ask ourselves: *Cui bono?* Who benefits? Are these hearings Congress's idea of "leveling the playing field" for the sake of Toyota's domestic competitors? Or is the object to create more jobs for government regulators at a time of high unemployment?

[http://townhall.com/columnists/GeorgeWill/2010/02/28/a\\_cure\\_for\\_character?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/GeorgeWill/2010/02/28/a_cure_for_character?page=full&comments=true)

As someone who narrowly escaped being part of the Ritalin generation, I have long been acquainted with our pharmaceutical approach to all of life's problems. In my college days, the advertising slogan "Better living through chemistry" always elicited knowing chuckles on campus. Such a chuckle-headed attitude toward life is all of a piece with a more general preference for external governmental controls over internal self-government that characterizes the drift of our national life today.

Ben Stein dropped by campus yesterday and cited one of the Founders to the same effect: "Nearing the end of the session," according to the News and Advance, "Stein paraphrased President John Adams, stating 'The constitution of this country was made for a moral, God-fearing people. It is completely inadequate for any other.'"

More recently, David Kupelian put his finger on the underlying problem in his just-published book, *How Evil Works*. Although this theme is repeated in a continuing refrain throughout his *tour d'horizon*, I wish to single out this passage on page 196 concerning our penchant for scapegoating:

"There are, in a sense, two types of people in the world: There are those who, regardless of how flawed or out of control they are, deep down want to face reality, want to understand what's wrong with them, and are willing to apologize to God or man for their offenses. Then there's everybody else – those who, despite all appearances to the contrary, don't really want to face reality and aren't truly interested in admitting their own failings or changing in any meaningful way. For the latter group, there's a tempting smorgasbord of options available to facilitate their escape from basic truth: drugs, alcohol, sex, even music and entertainment. The choices are virtually endless. But perhaps the most dangerous, certainly as addicting as any drug, is scapegoating."

Pastor Mabray's sermon today tied together two parables of Jesus in Luke 18 with the bringing of infants for his blessing, showing that each episode conveyed the same message. To summarize by way of another passage of Scripture: The greatest treasures are those that are freely and graciously given and which are there for us to freely and gratefully receive. It is the treasures that we covet – the ones we grasp at and cling to – which tend to ensnare us. Perhaps that is the tale Tolkien wished to tell in *Lord of the Rings*. G. K. Chesterton asked a question in the title of one of his books: *What's Wrong with the World*. His short answer: I am.

Today is Purim. What Mordecai told Esther is a helpful reminder: "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther replied: "I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

We always live in "such a time as this." As Jesus said at the beginning of Luke 18: "And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." But at the end of the passage he alluded back to Luke 17: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" As John Wesley counseled: "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." And Paul: "Pray without ceasing."