FRIDAY CHURCH NEWS NOTES

CHINA’S AIM TO “SINICIZE” CHRISTIANITY AND REWRITE THE BIBLE

The following is excerpted from “China Trying to Rewrite,” Christian Post, Sep. 28 2018: “The Rev. Bob Fu, a former Chinese house church leader who immigrated to the United States in 1997 and founded the persecution watchdog organization China Aid, provided great detail during a United States House of Representatives hearing Thursday about a plan enacted by leading state-sanctioned denominations in China to ‘Sinicize’ Christianity. As China’s crackdown on religion has seen many house churches demolished and thousands of crosses removed from churches nationwide, Fu warned [that] ‘Religious

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THE ADDICTIVE DANGER OF SMART PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Following are excerpts from the BBC documentary Mind Control: The Dark Side of Your Phone - “‘Insiders told us that social media companies track vast amounts of data, every swipe and click, and analyze it in real time. Artificial intelligence then uses that to adapt what we see on our screens to keep us coming back.’ Asa Raskin, who designed the endless scroll and other popular app features, says, ‘We’re in the largest behavioral experiment the world has ever seen. You’re being tested on all the time. Things like changing the color of your like button. This shade of blue, should it be a little bit more red? And they will keep trying until they find the perfect shape and the perfect color that most maximizes your continued scrolling. Behind every screen on your phone there are

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freedom in China has really reached to the worst level that has not been seen since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution by Chairman Mao [Zedong] in the 1960s.’ … At the center of this new level of persecution is China’s new regulation on religious affairs that was released last year but enacted on Feb. 1. According to Fu, the revision of the religious regulations are to actively guide religion to ‘adapt to socialist society.’ In a written testimony, Fu said that under the new regulations, religious activity sites will ‘accept the guidance, supervision, and inspection of relevant departments of the local people’s government regarding the management of personnel, finances, assets, accounting, security, fire protection, protection of relics, health and disease prevent and so forth.’ … One way in which they plan to Sinicize Christianity, Fu said, is by ‘retranslating’ the Old Testament and providing new commentary to the New Testament to make socialist ideals and Chinese culture seem more divine. … According to its latest outline, Fu said, a retranslation would be a summary of the Old Testament with some Buddhist scripture and Confucian teachings and new commentary for the New Testament. … Fu added that the five-year plan advocates for ‘incorporating the Chinese elements into church worship services, hymns and songs, clergy attire, and the architectural style of church buildings. This includes editing and publishing worship songs with Chinese characteristics and promoting the Sinicization of worship music, using uniquely Chinese art forms … In the beginning of every church worship service, the choir of the church has to sing a few communist revolutionary songs praising the communist party before they can sing the worship songs,’ Fu detailed. … Hundreds of Christian leaders in China signed onto a statement this month condemning the new regulations, the increased persecution and control the party is taking over the churches. ‘[W]e believe and are obligated to teach all believers that all true churches in China that belong to Christ must hold to the principle of the separation of church and state and must proclaim Christ as the sole head of the church. … For the sake of the Gospel, we are prepared to bear all losses—even the loss of our freedom and our lives,’ the statement reads. … At its Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July, the U.S. State Department released a formal statement condemning China for its religious freedom violations. However, the statement was only signed by three other nations.”
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literally a thousand engineers to try to make it maximally addicting. It’s as if they’re taking behavioral cocaine and just sprinkling it all over your interface.’ Asa says, ‘I don’t want my mind to be hijacked.’ So he does things like having very few apps and keeping his phone in black and white instead of color. Endless scrolling is based on a soup experiment which showed that if a bowl of soup is endlessly refilled without the knowledge of the eater, he will eat a lot more, because there is no cue that the meal is finished. Without endless scrolling, you scroll to the end of a page and have to click to go to a new page, but the endless scroll has e. ‘We found that if you don’t give people stopping cues, they just keep scrolling. We found that our design techniques became so powerful that it just adds people.’ Sean Parker, co-founder of Napster and Facebook’s founding president, describes the company’s original purpose as follows: ‘How can we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible? And that means that we need to sort of give you a little dopamine hit every once in a while, because someone liked or commented on a photo or a post or whatever.’ The whole gambling industry is built on the unpredictability of rewards. Could our smartphones be like a slot machine or worse? The gambling industry calls all of the razzmatazz in casinos--the noise and lights and action and music--‘the juice.’ Our smartphones have juice, too. Professor Catherine Winstanley, who has done leading research on the way dopamine fuels addictions, says, “Unexpected rewards activate the dopamine experience. I think there are elements of design of apps on smartphones that seem similar to the electronic gaming. So if your smartphone is recruiting and activating your dopamine system in the same way that we think happens when people are gambling it would imply that those two behaviors could be addicting in the same way as addictive drugs.” (See also “Dopamine, Smartphones & You” by Trevor Haynes, sitn.hms.harvard.edu.)

SHOULD EVANGELISM BE NON-THEOLOGICAL?

The following is from D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 1971: “A type of preaching that is sometimes, indeed very frequently today, regarded as non-theological is evangelistic preaching. I well remember how when an evangelistic campaign was being held in London a few years ago [Billy Graham Crusade], one of the liberal religious weeklies supporting the campaign said, ‘Let us have a theological truce while the campaign is on.’ It went on to say that after the campaign we must then think things out and become theological. The idea was that evangelism is non-theological, and to introduce theology at that stage is wrong. You ‘bring people to Christ,’ as they put it, and then you teach them the truth. It is only subsequently that theology comes in. That, to me, is quite wrong, and indeed monstrous. I would be prepared to argue that in many ways evangelistic preaching should be more, rather than less theological, than any other, and for this good reason. Why is it that you call people to repent? Why do you call them to believe the gospel? You cannot deal properly with repentance without dealing with the doctrine of man, the doctrine of the Fall, the doctrine of sin and the wrath of God against sin. Then when you call men to come to Christ and to give themselves to Him, how can you do so without knowing who He is, and on what grounds you invite them to come to Him and so on? In other words it is all highly theological. Evangelism which is not theological is not evangelism at all in an true sense” (page 65).
The following is excerpted from Seeing the Non-existent: Evolution's Myths and Hoaxes, David Cloud: “Could the eye have evolved from a single light-sensitive spot, as evolutionists claim? First, even a 'simple' light sensitive spot that can actually discern and interpret light is incredibly complicated and could not have evolved by chance. Biologist Michael Behe observes: ‘We are invited by Dawkins and Darwin to believe that the evolution of the eye proceeded step-by-step through a series of plausible intermediates in infinitesimal increments. But are they infinitesimal? Remember that the ‘light-sensitive spot’ that Dawkins takes as his starting point requires a cascade of factors, including 11-cis-retinal and rhodopsin, to function. Dawkins doesn’t mention them. And where did the ‘little cup’ come from? A ball of cells--from which the cup must be made--will tend to be rounded unless held in the correct shape by molecular supports. In fact, there are dozens of complex proteins involved in maintaining cell shape, and dozens more that control extracellular structure; in their absence, cells take on the shape of so many soap bubbles. Do these structures represent single-step mutations? Dawkins did not tell us how the apparently simple cup shape came to be. And although he reassures us that any translucent material would be an improvement ... we are not told how difficult it is to produce a simple lens. In short, Dawkins’ explanation is only addressed to the level of what is called gross anatomy. ... Biochemistry has demonstrated that any biological apparatus involving more than one cell (such as an organ or a tissue) is necessarily an intricate web of many different, identifiable systems of horrendous complexity. ... Not only is the eye exceedingly complex, but the light-sensitive spot with which Dawkins begins his case is itself a multicelled organ, each of whose cells makes the complexity of a motorcycle or television set look paltry in comparison. ... Richard Dawkins can simplify to his heart’s content, because he wants to convince his readers that Darwinian evolution is a breeze. In order to understand the barriers to evolution, however, we have to bite the bullet of complexity’ (Behe, Darwin’s Black Box). Second, the eye appears in the fossil record in great variety and amazing complexity (e.g., trilobite and shrimp eyes), far beyond a ‘simple light spot.’ There is zero evidence that complex eyes evolved from simple eyes. Further, not only does sight require exceedingly complicated biological machinery, but there must be the accompanying intelligence to interpret the light signals and this must be coordinated with further complex systems that enable the creature to do something with the information. Darwinists have never demonstrated how these things evolved. They only propose ‘just-so’ stories.”