FRIDAY CHURCH NEWS NOTES

PASTOR TO GO ON TRIAL FOR COMMENTS ON ISLAM

In a portent of the times, a pastor is going to trial in Northern Ireland for comments about Islam in a sermon. Pastor James McConnell of Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in Belfast called Islam “Satanic” and “heathen,” both of which are true according to the Bible’s teaching. Pastor McConnell is charged by God to “preach the Word, reprove, rebuke, exhort” (2 Timothy 4:2), and that is what he was doing. The Irish government has become so audacious as to try to rule over the content of Bible preaching. Because the sermon was streamed online, the 78-year-old pastor is being prosecuted under the 2003 Communications Acts for allegedly “causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network” (“Pastor to go on trial,” RTE News, Dec. 14, 2015; RTE is Ireland’s national broadcasting service). Hundreds of Christians have attended the pre-trial hearings to show their support of the preacher and their protest of this brazen attack on the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech. Pastor McConnell isn’t cowed. He told the press, “It’s a good day for hanging—particularly to hang the prosecution.” “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:1-3).

GOOGLE CHAIRMAN WANTS “HATE-SPEECH SPELL-CHECKER” TO FILTER THE INTERNET

The Internet is too powerful a communication device to be left alone by thought police, and I am convinced that it is only prayer and the grace of God that has kept it free in most parts of the world thus far. A reminder of what many want to do came recently when Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google, wrote in the New York Times that he wants to use technology to “filter-out extremist material.” He said, “We should build tools to help de-escalate tensions on social media—sort of like spell-checkers, but for hate and harassment.” But who is to define “hate and harassment”? Many Islamists define any negative view of Islam as hate. Many homosexuals define support for traditional marriage as hate. Many feminists define anti-feminist speech as hateful harassment, and many economic liberals and socialists define speech opposing the welfare state as hate. In fact, on some college and university campuses, ANY “offensive” speech is hateful.

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THE WALDENSES AND THE POPE

Earlier this year, Pope Francis became the first pope to visit a Waldensian church. On June 22, he visited Turin, Italy, and spoke in the church there. He even kissed the Bible which was banned and burned by his infamous predecessors. For 600 years, the Roman Catholic Church hounded and slaughtered Waldenses in their home territory in the Cottian Alps in northwest Italy, in France, and elsewhere. This is a fact of history that was documented by Waldensian pastors who were on the receiving end of the Inquisition. For many years I collected these histories, and we eventually published them in the Fundamental Baptist Digital Library. As late as 1690, Waldenses were being killed for their faith at the hands of Roman armies, and they did not receive full religious liberty in Italy until 1848. Since then, they have apostatized. In 1947, the Waldenses built the Agape ecumenical center, and beginning in the early 1980s, it hosted “ecumenical conferences for homosexuals” (You Are My Witnesses: The Waldenses across 800 Years, p. 303). In 1975, the Waldenses in Italy merged with the liberal Methodists and joined the World Council of Churches, which promotes unity among all churches and religions. In 2003, David Brown, Brian Snider, and I visited the Waldensian Museum in Torre Pellice, not far from Turin, and the woman in charge told us that she doesn’t believe in heaven or hell. She said that heaven is a metaphor. When asked how a person can be saved, she replied that “the main task we have is to live our life and when we are dead, God will think about us. Just try to be faithful to your vocation that God calls you to do.”

CHURCH OF ENGLAND APPOINTS FEMALE NUDIST AS BISHOP

Another one of the seven new female Church of England bishops appointed since December 2014 is Karen Gorham, Bishop of Sherborne, a supporter of nudist colonies. Part of her ecclesiastical territory is the Studland nudist beach where her family experienced “naturism” when she was a child (“Church of England appoints nudist bishop,” Breitbart, Nov. 30, 2015). Though Gorham allegedly “stopped going nude while she was a teen,” she has written a treatise supporting the practice and urging “the Church” to remove “false taboos.” “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21). “And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid” (Mark 5:15).
THE WALDENSIAN BIBLE

The Waldenses lived in northern Italy and France and had congregations in many other parts of Europe through their missionary work. The name “Waldenses” encompassed a variety of doctrine and practice, but most Waldenses held the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice and rejected Rome’s errors. Many, if not most, were baptismic (prior to the Reformation). For this reason, they were bitterly and terribly persecuted for hundreds of years. They believed in salvation by God’s grace alone without works and loved the Bible as God’s infallible Word. They read the Bible, memorized the Bible, and taught the Bible. One of their Bible colleges was in Piedmont in northern Italy. A beautiful, full-size model of the multi-room stone building can be seen in the Waldenses museum in Valdes, North Carolina, where a group of Waldenses settled in 1893. Their most ancient Bible was in the Romaunt language, a common language of the south of Europe from the 8th to the 14th centuries. It was the language of the troubadours, nobles, knights, and men of letters. Only seven of the Waldensian Romaunt New Testaments survived Rome’s burnings, and I have examined two of these, one at Cambridge University and one at Trinity College, Dublin. They were based on the Latin text, and as a result they have the Trinitarian “comma” in 1 John 5:7, but they lack “God” in 1 Timothy 3:16, which was preserved in Greek but not in Latin. For many centuries, Rome forbade the Bible to be translated into and read in the common languages. Well into the 19th century, the popes continued to hurl curses at the Bible societies for the “sin” of distributing the Bible among the people, even though those Bibles were usually “without note or commentary.” Rome cursed the Waldo Romaunt, the Olivetan French, and the Diodati Italian. But in the 1970s, the Waldenses joined hands with the Roman Catholic Church to produce an “interconfessional Bible” based on the corrupt Egyptian text of ancient heretical origin. It is this corrupt interconfessional Bible that Pope Francis kissed in his visit to the Waldenses of June 2015. (Our studies on the Waldenses can be found in the book Rome and the Bible: Tracing the History of the Roman Catholic Church and Its Persecution of the Bible and Bible Believers, available from www.wayoflife.org.)

CHURCH OF ENGLAND BISHOP SAYS GOD SHOULD NOT BE REFERRED TO AS “HE”

The Church of England has appointed seven female “bishops” since last December. One of those, Rachel Trewood, Bishop of Gloucester, said that is wrong to refer to God as “He” because God is “gender neutral” (“God is not a he or a she,” The Guardian, Oct. 24, 2015). Trewood is one of the House of Parliament's “26 Lords Spiritual,” which is sad because she doesn't believe the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: OUR FATHER which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9). Trewood also says that she is not comfortable with the term “mother.” “There is something about the whole connotation of ‘mother’ that has a sense of dependency for me. It’s not how I want to be looked at. I see myself as a leader, as leading from among the people.”
SCIENCE MIXED WITH SCIENCE FICTION

The following is from CreationMoments.com, November 25, 2015: “Many people--especially those who believe in creation--avoid watching science shows on TV because these programs are usually saturated with unscientific claims favoring evolution. However, even Darwinian soapboxes like Nova can be worth watching, just as long as you do so with a discerning eye. You especially need to pay close attention to the unwarranted assumptions and faulty logic you’ll often encounter. For instance, there’s ‘Kings of Camouflage’--a Nova program about the cuttlefish’s amazing ability to instantaneously change the color and texture of its skin. The program did a good job of describing the color disks that expand or shrink in size. But then the scientist added: ‘My guess is that their skin evolved for camouflage, because as soon as they got rid of the big shell, they had to hide from predators.’ Well, Mr. Scientist, why did the cuttlefish discard its shell in the first place if it was beneficial to its survival? And why didn’t the cuttlefish just evolve its old shell back? Instead, evolutionists guess that the cuttlefish evolved the most complex skin of any creature on the planet as well as an amazingly complex eye and nervous system that allows it all to work. So when you watch science shows on television, learn what you can from the true science. Enjoy the breathtaking photography as you marvel at the wondrous creatures that God has designed. And teach your children how to spot the atheistic philosophy that’s camouflaged to look like true science.”

NOTE FROM BRO. CLOUD: We would also ask “Mr. Evolutionary Scientist” the following question: Assuming that your “just so” story was true and the cuttlefish evolved its amazing, mind-bogglingly complex biological camouflage system because it needed to, HOW exactly did this happen? What was the evolutionary creative mechanism?

INFORMATION

The Friday Church News Notes is designed for use in churches and is published by Way of Life Literature’s Fundamental Baptist Information Service. Unless otherwise stated, the Notes are written by David Cloud. Of necessity we quote from a wide variety of sources, but this obviously does not imply an endorsement. We trust that our readers will not be discouraged. 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. The News Notes remind us that the hour is very late, and we need to be ready for the Lord’s coming. Are you sure that you are born again? Are you living for Christ? “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 mailing list. To SUBSCRIBE, go to http://www.wayoflife.com/subscribe.html. TO UNSUBSCRIBE OR CHANGE ADDRESSES, go to the very bottom of any email received from us and click “Manage My Subscription.” Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org.