

Christians must reclaim their good name, Ratliff urges Texas Baptists_22105

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AUSTIN—Christians have become the victims of identity theft in politics, as so-called conservative Christians espouse views that are “inconsistent with our Christian faith,” according to former Texas Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff.

Ratliff, a retired Republican state senator from Mount Pleasant, spoke during the annual statewide conference of the Christian Life Commission, a ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Many Christians consider themselves conservative and have adopted that mantle because of a few strongly held beliefs, Ratliff said. They are concerned about society's moral decay; support prayer in public settings; and oppose abortions on demand, same-sex marriages and legalized gambling.

Former
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Lt.
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Ratliff

However, some groups advocate for “their definition of a conservative agenda and ... purport to fly under the cover of the Christian banner to do so,” Ratliff said. “They present themselves as advocates for Christian ideals and do indeed pursue the types of issues I just mentioned. However, they then use this identity to advocate for other so-called conservative causes which ... are inconsistent with our Christian faith.”

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For example, some self-identified Christian groups take the position that public schools should not be allowed to begin classes before the last week

in August, he said. “Now, you may have personal opinions either way about this matter, but does anyone really believe that Christ would have an opinion on this subject?”

Another “Christian” group believes the legislature should reduce the number of election dates in Texas. “May be a good idea, but is it really a subject of concern” to Jesus?

Yet another “Christian” group says the legislature should not expand the state's franchise tax to fund public education and that property tax appraisal increases should be capped at 5 percent, he noted.

“I seem to recall an instance in the Gospel where a group of men attempted to trick Jesus into taking a position on taxes, and Jesus deferred by saying they should render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's. That doesn't seem to square with these groups' supposedly Christian position on taxes,” Ratliff said.

But the identity theft goes further, he insisted.

Some “Christian” groups oppose early childhood and Head Start public education programs for children from underprivileged homes, Ratliff said. “I wonder how Christ would have viewed this position. Perhaps he would consider a modification to his admonition to 'suffer the little children to come unto me.'”

Then there's the matter of funding social services, Ratliff added.

Some “Christian” groups “see no inconsistency in their willingness to sacrifice the health and welfare of underprivileged children and elderly citizens on the altar of low taxes,” he said.

“Texas is one of the two or three lowest-tax states in the nation, and yet there are those flying under the Christian banner who say we must

eliminate children's health insurance for hundreds of thousands of poor Texas children rather than having all businesses pay their fair share of taxes.”

The quality of nursing homes and child protective services also are being undermined by “Christian” groups, he said.

This “misrepresentation” of the Christian faith is causing “many good people in government,” including those with a deep faith, to “cringe at the thought of a visit from the Christians.”

Across this broad sweep of issues, Christians are “represented as agreeing with these positions and these outrageous political tactics without our knowledge or consent,” Ratliff said.

It is up to Christians to “take back our banner,” he urged. “We must gather fellow Christians and let the world know that our Christian positions are those which we believe Christ would have endorsed.”

People “certainly have the right to advocate for other issues, but they should not be allowed to do so while hiding behind the Christian faith.”

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