

EDITORIAL: At least the pope cleared the air

July 20, 2007

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"Is the pope Catholic?"

That's got to be one of the world's oldest one-line jokes. It's also probably the world's most-used non-scatological rejoinder to an obvious question. For example, this discussion about Texas weather in July:

"Is it going to be hot tomorrow?" your neighbor asks.

"Is the pope Catholic?" you reply.



Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Muslims, evangelicals not so apart. Muslim Americans and white evangelicals have more in common than other religious groups when it comes to religious fervor, scriptural literalism and social morality, according to the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#). They consistently scored closer than other groups, including black and mainline Protestants and Catholics. For example, on the question of religious vs. national identity, 47 percent of Muslims saw themselves as Muslims first and Americans second, while 62 percent of evangelicals said they were Christians first and Americans second. Similar scores were 55 percent for black Protestants, 31 percent for Catholics and 22 percent for mainline Protestants.

Accident stills Marlette's pen. Doug Marlette, 57, whose editorial cartoons often lampooned fundamentalist religion but whose folksy comic strip celebrated a rural Southern Baptist pastor, died in an automobile accident July 10. He was 57. The Pulitzer Prize winner, who recently joined the staff of the Tulsa World, died near Holly Springs, Miss., after a truck in which he was a passenger careened off a rain-slicked highway. "The Creator endowed him with such creativity that he was literally one of a kind—and a real Baptist," said James Dunn, former executive director of the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#). "He could see the ironies and the contradictions (in political or religious life) so clearly and then

reduce them to just a few strokes in a cartoon.” Dunn and another famous Baptist preacher, Will Campbell, reportedly were the inspiration for one of the lead characters in “Kudzu,” a small-town Baptist preacher named Will B. Dunn.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

Long-term missionaries

Ken Hall’s suggestion that long-term missionaries have a minimal place in the future of missions ([July 9](#)) concerned me.

Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com ; 250 words maximum.
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"We have to demand full religious liberty here at home for non-Christians. That sounds kind of like the Golden Rule. ... You can't be for separation of mosque and state abroad and come home and oppose separation of church and state here at home. Let's be consistent."

Melissa Rogers

Visiting professor of religion and public policy at Wake Forest University, at a forum on ministers and politics sponsored by *Christian Ethics Today* (RNS)

"I would absolutely reject any idea that God sends suffering our way. The issue for me is not, 'Why me?' It is, 'Why not me?' I'm not exempt from the difficulties that come to everyone else."

Tom Graves

Former president of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va., who departed his post because issues related to multiple sclerosis (*Baptists Today*)

"Faith and reason are knitted together in the human soul. So don't leave home without either one."

Tony Snow

White House press secretary (*The Washington Post*/RNS)

Some of the Apostle Paul's missionary endeavors were brief, but strategic distinctions exist between his context and ours. He probably didn't learn new languages for his ministry, and his upbringing prepared him for bicultural missionary life. These differences enabled Paul to engage immediately at a level of culturally sensitive ministry that demands a lengthier period of adaptation for us.

Whatever we emulate from Paul's example, we should adopt his clear ambition not only to preach Christ, but to proclaim him where he has not yet been named (Romans 15:20-21).

On the Move

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- **Bill Austin** to Park Lake Drive Church in Waco as interim pastor.
- **Thomas Barber** to Prairie Hill Church in Prairie Hill as minister of outreach.
- **Tim Berg** to Meadowbrook Church in Rockdale as youth director.
- **Cory Brand** to First Church in Edna as youth minister.

Shores to lead Buckner ministry to Mexico, Border

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DALLAS—Dexton Shores, who has led [Border/Mexico Missions](#) and the Rio Grande River Ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas since 1999, has been named director of ministry development for Mexico and the Border for [Buckner International](#), effective Aug.1.

As director of ministry development, Shores will lead Buckner International's existing ministries along the United States-Mexico border as well as develop new ministries in the Mexican interior.

Dexton Shores

Shores will “immediately bring years of relationship-building, kingdom-building legitimacy to our work in Mexico,” said Randy Daniels, director of Global Initiatives for Buckner. “We’ve been seeking ways to provide ministry, but had not, until Dexton, found the right person to carry that through. Dexton is the person to take us into Mexico.”

Shores' abilities and passion for Mexico and the border region is a "natural next step" for Buckner Border Ministries, added Albert Reyes, president of Buckner Children and Family Services.

Court affirms religious obligation in case pitting sacred vs. secular

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Court affirms religious obligation in case pitting sacred vs. secular

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

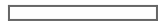
AUSTIN (RNS)—The Texas Supreme Court unanimously dismissed a suit brought by a former member of a Fort Worth church who accused her pastor of violating her confidentiality.

The case centered on questions of what roles civil courts should have when asked to resolve matters related to church discipline.

Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits

Hendrick named 'Great Workplace.' [Hendrick Health System in Abilene](#) has received the [Gallup Great Workplace Award](#), given to the world's 12 most productive workforces. The Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated hospital system ranked alongside such companies as Starbucks and Wells Fargo. Hendrick President Tim Lancaster credits the system's employees: "Hendrick is based in the idea of Christian service, with values like integrity, quality, teamwork and compassion. We are very blessed to have the majority of our employees dedicated to those values. When those employees believe in those values, and they live those values, they inspire those around them to do the same every day."

Baylor hospital ranks among best. For the 15th consecutive year, [U.S. News & World Report](#) has designated [Baylor University Medical Center](#) at Dallas among the nation's top 50. Baylor Dallas ranked with the nation's best hospitals in seven of 16 specialty areas—digestive disorders, endocrinology, gynecology, kidney disease, orthopedics, respiratory disorders and urology. Baylor Institute for Rehabilitation also ranked 15th among the nation's top rehabilitation facilities.

TOGETHER: Ministers need time for rest & renewal

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TOGETHER: Ministers need time for rest & renewal

Years ago, a church member criticized my father because he announced he would take a vacation. She said: "How can you take a vacation with so much to be done? The devil never takes a vacation." He replied, "Yes, and that's why he's so mean."

Rosemary and I just got back from a week in the Creede area of Colorado. All four of our children and their spouses plus nine of our 10 grandchildren gathered for a fabulous week. When our children were young, we tried to take a vacation every year and go somewhere. Sometimes, we had to borrow some money to make the modest trips, but we always said we were "buying memories."



Executive Director
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Sure enough, the memories that live on often are about those excursions. Several times, we could take these trips because members of our church who had cabins/houses somewhere would invite us to use their place for a few days. The kind generosity of our church and our members in making vacations possible blessed us.

When I got back from vacation, I had an e-mail from a BGCT congregational strategist.

Urban population crunch prompts crowds in church

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Urban population crunch prompts crowds in church

By Jennifer Koons

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Predictions that increased urbanization around the world would lead to a more secularized society are un-founded, and in fact the opposite may be true, according to a new report from the [United Nations Population Fund](#).

“Rapid urbanization was expected to mean the triumph of rationality, secular values and the demystification of the world, as well as the relegation of religion to a secondary role,” the report said. “Instead, there has been a renewal in religious interest in many countries.”

The global population influx into urban centers has produced an increased interest in religion—just the opposite of expectations. (United Nations / RNS)

Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Above, where Christ is

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CYBER COLUMN: Above, where Christ is

By John Duncan

I'm sitting here under the old oak tree, wondering where the summer has gone. Here in Texas, August beckons. Gerard Manley Hopkins, the poet, once quipped, "Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain." I have been away from the church for a sabbatical of sorts, rest, finding pleasure in reading and writing and resting and longing to return to my post as pastor to be with the people of God. The Lord is sending my dry roots rain. I feel refreshed.

John Duncan

I find myself thinking of the future, climbing Jacob's ladder to peer in to what God has in store; gazing at Jeremiah's future and a hope; scoping Paul's letter to the Colossians (3:1) from prison where from the deep and dark he declares, "Keep seeking those things above, where Christ is... ." I think of the future, one with no land phones and digital, of green cars in an

eco-friendly society and HD TV where at least we yearn to see the Dallas Cowboys or Dallas Mavericks in multi-color championships on crystal-clear screens. I think of the future, cancer walks and cancer research and cancer cures on the horizon. I think of the future, political speeches winding down and electronic election polls minus the chads; of hyped cars with powerhouse engines advertised with mega “horsepower”; of outsourcing in business and televised conference calls in HD TV with clear sound like talking to the neighbor next door; and of churches with digitized sound and big screens and bands like the Beatles echoing praise choruses and rhythmically blasting hymns high to the heavens. The future is wide screen and wide open. Yes, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is.

Pope’s assertion finds parallels in Baptist successionism

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Pope’s assertion finds parallels in Baptist successionism

By Robert Dilday

Virginia Religious Herald

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP)—Pope Benedict XVI's [recent reaffirmation](#) that the “true church” lies in an unbroken line of succession from Christ and his apostles might resonate in an unlikely place—conservative Baptists who trace the roots of their denomination back to Jesus—and sometimes beyond, to John the Baptist.

Baptist successionism—a theory which emerged on the 19th-century American frontier—claims to find a line of historical continuity in doctrine and practice from Jesus himself to today's Baptist churches. True Christian churches, goes the theory, are marked by distinctive baptistic characteristics, such as autonomous government, closed communion and baptism by immersion. Such churches have existed since New Testament times and can be traced through history in dissenting groups such as the Donatists, Albigenses, Cathari, Waldenses and Anabaptists.

Baptists, other Christians push for reform in farm bill

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Baptists, other Christians push for reform in farm bill

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP) —Baptists and other Christian groups are asking Congress to seize an opportunity to reform the way the government relates to farmers—for the sake of the poor in the United States and around the globe, they say.

A group of Christian leaders have urged House members dealing with the [2007 Farm Bill](#) to consider re-prioritizing how the government doles out support for farm subsidies, food stamps, rural development and foreign aid.