

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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FALWELL SAYS CHURCH STANDING TALL IN AMERICA

Friday Church News Notes, Dec. 10, 2004, <http://www.wayoflife.org>
Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and head of Liberty Baptist University, believes America is on the verge of a spiritual awakening (*Religion Today*, Dec. 1). He wants to build on this with the newly formed political action group The Faith and Values Coalition. Falwell believes "the church of Jesus Christ is now standing tall" and "if we will press the battle now--in the next four, eight, or twelve years, we can bring this nation back to the faith of our fathers." He said America has been undergoing "a quiet spiritual awakening" during the past two decades, and points to the popularity of the *Left Behind* books, the rise of CCM, and the increase of those who describe themselves as evangelicals. From where I sit, the only spiritual awakening discernable in America is one built upon spiritual compromise,

heresy, and idolatry. CCM is not spiritual revival; it is worldliness. The increase of "evangelicals" is of no consequence because the definition of evangelical has become meaningless. Today, "evangelical" describes a Roman Catholic praying to Mary or a Fuller Seminary president denying verbal inspiration or Wheaton College inviting a cultic Mormon professor to talk about heretical C.S. Lewis or Cornerstone College hosting a rock & roll dance party or someone falling on the floor and calling it a miracle or muttering nonsense and calling it tongues or a movie about Jesus based on the visions of a Catholic mystic. Seeing that this type of thing is not on the periphery of evangelicalism but at its very heart, on what biblical authority do we describe today's evangelicalism as spiritual revival? Independent Baptists, take heed. Jerry Falwell: the blind leading the blind.



Falwell says the the rise in the popularity of Christian rock is a sure sign that America is getting better. Above, Christian rockers Delirious.

LESBIAN PASTOR DEFROCKED BY UNITED METHODIST COURT



Rev. Beth Stroud embraces her counsel, Dr. J. Dennis Williams, while co-counsel, Alan Symonette, Esq. looks on after verdict is read.

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Lesbian pastor Elizabeth Stroud was defrocked by a church court on December 2 after being convicted of engaging "in practices that are incompatible with Christian teachings." By a vote of 7-6 she was stripped of her ministerial credentials. Stroud has been the associate pastor of First United Methodist Church in Germantown, Pennsylvania, since 1999. Senior pastor Fred Day expressed his sorrow at the trial's outcome. Church law bars "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals" from the ministry, but the key is "self-avowed." There are many homosexuals in the United Methodist (UMC) ministry, but they must remain quiet. In Stroud's case, she announced to her bishop last year that she was living in a lesbian relationship. In 1987 a UMC court in New



Stroud and her partner, Chris Paige, stand outside the gymnasium where the trial was held to make a brief statement after the case went to the jury.

LESBIAN (Continued)

Hampshire ruled against lesbian Rose Mary Denman. After she was suspended (but not defrocked) she joined the Unitarian Universalists. In 2003 a UMC court in Washington acquitted lesbian Karen Dammann. In 1998 UMC pastor Jimmy Creech was acquitted for presiding over a “same-sex union ceremony.” A meeting of Methodist “clergywomen” in August 1987 exposed the depth of immorality in the denomination. More than half of the participants expressed their solidarity with lesbian ministers and statements from 25 anonymous lesbian United Methodist ministers were read to the gathering (*National & International Religion Report*, Sept. 7, 1987). The situation has only gotten worse in the 17 years since then. Stroud will remain a church member in good standing and in fact will continue as “a lay employee.” A denomination that allows church members to live in open adultery and fornication may as well allow them to preach. The trials are a vain exercise in denominational politics.

THE SADDLEBACK CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH: SHALLOW and HERETICAL

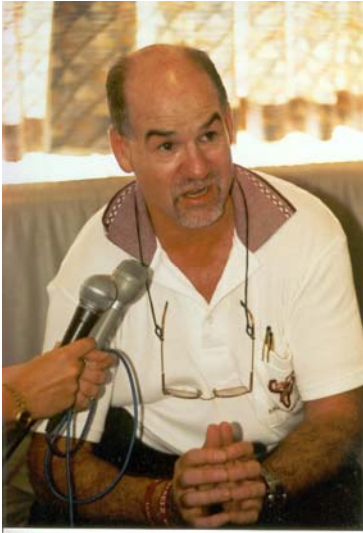
Friday Church News Notes, Dec. 10, 2004, <http://www.wayoflife.org>
Rick Warren of Purpose Drive Church and Life fame loves to simplify the Christian life and ministry. This is evident in Saddleback Church's statement of faith. Consider this excerpt from the statement on “Who is Jesus?” -- “Jesus Christ is God's Son and an equal of the Father. He has existed from the beginning of time, yet lived on earth during the first century A.D.” This is heresy. Christ had no beginning; He is the eternal God and Creator of all things. Consider the statement on “What is Salvation?” -- “Our disobedient nature has eternally separated us from our Creator. No matter how hard we try, we can never earn our way back into God's presence. Our only hope is to trust Jesus as God's provision for our disobedience.” This statement is so shallow and insufficient that it is difficult to know where to begin, but briefly, salvation is much more than a vague, undefined trusting “Jesus as God's provision for our disobedience.” Heretics on every hand could fit their theology into that. They say we are saved by Jesus' life or His example or His suffering in general. Notice that there is no mention of the death, burial, and resurrection. In fact, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is not even referenced in the Saddleback statement of faith. No mention of the blood. No mention of repentance. The Saddleback paraphrase of the gospel is no gospel at all. The shallowness of this type of evangelism is why I could sit next to a church member at Saddleback on a research visit last year and have him tell me that he has always been a Christian. This was in response to my question, “When were you born again?”



Rick Warren has taken contemporary and casual to a new level. Shown here in the Hawaiian shirt he wore for his Sunday morning message.

Photo by David Cloud

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER



Graham Power

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Global Day of Prayer is another of the international ecumenical adventures that Christians in this age are so proud of. It is the outgrowth of a charismatic “vision.” In February 2002 Graham Power claimed that God showed him that Africa would become the “light to the world.” The goal is “transforming Africa through Unity and Prayer,” which would involve Christians “of all denominations,” first in Africa and then around the world. The Global Day of Prayer claims that “soon, the whole earth will be affected.” Prayer is crucial, but this Global Day of Prayer is an unscriptural delusion. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ is not to transform society but to preach the Gospel and establish Bible-believing churches (Mat. 28:19-20). The apostles understood this, and there is no record that they set out to transform the Roman Empire. Further, there is no answered prayer where there is open disobedience to God's Word, and an ecumenical venture that ignores doctrine for the sake of unity is most blatant disobedience.

HAYFORD, HYBELS, RUTH GRAHAM TO SPEAK FOR SCHULLER

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The January 24-27, 2005, Institute for Successful Church

Leadership, sponsored by Robert Schuller, will feature Jack

Hayford, Bill Hybels, and Ruth Graham. The theme is “Finding and

Fulfilling Your Mission: Proven Principles for Success.” Anyone

who would preach for Robert Schuller, or even appear on the same

platform with him, is a deeply disobedient compromiser--at best (2

John 9-11). (Ravi Zacharias spoke for Schuller in April 18, 2004;

Rick Warren preached at Schuller's Institute in 1997; and Schuller

received a standing ovation when he spoke at the National

Association of Evangelicals meeting in March 2004.) Schuller

reinterprets the doctrines of the Word of God to conform to his

heretical self-esteem philosophy. To Schuller, sin is “any act or

thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-

esteem” (*Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, p. 14). His christ is

“self-esteem incarnate” (p. 135). His new birth is to be “changed from a negative to a positive self-image” (p.

68). His hell “is the loss of pride that naturally follows separation from God” (p. 14). To Schuller, the most

destructive thing is to call men lost sinners and thereby injure their self-esteem (*Christianity Today*, Oct. 5,

1984). Schuller is a universalist who believes that all people are the children of God. The fact that so many

“evangelical” leaders treat Schuller as a brother in Christ is evidence of their own spiritual blindness. Christ



Schuller with former Playboy playmate of the month, Corinne Entratter Sidney (aka Lari Laine)

warns us not to follow blind leaders. “And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14). (For more about Schuller see “Evangelicals and Robert Schuller” at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/evangelicalsschuller.htm>)



Graham, Hayford, Hybels (left to right)

NEW CCM ALBUM FEATURES SECULAR ROCK SONG



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Nicole Mullen's new album has the song "Everyday People" by the rock band Sly & The Family Stone. I remember very well when Sly and his "family" blasted on the scene in 1967, because that was the year I graduated from high school and launched full time into a career of living the rock and roll lifestyle to the hilt, enflamed by the likes of Sly Stone. In my case, God had mercy upon me and saved me at age 23 and I escaped the path of destruction on which I was bent, but Sly's story hasn't turned out as well (even though he grew up in a Christian home and started his recording career at age five with the single "On the Battlefield for My Lord"). Since the end of the 1960s he has been heavily involved with drugs and has displayed a "duel personality." An article at the slystonemusic.com web site reports: "Rumours of isolation and eccentricity have followed Sly's legend over the years. He lived reclusively in Los Angeles, and reports of his mental and physical health were generally not encouraging..." For Contemporary Christian musicians to promote secular rock music is inexcusable. The Bible warns, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). They will have to give an account for every person who follows their lead and becomes spiritually and morally polluted by swimming in the filthy waters of today's pop music.

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? Are you in the perfect will of God for your life and bearing fruit for His glory? "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).

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