

Friday Church News Notes

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST LEADER CRITICIZES FUNDAMENTALISM

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I have long said that the central problem of the Southern Baptist Convention is its commitment to New Evangelicalism, and this is evident from a recent article by R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity" (Baptist Press, August 23, 2006), Mohler divides biblical truth into three categories: First-order, which are "those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith" (in this category Mohler lists only the incarnation, humanity and deity of Christ, the Trinity, justification by faith, and the authority of Scripture); Second-order, which are things "that believing Christians may disagree on though this disagreement will create significant boundaries" (he gives the examples of the mode of baptism and women pastors); and Third-order, which "are doctrines on which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship" (here Mohler lists eschatology and "any number of issues related to the interpretation of difficult texts or the understanding of matters of common disagreement"). While Mohler adds a caveat that "a structure of theological triage does not imply that Christians may take any biblical truth with less than full seriousness," he blatantly contradicts this statement by lumping many biblical truths into a "third-order" category and claiming that these particular truths should not be divisive. Mohler says that liberalism's error is "the refusal to admit that first-order theological issues even exist," while the error of fundamentalism "is the belief that all disagreements concern first-order doctrines." He says this results in Christians being "wrongly and harmfully divided." This is the typical New Evangelical position, and while it might sound reasonable it is nowhere supported by Scripture. Though we recognize that not everything in the Bible has equal weight, all has some weight and the division of biblical truth into second or third classes after the fashion of modern evangelicalism is artificial and man-made. The Lord Jesus Christ instructed the churches to teach the believers "to observe ALL things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:20). There is not a hint in Christ's teaching that some of His doctrine can be placed into a "third-order" category. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to keep the apostolic commandments "without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:14). This refers to the details of the New Testament faith and includes things such as church discipline, standards for pastors and deacons, restrictions to the woman's ministry, regulations pertaining to the exercise of spiritual gifts, separation from the world, separation from false teaching, and the interpretation of prophecy, all of which are clearly commanded in the apostolic epistles. Nowhere does Paul instruct his fellow preachers or the churches that a segment of biblical truth can be placed into a "third-order" category for the sake of unity. It is the Scripture itself that has made me a Fundamentalist and has led me to reject New Evangelicalism. Divisions created by a stand for biblical truth are not wrong.



ETERNAL WORD TELEVISION NETWORK IS 25 YEARS OLD



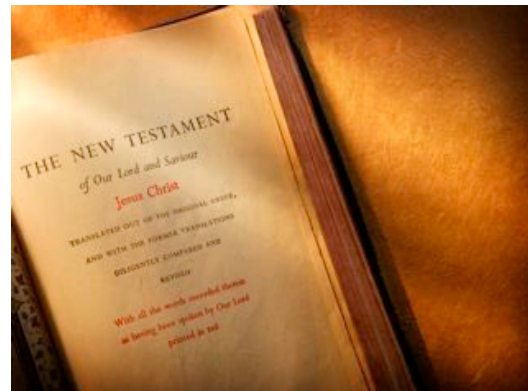
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The EWTN Global Catholic Network is 25 years old this year. It was founded in 1981 by "Mother" Mary Angelica, a nun of the cloistered order of Poor Clare Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. The network is available in 127 countries and has done much to promote Roman Catholicism. "Mother" Angelica is 83 years old and in poor health and no longer tapes the "Mother Angelica Live" programs, but she remains the matronly icon of the network. Many viewers have been deceived by her sincere and fervent demeanor and have been thus led into the arms of the harlot "church." Retired Birmingham police officer Johnny Lawrence, a lifelong "Protestant," converted to Catholicism after attending tapings of Mother Angelica's television show eleven years ago ("Catholic TV Network Celebrates Success," Associated Press, Aug. 13, 2006). Thousands of people visit the network's headquarters in central Alabama, in the midst of America's Bible Belt. Mary Ann Plastino-Charles, creative director at

EWTN, says, "A lot of people see this as hallowed ground." "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

THE BIBLE IS THE SOLE RULE FOR FAITH AND PRACTICE

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The concept of the Bible as the sole rule for the faith and practice is derived from verses such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The word "perfect" is defined in the passage itself. It does not refer to sinless perfection but to being "thoroughly furnished" in the will of God. Since the Bible is able to make the believer complete in the will of God, nothing else is needed, not extra-biblical visions or prophecies, not extra-biblical traditions or councils, not extra-biblical



science, not human philosophies, not miracles and mystical experiences. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 changed the entire course of my life in 1973 when I understood that the Bible alone is the infallible revelation God has given to men and I submitted to the Bible as the complete Word of God. Prior to that point in my life I was guided by a hodgepodge of philosophy and religion, a little Mao Tse Tung, a little Paramahansa Yogananda, a little Ayn Rand, a little Hermann Hesse, a little of the Southern Baptist Sunday School lessons from my childhood, and a lot of the Beatles and Bob Dylan and the Who and the Rolling Stones, combined with a heaping dose of my own self-willed opinions. On one glorious day in the summer of 1973 I turned my back on all of that to receive the Bible alone as my Guide in life and the blessed Jesus Christ of the Bible as my Lord and Saviour, and I have never regretted it, for I found satisfaction and rest for my soul.

PETER RUCKMAN, UFOS, AND DAFFY DUCK

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Peter Ruckman of Pensacola, Florida, has done more harm to the cause of the King James Bible than some of its enemies. That is due to his cultic beliefs and his strange, carnal spirit. According to one of his books, "Black Is Beautiful" (1996), UFOs are real, and if you doubt it you are an unbeliever. If Ruckman says two plus two equals five, and you don't agree, you are an unbelieving "jack leg" and a "bloated egotist." He believes the CIA has implanted brain transmitters in children, old people, blacks, and prisoners (p. 243) and operates underground alien breeding facilities (p. 256). He believes in blue aliens with blue blood (pp. 85, 86), black aliens with green blood (p. 244), and grey aliens with clear blood (pp. 310-11). He believes that Adam originally had water in his veins instead of blood (p. 185). He believes that the CIA flies around in space ships developed from technology gained when the government made a deal with aliens to allow them to kidnap children and use their organs as food and to experiment on U.S. citizens (pp. 291, 295-297). Ruckman does not use facts, he abuses them; and he often builds his case upon thin air, fables, and half-truths.



Consider one example of his reasoning. An old Bolivian legend tells of a non-human race that had webbed feet. Old comic books about Daffy Duck and Donald Duck depict creatures with webbed feet (p. 85). Voila! The legend must be true and Donald Duck must be a secret depiction of aliens!!!! For 33 years, since I was converted, my sole authority has been the King James Bible, and the bottom line here is that the Bible says nothing about UFOs and therefore it is not something I need to concern myself with (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The verses that Ruckman cites in support of UFOS are taken out of context and grossly misused, not remotely supporting such nonsense (e.g., Gen. 6:1-5; 2 Sam. 5:24; 2 Ki. 2:11; Isa. 14:29; Ezek. 1:4; Zech. 5:1-3). Ruckman

believes that the aliens are demons who are preparing to take control during the Tribulation and he cites Revelation 9:2-3, but this does not describe UFOs and it has nothing to do with events in our day. Revelation 9 describes demons who are currently imprisoned rather than appearing on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles did not teach God's people to worry about UFOs or to rage against the government. They taught us to honor those in authority and submit to them (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-25), to live obedient and holy lives and to dedicate ourselves to preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth until Christ returns (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). You don't see Paul ranting against the Roman Empire and mocking its emperor. Dear friends in Christ, beware of the cultic element in the independent Baptist movement.

THE GROWTH OF IDOLATRY IN THE CHURCHES

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Already in the first century idolatry was entering some of the apostolic churches. When Christ wrote to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, He mentioned the presence of the doctrine of Balaam, which was an illicit association with idolatry (Rev. 2:14), and the Jezebel prophetess who seduced the church members to "commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:20). By the third century the association between Christianity and idolatry had increased dramatically and eventually idolatry itself became a settled practice in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church. The *McClintock and Strong Cyclopedia* describes this: "Images were unknown in the worship of primitive Christians, who abstained from worship of images because they thought it unlawful in itself to make any images of deity. By the steady pressure of the heathen ideas and habits upon Christianity, emblems such as the dove, the fish, the anchor, vine, lamb, etc., formed the first step; then, paintings representing great biblical events, saints, martyrs, which were placed in the vestibule

of the church. Yet this practice was unfavorably regarded by the synods of the fourth century. When, however, in the same century, Christianity was proclaimed (by Constantine) the religion of the state, the use of painting, sculpture and jewelry became general for the decoration of the churches, resulting in the adoption of a regular system of symbolic religious images. The teachers of the church became gradually more accommodating in their



relations with the heathen, allowing them to retain their old usages, while conforming to the outward forms of Christianity. Thus the worship of images became so general that it had to be repeatedly checked by laws. In the sixth century, it had grown into a great abuse, especially in the East, where images were made the object of a special adoration: they were kissed, lamps were burned before them, incense was offered to them,--in short, they were treated in every respect as the heathen were wont to treat the images of their gods.

The same arguments now used by the Romanists to defend image worship were rejected by Christians of the first three centuries when used in defense of image worship. The heathen said, 'We do not worship the images themselves, but those whom they represent.' To this Lactantius (third century A.D.) answers, 'You worship them; for, if you believe them to be in heaven, why do you not raise your eyes up to heaven? Why do you look at the images, and not up where you believe them to be?' Thomas Aquinas, a Roman Catholic (13th century), declared, 'A picture, considered in itself, is worthy of no veneration, but if we consider it as an image of Christ, it may be allowable to make an internal distinction between the image and its subject, and adoration and service are as well due to it as to Christ.' Bonaventura, the Franciscan, said, 'Since all veneration shown to the image of Christ is shown to Christ himself, then the image of Christ is also entitled to be prayed to.' Bellarmine, Rome's principal authority in dogmatic theology (1542-1621), writes, 'The images of Christ and the saints are to be adored, not only in a figurative manner, but quite positively, so that the prayers are directly addressed to them, and not merely as representatives of the original.'"

GIVE UNCLEANNESS A WIDE BERTH

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The following is from Harry Ironside's commentary on First Corinthians. It was first preached in 1934 at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago: "We are living in a day when uncleanness is everywhere. Our modern novels are reeking with it, our newspaper stands are filled with vile pornographic literature that came from hell, and men are enriching themselves by poisoning the minds of our young people. The pictures they see, the songs that come over the radio, many are filled with suggestions of impurity and uncleanness. How sternly the Christian Church needs to set its face against everything of this kind. We should have no compromise whatever with impurity. People see the pictures, read the books, listen to the songs, and they all have their effect upon the flesh, and before you know it men are drifting off into unholy, unclean things because of the constant incitation to them in the music and literature of the day. Let us give everything like that a wide berth."

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.