

# Friday Church News Notes

## The New Baptist Covenant Celebration: *An Unbiblical Unity*

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[www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)

The New Baptist Covenant Celebration convened January 30 to February 1 in Atlanta, Georgia, attended by roughly 14,000 people, and Brian Snider and I were there with media credentials to report on it. I plan to publish a longer report on the conference soon, but the following is a brief summary. The meeting was sponsored by more than 30 liberal Baptist groups and institutions, including the American Baptist Churches USA, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Baptist World Alliance, Baylor University, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Mercer University. The new Baptist covenant is an agreement to ignore all differences and to unite together around an ill-defined "gospel." In his keynote address on the first night of the conference, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter explained that he has been promoting unity among Baptists for many years and that the groundwork for the New Baptist Covenant was laid in 2006 and 2007 in meetings he had with various

Baptist leaders. They "were unanimous in their desire to transcend their differences" and "affirmed their desire to speak and work TOGETHER."

In reality, the New Baptist Covenant's unity is a unity in liberalism and they have no time or love for a strong biblical stand, which they mislabel "legalism" and "partisan politics." Jimmy Carter said that it is impossible to agree on doctrines and issues and we should unite rather on the "gospel," but the gospel was never defined. Nothing was said about the virgin birth, the substitutionary blood atonement, the bodily resurrection, repentance as a necessity for salvation, etc. The reason for this is that there are many within these groups who deny  
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*"For the first time in more than 160 years, we're convening a major convocation of Baptists throughout an entire continent without any threat to our unity or to our freedom brought by differences of race, politics, geography or the **legalistic interpretation of Scriptures.**"*

*Jimmy Carter, address at New Baptist Covenant meeting*

## DRINKING IS NOT FOR KINGS

"Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink" (Proverbs 31:3-4). The Bible's book of wisdom says drinking destroys kings. Drinking makes the individual careless and weakens his moral resolve. Drink has caused men to give away the secrets of their office. It has caused men in positions of authority to fail to act in a decisive and right and timely fashion during crises. Drink has weakened

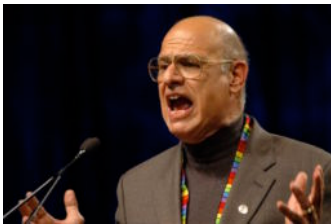
presidents and prime ministers and governors and military officers and judges and police captains. U.S. President George W. Bush recently recalled his drinking days and explained that it was faith in God that gave him the discipline to stop. He then made this statement, "I wouldn't be president if I kept drinking. You get sloppy, can't make decisions, it clouds your reason, absolutely" ("Bush tells biographer: 'I do tears,'" Associated Press, Sept. 4, 2007). Bush is  
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## NEW BAPTIST COVENANT

AN UNBIBLICAL UNITY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 these and other cardinal doctrines of the faith. Carter acknowledged that there are many things that divide Baptists. He mentioned the issues of legalized abortion, homosexuality, women church leaders, and creationism vs. evolution, and said those issues are like “eating meat offered to idols.” In other words, they are peripheral and should never be a cause for division. The sponsoring organizations of the New Baptist Covenant are exceedingly liberal. Mercer University, for example, is a hotbed of theological modernism. Kirby Godsey, who was president of Mercer from 1979 to 2006 (when he was replaced by William Underwood, one of the leaders of the New Baptist Covenant), denies practically every doctrine of the Christian faith. In the book *When We Talk about God ... Let's Be Honest*, which was displayed for sale at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration,

Godsey claims that “the notion that God is the all powerful, the high and mighty principal of heaven and earth should be laid aside.” The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is another sponsoring organization. I talked with a woman who works in the CBF main office, and she said that she was never asked whether she was born again at any point during her application process. By the way, if the participants in the New Baptist Covenant believe so much in unity and don't believe in disunity, it makes you wonder why so many of these same people, including Jimmy Carter, separated themselves from the Southern Baptist Convention! And if they are so committed to not criticizing others, it makes you wonder why they have so often criticized biblical conservatives and fundamentalists of all stripes in such severe terms!



### DOUBLE MINDED MEETING

*Photos above, l to r - Many of the statements Tony Campolo made at this meeting made him sound like a fundamentalist, but in the past he has said that he believes that Jesus resides in every person. While he claims to be conservative on the issue of homosexuality, he wore a rainbow colored stole, which seemed to be an unspoken claim of unity with the gay lobby, which was much in evidence at the meeting. Julie Pennington-Russell is the pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, GA. She said that Baptists are 'people of the book' who look to its pages for answers to every difficulty of life, and yet she oversteps the clear Biblical injunction against women pastors. The front row of the Thursday night meeting consisted of (l-r) Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter, and representatives of the National Council of Churches, the Methodist Church, Atlanta's Islamic community, the Presbyterian Church, the Jewish Synagogue, the Roman Catholic Church and the former head of the Baptist World Alliance, David Kim. In the final photo, Al Gore receives a green Bible in recognition of his work as an old-style "biblical prophet," according to the presenter.*

## The New Baptist Covenant Celebration: *An Unbiblical Work*

The first theme of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, which met in Atlanta January 30 to February 1, was unity. A second theme was social work or kingdom building. Their objective is to “promote peace with justice; to feed the hungry; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; care for the sick and the marginalized; welcome the strangers among us; and promote religious liberty

and respect for religious diversity.” Theological liberalism has always replaced the biblical gospel of redeeming souls with a humanistic gospel of redeeming society. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), often called the father of the “Social Gospel,” was a Baptist. He believed in the preaching of the gospel and the call to the new birth, but he added the social

dimension to it, and the movement that he created soon left gospel preaching behind and focused exclusively on the social aspect. The New Baptist Covenant claims to believe in the salvation of the soul as well as the salvation of society, but the fact is that the emphasis of the convocation was almost entirely upon the latter. During

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## AN UNBIBLICAL WORK, CONT.

the more than 12 hours of plenary sessions there were no messages dedicated to the winning of souls to Christ, but there were many messages dedicated to social work. Almost all of the 16 Special Interest Sessions in the afternoons focused on social-justice issues. Some of the themes of these sessions were as follows: engaging the criminal justice system, breaking cycles of poverty, peacemaking, faith and public policy, sexual exploitation, race as a continuing challenge, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and responding to national disasters. There was even an emphasis on saving the planet. Al Gore presided over a "Stewardship of the Earth" luncheon at the conference on the afternoon of January 31. The former U.S. Vice President was introduced by Robert Parham, executive director of

the Baptist Center for Ethics, who called Gore a "Baptist prophet" and presented him with a "Baptist of the Year Award" and a "Green Bible." Parham said that the Bible should be green because it "tells us to love our neighbor and loving our neighbor means not leaving him a ruined earth"! Gore's misguided and error-filled movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, was shown during the conference, but the attendees were not told that British High Court judge Michael Burton ruled on October 10, 2007, that this movie can only be shown in British schools if the teachers point out 11 serious factual errors in the film. These include saying that melting snow on Mount Kilimanjaro is proof of global warming, that polar bears have drowned due to disappearing arctic ice, that global warming could stop the Gulf Stream,

that the Greenland ice covering could melt, that the Antarctic ice covering is melting, that sea levels could rise by seven meters, and that rising sea levels had caused the evacuation of certain Pacific islands. The social-justice emphasis at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration comes from a misunderstanding of the kingdom of God. Tony Campolo said that Jesus has called us to build the kingdom of God today, but we are called to no such thing. See <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/kingdom-of-god.html>.

## CHRIST NEVER CHANGES

The following is excerpted from Barnes commentary on Hebrews: "Man may change by caprice, or whim, or by some new suggestion of interest, of passion, or ambition. I go to my friend today, and find him kind and true --but I have no absolute certainty that I shall find him such tomorrow. His feelings, from some unknown cause, may have become cold towards me. Some enemy may have breathed suspicion into his ear about me, or he may have formed some stronger attachment, or he may be sick, or dead. But nothing like this can happen in regard to the Redeemer. He changes not. I am sure that he is always the same. No one can influence him by slander; no new friendship can weaken the old; no sickness or death can occur to him, to change him; and though the heavens be on fire, and the earth be convulsed, he is THE SAME. In such a Saviour I may confide; in such a friend why should not all confide."

## DRINKING KINGS, CONT.

absolutely right, but it is a sad fact that most political leaders today are heavy drinkers. Many years ago J. Vernon McGee warned: "We are told that every day in Washington there are many cocktail parties for our government officials. Republicans and Democrats both have this in common--the party membership doesn't make any difference. It is tragic to have drinking men in high positions of government." In his commentary on Proverbs George Lawson made this important observation: "The more important any man's work is, he is the more obliged to be temperate in all things; and

drunkenness, which is a damning sin in any person, is attended with prodigious aggravations in those men that dispense the mysteries of the gospel, or administer the public affairs of the nation." Drinking can cause one to give away his strength; it makes him weak and foolish (Prov. 31:3). It detracts from the authority of his position. It makes the individual foolish and careless. Drink has caused men to give away the secrets of their office. It has caused men in positions of authority to fail to act in a decisive and right and timely fashion during crises. Drink has weakened presidents and prime ministers and governors and military

officers and judges and police captains. U.S. President George W. Bush recently recalled his drinking days and explained that it was faith in God that gave him the discipline to stop. He then made this statement, "I wouldn't be president if I kept drinking. You get sloppy, can't make decisions, it clouds your reason, absolutely" ("Bush tells biographer: 'I do tears,'" Associated Press, Sept. 4, 2007).

## A LITTLE GIRL WHO TESTED HER PARENTS' DISCIPLINE

The following is excerpted from *Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, an excellent book by David Sorenson (Northstar Ministries, 1820 W. Morgan St., Duluth, MN 55811, 218-726-0209, [www.northstarministries.com](http://www.northstarministries.com), [dhs.northstar@charter.net](mailto:dhs.northstar@charter.net)) -- "Our children need to learn that every single time they violate a household rule, there will be a predictable and unpleasant experience. Children seem to think that if they whittle away at their parents long enough, the parents will wear down and then give in. Consistently enforce your rules. When one of our girls was small, she decided one evening that she did not want to stay in her bed. She had been put to bed, but she decided she wanted to get up. She climbed out of her bed and came out into the living room. She was lectured about the fact that it was her bed time and that if she got out of bed again she would be spanked. She was placed back in her bed. A few minutes later, she came out again. As promised, she was paddled and placed back into her bed. ... A few minutes later, she came out again. She again was paddled and placed back into her bed amidst rather rebellious crying.

She was throwing a tantrum. After a while she proceeded to get out of bed and come out again into the living room. As far as we could tell, there was no legitimate reason for her to get up. She just did not want to stay in bed. Again she was spanked. This went on for about a half an hour, but she finally got the message; if she openly defied Mom and Dad, she would be spanked. It was consistent. It happened every single time. ... That night a major battle was won. Her rebellious little will was broken. She had tried her hardest to challenge parental authority, and she had lost. ... Did we as parents enjoy spanking our little girl? We hated every moment of it. She was our pride and joy. Nothing would have pleased us more than for her to cuddle up to us out in the living room, but we knew how she needed to have discipline developed in her life" (*Training Your Children to Turn Out Right*, 1995, pp. 71, 72).

### 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](mailto:fbns@wayoflife.org). David Cloud is the director of Way of Life Literature and author of the Friday Church News Notes.