

Friday Church News Notes

The following is another installment of the Friday Church News Notes designed especially for use in churches. It is published by Way of Life Literature's Fundamental Baptist Information Service.

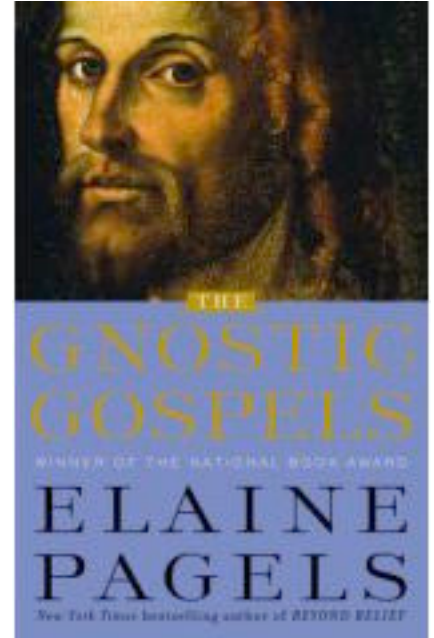
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MORE BLASPHEMY FROM THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

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It is typical during Christmas and Easter for the mainstream media to run articles tearing down their reader's faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible. The cover story for *U.S. News & World Report* for December 18 did not disappoint in this regard. It was "In Search of the Real Jesus." We are told that "new research questions whether he was more teacher than savior." The research turns out to be associated with the renewal of interest in ancient heretical gnostic writings. One of the scholars cited by *U.S. News* is Princeton University professor Elaine Pagels, author of *The Gnostic Gospels*. "As Pagels presented them, the Gnostics came across as forerunners of modern spiritual seekers wary of institutional religion, literalism, and hidebound traditions. Free of sexism and paternalism and unburdened by an emphasis on guilt and sin, the gnostics' highly esoteric and intellectual approach to the sacred was one that even enlightened skeptics could embrace" (*U.S. News*, p. 76). It is not surprising that modern heretics find sympathy with ancient ones. The same devil that blinded the minds of those who rejected God's Word and the Gospel of Jesus Christ 1800 years ago is still in business today.



"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The *U.S. News* article concludes with the following quote: "This is an exciting time to be a scholar. There are now so many new approaches and possibilities and ways of putting things together that they allow people to find out where their theological comfort zone is." The ME generation thinks religion is like a hamburger that it can have its own way.

OSTEEN VOTED ONE OF 10 MOST FASCINATING PEOPLE



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Joel Osteen, pastor of a megachurch in Houston, Texas, has been selected by Barbara Walters as one of the 10 Most Fascinating People for 2006. This is the first time that a pastor has appeared on the annual television special. Osteen focuses on a "positive" message and refuses to preach on such things as repentance and judgment. You won't hear a red-hot sermon on hell, such as those that Jesus preached, at Lakewood Church. Walters said it was Osteen's positive message and huge congregation that led her to pick him. An uncompromising Bible preacher will never be rewarded

by this wicked world. The world did not love Jesus 2,000 years ago and it does not love those who are faithful to His message today. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:19-20).

MORE CHURCHES SPLIT FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

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On December 17 two prominent Virginia churches voted to leave the Episcopal Church and join fellow Anglican conservatives forming a rival denomination in the United States (“Va. Parishes Split from Episcopal Church,” AP, Dec. 17, 2006). Truro Church in Fairfax and The Falls Church in Falls Church voted by a margin of 9 to 1 to depart. These historic churches have put themselves under the oversight of Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria, who calls the acceptance of homosexuality a “satanic attack.” On December 10 All Saints



Peter Akinola

Episcopal Church in Dale City, Virginia, voted to leave by a margin of 402-6, and several others are in the process of making the same move. The entire Episcopal diocese in San Joaquin, California, voted recently to sever ties with the mother denomination, a decision it must confirm in a second vote next year. At least six other dioceses say they are considering this step. Many Episcopal congregations have been dissatisfied with the denomination's rank liberalism and acceptance of homosexuality for decades, and the “straw that broke the camel's back” was the 2003 ordination of Vickie Gene Robinson as the first openly homosexual bishop. The Episcopal bishop of Virginia, Peter Lee, said the votes “created Nigerian congregations occupying Episcopal churches,” signaling his intention to sue the congregations in court with the objective of taking their property. The churches at Truro and Falls Church alone possess property valued at \$27 million. According to Anglican practice, archbishops rule over all of the congregations in a territory and are not

allowed to start churches outside their own borders. In contrast, true New Testament churches are autonomous. There is no support in the New Testament for establishing denominational structures that lord it over the individual congregations, and the office of “archbishop” does not exist in Scripture.

IRAN HOLDS CONFERENCE TO DENY HOLOCAUST

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Dozens of holocaust deniers and revisionists from around the world attended a conference sponsored by the government of Iran on December 11-12 (WorldNetDaily, Dec. 11, 2006). Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has labeled the holocaust a “myth” and called for the destruction of Israel. Attendees included former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke of the United States. The outspoken Ahmadinejad is considered a “radical” Muslim by the press, but in fact he is simply taking the Koran seriously. The following are facts from *Judgment Day* by Dave Hunt (The Berean Call, 2005): Mohammed's dying words were, “May Allah curse the Christians and Jews!” Hatred for and destruction of Israel is a prominent theme in publications officially distributed by Ministries of Education in Muslim lands. Every child in the Palestinian Authority's



schools reads the textbook *Our Country Palestine*, on the title page of which appears the words, “There is no alternative to destroying Israel.” Muslim terrorists who kill Jews are honored with streets and holidays named after them. To Muslims living in Muslim nations Hitler is a hero and his racist diatribe *Mein Kampf* in Arabic is a best seller. Recruitment for jihad is taking place in as many as 20 mosques in the Netherlands. Israel is not recognized as a sovereign state in Saudi Arabian textbooks and its name does not appear on any map. No Jews of any nationality are allowed into Saudi Arabia. The American military had to invent a category “Protestant B” and put this on the dog tags of Jewish soldiers who were stationed there. Though Iran's

president calls for Israel to be wiped from the map and though no Israeli passport holders are allowed there, Iran is a member in good standing in the United Nations and is allowed, on a rotating basis, to sit on the UN Security Council and the UN Commission on Human Rights. In fact, the only one of the 191 members of the United Nations *not* allowed on these UN councils is Israel!

POPE CALLS DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS A SCANDAL

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On his recent trip to Turkey Pope Benedict XVI, addressing Orthodox church leaders, said: “The tragic divisions which, over time, have arisen among Christ's followers openly contradict the Lord's will, give scandal to the world and damage that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature” (“Heal the Wounds of Separation between Christians,” Vatican Information Service, Nov. 30, 2006). In fact, it would be tragic if there were no divisions and if professing Christians were united in spite of heresies and false doctrine. The apostle Paul taught Timothy to take such a strong stand for sound doctrine that he would not allow any other doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3). Jude commands us to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It is impossible to take a stand for sound doctrine and to contend for the faith and also to be ecumenical in any sense whatsoever. The focus of this age is unity, while the focus of New Testament Christianity is Jesus Christ and biblical truth.



SADDLEBACK CHURCH MISSIONS TEAM USING ATHEIST SONG “IMAGINE”

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A video that contains a graphical slide show from an Argentina missionary trip by Saddleback Church members features John Lennon's atheistic song “Imagine.” The trip, made August 1-12, 2006, was part of Rick Warren's P.E.A.C.E. program, and the video was published on YouTube.

The soundtrack uses several pieces of music, including John Lennon's original recording of *Imagine*. The lyrics say: “Imagine there's no heaven/ It's easy if you try/ No hell below us/ Above us only sky.” There is no separation from the world at Saddleback Church. Practically any sorry piece of rock or rap music is fine as long as it is accompanied by a thin veneer of religiosity. Last week we reported in



Rick Warren sings with Winona Judd during his recent AIDS conference

the *Friday Church News Notes* on a Saddleback Worship concert that featured teenage girls doing immoral dance moves. On April 17, 2005, when Rick Warren announced his P.E.A.C.E. program to Saddleback Church, he sang Jimi Hendrix's drug-drenched song "Purple Haze" to the congregation, accompanied by his "praise and worship" band! He said he had wanted to do that for a long time. There has never been anything innocent or pure about rock and roll. From its inception it has had two grand themes: licentiousness (sex, drugs, etc.) and rebellion ("I can do whatever I want any old time"), and this is nowhere more evident than in the music of Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles. There is no excuse for this action on the part of an influential pastor who should set a standard of godliness instead of carnal foolishness. I want to say again publicly, Shame on Rick Warren, and shame on his fellow Southern Baptist Convention leaders for not loudly and unequivocally rebuking him for such worldly shenanigans. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

ISN'T THE SINCERITY OF MUSICIANS ENOUGH?



Mylon LeFevre

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Those who defend Contemporary Christian Music often argue that the only thing that matters is the sincerity of the musicians. Note the following statement by Christian rocker Mylon LeFevre: "Music is not good or evil because of the formation of the notes or the structure of the beat. Music is good because the heart of the person playing it is innocently and sincerely giving praise to our God" (interview by Pastor Rick Anderson, Minneapolis, Minnesota). Yet God requires obedience to His Word and does not accept man's sincere disobedience. Moses was very sincere before God, but when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, God judged him and refused to allow him to enter Canaan (Num. 20:7-14). When Aaron's sons offered strange fire, God struck them dead, paying no attention to whether or not they were acting sincerely (Lev. 10:1-7). When Saul disobeyed in the seemingly minor matter of refusing to destroy all of the cattle belonging to the Amalekites, God judged him and removed the kingdom from him (1 Samuel 15).

When Uzzah steadied the cart holding the ark, God struck him dead (1 Sam. 6:6-7).

Dr. Frank Garlock, who has a doctorate from the respected Eastman School of Music, observes: "Sincerity and motivation have never been a test of real spirituality or even of Christianity for that matter. The Word of God is that which will abide forever, and it is upon His Word that God hinges all spiritual truth. It is not right to ignore the Bible, to become worldly in philosophy and practice, to call things Christian which are not, nor to disobey the Word of God, even to try to win people to Christ" (*Can Rock Music Be Sacred?* 1974, p. 39).

CONCLUSION: Friends in Christ, do not be discouraged by any of this. It is God's will that we know the times (1 Ch. 12:32; Mat. 16:3) and that we be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. These things remind us that the hour is very late, and we need to be ready for the coming of the Lord. Are you sure that you are born again? Are you living for Christ day by day? "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:11-14). This material is sent only to those who personally subscribe to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service list. To SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE or CHANGE ADDRESSES go to <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbis/subscribe.html>. Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061. 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org. David Cloud is the director of Way of Life Literature and author of the Friday Church News Notes.