

# Texas Baptist Forum

May 8, 2008

Posted: 5/09/08

## Texas Baptist Forum

### Climate change

Thank you for printing John Christy's excellent article on global warming ([April 28](#)). As a climate scientist, he is in a position to expose much of the overreaching we see on the subject—the bulldozer approach to rushing us all into acceptance of Al Gore's brainchild.

- [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

Letters are welcomed. Send them to [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com);  
250 words maximum.

## **Out((Loud))**

*“We deplore those who are led astray—those Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baptists, evangelicals, Pentecostals and many others who cut Christ’s robes like bandits, who are like the soldiers who crucified Christ, who ripped apart Christ’s holy coat.”*

**Aleksei D. Zorin**

Chief Russian Orthodox priest in Stary Oskol, Russia, in a televised sermon that denounced Protestant “sects” (New York Times/RNS)  
*“Whenever we see euphemisms in use, we can know that something morally dubious is going on. Torture is not ‘torture’; it is ‘enhanced interrogation.’ Genocide is not ‘murder’; it is ‘special treatment’ or ‘ethnic cleansing.’ And a developing human being in its first stages is not a ‘baby’ but a ‘potential life.’”*

**David Gushee**

Ethics professor at Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology (ABP)

*“To avoid misunderstandings I would like to say: I was atheist and I stay atheist.”*

**Mikhail Gorbachev**

Former Soviet leader, debunking rumors he converted to Catholicism (RNS)

There have been many articles and essays on the need to go slow on trying to control climate change. In a recent edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, Steven Hayward, author of the annual “Index of Leading Environmental Indicators,” demonstrates the mathematical chances for reaching the 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050 being pushed by the major presidential candidates and the environmental lobby. In short, it ain’t gonna happen, and wishing won’t make it so.

Ken Boren

Rowlett

### **Biofuels & the poor**

Global warming is a catastrophe, but not in the sense that so many think. The catastrophe is that so many “experts” did not foresee or care about the damage that biofuels would have on the world’s poorest.

Taking food such as corn and turning it into fuel when so many in the world already struggle to survive because of lack of food is a bad idea.

The global food price index has risen 40 percent this year. Now we have a worldwide food shortage and high prices causing more starvation.

United Nations expert Jean Ziegler calls the present situation “a crime against humanity” and is calling for a five-year moratorium on biofuels until ethics and science can catch up with each other.

Two hundred thirty-two kilos of corn produce 50 liters of ethanol—not much. The same 232 kilos of corn can feed a poor child for a year.

The Christian response calls for us to petition for the poor and stop using food for biofuels. Anything less is evil.

Jean Whitmore

Okinawa, Japan

### **Capital punishment**

I wish I were so confident I would be able to know for sure what Jesus would oppose and what he would support were Jesus a member of today's U.S. Supreme Court. Would Jesus be more in opposition to the death penalty or legal abortions?

The number of innocents wrongly convicted and executed, and yes, even the number of guilty who are executed, is very small when compared to the number of babies killed by abortion. Which would Jesus be most likely to speak out against?

I suspect no one knows for sure. After all, didn't God allow the political powers of the time to execute his own innocent son?

Does the commandment the editorial writer chose to apply to his argument against executions ([April 28](#)) state, "Thou shall not kill" or "Thou shall not murder" in the earliest known languages?

Mac McFatter

Semmes, Ala.

### **Intrigued by Calvinism articles**

I'm no theologian, but I was intrigued by the package of articles on Calvinism ([April 28](#)).

Ironically, today's entry in *My Utmost for His Highest* says, in part: "When

we become simply a promoter or a defender of a particular belief, something within us dies. That is not believing God—it is only believing our belief about him. Jesus said, ‘unless you ... become as little children ... .’ (Matthew 18:3) The spiritual life is the life of a child. We are not uncertain of God, just uncertain of what he is going to do next. If our certainty is only in our beliefs, we develop a sense of self-righteousness, become overly critical and are limited by the view that our beliefs are complete and settled. But when we have the right relationship with God, life is full of spontaneous, joyful uncertainty and expectancy. Jesus said, ‘Believe also in Me’ (John 14:1), not, “Believe certain things about Me.”

Calvinism, as with much of Christian fundamentalism, sounds suspiciously like believing in our beliefs, not in our Savior.

Vic Houston Henry

Dallas

### **Promiscuous or Spirit-led?**

I have read your editorial on “U.S. faith swapping” ([March 17](#)) and Paul Mastin’s response, “Reason to swap” ([March 31](#)). I would like to share several thoughts:

I was raised in Churches of Christ, graduated from a Texas Baptist (Logsdon) seminary, attended a nondenominational church, participate in many ecumenical Christian functions and currently attend a large Baptist church that sends money to the Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. If you were to attend my Sunday school class, you might think you were in semi-charismatic church on some Sunday mornings. If I were to re-locate to another city, I frankly do not know where my family would attend worship.

The sign out front would not be the primary factor in our family's decision.

Am I "religiously promiscuous"? I think not! I prefer the term "Spirit-driven." I have concluded many churches sincerely seek to worship Jesus and serve humanity with many different signs out front. I do not see this as a crisis; it is simply the way things are in our postmodern and mobile culture of the 21st century USA.

Many contemporary Christians are not seeking creedal purity, nor are they seeking to be part of a specific tradition. They are seeking a church where they can serve the Lord, raise their kids and participate in a wholesome, vibrant Christian community.

On the other hand, I have found there is too much selfishness, politics and immaturity in churches of all denominations.

Brian Gasiorowski

Corpus Christi

### **Gambling vs hoping to win**

I just read Van Christian's "Right or Wrong" article about lottery tickets ([April 14](#)). He handled the issue quite well, but I must question two of his points.

He says: "Yes, this is really gambling. The amount is irrelevant. You are wagering a small amount for the potential of winning a larger amount." I think most would agree that this is a fairly common and accurate definition of gambling.

However, what do we do about churches that have golf and fishing tournaments? The people who enter these tournaments pay an entry

fee—which is usually much more than the cost of a lottery ticket—and there is the “potential of winning a larger amount.” They are “wagering” their money with the hopes of winning more.

This also brings into question the last point Christian makes. He says the lottery “gives them hope.” Whenever I enter a golf or fishing tournament, I always “hope” I will win and take home the big prize. Is it wrong for me to hope I win?

I am not condemning or condoning the lottery or golf and fishing tournaments, but sometimes I feel our reasoning for abstaining from one activity is contradicted by our actions in another activity.

Russell Cowan

Midland

### **Charity is not a tithe**

As presidential candidates release their IRS filings, the news media seem to determine the amount given to charitable donations is a tithe. Wrong!

One of the first scriptures I learned back in GAs, then called Girls Auxiliary, was Malachi 3:10.

Verses 8 and 9 clarify the tithe belongs to the Lord. Nothing in that Scripture says we can take God’s money and spread it around to nonprofit or charitable organizations and call it tithing. God makes it quite clear: All the tithes are to be brought to the storehouse to prove the goodness of God.

Not that we can’t give to worthwhile causes. I have two favorite charities I give to regularly.

Why, I can even remember collecting dimes for the March of Dimes back in the 1940s when I first went to school.

My favorite story about tithing took place a number of years back when I attempted to teach my fifth grade Sunday school class how to tithe.

That Sunday morning, I gave each child 10 dimes. They were so thrilled when I told them they could keep all the dimes and decide on how to spend the dimes. As they counted the dimes, I said, "One dime belongs to God." We then learned Malachi 3:10.

Ninety cents out of 10 dimes made some happy kids. Yet one little boy spoke up and said, "That's not fair."

I replied, "What's not fair?"

He answered, "God doesn't get very much."

Joyce Brumley

Grand Prairie

*Speak up. Send letters by mail: P.O. Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267; or by e-mail: [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com).*