

Texas Baptist Forum

April 28, 2006

Posted: 4/28/06

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Pride in possessions

I was a college sophomore when I bought my first car. It was a black 12-year-old '41 Ford. Jones Chevrolet in Center stored it for me eight months while I made the down payment on it. It cost me \$495, and I couldn't wait to drive it home.

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marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250
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“When my soul was troubled, it was Billy I reached out to for advice, for comfort and for prayer. You could say Bill has been the conscience of our nation and sometimes of the world.”

George H.W. Bush

Former U.S. president, speaking in College Station as he awarded the George Bush Award for Excellence in Public Service to evangelist Billy Graham (Houston Chronicle/RNS)

“Academics often think of conservative Christians as rubes and dupes. The reality is that the real movers and shakers behind the evangelical movement are highly educated, thoughtful people with entrepreneurial skills, wealth and extraordinary management savvy.”

Robert Wuthnow

Professor of social sciences at Princeton University, commenting on a comprehensive study by Michael Lindsay, a sociology doctoral student (Princeton Weekly Bulletin/RNS)

“What many people find disagreeable about the political use of evil is that it’s rooted in self-righteousness on the part of the speaker. It’s saying we’re entirely different from our enemies without any attempt to understand them.”

Robert Gahl

Professor of ethics and morality at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome (RNS)

I painted the dash tomato red and put a wheel cover and steering knob on it before driving it to East Texas Baptist College to show it off. Parking it every day in front of the dining hall assured me that everyone saw it. I was proud of that car!

When I was converted to the Lord, I was so proud of the Lord Jesus. I apologized to people I had offended, returned the 50 cents I'd stolen from Barney Bridges' café and showed my new faith to everyone.

Many people don't show off their cars like they used to. I've also noticed that many Christians don't show the Lord off like they once did.

I wonder why.

Doug Fincher

San Augustine

Organ donors first

The generosity of live organ donors like Jerry Wooley (April 17) is remarkable. But we wouldn't need many live organ donors if Americans weren't burying or cremating 20,000 transplantable organs every year.

There is a better solution to the organ shortage: 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.

Giving organs first to organ donors will convince more people to register as organ donors. It also will make the organ allocation system fairer. About 60 percent of the organs transplanted in the United States go to people who haven't agreed to donate their own organs when they die.

Anyone who wants to donate their organs to others who have agreed to donate theirs can join LifeSharers. LifeSharers is a nonprofit network of organ donors who agree to offer their organs first to other organ donors when they die. They do this through a form of directed donation that is legal in all 50 states and under federal law.

Anyone can join for free at www.lifesharers.org or by calling 888-ORGAN88. LifeSharers has 4,186 members, including 364 members in Texas. More than 400 members are minor children enrolled by their parents.

David J. Undis

Nashville, Tenn.

Methodists' example

Food for thought: "Methodists across the nation will celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the milestone decision granting full clergy rights to women in the United Methodist Church this year. All 63 United Methodist conferences have special activities planned for the commemoration, according to the United Methodist News Service."

With more women pushing for the same rights in the Southern Baptist Convention, is it not worthwhile to note that the Methodist Church's decline accelerated with this unbiblical decision?

Let's continue to teach and stand for God's clear teaching concerning the pulpit and pastoring.

Michael Simons

Cleburne

Culture & Scripture

The third paragraph of Jim Salles' letter (April 3), dealing with culture and Scripture and how the two interact, is an example of exegesis out of hand.

The fact the Bible consists of writings penned by those whose cultures defined women as little more than chattel should confirm that culture did, in fact, interact with the author's basic concept of the role of women in that society. Presently, there are worldly cultures that still demean and diminish women, not only as pastors or teachers, but also as human beings.

If carried to its natural conclusion, Salles' argument that Scripture should not be affected by culture would leave one hard-pressed to refute the notion that God continues to inspire men in their subjection of women to inferior status. Logic is in a lurch!

The life of Christ should be the plumb bob by which Christians relate to each other. The Apostle Paul is given credit for making statements that have become the wrecking ball of women's aspirations to respond to what they feel is divine magnetism. The debate can rage over what he said, why he said it, or even if he said it.

Those who pay attention know male and female are not combative entities, and with that light shining on the dark path of dogma, it should be clear that culture did, in fact, influence what was written in Scripture about women. It is demeaning and diminishing, and our Savior had no part in it.

Edward Clark

Danville, Ky.

Broader Christian perspective

In a time when many Baptist churches have abandoned Christian symbols, sing only songs written in the last decade and illustrate sermons mainly with film clips or current events, it is encouraging that Baptist churches like River Road, Royal Lane and Wilshire have realized the value of Lent, liturgy, lectionary and other ancient Christian practices (April 17).

Certainly, Baptists are free to adopt many styles of worship, but there are reasons these older forms have persisted for thousands of years. First, when we worship, we are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” that connect our service to the everlasting worship of God by Christians of all ages and all lands. Second, our children learn the prayers and songs of our founding fathers, including much of the greatest music ever written. Third, there is comfort and purpose in following the church year that mirrors the life and work of Christ, both in joy and in sorrow.

If we neglect these things, we miss out on the best of the past, do not learn the lessons of history, and can become provincial in our attitudes.

I have attended Royal Lane and Wilshire. Their services are definitely Baptist, but they offer a glimpse of a broader Christian perspective that is both appealing and refreshing to the soul. It might be the type of service that refreshes your church.

Dolan McKnight

Richardson

Choices about war

A U.S. or Israeli preemptive strike on Iran would be a monumental mistake. Attacking Iran would show the United States learned nothing from its colossal mistake of invading and occupying Iraq. The anger stirred up in the Muslim community of Iraq would be multiplied many times over in the

rest of the Muslim world if Iran were hit.

It is pure folly for any faction in the world to believe bullets, bombs and deadly nuclear weapons will win the peace. It is a sad commentary on the state of the world when people of the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths cannot find the common, higher ground that leads to brother/sisterhood—peace. Far too many believers of each religion believe their faith is superior to the others and that God especially favors them.

I am a person of faith and hope, but I fear we are moving toward unthinkable, suicidal world holy war. The God of Abraham does not want that to happen but won't stop it if humankind chooses to let pride, arrogance and greed drive its God-given freedom to make choices.

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.

Louisville, Ky.

What might have been

When I think about the recent actions of the International Mission Board trustees, it makes me mad and sad. It is a bit ironic and hypocritical for IMB and Southern Baptist Convention leadership now to say the trustees must either be loyal or keep quiet.

If those rules would have been in place 20 years ago, great men like Keith Parks (Foreign Mission Board), Russell Dilday (Southwestern Seminary) and Lloyd Elder (Sunday School Board) would not have had their ministries destroyed.

Dan Curry

Arlington

Homeless & children

In all my experience, some 20-plus years either being homeless or dealing with homeless issues, I have never known of a homeless person to harm a child. Yet I have heard of many people with homes who have done children a great deal of harm. Prejudice against homeless people—as expressed by some people affiliated with First Baptist Academy in Dallas (April 3) is what prevents many of them from ever overcoming homelessness.

Yes, I understand that there are some homeless people who are guilty of violent crimes, but the truth is, homelessness is not an indicator of criminal intent. Homeless people are most guilty of public intoxication and trespassing—as they often use doorways of businesses as shelter for sleeping and for some small protection from the weather. And yet most homeless people are not even guilty of that. The majority of homeless people make use of shelters and do not bother the public with their addictions and other personal defects.

Mostly, the homeless just want to be left alone. They do not enjoy the harassment they often receive from citizens and the police. Time in jail severely interferes with homeless people's needs to "self medicate" their addictions and mental illnesses. This provides more than enough motivation to avoid trouble.

Kevin Barbeau

Las Vegas, Nev.

Faith in evolution

Having read "Two new discoveries answer big questions in evolution

theory," plus another article about the Religious Left found at slate.com through a link from the Baptist Standard, the question arose: If what they say is true, why should I continue to believe in God at all, when respected experts and other eminent personalities also profess belief in God but at the same time dispute that he ever created anything?



If the millions of plant and animal species we know about all evolved, as many say happened, why should I continue to believe in the God whose creation story is told in the Holy Bible? How does one come down on both sides of this question?

Yes, God is our Savior and the Bible is true. However, he did not create us as the Bible indicates; we evolved over time. Can both really be believed by the same mind? Does anyone really think the science is conclusive on evolution anyway? Is evolution theory as settled as the Second Law of Thermodynamics? If not, aren't some exercising more faith in evolution than others do in Jesus Christ?

Further, with other advances in science now allowing us to see the living child inside the human womb, how do we reconcile God's love for all people with the practice of induced abortion? By valuing the child's life less than the parent's, have we not then made distinctions among ourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (James 2:4)

David Hammons

Fort Worth

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.