

Texas Baptist Forum_11005

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TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM:

Faith is foundation for all knowledge

The ongoing situations at Baylor and Louisiana College open the question of the very nature of academic freedom. Following Michael Polanyi, the late missologist Lesslie Newbigin (hardly a fundamentalist) observed: "Truth is not a fruit of freedom. It is the precondition for freedom." In other words, freedom extends to the discovery of the truth and no further. Once the truth has been ascertained, academic freedom works within those bounds. Polanyi, a first-rate scientist, understood that all fields of knowledge—not just theology—begin on a foundation of faith. William Dembski understood this when he used Polanyi's name for his ill-fated center at Baylor. In all fields, the sciences included, knowledge is "credo ut intelligam"—"I believe that I may know." The question for a Christian university is not a conflict between academic excellence and "holding as a matter of faith that certain truths already are definitively settled." The question is: Which truths are held by faith as settled, those of the Christian or those of the naturalist?

Tom Whitehouse

McAllen



Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.



“We're seeing devastation and death beyond belief. I've been through many disasters around the world, but I've never seen anything like this. There's really nothing to compare it to.”

Michael Elmquist

United Nations assistance director in Indonesia (New York Times)

“If I just fed people and that's all I did-if I clothed people and that's all I did-I would be cheating people. I would be holding back the most important information that I have to give them. It would be a sin for me not to share with them my faith.”

Franklin Graham

Evangelist and head of Samaritan's Purse (Newsweek)

“There are those people who are an anchor or a cornerstone in each congregation. Roy Honeycutt was (an anchor). At the center of his life was a deep love for the church. This love informed his scholarship, his teaching, his leadership, his service. He loved the body of Christ.”

Bill Johnson

Minister of spiritual formation at Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., speaking at a memorial service for former Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt (BP)

More on the Star of Bethlehem

“Star of wonder” (Dec. 20) was correct on one point: It was subtle and unspectacular, as was the King it announced. Modern scientists attempting to explain the star of Bethlehem contradict one another, because they omit the only reliable source of information—the Bible. Left unexplained is why an eclipse or a conjunction of stars and planets should provoke Persian astrologers to undertake a journey requiring  several months to accomplish (Matthew 2:16). Ordinary celestial objects cannot pause and change direction in such a manner that would guide travelers. Following a star in the eastern sky would have led the wise men in the wrong direction; an ordinary star would have led about in circles. The Bible foretold the star 1,500 years previously: “There shall come a star out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17). The wise men could have known the prophecy of Balaam, who was a fellow Mesopotamian.

“We have seen his star in the east” should be read as, “We in the East have seen his star.” When Jesus was born, God caused a supernatural light to appear in the west, contrary to nature, seemingly rising out of Israel as seen in the east. This miracle prompted the wise men to find the fulfillment of Balaam’s prophecy. The star, specially created to announce the birth of the King of Israel, rose in the west, hung in the western sky long enough to lead the wise men to Bethlehem. Ordinary heavenly objects were as unnecessary as they were unsuited for the purpose.

Wes Duckett

Odessa

Government should maintain social order

I would like to bring up some counterpoints to the views expressed by two letters in the Nov. 1 issue of the Standard. First, the state is ordained by God to establish laws and social order (Romans 13). Marie Hartzfeld is misled about the job of government. Since our country is a government “by the people and for the people,” when we elect them, we have the right to request them to make laws that promote the social order. Gay marriage was illegal until some crackpot judges in  Massachusetts decided 200-plus years of American law was wrong. Abortion was illegal until the High Court overturned it in 1973. So, I contend that it is the government’s job to maintain the social order. I am proud that in 11 states people have exercised their rights to ban gay marriage. Genesis 1 and 2 set the social order; it was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Second, I must contend with the statements made by Charles Lee Evans about our founders’ faith. While I have read these quotes before, it does not tell the whole story. I challenge my brother to read the Mayflower Compact and the Articles of Confederation of Connecticut. America was founded as a Christian nation. She is not a perfect place, because she was founded by imperfect people, but she did use Christian values and ideas to lay her foundation.

Michael L. Simons

Cleburne

Shortage of organs for transplants

This nation faces a tragic shortage of human organs for transplant operations. That shortage kills more than 6,000 Americans every year. Most of those deaths are needless. Americans donate only half the organs

that could save lives and reduce suffering. They bury or cremate the rest. The solution to the organ shortage is simple: If you don't agree to donate your organs when you die, then you go to the back of the waiting list if you ever need an organ to live. A grassroots group of organ donors called LifeSharers is making this idea a reality, one member at a time. LifeSharers is a nonprofit network of organ donors. Members agree to donate their organs when they die, and they give fellow members "first dibs" on their organs. This gives other people a strong incentive to sign donor cards and join the network. More donors means fewer deaths on the transplant waiting list. LifeSharers also helps make sure that organ donors get their fair share of organs. About 70 percent of the organs transplanted in America go to people who haven't agreed to donate their own organs when they die. As long as we let people refuse to sign a donor card and still jump to the front of the waiting list if they need a transplant, we'll always have an organ shortage. Anyone who wants to donate their organs to others who have agreed to donate theirs can join LifeSharers at www.lifesharers.com. Membership is free. LifeSharers has 2,562 members, including members in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

David J. Undis

Nashville, Tenn.

U.S. was provoked

I am compelled to answer the letter written by Bob Cheateam, who said, "... we went to war with Germany, and they did not provoke us" and "Hitler did nothing to us." Germany declared war on America shortly after America declared war on Japan following their attack on Pearl Harbor. Germany and Japan were allies. One nation declaring war against another nation certainly rises to the level of a "provocation."

Jim Wallace

Richardson

Call country back to obey God

When our country was founded, there were no ugly or pretty people, just people with beautiful souls, seeking a homeland where they could worship God without persecution. For a number of years, we grew closer to the Lord. Then we started to do as Eve did when she was tempted by the devil.

✘ The devil told Eve, "You shall not surely die," although God had said she would. We started to believe that same lie, that God was mistaken in how he told us to live our lives, so that we would know peace, happiness and prosperity. I noticed it first in our doctors, who used to live by their oath. I think Norman Rockwell captured the idea in one of his paintings where a family doctor had made a house call on a sick little girl. The little girl was holding up her rag doll, and the doctor was listening for the heartbeat of the doll. But now so many of the doctors are only in it for the money, as they raise the cost of office visits when you receive Medicare. Look at all the documented cases of how some have taken advantage of the system to gain greater wealth. God has told us to love one another, even love our enemies, and to return good for evil. We still think we know better. When will we learn and return back to the peace and prosperity we once knew?

Daniel Younger

Itasca

Champions of faith

Over the Christmas holiday, the world of professional sports and the body of Christ suffered two significant losses. Reggie White and Johnny Oates exemplified Christian character and stood for biblical principles.

White's intensity on the football field, and most notably his knack for punishing opposing quarterbacks, earned respect around the NFL. Yet it was his religious convictions, especially his stance against homosexuality, that drew general attention. Refusing to bow the knee to the postmodern idol of tolerance and drawing severe criticism, White refused to let go of his convictions and continued to preach that homosexuality is a sin and not a biological condition.

For every pound of intensity White had for football, Oates had a pound of intensity for baseball. He assumed the coaching reins of the mediocre Texas Rangers and led them to three division titles in six seasons. Yet Fort Worth Star-Telegram columnist Jim Reeves described how Oates will be remembered not only as a passionate baseball coach but as a loving husband and father who had a healthy relationship with God.

Professional sports and the American church will surely miss Johnny Oates and Reggie White. They were not only champions of the arena, but champions of the faith. Will we follow their example?

Lance Higginbotham

Arlington

Hitler's aggression

Letter writer Bob Cheateam suggested the United States went to war

against Hitler's Germany without provocation (Dec. 6). Actually, Germany first declared war on us. We had little choice but to respond on Dec. 11, 1941.

For all his faults, Saddam Hussein never suggested that he was planning to initiate a war against the United States. He wasn't that stupid.

James O. Morse

Woodway

About time

I read the article about Eugene Florence (Dec. 6) with great joy and great sadness. With joy, because, at 100, he finally obtained his degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. And with sadness, because I wonder how many black students died without the blessing of getting a degree from one of the Baptist seminaries.

However, I thank God that Eugene Florence and the black students who died without a degree, probably having earned one, got an Eternal Life Degree from God the moment they accepted Jesus as Savior.

J.R. Aldape

Corpus Christi

'Body chemistry'

Your article on free teaching materials that help parents and youth ministers prevent drug abuse in teenagers (Dec. 6) is great. It's about time somebody came to the rescue and help in such serious subjects.

However, as far as the drug abuse of alcoholism, it would serve more folks by using the term “body chemistry” rather than “genetic predisposition.” That merely means one drink is enough to begin the road to becoming an alcoholic, no matter what age they start the drinking process. Drinking alcohol for any reason doesn't mean that God approves of such activity.

Dorothy Taylor

Lockhart

Heathen theories

Anybody who teaches the “evolution of man” is making God a liar (1 John 5:10).

God created Adam to be an adult male without parents and Eve to be an adult female made from the bones and flesh of Adam. That is the record God left behind of his son Adam to be the progenitor of Immanuel, called Christ.

Evolution theory is for animals/ beasts, and Neanderthals were the highest form of animal/beast. They were never the progenitors of Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God with a soul.

Because scientists disavow God in their sciences, they have dug pitfalls for their own heathen-concocted theories and have caused our teachers and academic professors to practice making God a liar, which is satanic.

B.D. Norman

Dallas

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.