

Texas Baptist Forum_112204

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TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM

Discerning eyes

The 2004 BGCT convention in San Antonio was one of the most historic conventions I can remember.

Our leaders put before us a challenging vision of our future. This new vision will streamline our governance and challenge our convention to be much more "church-centered" rather than "program centered."

You can see the fingerprints of our Lord in much that was presented to us, but I am also deeply concerned about other trends.

E-mail the editor at *-Marv Knox*

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Our convention voted 1,973-444 in favor of moving forward with our new vision for tomorrow. I hope our leaders will see this vote with discerning eyes. At first glance, the vote appears to be mandate for change. However, a closer look reveals a disturbing insight into our commitment to cooperation. There is a huge difference between compliance and commitment.

To capture the new day ahead, we need commitment from all our churches, but it appears we are experiencing the early stages of apathy. We talk

about more involvement of our people, but we only had 2,937 messengers present. In 1985 when we met in San Antonio, we had 4,275 messengers, and in 1995, we had 6,867 messengers. Were the churches in our convention voting “no” by not showing up?

I pray our leaders will reach out to all the churches of our state with listening ears, an open heart and a bold, daring vision for tomorrow that will move us from compliance to the kind of commitment that will seize the day.

David Lowrie
Canyon

'Christian' nation

Some Baptists and others want to restore the American dream of a “Christian” nation. This is false and frightening.

Our forefathers founded the United States upon many Christian ideals, but they never meant for us to be a “Christian” nation. We are better—a secular state, with freedom to worship God or not, according to one's conscience.

Those who want a Christian nation scare me, because if they were in power, they would force their religious viewpoint upon others. I cannot think of anything more un-Christian than that!

Such Christians want political power because they feel powerless, humiliated by pagan society, frustrated by their lack of social and political prestige and influence. They take themselves too seriously and are angry because others don't take them seriously enough. They suffer from the same mindset, to a degree, as the fanatical Islamic fundamentalists.

The church has a terrible history of misusing political power to kill millions

of innocent people when they don't conform to the faith. Examples are the medieval Catholic Church of the Inquisition; the Calvinist, Lutheran and Catholic churches of the Thirty Years War; and the militant Puritan takeover of England.

So, this Thanksgiving holiday, I am thankful to live in a free, pluralistic, secular state. To follow Christ, I must serve my fellow man and make it a better country for all. It is not my calling, nor anybody's calling, to control others and force one's religious viewpoint upon them.

God save us from a "Christian" nation.

Alvin Petty

Friona

Social issues

In response to your editorial on moral values (Nov. 8), please read the story on page 18 of the same issue: "The election also marks a defeat for progressive groups who tried to cast social justice concerns of poverty, war and the environment as moral issues."

The things you write about in your editorial are all social issues.

Ask a liberal what moral values are, and they always say things like poverty, jobs, healthcare, environment, etc.

That's the reason they keep getting defeated and hopefully will keep being defeated.

Leslie H. Hight

Odessa

Weightier matters

Regarding the editorial on “moral values” (Nov. 8): It is profoundly true that morality is much more than sexuality. Our culture has forgotten that and seems to be “hung up” on sex.

Christian ethics cries out for attention to the weightier matters of morality.

James M. Dunn

Winston-Salem, N.C.

Ridiculous ideas

Suggestions in recent letters that Jesus is a liberal and that our greed led to 9/11 and the war in Iraq are ridiculous.

Jesus is transcendent. Our political classifications cannot possibly characterize him.

However, for those who insist on doing so, let's recall that he opposes divorce, lust, lies, theft and blasphemies (Matthew 15:19-20). His word states that those who will not work should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10) and that the government is a “minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him who does evil” (Romans 13:3-8).

Jesus taught us to forgive and love our personal enemies, but he instituted governments to fight evil. Is this liberal?

The terrorists attacked us because they are evil, not because we are greedy, and our government's responses were necessary and consistent with Scripture.

Should we be more generous? Absolutely. Should we blame ourselves for terrorism and be paralyzed by moral confusion? The majority of Americans answered that question in the recent election.

Stephen B. Pruett

Bossier City, La.

Lying shame

I agree with the editorial regarding “moral values” nearly 100 percent.

I would have added at least one more moral problem—lying.

Henry Howard

Georgetown

Moral expression

The article “Personal morality beats social justice at the polls” (Nov. 8) shows 79 percent of those who voted based on moral values voted for Bush. What irony!

Bush ordered a premeditated, unprovoked war against the people of Iraq. That war has been roundly condemned worldwide as illegal and immoral. U.N. Secretary General Koffi Annan, Pope John Paul and Jimmy Carter have condemned it. Reports indicate it has killed 100,000 Iraqi civilians, most of them children.

The lies and excuses for that war have now been exposed and discredited. Iraq never threatened America, had no WMD, had no connection to Al

Qaeda, and had no connection to 9/11.

Nevertheless, four out of five white evangelical Christians voted for Bush. And their purpose was to cast a moral vote. Without them, Kerry got over 60 percent of the vote.

How could evangelicals go so wrong? We've been misled by wolves in sheep's clothing.

Our biggest problem is not our morals-it's our facts. Three out of four Bush voters still believe WMD have been found, that Iraq was connected to Al Qaeda or that Iraq was connected to 9/11.

I don't believe Baptists knowingly condone war crimes. But we do have a moral problem. We are more concerned about the way people express love than the way people express hate.

The distinguishing characteristic of evangelical Christians is not our concern for moral values-it's our ignorance on public affairs. The people of Iraq are paying a dear price for that ignorance.

Charles Reed

Waco

Starting point

After making a sincere effort to remain at least tongue-in-cheek, the Standard's online survey soliciting Texas Baptist opinion on the proposal to start an undergraduate school at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has proven to be more than a poor sinner can handle.

In short, I think Southwestern should get back to basics and concentrate on providing a bona fide graduate school of theological education.

A good place to start might be a renewed concentration on the study and teaching of Christian ethics.

Scott Shaver

The Woodlands

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.