

Texas Baptist Forum

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Danger of 'relevance'

Some years ago, Elton Trueblood warned of the cult of contemporaneity. The church can become so obsessed with being relevant that it becomes irrelevant. If the church in its quest to be cool like the culture around it becomes so indistinguishable from the slovenly and often immodest attire, lingo and music, who needs it?

People get that every day in movies, television, popular music and life in general.

Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com ; 250 words maximum.
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Out ((Loud))

"He's at total peace, which makes me think it's really the right decision. There's no second-guessing; there's no struggling. In fact, he told me, 'Anne, I have perfect peace.'"

Anne Graham Lotz

Author and speaker, discussing the decision by her father, evangelist Billy Graham, to quit preaching crusades
(Associated Press/RNS)

"As we continue to try to politicize God, or market God, or say that America is Christian, or that God is with one (political) party, or that God is here and not there, it only further points to the fact that we don't understand how big God is-and how great God is."

T.D. Jakes

Pastor of the Potter's House in Dallas
(USA Today/RNS)

"What everyone can do is to see those ... we'd rather not see with new eyes, whether they be the homeless, the outcast, the terrorist, those who irritate us, our enemies. And each time we see them, repeat to ourselves that we are seeing a precious child of God."

Lauran Bethell

American Baptist global consultant and recipient of the Baptist World Alliance's Human Rights Award, who works to aid women trapped in prostitution (American Baptist News Service/RNS)

When the heart seriously hungers for the spiritual, it seeks an otherworld, not just more of this perverted world with a superficial gloss of religion. It seeks for a God of awe and majesty, not some divine youth director “hip” with all the latest moves.

That is the reason so many of our Baptist young people, who don't drop out of church life altogether, turn to the more liturgical denominations when they grow up. We haven't given them much in the way of mature Christianity to model. We separate them from their families at an early age, never to participate in a grownup worship environment. They draw their values from each other in the various youth groups under leadership who themselves are a product of the youth subculture.

No wonder our retention rate and impact on their spiritual lives is so feeble. Thank the Lord for those fine young people who survive despite our quest for relevance, which by the time they are grown up, has become passé.

Richard Berry

Longview

A child's step

I disagree with Roger Olson's conclusion in “When should a child be baptized?” (Aug. 8).

Asking anyone to have “a profound religious awakening with sorrow for sin and repentance” is asking much more than Christ ever intended. Romans 10:9 clearly states, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

This is a step that a child can take. Even Jesus himself compared having

faith to that of a little child. It isn't up to the adults to question a child's salvation-only to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). God should be allowed to handle the rest.

Kim Gray

Keller

Significant decision

Thank you for publishing Roger Olson's article on children and baptism.

Having worked in children's Sunday school and Vacation Bible School for more than 30 years, this has been a question that has perplexed me. I fear that adults often try to play the part of the Holy Spirit by introducing children to the theology of salvation before they are able to make a responsible decision.

I cannot think of any other decision-college, marriage, career—that we would expect a child to make and hold to for their entire future. Yet in most Baptist churches, the most important decision of a person's life is urged upon children in a corporate setting. In the case of "decision services" during Vacation Bible School and children's night at revivals, the children present often are not even from a home where Christian parents have given them any information about what it means to follow Jesus.

Could it be that our churches would be stronger and more purposefully involved in the kingdom of God if every member came for membership after a spiritual experience initiated by the Holy Spirit instead of by adults who want this "decision" to be settled as soon as possible?

Can't we trust God to work on his timetable?

Nelda Weldon

Hewitt

Church's decision

Roger Olson's column raised excellent questions pertaining to baptism and children. There will be disagreement about what he said. That, in itself, is to be expected, but it was a thoughtful and developed opinion that concerns every Baptist church in America.

Toward the end, he said, "What I suggest is that churches give serious consideration to the matter and back up their pastors." It is at this point I would take a different view. Baptism is not a matter to be decided by any pastor. Rather, the church should decide what is to be the rule followed, and the pastor should support the adopted stance of the church membership.

One church problem is rooted in the fact churches often have no idea who they are and simply become what the next pastor concludes is their identity. Weighty matters of church polity should never be interpreted by the pastor. The church should know what they believe about worship, the standards that are expected and the basic predetermined deportment of staff members along with the basic expectation of church governance.

Edward Clark

Danville, Ky.

Cultural decline

Many decry the loss of the American culture. The society at large is pagan now. More worrisome than that is the loss of the Christian culture within the church, the visible body of Christ in the world.

I offer three indicators we have lost our culture within the church. Many may find even the mention of these offensive, yet they are present-visibility and very noticeably present-in our congregations:

- ◆ Women wearing hair styles shorter than men.
- ◆ Women with tattoos.
- ◆ Women getting breast-augmentation surgery.

Each of these is found in almost any church in the country, regardless of denomination or conservative/liberal leanings. Each of these indicators reflects undue attention to the world and its dictates. And each demonstrates a desire to follow personal desires before God and modesty.

Mike McNamara

Conroe

Undignified headline

It is unfortunate that the headline “Will Bush supporters receive payoff?” was used for the July 25 editorial. It seems after two elections, in which he was elected president and in which the majority of both houses of Congress have somewhat the same bent were elected, that something other than “payoff” should be used.

I believe as a long-time Republican, more than 50 years, when my party has the White House and Congress elected by a majority of voters it is something other than “payoff.” I doubt most voters went to the polls in the past several elections with a first priority of the appointment of a Supreme Court justice in mind.

It seems to me what the editor did was prejudge a person, who by all

accounts is a proven lawyer and a proven judge, yet the editor has determined how that person is going to rule in a certain way on a yet unrepresented case before the court. How unfortunate that such a judgment was made and stated under such an undignified headline.

H. Harold Brown

Port Neches

Positive articles

I just want to express my appreciation for the *Baptist Standard*. A few months ago, I wrote and was critical of the many articles that related to the Southern Baptist Convention controversy.

I am happy to say it is great to read positive articles about what is going on in Texas with so many churches and individuals. Thanks for the articles that you write. I do enjoy them.

I am proud to be a Southern Baptist and Texas Baptist Christian. Keep up the good work.

Lucy Thomas

Shepherd

History lesson

In 2000, moderate Baptists criticized the Southern Baptist Convention for deleting from the Baptist Faith & Message a reference to Jesus Christ as the criterion for interpreting the Bible. In 2005, fundamentalist Baptists are criticizing the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship for deleting the Christ's name from its revised purpose statement.

Perhaps a little history can help. The first English Baptist confession of faith, published in 1611, included 27 articles. Of those articles, one mentioned the “Word” (referring to Christ's role in the Trinity). Three mentioned “Jesus Christ.” Eleven mentioned “Christ” or “Christ's.” Thus, 55 percent of the articles referred to such theological convictions as Christ's role in creation, salvation, justification, incarnation, the church, the Bible, the Lord's Supper, worship and judgment. Article 9 designated Christ as Mediator, King, Priest, Prophet and Law-giver.

The earliest Baptists made certain that they and the world knew that Christ was their Lord. They did not use the name Christ as some magic wand to wave about. Instead, they viewed Christ as the key to every phase of their existence and identity. Christ called the earliest Baptists to freedom, cooperation and accountability, and they accepted the call. For them, Christ's name was important.

Charles W. Deweese, executive director

Baptist History & Heritage Society

Brentwood, Tenn.

What do you think? Send letters to Editor Mary Knox by mail: P.O. Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267; or by e-mail: marvknox@baptiststandard.com. Letters are limited to 250 words and 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.