

Friday Church News Notes

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***THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE* IS NOTHING BUT A SILLY FAIRY TALE**

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C.S. Lewis's fantasy, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, made its appearance as a feature Hollywood movie on December 9 and took in \$187 million worldwide in the first ten days. There is much hubbub about the movie in evangelical circles. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of Southern Baptist Seminary, is typical in his claim that Lewis's fiction "stands as a powerful story with clear allusions to the person and work of Christ, to the reality of human sin, to humanity's desperate need for redemption and to God's ultimate victory in Christ" ("Aslan Is on the Move," Baptist Press, Dec. 10). I could not disagree more strongly. Though I have not seen the movie, I have read the book, and it is nothing more than a silly fairy tale. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, one of seven stories called *The Chronicles of Narnia*, is about four children who enter a magical country called Narnia through a closet. It is perpetually winter in Narnia, because the land is under the spell of a witch. A prophecy predicted that two boys and two girls would come to the land and become the rightful kings and queens. The great lion Aslan, supposedly a Christ figure, dies and rises from the dead to make the defeat of the witch and the fulfillment of the prophecy possible. What about the alleged Christian aspects of this story? At best, any biblical doctrine that is presented in Lewis's Narnia is vague and distorted and overlaid with heathen mythology. The defenders of Lewis's fiction argue that the Bible uses parables to present truth, but Lewis's fiction is filled with unscriptural things that one will never find in a biblical parable. Christ's parables did not contain a mixture of truth and paganism, but Lewis's stories unblushingly intertwine a few vague biblical themes with pagan mythology: nymphs, fauns (part man and part goat), dwarfs, centaurs (part man and part horse), Dryads (tree-women), and Naiads (well-women). All of these creatures are depicted as serving Aslan. Lewis presents the deeply heretical idea of good magic. He calls Aslan's power "Deep Magic" and Aslan's father's power as "Emperor's Magic." He introduces the vile pagan god Bacchus and his orgies as a desirable thing that was part of Narnia's past before the White Witch worked her spell. He presents the myth of "Father Christmas" as if it were innocent and wholesome. He teaches that Adam's first wife was not Eve but rather a woman named Lilith and that she was a witch. As for the heart of the story, which is the death and resurrection of the lion Aslan, at best it is a corrupt depiction of Christ's salvation. Aslan dies and sheds his blood not to satisfy God's law but to satisfy the "Deep Power" and the White Witch. This confusion is a reflection of Lewis's heretical stand on the atonement. He said, "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has SOMEHOW put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. ... Any theories we build up as to how Christ's death did all of this are, in my view, quite secondary..." (*Mere Christianity*, HarperSanFrancisco edition, 2001, pp. 54, 55, 56). This is heresy. God has revealed exactly what Christ did and what the atonement means. It is not a matter of theorizing or believing one "formula" over against another. The Bible says our salvation is a matter of a propitiation, a ransom, whereby our sins were washed away by Christ's bloody death, which was offered as a payment to satisfy God's holy Law. As for Aslan's resurrection, Lewis calls it "more magic." Friends, I would urge you in the strongest way to beware of C.S. Lewis and of the deluded evangelical world that glorifies him.



SERVING GOD AND MAMMON: THE MERGING OF EVANGELICAL AMERICA AND CORPORATE AMERICA

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An article in *The Economist* for December 3, 2005, analyzed “the reconciliation between religious America and corporate America.” This merger has occurred because of the weakness and deep compromise of American Christianity and the vast amount of money that is spent today on “religious products,” an estimated \$6.8 billion in 2003. The “Left Behind” novels alone have raked in \$650 million (“Onward, Christian Shoppers,” *The Economist*, Dec. 3, 2005). Rick Warren's “Purpose Driven Life” is the best-selling hardcover book in American history, with 25 million copies sold. The secular world has not been slow to cash in on this bonanza, beginning in the late 1980s with the purchase of Zondervan by Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins. (Zondervan thus became a part the same publishing house as Regan books, the publisher of “How to Make Love Like a Porn Star,” and Avon books, publisher of “The Satanic Bible.”) Other secular corporations have followed suit. The same trend has occurred in Christian music. For example, Warner Music Group, a division of AOL Time Warner, owns Myrrh Records. Time Warner, who also owns Atlantic, Elektra, London-Sire, Reprise, and Warner Bros. Records, and has on its roster such vile secular rock artists as Green Day, Madonna, and Red Hot Chili Peppers. Zomba Music owns Brentwood-Benson Music, which has the world's largest Christian music publishing catalog. Thus, a large percentage of the money paid to license Christian music today goes into the coffers of a large secular corporation. Zomba also owns such sensual acts as Britney Spears, 'N Sync, and the Backstreet Boys, and others whose names alone are too vile to mention. That great lover of God, Chevrolet, sponsored one of Michael W. Smith's worship tours, and those giants of the Christian faith, Ford, Coca-Cola, and Bank of America, sponsored T.D. Jakes' megafest this summer. The trend is being repeated now in Hollywood, following the breakaway success of Mel Gibson's “The Passion of the Christ” movie. The Disney Corporation, which has organized “gay days” at Disney World, has jumped on the religion bandwagon by producing C.S. Lewis's “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,” and gullible evangelicals are thrilled. The Word of God is very clear about these unholy alliances. Can you imagine Paul and Barnabas seeking the world's sponsorship for their missionary journey! “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (2 Cor. 6:14-15).



PASTOR'S SON DEVELOPS ONLINE GAMBLING ADDICTION, THEN ROBS BANK



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Nineteen-year-old Greg Hogan of Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, developed an online gambling addiction, ran up a \$5,000 debt, then robbed a bank on December 9 in an attempt to settle the score. He is now facing the possibility of 20 years in prison.

Hogan is the well-liked son of a Baptist pastor. Though the young man is to blame for every step of this sad and sorry affair, the proliferation of online poker and other games is doubtless a factor in his downfall, “William N. Thompson, professor of public policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, says the poker craze is here. What used to be played by middle-age men in smoky backroom games is now being played by college

and even high school students. If players can't find a live game, online poker is just a mouse click away, and they need only a computer and a credit card, as long as the credit limit hasn't been maxed out. The game has become so popular that ESPN, Fox Sports Net and Bravo spend hours of television programming on poker, and the Travel Channel's 'World Poker Tour' is its highest-rated show, with more than 1.2 million viewers a week” (*The Morning Call*, Allentown, Penn, Dec. 14). The Internet is an amazing resource for information and commerce and it facilitates the preaching of the Word of God to a wide audience, but great dangers lurk there and God's people must take precautions against cyber temptations as they do against the temptations found in the “real” world. “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me” (Psalm 101:3). “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

POPE MAKES PILGRIMAGE TO MARY SHRINE AND HONORS MARY AS SINLESS

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On December 8, in celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Benedict XVI made a pilgrimage to the Mary shrine in Rome's Piazza di Spagna and venerated the statue there. The Pope said: “I deliver to the celestial mother of the Redeemer the anxieties and hopes of humanity.” He prayed to Mary to bless men with her presence “in every moment of our existence.” Obviously he believes that Mary is divine, for he is attributing characteristics to her and asking her to do things that only Almighty God can do. This Mary statue was erected by Pope Pius IX in 1854, the year that he declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, blasphemously claiming that Mary was conceived without sin. Earlier in the day on Dec. 8, during the papal mass, Pope Benedict recalled that during the Vatican II Council in the 1960s all of the bishops rose up spontaneously and applauded when they heard the words “Mariam Sanctissimam declaramus Matrem Ecclesiae,” meaning “we declare Mary Most Holy as Mother of the Church.”



A flower wreath is used to decorate the statue commemorating the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

ROMAN CATHOLICS PERSECUTE PENTECOSTALS IN MEXICO

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The Roman Catholic majority in the village of San Nicolas outside the city of Ixmiquilpan, Mexico, are persecuting the Pentecostal minority. They used a backhoe to cut off Nicolasa Vargas' water when she and her husband did not attend the annual fiesta honoring St. Nicolas, the village's patron saint. When the Pentecostal congregation purchased land for a new church, the Catholic leaders blocked the road to the property with a bulldozer. Genaro Gutierrez, a high school teacher and one of the village leaders, said, "We told the evangelicals that they won't be holding any more meetings here" ("One Faith Fits All -- or Else," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 15). This is only one example of the Roman Catholic persecution of Protestants and Baptists in Mexico. The *Los Angeles Times* observes, "From central Mexican villages like San Nicolas to the southern region of Chiapas, the steady growth of evangelical congregations has produced an angry backlash, with some Catholic lay leaders using their control of local communal assemblies to enforce religious traditions." The non-Catholics complain that communal leaders in rural Mexican towns and villages act like "dictatorial caudills" (strongmen). Those who do not attend the ceremonies venerating the Mary idols or who refuse to go on pilgrimages to Mary shrines are fined and harassed. Sheep do not harass and injure other sheep; it is wolves that engage in such tactics.



Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iniguez leads the Archdiocese of Guadalajara in Mexico.

RUNDOWN ON RECENT ISLAMIC PERSECUTION



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Twice this month, large gatherings of more than 2,500 Muslims in a Pakistani mosque have called for the elimination of Christianity. The meetings were held at Sangla Hill, the same location in which churches, schools, and Christian homes were attacked on November 12. Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported that Islamic leaders used loudspeakers to urge Muslims to rise up and eliminate Christians (Assist News Service, Dec. 13). They also called on the government to release 88 Muslims who have been arrested in connection with the Sangla Hill attacks. In Iran, on Nov. 28, Muslims stabbed to death an Iranian convert to

Christianity and the pastor of a small church. Ghorban Tori, 50, was kidnapped from his home, brutally murdered, and his body left in front of his house for his loved ones to find. Muslim "extremists" had been threatening to kill him if he did not stop preaching Christ. He is the fifth Protestant pastor assassinated in Iran by unidentified killers in the past 11 years. Iranian intelligence officials have recently arrested and tortured 10 other Christians and threatened all of the house fellowships. The new president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has called for the destruction of Israel.

EDUCATING PEOPLE UP TO THE BIBLE



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The following is an excerpt from Leland Ryken's *The Word of God in English*:

“Instead of lowering the Bible to a lowest common denominator, why should we not educate people to rise to the level required to experience the Bible in its full richness and exaltation? Instead of expecting the least from Bible readers, we should expect the most from them. The greatness of the Bible requires the best, not the least. ... The most difficult of modern English translations -- the King James -- is used most by segments of our society that are relatively uneducated as defined by formal education. ... research has shown repeatedly that people are capable of rising to surprising and even amazing abilities to read and master a subject that is important to them. ... Previous generations did not find the King James Bible, with its theological heaviness, beyond their comprehension. Nor do readers and congregations who continue to use the King James translation find it incomprehensible. Neither of my parents finished grade school, and they learned to understand the King James Bible from their reading of it and the preaching they heard

based on it. We do not need to assume a theologically inept readership for the Bible. Furthermore, if modern readers are less adept at theology than they can and should be, it is the task of the church to educate them, not to give them Bible translations that will permanently deprive them of the theological content that is really present in the Bible” (pp. 107, 109).

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.