

Texas Baptist Forum_122203

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TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM: Claim the name

Every day, the name of Jesus becomes a “rock of offense” to more and more Americans.

In an effort to offend no one, timid church members-especially politicians-are using a new term to escape the scorn of the “politically correct.” Instead of “I’m a Christian,” it’s now, “I’m a person of faith.” This brings no criticism from those who don’t like the name of Jesus.



Saying, “I am a person of faith” is just a bit vague.

Faith in what? A rock? A tree? Faith in whom? Buddha? Confucius?

Make no mistake about it. The gates of heaven only open for those who confess Jesus.

Political platitudes won't do it.

Doug Fincher

San Augustine

21st century dream

Over 75 years ago, E.Y. Mullins, president of a large Baptist institution, had the initiative and creativity to bring together a new venture in mission work. We still are the beneficiaries of the Cooperative Program.

Now a new vision needs to be cast by BGCT leaders Charles Wade, Ken Hall, Albert Reyes and Dennis Young. Appropriately, two of these people are leaders of institutions; all have the kingdom of God as their priority. A new vision should have the feel of several initiatives:

- ◆ Realigning the BGCT budget. It's time to embrace traditional Baptist entities like the Baptist University of the Americas, Truett Seminary and Logsdon School of Theology. Use the money that is going to Houston Baptist University for institutions that train ministers for our churches.
- ◆ Restructuring Texas Baptist ministries and missions. Let's ask the hard questions. Where are we duplicating efforts with other organizations? How can we cut overhead and focus on missions? Can churches who want to partner with non-Texas Baptist groups send those checks directly to those bodies rather than using the BGCT as a collection and deposit agency?
- ◆ Making room for the Spirit. We see its work in the lives of women and men deciding to serve vocationally in ministry. The Spirit comes through the work of Hispanic, African-American and Asian leaders who are in desperate need of resources to accomplish the dream God has given them.

Mullins' vision worked for 1925; let's cast a 21st century dream before this open door closes.

Bill Shiell

San Angelo

'Lottie' beneficiaries

Who benefits from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering? The Southern Baptist Convention? The International Mission Board? No. The chief beneficiaries of your gifts are the lost!

Do you not like a personality in convention leadership? Think the denomination and its agencies already have enough money? Tired of "battlin' Baptists"? Got some other beef?

The lost around the world don't know or care about these things. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is for them. It sends and supports those who deliver good news. It provides for the Bibles, the tracts, the films, the starting of new churches.

More than a century ago, a passionate missionary in China wrote to her fellow Southern Baptists in the United States, urging them to give their lives and money sacrificially so all peoples might know Jesus Christ. Her message may be even more relevant today.

In the December 1887 edition of the Foreign Mission Journal, Lottie Moon wrote: "How many there are ... who imagine that because Jesus paid it all, they need pay nothing, forgetting that the prime object of their salvation was that they should follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in bringing back a lost world to God."

If you love the Lord Jesus Christ and the lost who are without hope that only the Christ of Christmas can give, then please give sacrificially and significantly to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

They don't know it, but the lost are depending on you.

Rodney Hammer

IMB regional leader

Prague, Czechoslovakia

Response to Islam

President Bush has spoken about the fact the word for God in Arabic, "Allah," is used by both Christians and Muslims. Both groups regard Allah as the Creator, in control of the universe and of our history. Beyond that, the two understandings of the nature of God differ drastically.

In Christianity, the basic nature of God is love. In Islam, the basic nature of God is power. In Christianity, human life is considered sacred because we are made in God's image. In Islam, human life is valued only for what it can do for God through the spread of Islam and the destruction of those who oppose it. In Christianity, God's high moral values are to be reflected in his people. In Islam, moral values are relative to the will and purpose of Allah. In Christianity, God provides salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God. In Islam, God only provides a way of salvation through obedience to his revelation through Mohammed.

Islam is a religion of peace where it is the majority religion and its rule is not threatened. Where it comes up against any other religion or threat to its territory or power to rule, it often is violent, seeking to dominate.

Our response to Islam must be compassion and love demonstrated, as we recently did, by the distribution of 45,000 boxes of food in Iraq and by serving their needs in Christ's name.

David King
Marshall

Asian vs. Asian-American

I enjoyed reading your article titled “Asians critical of LifeWay’s Rickshaw Rally VBS theme” (Dec. 8). However, I found your headline highly offensive.

The headline (although unintentional) those critical of the Rickshaw Rally program are not Americans, when in fact they are.



Would your paper mix up Africans and African-Americans? Probably not. The same should go with Asians. Asians and Asian-Americans have highly distinct cultures and heritages. People should stop mixing them up. It only causes more stereotyping, prejudices and generalizations.

The headline is an affront to the Asian-American pastors and people who disagree with the portrayal of Asia in the Rickshaw Rally curriculum.

I am either Asian-American or American. I am not Asian. As Christians, we need to be more sensitive to each other’s identities to minimize outbursts of prejudice and racism. Sadly, such insensitivity starts with how the media portrays other races.

I realize that your editors have no intention in misrepresenting Asian Americans; however, they have.

Li Chung

Evanston, Ill.

Biblical world view includes more

George Barna’s recent poll—which shows only 4 percent of American adults and 9 percent of born-again evangelical Christians (8 percent among

Baptists) have a biblical worldview—is eye-opening.

Marv Knox’s editorial (Dec. 8) fills in three noticeable gaps in Barna’s worldview criteria that are helpful. However, even these additions don’t go far enough if we are to grasp what really makes up a biblically worldview-driven church and Christian life.



Doctrinally, among other things, it must recover the glory and worship of God as the church’s chief purpose; creation, fall and redemption as the church’s complete story; Jesus as the cosmic creator and redeemer Christ; the kingdom-rule of God and its total redemptive significance; the nature of the believer as a whole person, including the body; the identity of the church as the new Israel of God; and the “already but not yet” eschatological character of the church in redemptive history.

Ministerially, among other things, it must recover the historic liturgies of the church; the deeper meaning of the sacraments, baptism and communion; expository preaching that is christological and canonically contextualized; the authenticity of Christian community; the vision of Christian humanism as the goal of discipleship and spiritual formation; the Protestant doctrine of the calling and giftedness of every believer in all spheres of life and service; transformative cultural engagement; and holistic evangelism.

This kind of comprehensive biblical worldview fills in even more gaps in our understanding and living and will foster the adulthood of the church.

David Naugle

Duncanville

Scratching my head

I was amazed to read the letter scourging Baptist leaders for their support for America's "illegal, unprovoked war" against Iraq (Dec. 8).

I expect such language from Democratic presidential candidates, but to read such words from a fellow Baptist boggles my mind.

Evil condoned and pursued by Hussein and his sons? Torture chambers and mass graves? Genocide of Iraqi and Kurdish people? Development and use of biological and chemical weapons, intentionally killing tens of thousands of Iranian soldiers and innocent Kurdish civilians? Seventeen U.N. resolutions, including the last authorizing "extreme measures," which was approved unanimously by the Security Council? Congress voting to give the president bi-partisan authority to use military force?



I suspect the writer would have criticized Baptist leaders for supporting the Allied defeat of Nazi Germany (genocide) and imperialist Japan (Pearl Harbor).

"Turning the other cheek" never was meant to be national foreign policy. "And when your east coast is attacked, turn unto them thy west coast also." Jesus was telling us, as born-again citizens, how to treat each other in the kingdom.

But then we find a quick slap at these same Baptist leaders for speaking out against homosexuality. Perhaps the actual focus of the letter was an attempt to silence the moral condemnation of homosexual behavior by employing the fiction of an "immoral war."

I applaud the freedom of Americans (including Baptists) to express opinions freely, but I am also free to scratch my head at such convoluted thinking.

Rick Yount

Fort Worth

Advent resources

Your recent article on Advent (Dec. 8) made for interesting reading. Our church has observed Advent, with candles, for the last three years. It has been a blessing to our church and helped us focus on the true meaning of Christmas.



Texas Baptists don't have to go to Oklahoma to find help in planning and celebrating Advent. An excellent book, "Worship Innovations: Hanging the Greens for Christmas," by Janet Burton is available and published CSS Publishing Company of Lima, Ohio.

Don Doyle

Cotulla

What do you think? Submit letters for Texas Baptist Forum via e-mail to marvknox@baptiststandard.com or regular mail at Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267. Letters must be no longer than 250 words. They may be edited to accommodate space.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.