

RIGHT or WRONG? Doctrinal disagreements

September 14, 2007

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RIGHT or WRONG? Doctrinal disagreements

I've just come across the statement: "In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity." Where does that come from, and is it actually a valid principle for congregational relationships?

Richard Baxter, a 17th century English clergyman, is credited with a slight variation of this statement from his long and prolific career as pastor, writer and theologian. Baxter held deep theological and political convictions during a tumultuous period of English history. Eventually, he became alienated from the Church of England, but he spent his life seeking unity among numerous Protestant groups. Baxter once wrote: "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."

[Previous Columns](#)

Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Thinking baseball

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CYBER COLUMN: Thinking baseball

By John Duncan

I'm sitting here under the old tree, thinking baseball of all things. John Grisham, in his book about baseball, Bleachers, says: "Football was king and that would never change. It brought the glory and paid the bills." I am under this old oak tree, thinking baseball in the start of football season and realizing that Friday night lights and football is king in Texas while thinking baseball and the game of life. Or in the words of the poet Langston Hughes, "Jesus ain't you tired yet?"

My life as pastor is a wonderful life. Never mind that preaching, as they say, is "between two worlds," the temporal and the spiritual, and on some Sundays, since I preach three times on Sunday morning, I hit a single, a double, a triple or a home run. And, yes, while on some Sundays I strike out, at least I have the privilege of walking up to the preaching plate to take my swings again on the next Sunday.

John Duncan

Around the State

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Around the State

- **Tony Martin**, professor of Greek, New Testament and world religions at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, will speak at a ministers' forum at noon Sept. 20. His topic will be "Biblical Ideas Relating to the Issue of Suffering in Human Experience." The presentation will be held in Shelton Auditorium. For more information, call (254) 295-4606.
- **East Texas Baptist University** will hold a preview event for prospective students and their families Sept. 29. There is no cost to attend, and visitors will receive information about academic programs, financial aid, campus life, ministry opportunities, tours of the campus and tickets to the ETBU football game. For more information, call (800) 804-ETBU.

Seven Howard
Payne University
students traveled to
India in culmination
of a class that
taught them how to
plan the logistics of
a mission trip to a
foreign country.
They learned
everything from
securing insurance
to visas. They also
learned the
importance of
learning about the
culture of the
people there. While
in India, the
students
participated in
worship in both a
house church and in
a congregational
setting, as well as
witnessing Hindu
worship of the
Ganges River.
Pictured in front of
the Taj Mahal are,
front row from left,
Naphtali Renshaw,
Allison White and
Jamie Coston; back
row from left, Travis
Garcia, Jared
Renshaw, Skyler
Smith, Tim Heinze
and Professor Rusty
Wheelington.

- **Baylor University** will hold the Parchman Endowed Lectures Oct. 2-4.

Ben Witherington, a professor of New Testament interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, will deliver the lectures, scheduled for 9:30 a.m. each day. For more information, call (254) 710-7347.

- **Kelvin Kelley** has been named to the faculty of Logsdon Theological Seminary, and also has been appointed assistant to Hardin-Simmons University President Craig Turner.

Amarillo minister to be nominated for BGCT second vice president at hometown meeting

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Amarillo minister to be nominated for BGCT second vice president at hometown meeting

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

AMARILLO—Citing his effectiveness in mobilizing laity for missions involvement, Bill Brian has announced his intention to nominate Jeff Raines, associate pastor of [First Baptist Church in Amarillo](#), for second vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Election of officers will top the business agenda at the BGCT annual meeting in Amarillo, Oct. 29-30.

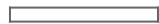
Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

[***This Immoral Trade: Slavery in the 21st Century***](#), by **Caroline Cox and John Marks (Monarch Books)**



Two hundred years after William Wilberforce succeeded in his long crusade to abolish the British slave trade and 144 years after Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in the United States, at least 27 million people are enslaved in the world today.

Caroline Cox, former deputy speaker of the House of Lords, and John Marks, a human rights campaigner and researcher, highlight the modern blight of slavery in its varied manifestations—sexual trafficking, forced labor, child soldiers and debt bondage.



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

Cox and Marks conducted extensive interviews with former slaves in Sudan, Uganda and Burma. About two-thirds of the book is filled with those first-person accounts, allowing readers to hear directly from people whose stories otherwise would remain untold and whose voices otherwise would be left unheard.

Call clarification important at Baptist schools

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Call clarification important at Baptist schools

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

Sometimes a Christian young person may report receiving a crystal-clear call from God. But more often, he or she may feel like there's some static on the line.

That's the conclusion of guidance directors who work with ministry students at some Baptist schools.

David Garland

Candidates' religious commitment not a big voter draw, survey shows

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Candidates' religious commitment not a big voter draw, survey shows

By Robert Marus

ABP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON (ABP)—A new survey of voters' attitudes toward presidential candidates shows that being perceived as highly religious may not help the 2008 hopefuls much.

[The study](#), released by two bipartisan public-interest groups, also suggests many issues most important to conservative religious voters aren't as important to the wider electorate.

Cartoon

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News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.

2nd Opinion: The importance of letting go

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2nd Opinion: The importance of letting

go

By Bob Campbell

Two years ago, I retired from a large church in Houston after almost 15 years of pastoral service. The day I retired, I gave up my role as “pastor” of the church.

I have elected to stay in the church with the many friends I made over the past 15 years. However, all of my friends will testify that I do not allow them to “talk” church business with me. I always refer them to the current leadership. Any member of the church will tell you that I have not said or done anything that could be construed as “pastoral” ministry in the church. I visit prospects as any member might. I never identify myself as the “former” pastor.

No pastor can stay with a congregation he has pastored if he does not recognize that he no longer holds the office of pastor. I told my congregation I wanted to stay under the following self-imposed conditions:

DOWN HOME: Lessons learned at a busy intersection

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DOWN HOME: Lessons learned at a busy intersection

Commuting is a microcosm of life.

Many folks, bless their souls, live in small towns, where commuting is nothing. But those of us who drive miles through city traffic every day view the gamut of human nature on the streets and expressways and overpasses of our lives.

This morning on the way to work, I witnessed the extremes of kindness and reckless selfishness within 15 seconds.

The Good Samaritan appeared first. Her dark-blue SUV grabbed my attention, because it was stopped on the left side of the road—out of the traffic lanes and partway onto the grass.

EDITORIAL: Good news from MTV, of all places

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EDITORIAL:

Good news from MTV, of all places

The best way to ensure the happiness of teens and young adults is to envelope them in the embrace of family.

A new study sponsored by MTV and the Associated Press revealed the most significant factor contributing to teen happiness is family. Spiritual faith also is a vital contributor to teens' and young adults' emotional well-being. Conversely, many of the supposed happiness-providers that dominate teen- and young-adult-oriented media—money, fame, sex and drugs—finished far down the list. And some of them even cause unhappiness, survey respondents said.



The majority of American young people lead happy lives, the poll found. Sixty-three percent of survey participants aged 13 to 24 said they are very happy (21 percent) or somewhat happy (42 percent). Another 22 percent said they are “neither happy nor unhappy.” Only 15 percent said they are somewhat unhappy or very unhappy.

Parents and family are the far-and-away dominant factors in young people's happiness. Asked to cite the “one thing in life that makes you happy,” 46 percent of young people named spending time with family, friends and loved ones. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents said they are very

happy (41 percent) or somewhat happy (32 percent) with their relationship with their parents. Eleven percent said they are somewhat unhappy with their parents, and only 2 percent are very unhappy.

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Religious activists fast for debt relief. A group of religious activists began a 40-day fast Sept. 6 to advocate for legislation that would cancel the debts of the world's 67 poorest countries, according to the [Jubilee USA Network](#), an alliance of more than 80 religious denominations and faith communities. 2007 is a Sabbath year, according to Jubilee USA, which in the Old Testament meant creditors were expected to cancel the loans of fellow Hebrews. In June, Reps. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., and Spencer Bachus, R-Ala., introduced the 2007 Jubilee Act in the House of Representatives. Jubilee USA says its goal is to get a hearing on the bill and similar legislation introduced in the Senate.

Confucius joins Jesus at courthouse. Napoleon, Confucius, Hammurabi and more than a dozen other historical figures have joined Jesus Christ on the wall at a Louisiana courthouse in a bid to reassure visitors that the

court wanted nothing more than to showcase people who helped to create the laws of civilized nations. Officials mounted the additional portraits one week before a scheduled court hearing at which the Louisiana ACLU planned to ask a federal judge to remove the Jesus portrait. The ACLU has sued the court, the city of Slidell, St. Tammany Parish and Judge Jim Lamz, saying the portrait and the accompanying words, "To know peace, obey these laws," violates the First Amendment and the separation of church and state.