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**From the Selected Works of Steven Alan Samson**

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## 201012 OBITER DICTA: THE DRY BONES OF APRIL 2010

Steven Alan Samson, *Liberty University*



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**Steven Alan Samson**

**Tuesday, March 30**

<http://www.debka.com/article/8687/>

The cat appears to be out of the bag about the Administration's back channel negotiations with the Revolutionary Guard. Although it is true that the RG leaders are heavily invested in various business enterprises, some of which are immense, these concerns have long been a source for financing its surrogates abroad. The Administration's underlying assumption seems to be that business interests trump ideological commitments despite all the evidence that suggests otherwise. Capitalism is an engine of growth, not a vehicle for maintaining a conservative status quo. The issue, as always, is the purposes to which the growth and profits may be put.

Our Chicago crowd's poverty of imagination seems to be a function of the ideological blinkers -- the leftover 60s granny glasses -- they continue to wear. Do these guys really believe they can gain leverage by keeping their mitts off the Revolutionary Guards' operating capital? This is not another turf war in the Chicago yards. Khomeini's mob wedded Leninism to a radical theology. Revolution has been their most important product.

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=MjA0Y2NiNDI4Y2ZkZWNiMWJjZTAwMzAwMTYwZTA0MGE=>

The American public should sue the feds for fraudulent lending practices. If they have any sense at all, Republicans should make hay of this in November. Students will have only one source for their educational loans starting in July. Lamar Alexander shows how it works:

“The first really unhappy people will be the 19 million students who, after July 1, will have no choice but to go to federal call centers to get their student loans. They’ll become even unhappier when they find out that the government is charging 2.8 percent to borrow the money and 6.8 percent to lend it to the students, and spending the difference on the new health-care bill and other programs. In other words, the government will be overcharging 19 million students.”

Just another Washington shell game. It is reminiscent of what Roosevelt did with gold in 1933.

**Wednesday 31**

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304370304575152023005805864.html>

It is joy to see a political scalpel wielded with such dexterity. I would want Shelby Steele on my side in a knife fight. Political narcissism has rarely been

so gaudily festooned with such cleverly sliced ribbons of ego and ambition: true master strokes performed upon a well-stroked ego.

### **Saturday, April 3**

[http://townhall.com/columnists/CharlesKrauthammer/2010/04/02/slapping\\_friends?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/CharlesKrauthammer/2010/04/02/slapping_friends?page=full&comments=true)

Charles Krauthammer asks whether this Administration's foreign policy provocations are due to pique, principle, or carelessness. Can there be much doubt that its recent brush-offs and insults are calculated to provoke? How can they merely be spiteful or careless?

[http://townhall.com/columnists/MichaelGerson/2010/04/02/where\\_slavery\\_is\\_not\\_a\\_metaphor](http://townhall.com/columnists/MichaelGerson/2010/04/02/where_slavery_is_not_a_metaphor)

Under present circumstances, it would be remarkable for South Sudanese to be able to vote a few months from now on the referendum on independence.

Addendum: A few days after I wrote this, I discussed the election with one of our students, who is from the South of Sudan. His reaction to a BBC report that the ruling thugs will become even more deeply entrenched in the north, and the opposition even more isolated, was that this cannot be helped. He is confident that the South will vote to secede in a few more months.

### **Sunday 4**

<http://frontpagemag.com/2010/04/02/obama%e2%80%99s-greatest-crime-2/print/>

What more will Congress conjure forth from the Santa Clause's bag of tricks? Ralph Peters expects to see a big push by the Democrats to extend voting rights to illegal aliens. This is one gift that might place a restoration of the Constitution effectively out of reach. In *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming* (2003), Victor Davis Hanson already framed many of the issues such a debate would raise. I have posted my notes to the book on the Digital Commons.

### **Monday 5**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/apr/03/hugo-chavez-venezuela-arrest-alvarezpaz>

Vaclav Havel and several other former public officials have issued a statement condemning the arrest of a prominent critic of Hugo Chavez, the presumptive president-for-life, a few months before important legislative elections.

<http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=NGExNmY2ZTVmNDRjM2NmZGQ0NjlhZTJiNWRhM2ZmNTI=>

Stephen Spruiell calls attention to two state health care programs -- in Kentucky and Maine -- that failed. He considers some of the lessons that should be applied toward repeal of the national plan.

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/obamas\\_russian\\_disaster.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/obamas_russian_disaster.html)

How many slaps does it take to send a signal to a White House that is still determined to "reset" American foreign policy? Does anyone at the White House have any sense of shame? The tight relationship between Putin, Chavez, and Ahmadinejad is no secret. This Administration's policies, especially toward this developing new axis, are a shambles. The following brief from DEBKAFfile today is as good a summary as any of its "new ideas."

"After laying hands on the record-breaking 61.5 mph speedboat, built for a British sporting adventurer, the Iranian navy plans to arm it with the reputedly fastest torpedo in the world, the Russian-designed Shkval (Squall), which moves at speeds of 360 kph. DEBKAFfile's military sources report Tehran is aiming for a seaborne weapon able to sink a US carrier in the Persian Gulf."

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/undermining\\_our\\_faith.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/undermining_our_faith.html)

Long before Roger Scruton described what Jeane Kirkpatrick called "the Blame America First Committee" as a "culture of repudiation," Eric Hoffer identified and dissected the misanthropy of many intellectuals who "hate their native land and wish for its annihilation."

On the opposite side is "Gratitude and Grace," a piece by Roger Scruton in the latest *American Spectator*, which is excerpted in today's Wall Street Journal.

"The proper response to a gift, even a gift of charity, is gratitude. People who feel gratitude also wish to express it. The easiest way is to give in one's turn. By giving you pass on and amplify the goodwill that you received. Thus it is that, in America, where the tradition of giving is very much alive, and the state has not yet extinguished the desire or the need for it, people give to their old school, to their university, to the hospital that cured them, to the local rescue service that saved them, and to the veterans who fought for them. They give without seeking or expecting recognition, but simply because gratitude is expressed through giving."

Blessings are meant to be passed along. Gratitude should give impetus to having a vocation. In fact, an important part of the Easter celebration is gratitude for the grace of God, which we should carry with us throughout the year. But we must take care not to allow weeds and thorns to choke off our more generous impulses.

Indeed, as Scruton notes, "the state is taking over many of the functions that were previously performed by charities - not least education, health care, and the relief of poverty. And the state deals on impersonal and equal terms with its citizens. It has no favorites, and it is governed by the rules - anything else is received by the citizens as an injustice. Hence charity is replaced by justice as the ruling principle upon which social benefits are distributed. But while charity deals in gifts, justice deals in rights. And when you receive what is yours by right you don't feel grateful. Hence people who receive their education and health care from the state are less inclined to give to schools and hospitals in their turn - something that is borne out vividly by the figures

concerning charitable giving. The spirit of gratitude retreats from the social experience, and in countries like France and Germany, where civil society is penetrated at every level by the state, people give little or nothing to charity, and regard gifts with suspicion, as attempts to privatize what should be a matter of public and impartial concern."

The attached piece by Ed Kaitz reminds me how little the University of Colorado illustrates anything better than the growth of "a culture of ingratitude" within our public institutions. Private charitable giving by Americans still far exceeds that of other prosperous countries. Yet what claim does a state university establishment place on us other than a demand for higher taxes just to keep it operating? Indeed, this demand for taxes preempts what might be better spent privately, charitably, and gratefully.

## Tuesday 6

[http://townhall.com/columnists/ByronYork/2010/04/05/what\\_was\\_obamacare\\_really\\_about?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/ByronYork/2010/04/05/what_was_obamacare_really_about?page=full&comments=true)

In a 1958 essay entitled "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," which is collected in *Against the Tide*, the German economist Wilhelm Roepke remarked how the modern welfare state "progresses by its own momentum" once the "principle of compulsion" has been accepted. In the hands of irresponsible intellectuals and ambitious politicians, the welfare state becomes "a playground of cheap moralism."

What better way is there of effectuating Jean-Jacques Rousseau's vision of a "general will" than by enforcing a moral and political straitjacket on society? All the better to keep society from imprisoning and corrupting the people, of course. Rousseau put the problem this way: "Man is born free but is everywhere in chains" - that is, the chains of social convention. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels seconded the motion: "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" Together, all of them articulated what Thomas Sowell has called "the vision of the anointed" in perhaps its purest form. Our latest collection of anointed ones wish to shift medical care into the government sector by entrusting it to the tender mercies of the commissariat. As Byron York has heard some of its advocates explain, the purpose of the national health care scheme, after all, is the redistribution of income.

Perhaps there is a natural law to the effect that compulsion plus cheap moralism generates sufficient social energy that, when compressed into a highly concentrated dose of the general will (where, as Rousseau allowed, unanimity is achieved by stipulating that resisters must be "forced to be free"), this volatile, even violent, mixture produces the propulsion necessary to send the public rocketing into the future.

Roepke was nobody's fool. He was intellectual father of the postwar "German miracle" (*Wirtschaftswunder*). In "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," he exposed the welfare state charade more than half a century ago by likening its apologists to the sorcerer's apprentice. Their predicament - and ours - is that "the welfare state is a powerful machine without brakes or a reverse gear." Once it is set in motion, we are left with little recourse but to regulate the fuel line while public officials and lobbyists continually struggle to grab the wheel.

The general characteristic of the welfare state is that it operates according to a singular principle: "letting someone else foot the bill." So much for Rousseau's "general will." The corollary to Rousseau's general theory is that the only effective will belongs to a vanguard or elite. The commissariat always exempts itself from the rules that it applies to everybody else. The reality is that that people who dream of wonderful castles in the sky seldom respect the human material that must serve as fodder for their visions. Again, it is "the vision of the anointed" we are discussing, not, as Roepke also noted, "the broad masses," who may actually not be very keen on the "new ideas." As Frederic Bastiat observed, "plunder originates in a desire to live at the expense of others." Most ordinary people are not so presumptuous as to consider this a worthy ambition.

The dynamic of the modern welfare state is reminiscent of Oliver Wendell Holmes's "wonderful one-hoss shay." As Roepke pointed out: "More and more areas of compulsory aid keep being discovered; more and more population groups are drawn in; the assistance rendered grows more comprehensive and the projects adopted more elaborate." Here is a Ponzi scheme designed to fill the whole earth.

"Such a welfare state not only exports inflation to other countries that, like Germany [in the late 1950s], were more successful in containing chronic inflation, but it also sponges on them to the extent that month after month it builds up a debit position in the European Payments Union. The welfare state lives beyond its means, but that can be done only if others foot the bill." As Homer might have put it: Beware of Greeks bearing away gifts.

It is long past time for us to scrutinize the welfare state's political enablers. Whom do they serve? Why do we keep permitting these co-dependents to be the "designated driver?" As they blithely shift the financial burden to other shoulders, should we not cast more than just a passing glance at the guys they are inviting to become collection agents. So, instead of digging our grave with a knife and a fork, it is time to tighten our belts, hide our wallets, and send our derelict elected officials to the fat farm.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/richardfernandez/2010/04/05/stop-me-before-i-steal-again/>

Richard Fernandez has gotten into the April spirit - ten days ahead of schedule. Imagine locking up local officials for floating a massive sewage disposal boondoggle. But who's big enough to go after the big boys who have converted the Tidal Basin into the Devil's Punch Bowl? And, in the meantime, who will forgive us Congress's debts?

## **Wednesday 7**

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columns/Five-things-we-learned-about-Obamacare-after-it-passed-90029262.html>

Over the next several months we will be seeing a lot more analyses, such as this one by David Fredosso, of the fine print hidden in full view within the 2000 page health care package that was apparently not read by any single member of Congress

responsible for its passage. This Congress's motto comes straight from the lips of Alfred E. Neuman: "What, me worry?"

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/the\\_rape\\_of\\_america\\_1.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/the_rape_of_america_1.html)

When I saw the title of the piece this morning, while briefly scanning various sites I regularly visit, I decided that I had better get some other matters wrapped up before tackling a piece that I knew was going to be unpleasant.

After giving three lectures, listening to some interesting CIA stories told by John Kiriakou, and combing through a couple of senior theses, I got around to reading "The Rape of America" this evening. At first, I hesitated about passing along this piece, which, at first glance, seemed over-the-top metaphorically. But then I began reading the embedded links and got to know more about the author. At last, I had to ask myself: How can I not pass this along? So, reader, be forewarned: Be prepared to wrestle with something very sinister – in just about every sense of the word – and analyzed in the way David Kupelian has done in *The Marketing of Evil* and *How Evil Works*.

Let's start by thinking of a premise for a parlor game: You know you are living in Rod Serling's Twilight Zone when . . . .

This piece is something like that premise: You know you are living in Rod Serling's Twilight Zone when you read something as stinging as this psychotherapist's rebuke and can only mutely nod that, yes, it is true. And, nearly as appalling, you know that some people will simply scoff and say something like this: Just take your lumps like a man. As if the continuing and unrelenting assault on our sensibilities simply requires an attitude adjustment: "Just get over it!"

What are we becoming: whipped dogs that meekly cower with our tails between our legs? Whatever happened to the rending of garments, the wailing of mourners, the gnashing of teeth in the face of evil? Perhaps our collective demoralization – our dispirited numbness – must be highlighted, framed like a snapshot, and put on full public display – and then to be confronted like the ravaging wolf it reveals. As Johan Huizinga put it in a book I read nearly four decades ago: *Homo homini Lupus*. Man is a wolf to man.

## Thursday 8

[http://townhall.com/columnists/RebeccaHagelin/2010/04/06/the\\_marketing\\_of\\_evil](http://townhall.com/columnists/RebeccaHagelin/2010/04/06/the_marketing_of_evil)

Years ago, I started recommending David Kupelian's *The Marketing of Evil* to my students as an optional reading for one of my courses. I have posted a study guide on the Digital Commons for anyone who was interested. The students who choose to read the book then participate in a panel presentation and take a test over the book at the end of the term. The book's message and its illustrations fit very well with J. Budziszewski's *The Revenge of Conscience*, which I assign as one of the regular texts. Unfortunately, Jay's publisher went out of business and *The Revenge of Conscience* is now out of print. I still strongly recommend it and have also posted a study guide on the Digital Commons. *The Marketing of Evil* is still readily available.

Kupelian's latest book, *How Evil Works*, is here reviewed by Rebecca Hagelin. I am reproducing here three concluding paragraphs, followed by a paragraph from the last page of *How Evil Works*.

"Speaking and living truth - boldly, consistently and with compassion - is the key to victory. It was Christ himself who said as recorded in John 8:32, '. . . the truth will make you free.'

"'How Evil Works' is rich in the profound lessons of history and of today. Kupelian's prescriptions for the victory of goodness are precise and brilliant - and must be read in their entirety.

"A warning you will see woven throughout the book is how 'those who are addicted to power are intent on keeping us off balance' in their effort to make us our own worst enemies - to resort to hostility and hate toward our cultural captors. Kupelian admonishes, 'Don't fall for it. There's a world of difference between righteous indignation and seething hatred. One is based on a strong sense of justice; the other is self-destructive, out-of-control rage. If we can rise above the temptation to hate, we're left with a truly righteous passion to right the wrongs in our beloved country.'"

We must take this warning to heart, prayerfully. The battle is a spiritual one in which we must guard and tend to our own hearts, as well.

As Kupelian puts it in the book's penultimate paragraph:

"One of my favorite biblical sayings is what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate: 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth' (John 18:37). Is there some reason we're supposed to be doing something different? I don't think so."

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/time/08599197878400>

Here is a brief history of Kyrgyzstan to help place recent events there into perspective.

## **Tuesday 13**

Note to a friend: Sally and I had a series of good visits during and immediately following the Philadelphia Society meeting. We stopped by the ISI headquarters in Wilmington on the way. Angelo Codevilla spoke at dinner the first evening. The next day we had a series of speakers on the subject of American exceptionalism and what are our prospects for retaining it. Judge Janice Rogers Brown was the luncheon speaker.

Late that afternoon Sally and I toured a special exhibit on Ancient Rome and America that compares their cultural traditions and political symbolism. Afterward I attended a dinner there at the National Constitution Center which honored Forrest McDonald. Michael Barone was the featured speaker. I chatted with Brian Domitrovic, whose *Econoclasts* I had picked up in Wilmington on the way to Philadelphia, and Richard K. Matthews, who had spoken earlier and was there that evening to honor



Forrest McDonald. Matthews explained to me how Madison was closer in his thinking to Hamilton and how radical Jefferson was. We were all given a Festschrift published by ISI.

Sally and I attended a small ceremony the following morning in which Annette Kirk and Jeff Nelson awarded a "sword of imagination" to Forrest McDonald for his lifetime achievement. Some of us got to handle the sword and to feel its rather sharp edge. In his absence (he and Ellen were returning to Alabama), Forrest McDonald's daughter and grandson received it in his place. I thought it fitting that the grandson, a 21 year old Marine in full dress uniform whose mother lives near the Beltway, should be handed a real sword. Perhaps our young Alexander will know what to do with the Gordian knot on Capitol Hill.

After the ceremony I talked McDonald's last Ph.D. student, James Albritton, who had written his dissertation on John Witherspoon. He had also studied under Jerram Barrs, a protégé of Francis Schaeffer. I fully appreciate the importance of good mentoring as a means of furnishing the seeds of a good life. Sally and I visited with Bob Weissberg and Ted McAllister in the lobby before we left. On our return trip we visited friends from Hope College days, the Thigpens, near American University.

Yesterday, the Helms School sponsored its fourth distinguished speaker this term. Lord Monckton, the Georgian ambassador, and John Kiriakou preceded the visit yesterday and today of Timothy Goeglein, who served as a staffer to Dan Quayle and Dan Coats, and served on the staff of the most recent President Bush. He is a Focus on the Family VP who is based in DC. After his first talk in which he contrasted the American revolution with the sexual revolution, in which he also discussed the impact of fatherlessness, I gave him a copy of "The Dangerous Rise of Sexual Politics" and e-mailed him the link so that he may circulate it among his colleagues. I also e-mailed the link to my piece, "The Grapes of Parnassos."

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/obamacares\\_key\\_to\\_the\\_kingdom.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/04/obamacares_key_to_the_kingdom.html)

Here is a dissenting voice that tempers the enthusiastic optimism of many Republicans that control over the House will change in November. Perhaps so, but will it prove to be a Pyrrhic victory? The reason why a political victory may avail little is to be found in Obamacare's Title V Christmas present to the public service employees unions. Title V establishes a National Healthcare Workforce Commission, which may be compared to the Wagner Act. This president is determined to expand upon some of the radical initiatives of Roosevelt's New Deal. Despite setbacks, Roosevelt's Progressive vision culminated in what Sidney Milkis calls the Third New Deal, which has given us Democratic Party dominance in the bureaucracy for the last seventy years.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8713/>

Iran is using its peaceful nuclear energy program to threaten the United States with nuclear destruction.

**Thursday 15**

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/162b0c58-47f5-11df-b998-00144feab49a.html>

David Hand, the president of the Royal Statistical Society, contends that inappropriate statistical methods were used in developing the "hockey stick" graph that exaggerated the effects of recent warming.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/rogerkimball/2010/04/15/tax-day-2010-two-thoughts-from-hayek-and-an-observation-from-william-hazlitt/?singlepage=true>

If, as Ronald Reagan put it, every day the July 4th for conservative Republicans and April 15th for liberal Democrats, here is some further wisdom for our times from William Hazlitt and Friedrich Hayek.

## Friday 16

<http://www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/243617>

Sovereign immunity -- the dictum that the king can do no wrong -- raises its head once again in a local case. We have a government that is largely protected from the legal consequences of its actions, but since liability is shifted to the people as a whole, all of us pay the price for the irresponsibility of some of us. Read William Graham Sumner's "The Forgotten Man" to understand how the scam works.

As Timothy Goeglein pointed out, the rising generation of Americans today may be the last to have any real opportunity to begin restoring the Constitution of Limitations that has been hidden away under multiple layers of what Edward S. Corwin called the Constitution of Powers, which has never given an inch during the last seven decades and counting.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8724/>

As David Berlinski put it in a book review: "Blood dries quickly, Charles de Gaulle observed, and so does outrage." For months the secret partnership between the United States and Iran has been getting less and less secret. DEBKA simply restates the fact that, as long as American troops are in the vicinity, they are effectively held hostage by Iran. If Israel should choose to attack Iranian nuclear facilities, the fallout (nuclear or otherwise) will spread as quickly and as widely as the volcanic ash that is now choking European air traffic. This is a time for real statesmanship. But where are the statesmen? As usual, Count Oxenstierna hit the nail on the head: "Behold, my son, with what wisdom the world is ruled." Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn rendered this sage observation into an amusing cartoon (of which I have a photograph) entitled "Stupidity Roams the World."