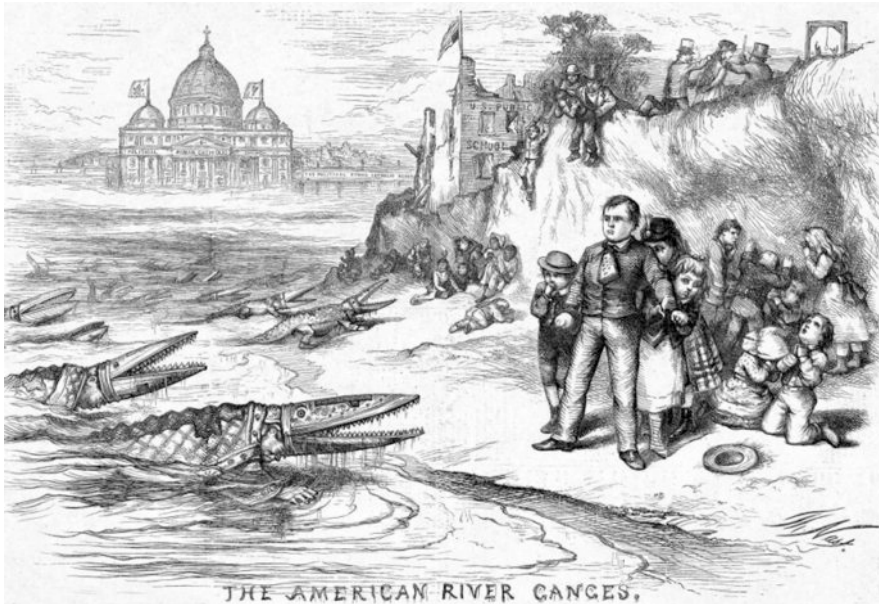


# Friday Church News Notes

## U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH GOES ALL OUT IN HIS WELCOME OF THE POPE



Friday Church News Notes, April 18, 2008, [www.wayofflife.org](http://www.wayofflife.org)

President George Bush welcomed Pope Benedict XVI in an historic manner this week. Bush met the pope's plane when it arrived at Andrews Air Force Base on Tuesday. The next morning the pope was welcomed to the White House with a 21-gun salute, and that night a fancy White House dinner was held in his honor. All of these are firsts. Bush is a great fan of the popes. He has met with popes five times. In 2005 Bush became the first sitting president to attend a papal funeral (he knelt before John Paul II's casket), and he told the Catholic television network EWTN that he sees God in Benedict XVI's eyes ("Bush Says He Sees God in Eyes of Pope," *Zenit*, April 13, 2008). The history of president-papal relationships began with Woodrow Wilson's audience with Pope Benedict XV in Rome in 1919. Forty years later Dwight Eisenhower met John XXIII. Since then every U.S. president has met with a pope at least once, but it was Ronald Reagan who launched U.S.-Vatican relations to a new high. It was under his administration that formal diplomatic relationships were established between America and the Vatican. Harry Truman had tried it in 1952 but was forced to back down by the strength of Protestant opposition. By 1984 the "protest" had long since disappeared from American Protestantism and Reagan had no problem establishing relationships with Rome. Not surprisingly, he had "behind-the-scenes" help from Billy Graham. In 1983 Reagan asked Graham to make

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*100 years ago, most Americans felt very differently about Rome's influence in the US. In the illustration above, Thomas Nast of Harper's Weekly depicts Catholic Bishops as crocodiles rising from the American River Ganges to devour our youth. In the man's vest is a copy of the Bible, as he attempts to defend the young people behind him.*

## Rock and Roll Youth Ministry Philosophy Doesn't Work

Speakers at Willow Creek's Shift 2008 conference this month said that young people are leaving churches at record numbers. They cite recent surveys that have found that "more than two-thirds of young adults drop out of the church" ("Youth Leaders 'Shift' against Tide of Discontent," *Christian Post*, April 10, 2008). A 2007 Barna study found that "the majority of young non-Christians perceive present-day Christianity as judgmental, hypocritical, and old-fashioned." What this tells me is that the rock & roll youth ministry philosophy hasn't worked. It hasn't kept young people from leaving the churches. When Christians try to be cool, they simply build a bridge to the world for young people to cross. The world is always going to be more "cool" than a half-way Christian alternative. Further, the rock & roll philosophy hasn't made the world think more highly of churches. Even with the majority of churches trying their best to be oh-so-cool and relevant, they are still considered judgmental and old-fashioned! It is impossible to make friends with the world, for the simple reason that the world is the enemy of our God (John 15:18-20; James 4:4). Our responsibility is to preach the gospel and to inform the world that "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Jesus instructed us to preach "repentance and remission of sins" in His name to all nations (Luke 24:46). And our responsibility is to live holy lives as a light to a "crooked and perverse" world (Philippians 2:15). That's not cool, but it is the truth, and the truth is far more important than cool.



POPE, Cont.

inquiries among evangelical leaders about the likely response to the establishment of relations, and Graham explained in a seven-page letter that there would be “few problems” (John Ashbrook, *The New Neutralism II: Exposing the Gray of Compromise*, 1992). In 1986 Reagan sent a telegram to the pope commending his syncretistic prayer meeting in Assisi that brought together leaders of Christian denominations and pagan religions to pray for world peace. Reagan thanked the pope for his efforts to “lead humanity toward a more tolerant, just and peaceful world” and assured the pope of his prayers (*Christian News*, Dec. 22, 1986). In November 1987, in an unprecedented act,

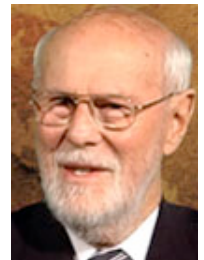
Reagan flew to Miami just to meet the pope when he landed on American soil. After meeting the plane, Reagan was kept waiting for three hours for an opportunity to have a private audience with the pope. He said to John Paul II, “As you exhort us, we will listen” (*USA Today*, Sept. 11-12, 1987). It is obvious that “conservative” politics does not equal spiritual wisdom. In fact, conservative republican presidents have done more than the “liberals” to bring America under God’s curse for yoking together with the Blasphemer on the Tiber. Where are the “separation of church and state” folk when you really need them?

## DAVE HUNT DENIES THE FIRE OF HELL

I am very sad to report that Dave Hunt, who has written some helpful books on a variety of subjects, is boldly denying the fire of hell. In an article at The Berean Call web site entitled “Justice, Forgiveness, and Transformation,” dated March 31, 2008, he says that the fire is “not physical” and that it “must be the ‘fire’ of God’s justice, holiness, purity, and truth that exposes motives and would surely torment the conscience of the damned forever.” He says, “This alone could constitute the flames in the Lake of Fire.” He goes to great effort to re-interpret various verses that refute his position. REGARDING MATTHEW 25:41, Hunt asks, “But the ‘devil and his angels’ have no physical bodies, so how could physical flames, to which they would be impervious, have been prepared for them?” The answer is that we don’t know and we don’t need to know. It’s not up to us to try to figure out how these things work. We can be assured that God knows how to make it work! All we need to know is that Jesus said the destiny of the devil and his angels and every unbeliever is everlasting **FIRE**. REGARDING REVELATION 20:15, Hunt asks “How could that happen through the torture of being thrown into the Lake of Fire? Will Hitler be in a hotter section? But how could physical bodies suffer greater or lesser heat in the split second of consumption? And how could degrees of physical torture

distinguish between sins of so many different kinds and the motivation behind each?” Again, these are not questions we should be asking. All we know is that the Bible says the unsaved will be raised and judged according to their works and cast into the lake of **FIRE**. We know that they will not be consumed in the fire but will be “tormented day and night for ever and ever.” That’s all we need to know. Our part is not to ask questions that aren’t answered in Scripture but simply to believe what the Bible plainly states. REGARDING LUKE 16:23-24, Hunt says that the rich man in hell was confused! He only *thought* he had a body that was in torments in the flame and a tongue that needed cooling! Hunt claims that “the rich man was apparently locked into that delusion for eternity.” In fact, the rich man is in a much better position to describe hell than Dave Hunt! He said that he had a body and a tongue. Of what nature is that pre-resurrection body? We don’t know and we don’t need to know. We only know that he was “tormented in this **FLAME**.” REGARDING 1 CORINTHIANS 3:13, Hunt compares the fire of the judgment seat of Christ with the fire of hell, but they are different things. Everything about the believer’s destiny is different from that of the unbeliever. Further, the fire of the judgment seat of Christ does not touch the believer himself; rather, it “tries every man’s work of what sort it

is.” There is a great attack today on the biblical doctrine of hell fire. Many others have denied it, including John Paul II, Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, Clark Pinnock, Neil Punt, Kenneth Kantzer, John Stott, and J.I. Packer. Of course, the Seventh-day Adventist and Jehovah’s Witness cults deny it. No one can understand this doctrine. It is far beyond human comprehension. It is doubtless the most difficult doctrine in Scripture, but since the Bible says the unbeliever’s punishment is eternal fire, I refuse to question it. Fifteen times in the New Testament, Hell is described in terms of fire. “the **FIRE** is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48), “**FIRE**” (Mat. 5:22; 18:9), “everlasting **FIRE**” (Mat. 18:8; 25:41), “**FIRE** unquenchable” (Luke 3:17), “this **FLAME**” (Lk. 16:24), “furnace of **FIRE**” (Mat. 13:42,50), “eternal **FIRE**” (Jude 7), “**FIRE** and brimstone” (Rev. 14:10; 20:10; 21:8). “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).



## WILLOW CREEK CONFERENCE FEATURES EMERGING CHURCH HERETICS

Willow Creek's Shift 2008 Student Ministries Leadership Conference this month featured at least three emerging church heretics, including Brian McLaren. McLaren rejects the infallible inspiration of the Bible, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell fire. He says the Bible is "not a look-it-up encyclopedia of timeless moral truths, but the unfolding narrative of God at work" (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 190). He says that it is wrong and Pharisaical to look upon the Bible as "God's encyclopedia, God's rule book, God's answer book" (*A New Kind of Christian*, p. 52). McLaren has "a strong conviction that THE EXCLUSIVE, HELL-ORIENTED GOSPEL IS NOT THE WAY FORWARD" (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 120, f. 48). McLaren mocks the "fundamentalist expectations" of an imminent return of Christ with its attendant judgments (p. 305), calling this "pop-Evangelical eschatology" (p. 267). McLaren epitomizes the emerging church's radical ecumenism by calling himself "evangelical, post-protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/Calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, Methodist, catholic, green, incarnational, emergent" (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, subtitle to the book). The fact that these various doctrinal positions are contradictory and non-reconcilable does not bother this new emergent thinker *one iota*. Willow Creek is very influential. It is a megachurch that is located west of Chicago, and it is also a network of more than 12,000 churches that share the same philosophy. The senior pastor, Bill Hybels, is one of the most popular church growth gurus. Willow Creek is behind most of the foolish "sex emphasis" church programs that we examined in the article "Sexy Churches."

## Willow Creek Conference Features Pastor With a Worldly Philosophy

Willow Creek's Shift 2008 conference this month featured Dan Kimball as one of the main speakers. He spoke on themes covered in his book *They Like Jesus, but Not the Church* (Zondervan, 2007), and the book was listed at the Willow Creek web site as a recommended resource. Kimball is opposed to "people who are always saying negative things about the world" (p. 191). He says, "We should be telling people about Jesus and his saving grace rather than judging and condemning them" (p. 106). He sympathizes with unbelievers who "fear that organized religion will try to control how they think, dress, and act" (p. 75). He says we should listen to unbelievers when they criticize us and quotes one who says, "I don't see the point of having to add on all these organized rules like the church leaders think you should do" (p. 74). Kimball tells about an unbeliever he met at a gym who was surprised that he, a pastor, appreciated filthy, rebellious rock groups such as the Cure, the Smiths, Siouxsie, and the Banshees. Kimball explained: "She said there was no way that a pastor would ever have liked the Smiths or the Cure, and she was shocked because I seemed normal and not at all what she thought a Christian and especially a pastor would be like" (p. 26). By just "hanging out" with unbelievers and by loving secular rock & roll groups and by not condemning sin in a plain manner and not warning of the dire consequences of unbelief, Kimball appears "normal" to unbelievers, meaning normal after a worldly definition. He is a *cool* Christian because he loves many of the same wicked things that the world loves and he isn't "judgmental" and "negative." Kimball criticizes Biblicist Christians who have strong opinions on things such as "the role of women in the church, what type of music to listen to, and which Bible version to use" (p. 54). He says it's wrong

for churches to be judgmental about things such as music, smoking, drinking, and dress, and it's wrong to tell homosexuals that unless they change they will go to hell (pp. 98, 99). This man is a rebel. The Bible teaches that every evil thing in the world is to be rejected (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:11; Titus 2:11-12; James 1:27; 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). We are not to be conformed to any of its unholy ways, and the standard by which the world is to be measured is God's Word. Everything pertaining to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is to be rejected, and that covers a lot of territory in this sin-cursed world! We are to apply this standard to fashion, music, literature, art, movies, photography, you name it. Everything in this world is to be weighed by God's holy standard and everything evil is to be rejected. And according to Ephesians 5:11, not only is the believer to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he is also responsible to reprove them. That is the very thing that Dan Kimball and his Willow Creek buddies consider "judgmental" and hateful.



***Witness or weirdness...***

This car was spotted on the street in Orlando, Florida. It mixes Bible verses and various admonitions with small statuettes, includes the Geico gekko. Hmm.



## 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.