

Friday Church News Notes

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PROTESTANTS LOOKING AT MARY IN NEW LIGHT

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A growing number of Protestants and Evangelicals are looking at Mary in a more Catholic light today, fueled by Hollywood movies (i.e., *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Nativity Story*), books (i.e., *The Real Mary* by Scot McKnight and *Blessed One* by Beverly Gaventa), ecumenical associations, the charismatic movement, organizations such as the Legion of Mary, and the spirit of apostasy that is in the air in these last days (2 Timothy 4:3-4). An article in the *Miami Herald* for December 24 observed that a Lutheran church in Orlando features a nearly life-sized statue of Mary and the infant Jesus, an Episcopal church in Sarasota celebrates the feast day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and a United Methodist church in Chicago has a statue of Guadalupe in its sanctuary. *Christianity Today*, the Associated Baptist Press, and *The Lutheran* have featured articles calling for Mary's reappropriation. Since its inception in the 1960s, the charismatic "renewal" in the Roman Catholic Church has exalted Mary. In 1979 *Light of Life*, India's most influential evangelical magazine, asked if the charismatic Catholics' views of Mary had changed. They responded: "Nothing has happened to the great Mother of God. SHE STILL REMAINS QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, RESPECTED, LOVED AND VENERATED" (*Light of Life*, June 1979). That same year Tyndale House published Michael Harper's book *The Three Sisters*, which traced the growing ecumenical unity of evangelical Protestantism (Evangeline), Pentecostalism (Charisma), and Roman Catholicism (Roma). On page 49 Harper, an Anglican, exclaimed: "Oh, what an enrichment it has been to meet with Catholics and to be introduced to some of the treasure stores of Catholic life! The VIRGIN MARY HAS COME ALIVE and I feel I know her now, in the same way as my Evangelical heritage helped to know St. Paul." At the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit & World Evangelization in New Orleans in July 1987, which brought together roughly 40,000 representatives of 40 denominations, there were many books for sale promoting the alleged Mary visitations at Medjugorje, Fatima, and Lourdes. The late and very influential Assemblies of God preacher David DuPlessis, who was called "Mr. Pentecost," believed that Mary was truly appearing at Medjugorje in Yugoslavia. He is listed on page 135 of the book "Is the Virgin Mary Appearing at Medjugorje" (The Word Among Us Press, 1984). A Catholic priest who spoke at Indianapolis '90, an ecumenical charismatic conference that I attended with press credentials, told how that Protestants have learned to pray the Rosary, which features prayers to Mary, through their relationships with Catholics in the anti-abortion movement. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33).



PANTS ON WOMEN AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

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The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Costume and Fashion makes the following observation on the issue of pants on women: "The real pants revolution came in the 1960s, with unisex fashions, though even at this time women wearing pants were often refused entry to restaurants and the whole subject was one of heated debate. By the 1970s rules and social attitudes had relaxed and pants of many lengths and styles had become an acceptable part of female dress for both casual and formal attire." This secular book admits that the growth in the popularity of pants on females in Western culture was part and parcel with the sexual revolution and the unisex phenomenon, both of which are an affront to the God of the Bible. Social attitudes had to be changed, and that occurred through the onslaught of the rebellious rock & roll culture. When jeans makers advertise their wares for women, what do they emphasize? Jeans are portrayed as the party girl fashion, as something worldly guys love because of what they can see. Pants draw attention to parts of the female body that should be de-emphasized by a modest woman. For our part, we are convinced that a proper dress is always more feminine and modest than a pair of pants and that a modest dress sets forth a godly standard in a confused world. If you don't agree, that is your business and I have no interest in debating the matter, but I want to take this occasion to thank every woman who is willing to bear the reproach of this present wicked and foolish generation by dressing in a truly modest, unquestioningly feminine fashion. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31-32).



IRANIAN PRESIDENT LOOKS FOR RETURN OF JESUS AND THE ISLAMIC MESSIAH

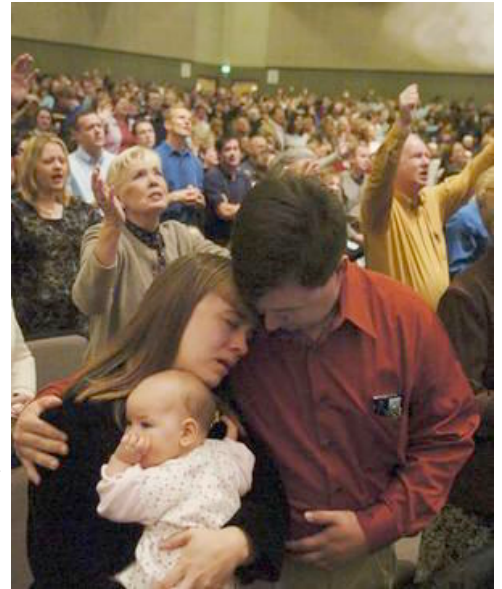
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Speaking on December 19, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said he is expecting the return of Jesus as well as the 12th Imam or the Imam Mahdi, a Shiite Islamic messiah, who will appear to "wipe away oppression." The Imam Mahdi, believed by Shiites to have disappeared as a child in A.D. 941, is supposed to return and reign on earth for seven years before bringing about a final judgment and the end of the world ("Jesus, Mahdi Both Coming, Says Iran's Ahmadinejad," WorldNetDaily, Dec. 19, 2006). According to the Bible, the next event on God's calendar is the Catching Away of church age saints, followed by the appearance of the Antichrist as a man of peace. Doubtless he will be accepted by the Jews as their Messiah and by the Muslims as theirs. Mankind will rejoice that the Middle East problem has been solved and the long-awaited "Age of Aquarius" has arrived, but the peace party will be short-lived and the Antichrist will show his true colors, setting himself up in Israel's temple as god and requiring the world's worship at the point of death. "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2). "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

EVANGELICAL HOMOSEXUALS

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An article in the New York Times for Dec. 12, 2006 ("Gay and Evangelical Seeking Paths of Acceptance"), described the increase in homosexuals who claim to be committed evangelical Christians. These believe that God made them the way they are and that it would be wrong for them to deny their homosexual desires but they also think of themselves as genuine Bible believers. A poster child for this type of this is Paul Barnes, who recently resigned from his position as the pastor of a megachurch in Denver after confessing to having sex with men. Though he might not claim that God made him a homosexual, he said he often cried himself to sleep, begging God to end his attraction to men, leaving his hearers with the impression both that he was unable to resist his lusts and that God does not answer such prayers. This type of thing is used to prove that homosexuality is ingrown and natural. In fact, homosexuality, like other forms of immoral lust, is indeed "natural," but it is naturally wrong. These lusts arise from the feeding of man's fallen nature. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). No man can say that God forced him to have immoral relations with men or with women. No one forces a man to break his marriage vows. It is the individual who is responsible not to allow his imagination to dwell on wicked things and not to act on wicked impulses. I have never had a desire toward men and I find such a thing repulsive; but I know the wickedness of the flesh that I inherited from Adam and I know that it is capable of any sort of evil if not denied. God's Word condemns homosexuality in the most severe terms. It is described as "vile affections," "against nature," "unseemly," "error," "a reprobate mind," and "not convenient" (Romans 1:26-28).



Members of New Life Church react as Ted Haggard admits homosexual liaisons

CONVICTION OF PASTORS IN AUSTRALIA SENT BACK TO LOWER COURTS

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The conviction of two pastors under the Hate Crimes law of Victoria, Australia, was overturned by the Victorian Supreme Court and remanded back to the lower courts. Danny Nalliah and Daniel Scott of Catch the Fire Ministries were convicted of "vilifying" Muslims after they quoted the Koran in a 2002 meeting and warned about the spiritual dangers of the Islamic religion. The judge admitted that they quoted the Koran accurately and that it does indeed tell men they can beat their wives and fight infidels until they submit. The judge found only one factual error in the lecture and that pertained to the birthrate of Muslims in Australia. The case will be retried under a different judge sometime in 2007. The original complaint was filed by The Islamic Council of Victoria. Nalliah has refused to apologize and says he is willing to go to prison for the right of free speech. The cost of defending themselves against the accusations currently stands at \$150,000.



BRUTAL TRUTHS ABOUT IRAQ

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The following is excerpted from an article about the American involvement in Iraq by Lieutenant General William Odom (U.S. Army, Ret.). While I don't agree with every point he makes, he does highlight some of the myths that are perpetrated by the media and that interfere with an honest debate on this issue. "Mythologies about the war in Iraq are endangering our republic, our rights, and our responsibilities before the world. The longer we fail to dispel them, the higher price we will pay. The following truths, while perhaps not self-evident to the American public, are nevertheless conspicuously obvious to much the rest of the world. Truth No. 1: No 'deal' of any kind can be made among the warring parties in Iraq that will bring stability and order, even temporarily. Truth No. 2: There was no way to have 'done it right' in Iraq so that U.S. war aims could have been achieved. Virtually every new book published on the war, especially Cobra II, Fiasco, and State of Denial, reinforce the myth--the illusion--that we could have won the war; we just did not plan properly and fight the war the right way. ... A different U.S. occupation plan might have changed the course Iraq has taken to civil war and fragmentation, but it could have not prevented that outcome. Truth No. 3: The theory that 'we broke it and therefore we own it,' with all the moral baggage it implies, is simply untrue because it is not within U.S. power to 'fix it.' Truth No. 4: The demand that the administration engage Iran and Syria directly, asking them to help stabilize Iraq, is patently naïve or cynically irresponsible until American forces begin withdrawing--and rapidly--so that there is no ambiguity about their complete and total departure."

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.