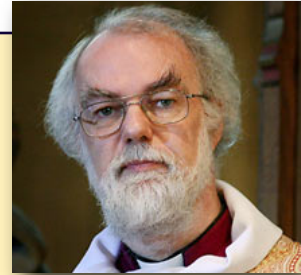


Friday Church News Notes

A Great End-Time Blending

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A great end-time blending is in process throughout Christianity and beyond to the religious world at large. Fundamentalists are affiliating with Evangelicals; Evangelicals are affiliating with Roman Catholics; and Catholics are affiliating with all the pagan religions. Richard Galentino's new book *Hail Mary and Rhythmic Breathing* (Paulist Press, 2008) is an example. Galentino merges Hindu yoga with the Catholic Rosary. The original title was *Hail Mary and the Art of Yoga Breathing*. The merging of Catholicism with non-Christian religions has been picking up steam each decade since the Second Vatican Council, which said: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. ... The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions ... they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men" (*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, Oct. 28, 1965). This opened the door for the interfaith dialogue that has resulted, not in the Catholicization of paganism but in the further paganization of Catholicism. The call for interfaith dialogue has been repeated forcefully by every pope since Paul VI. One of the segments of the Roman Catholic Church that has responded in a big way is the Catholic monastic orders (Trappist, Benedictine, Franciscan, etc.). Since the 1970s they have developed intimate ties with their counterparts in pagan religions, and they have discovered that contemplative mysticism is an effective bridge for interfaith unity. In recent decades many Catholic priests have become Hindus and Buddhists, while remaining Catholics. The very influential Trappist monk Thomas Merton claimed to be both a Buddhist and a Christian. Paulist priest Thomas Ryan took a sabbatical in India in 1991 and was initiated into yoga and Buddhist meditation. Today he is a certified teacher of Kripalu yoga. In our new book *Contemplative Spirituality: A Powerful Ecumenical Bond* and in the article "Second Pagan Invasion into the Roman Catholic Church" we provide extensive documentation for this phenomenon. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY SUPPORTIVE OF "FAITHFUL" HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, believes that "faithful" homosexual relationships are not forbidden by Scripture and can "reflect the love of God" in a way that is comparable to marriage. This is what he stated in correspondence with a psychologist eight years ago ("Rowan Williams," *Times of London*, Aug. 7, 2008). Williams said that he reached this conclusion when he was Dean of Clare College, Cambridge, in the 1980s. He first published it in an essay in 1989 entitled "The Body's Grace." The fact is that the Bible plainly states that sexual relationships apart from marriage are sinful (Hebrews 13:4) and it always defines marriage as a union of a man and a woman.

HIGH PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN BRITAIN SUPPORT KILLING IN NAME OF RELIGION

The following is excerpted from "One-third of UK Muslim Students Back Jihad," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 28, 2008: "Nearly a third of British Muslim students polled in a new report to be published on Monday said that killing in the name of religion could be justified. The report by the London-based Center for Social Cohesion (CfSC), entitled 'Islam on Campus: A Survey of UK Student Opinion,' showed that 32 percent of Muslim

students said killing in the name of religion could be justified, while 60% of active members of on-campus Islamic societies said the same. Only 2% of non-Muslims polled felt this

way. ... Forty percent of Muslim students polled supported the introduction of Sharia into British law for Muslims, and a third supported the introduction of a worldwide caliphate based on Sharia law; 58% of active members of Islamic societies supported the idea. ... 'These findings are deeply alarming,' said CfSC researcher Hannah Stuart, one of the report's authors. 'Students in higher education are the future leaders of their communities. Yet significant numbers of them appear to hold beliefs which contravene liberal, democratic values. In addition, there are signs of growing religious segregation on campus. These results are deeply embarrassing for those who have said that there is no extremism in British universities.'"



PERSECUTION

CHINESE GOVERNMENT INCREASES PERSECUTION AGAINST CHRISTIANS

The Christian Aid Association has reported at least 70 instances of persecution against unregistered house churches in the five months leading up to the start of the Olympics (<http://chinaaid.org/2008/08/04/report-issued-concerning-china%e2%80%99s-pre-olympic-crackdown-on-house-churches/>). The organization says, "It is hoped that the report will shed light on the near daily persecutions that occur in China and uncover the truth from the hypocritical host of this year's Olympic Games." Communist authorities in Beijing have forced house churches to sign a covenant agreeing to shut down from July 20 to September 20 ("Beijing's Authorities Force House Church Leaders to Sign Covenant," China Aid, July 28). In February of this year, 21 house church leaders were sent to labor camp at the same time. They were part of a group of 249 leaders that was arrested last December at a training program. The rest paid fines and were jailed for a few days to a few weeks, but 21 (17 men and 4 women) were accused of being "evil cult" members and sentenced from one to three years. On August 6 and 7, U.S. pro-life activists were arrested in Tiananmen Square when they tried to protest China's human rights abuses, including imprisonment of Christians and forced abortions ("Christian Protesters Dragged from Tiananmen Square," *The Guardian*, Aug. 7, 2008). Others were arrested for displaying Tibet independence banners. All of this is contrary to China's own constitution and its international agreements, but history instructs us never to believe a communist party.

PERSECUTION INCREASES IN RUSSIA UNDER PUTIN

The following is excerpted from "At Expense of All Others, Putin Picks a Church," *New York Times*, April 24, 2008: "It was not long after a Methodist church put down roots here [Stary Oskol, 300 miles south of Moscow] that the troubles began. First came visits from agents of the F.S.B., a successor to the K.G.B., who evidently saw a threat in a few dozen searching souls who liked to huddle in cramped apartments to read the Bible and, perhaps, drink a little tea. Local officials then labeled the church a 'sect.' Finally, last month, they shut it down. There was a time after the fall of Communism when small Protestant congregations blossomed here in southwestern Russia, when a church was almost as easy to set up as a general store. Today, this industrial region has become emblematic of the suppression of religious freedom under President Vladimir V. Putin. Just as the government has tightened control over political life, so, too, has it intruded in matters of faith. The Kremlin's surrogates in many areas have turned the Russian Orthodox Church into a de facto official religion, warding off other Christian denominations that seem to offer the most significant competition for worshipers. They have all but banned proselytizing by Protestants and discouraged Protestant worship through a variety of harassing measures, according to dozens of interviews with government officials and religious leaders across Russia. This close alliance between the government and the Russian Orthodox Church has become a defining characteristic of Mr. Putin's tenure, a mutually reinforcing choreography that is usually described here as working 'in symphony.' ... On local television last month, the city's chief Russian Orthodox priest, who is a confidant of the region's most powerful politicians, gave a sermon that was repeated every few hours. His theme: Protestant heretics. 'We deplore those who are led astray--those Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, evangelicals, Pentecostals and many others who cut Christ's robes like bandits, who are like the soldiers who crucified Christ, who ripped apart Christ's holy coat,' declared the priest, the Rev. Aleksei D. Zorin. Such language is familiar to Protestants in Stary Oskol, who number about 2,000 in a city of 225,000."



Designed by Nature

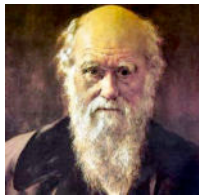
Secular media reporters, who believe in evolution, frequently use the term “design” in reference to nature. For example, a report on a new camera begins, “Borrowing one of nature’s best designs, U.S. scientists have built an eye-shaped camera using standard sensor materials...” (“Eye Spy,” Reuters, Aug. 6, 2008). Evolutionists unconsciously speak in these terms because of the obvious design that we find on every hand. The eye is such an amazing and complex instrument that man, even in these vaunted days of technological advance, cannot even begin to replicate it. But for an evolutionist to speak of “nature’s design” is a strange and impossible statement. Nature itself has no ability to design anything, unless Nature is a synonym for God. If Darwinian evolution is true there can be no design. Lacking an intelligent Director, how could evolution be anything but blind chance? The majority of evolutionists vehemently deny that evolution is the product of an intelligent designer. Thus, they must stop using terms like “nature’s design.” If the eye was “designed” then there is a Designer; and that could only be Almighty God, because it would have to be Someone with incredible intelligence and mind-boggling power after the fashion of the God described in the Bible.

And if there is an Almighty God capable of designing and producing such an amazing universe, that is powerful evidence that the Bible is true and man is a fallen sinner and salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ. Either the universe was designed, or it wasn’t. There can be no half-way position.



Did Darwin Recant Evolution on His Deathbed?

The following is excerpted from “Was Darwin a Christian,” ChristianAnswers.net: “In the years following Darwin’s death in 1882 several stories surfaced that he had undergone a death-bed conversion and renounced evolution. The best known is that attributed to a Lady Hope, who claimed she had visited a bedridden Charles at Down House in the autumn of 1881. ... This story first



appeared in print as a 521-word article in the American Baptist journal, the *Watchman Examiner*, and since then has been reprinted in many books, magazines and tracts. The main problem with these stories is that they were denied by members of Darwin’s family. Francis Darwin wrote to Thomas Huxley on February 8, 1887, that a report that Charles had

renounced evolution on his deathbed was ‘false and without any kind of foundation,’ and in 1917 Francis affirmed that he had ‘no reason whatever to believe that he [his father] ever altered his agnostic point of view.’ Charles’s daughter (Henrietta Litchfield) wrote on page 12 of the London evangelical weekly, *The Christian*, dated February 23, 1922, ‘I was present at his deathbed. Lady Hope was not present during his last illness, or any illness. I believe he never even saw her, but in any case she had no influence over him in any department of thought or belief. He never recanted any of his scientific views, either then or earlier.’

Darwin’s biographer, Dr. James Moore, produced a 218-page book examining what he calls *The Darwin Legend*. ... Moore concludes that Lady Hope probably did visit Charles between Wednesday, September 28 and Sunday, October 2, 1881, almost certainly when Francis and Henrietta were absent, but his wife, Emma, probably was present. He describes Lady Hope as ‘a skilled raconteur [storyteller], able to summon up poignant scenes and conversations, and embroider them with sentimental spirituality.’ He points out that her published story contained some authentic details as to time and place, but also factual inaccuracies--Charles was not bedridden six months before he died, and the summer house was far too small to accommodate 30 people. The most important aspect of the story, however, is that it does not say that Charles either renounced evolution or embraced Christianity. He merely is said to have expressed concern over the fate of his youthful speculations and to have spoken in favor of a few people’s attending a religious meeting. The alleged recantation/conversion is embellishment that others have either read into the story or made up for themselves. Moore calls such doings ‘holy fabrication!’ ... While the spiritual journey of a Christian is a journey out of darkness into Christ’s marvelous light, that of Charles Darwin was a slippery slide out of Gospel light (although not saving spiritual sight) into the sheer ‘blackness of darkness for ever.’”

JOEL HEMPHILL DENIES CHRIST'S DEITY

The following is excerpted from "Gospel Artist Joel Hemphill: Jesus Is Not God," Apprising Ministries, July 18, 2008: "Joel Hemphill is a noted singer-songwriter, evangelist, musician, and author. ... He has penned over 350 songs, many of which became Gospel Music classics. ... Along with his singing family, Hemphill is the recipient of eight Dove Awards. ... They appeared regularly on the Gaither Homecoming videos. ... In his 2007 book *To God Be The Glory: Exalting the Bible View of God* Hemphill clearly denies the Deity of Christ. ... He writes: "The focus of my book isn't what Jesus is not, but rather who God the Father is. God is immortal--Jesus was not. ... He is perfect, sinless man, but man nevertheless! ... A God-man could not redeem us. ... He is the second Adam, not the first God-man. ... The incarnation as taught by modern Christianity is a fable." Hemphill is a member of the Southern Gospel Hall of Fame.



Heresy Comes by Carelessness

"Each generation of Christians must look to its beliefs. While truth itself is unchanging, the minds of men are porous vessels out of which truth can leak and into which error may seep to dilute the truth they contain. The human heart is heretical by nature and runs to error as naturally as a garden to weeds. All a man, a church or a denomination needs to guarantee deterioration of doctrine is to take everything for granted and do nothing. The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness; the church or denomination that grows careless on the highway of truth will before long find itself astray, bogged down in some mud flat from which there is no escape. In every field of human thought and activity accuracy is considered a virtue. To err ever so slightly is to invite serious loss, if not death itself. Only in religious thought is faithfulness to truth looked upon as a fault. When men deal with things earthly and temporal they demand truth; when they come to the consideration of things heavenly and eternal they hedge and hesitate as if truth either could not be discovered or didn't matter anyway" (A.W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*).

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.