

Political rift helps Southern Baptists evolve

"I need God, not the political church."
 Sam Phillips

Columnist



H.L. Baxter
 Senior geography major

Bill Moyers has developed breakthrough medicine for his fellow Southern Baptists: change.

Moyers, host of PBS's *Genesis: A Living Conversation with Bill Moyers*, addressed the Texas Baptist General Convention in Ft. Worth last week. Met with both praise and contempt among conventioners, Moyers' opinions on the Southern Baptist Church were surprising, courageous and, above all, refreshing. In the search for knowledge, existing beliefs must be scrutinized, and Moyers should not be criticized or shunned for encouraging free thought.

In his Nov. 12 speech, Moyers praised the Texas Baptist General Convention for its criticism of the Southern Baptist Convention's far right wing, calling the wing's ideology "alien." Furthermore, he supported the Texas Baptists' decision to distance themselves from the "fundamentalists" who control the larger Southern Baptist Convention.

Moyers correctly assessed the fundamentalist faction's crusade as "less a set of ideas than it is a pathological distemper, a militant anger over the fact that the universe is not closed and life is not static."

Indeed, the Southern Baptist Church vilifies public opinion changes concerning abortion, child-rearing, corporal punishment, women's rights or any other issue the Church deems contradictory to the will of God. The Church has become political, more so than anything else, and it seems the

purpose of their conventions is to agree on a definition of "the will of God."

When the Southern Baptist Church (or any other Christian church for that matter) comes to a consensus as to what the will of God is, it begins building platforms, taking stances and passing judgment.

In effect, hypocrisy evolves: The Church uses its idea of "the will of God" to play God, instead of using it to regulate and improve its members' lives. Moyers recognized this trend within the Southern Baptist Church and accosted its leaders.

He challenged the Church to re-evaluate its policy of strict Biblical interpretation and entertain a degree of tolerance.

Over the past few years, Southern Baptists have disagreed on how literally the Bible should be taken.

Liberal thinkers within the Church advocate placing the contents of the Bible in the context it was written and building a platform on a modern issue from there; conservative minds advocate a more literal interpretation of Biblical events and application of them to modern issues.

One can use the catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) to demonstrate the differences between liberal and conservative Southern Baptist interpretations of the Bible. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of the inhospitable demeanor of their residents, not because of the rampant homosexual behavior some people believed existed there.

Conservative Southern Baptists often use the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to vilify

homosexuality or homosexual behavior. Their liberal counterparts may or may not condone homosexuality, but they are mindful not to use this Biblical event to validate their position. A rift exists between conservative and liberal-minded Southern Baptists concerning interpretation, and Moyers' comments were the most encouraging for the hushed liberal side.

The comments of J. Walter Carpenter, editor of *Plumline*, a Texas Southern Baptist publication, weren't so encouraging. Carpenter remarked to *The Dallas Morning News'* Christine Wicker, "Bill Moyers

is just the kind of liberal [the Southern Baptist Convention is] trying to get away from."

However, liberalism is not a philosophy one can easily "get away from." "Liberal" — now deemed the dirtiest of words — is the adjective identified with the Southern Baptist Convention's apology to the black community for its condonation of slavery; the Church issued the apol-



ogy earlier in the decade. "Liberal" were those few Southern Baptists who refused to advocate hypocrisy when they disagreed with the Church's boycott of Disney.

"Liberal" disregards boundaries of thought, opens the mind, questions everything to soothe one's hunger for knowledge. "Liberal" is fluid, dynamic as the world, and nothing, not even religion, can "get away" from this fact.

Moyers believes that none of man's beliefs can be static in a world of flux, and religion is no exception.

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the views of the editorials board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

Editorials Board

- Michael Landauer**
Editor in Chief
- Amy Collier**
Executive Editor
- Gretchen Perrenot**
Executive Editor
- Heather Pace**
Opinion Editor

KEEPING UP

The University should increase revenue to remain competitive

Texas educators, from kindergarten teachers to college professors, are grossly underpaid.

Students and parents certainly don't want to be the first to finance pay raises. Nevertheless, if the University hopes to maintain the current quality of education, it must turn somewhere for the necessary revenue.

Unfortunately, as the legislative goals in Austin have continually failed to appropriate adequate funding, the University has been left with few options to generate revenue for salary increases.

As a result, Texas A&M students may see their general use fee expand from \$24 to \$34 per credit hour.

If this increase is enacted, the extra money will be devoted to long-overdue faculty and staff raises.

Such competitive salaries will act as an incentive for current Texas A&M professors and attract other respectable professors from around the country.

Undoubtedly, this will allow A&M to maintain its status as a nationally-ranked university.

This institution has a long history of excellence, and the University has an obligation to protect the quality of education it provides. With this in mind, an increase in the general use fee, while unfortunate, will be of great benefit to the University.

Of course, such a bittersweet decision will hurt those paying the already-inflated fee statements. Parents and students

are already faced with rising tuition, and the added burden will be painful.

Students should note, however, that those attending other state universities have been faced with higher general use fees for some time.

Many of these universities were already charging the maximum amount, while Texas A&M continued to charge only \$24 per credit hour.

Unfortunately, the University has been forced to question the continuation of this rate.

Students must realize that a decision by the University to increase the general use fee would be the direct result of our state legislature's failure to provide adequate funding.

If an alternative source of revenue is not located, Texas A&M's inability to offer competitive salaries will lead the University into slow decline.

It is unfortunate that the funding will most likely be drawn from our savings accounts, but higher education has never been inexpensive, and Texas A&M cannot be allowed to slip into the ranks of mediocre institutions.

A college education is an important investment.

And although another fee increase will never receive a warm welcome, the diploma awarded by this University is second to none and worthy of the extra financial sacrifices parents and students must make.



Juniors should keep E-Walk clean

For two weeks, the Certificate of Death has been seen all over campus, ominously foreshadowing the moment in which the reins of seniority will be taken once and for all.

Our ascension is almost complete, and the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of '98 is prepared to live forever.

For those who are unaware, E-Walk is next Monday, Nov. 25, and it is important that juniors participate in our planned activities and allow the seniors to die in peace.

The tradition of Elephant Walk began in Ol' Army Days as an opportunity for the senior class to get together and reflect upon their years as members of the 12th Man; the junior class has recently become involved, hosting independent activities and celebrating our pivotal step in becoming the leaders of this campus.

It is important that all juniors and underclassmen exercise respect for themselves, the tradition and the senior class on this important day. The theme for all junior E-Walk activities is: Keep it clean. Let them die in peace.

By upholding the highest standards of respect for everyone involved, we can preserve this tradition and set a positive example for future classes.

Our treatment of the Class of '97 is a direct reflection of how we will be treated next year, and it is vital that we keep the celebration clean and appropriate by leaving the seniors alone in every aspect of their E-Walk activities.

If this tradition is abused, this tradition may be lost for our class and all classes to come, so please exercise good judgment and participate in our planned activities.

Class of '98 activities commence Monday morning at Bonfire Site with an opportunity for everyone to have pictures taken with two live elephants. The programs kick off at 98 minutes after noon (1:38pm) and include games, a life-sized elephant, prize drawings and more.

During this time, we will take the scenic route around campus to arrive at Kyle Field and listen to Frank Cox, Class of '65, followed by a pull-out yell practice with the junior yell leaders.

Then, our undying class spirit will be immortalized with a class picture.

Later in the evening, the Class of '98 is sponsoring a Bash at Hurricane Harry's with a \$2 cover charge all night. All classes are invited, and the festivities begin at 9pm.

The Class of '98 has a full schedule of activities for the day of Elephant Walk, and I would like to welcome all members to come out and participate.

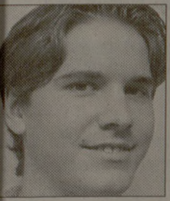
I am excited about seeing everyone at Bonfire Site and am confident in our ability to demonstrate to the entire 12th Man that we have the maturity and responsibility to lead this campus into the best year ever, 1998.

Nolan Barkhouse is the Class of '98 president and a international studies major.

CRs doesn't represent student stu-

The College Republicans has a long history of disenchanting traditional Republican voters on campus, disrespecting minorities and distributing misinformation to former students. It's high time someone pat those guys on the back for a job well done.

Columnist



Chris Miller
 Junior English major

How many times have you heard a fellow Ag say, "It took coming to Texas A&M for me to consider myself liberal," or, "I may be Republican, but the College Republicans do not express what I believe in?" And yet the organization continues to strive for extremism. How noble.

Any organization that has blind faith in its own principles and disregard for the opinions of other students should be respected for its bravery in sticking to its extreme beliefs in the face of adversity.

And there's no doubt in anyone's mind that the College Republicans has had its fair share of adversity.

Take, for instance, two years ago is an example. Certain members in the organization felt the need to distribute tasteless fliers with the intent of showing the horrors of affirmative action. Many students (conservative and liberal alike) rose in protest to the fliers, pointing out their offensive nature and insensitivity to minorities. The College Republicans remained undaunted.

About a year after that fiasco, the College Republicans again came under excessive scrutiny for a scandal I like to call Culturegate. It stemmed from former College Republicans' president Lydia Percival's fund-raising letter to former students. The letter was intended to criticize the multiculturalism requirement being considered by faculty and the administration. Percival's letter to the former Ags urged them to donate money to the organization to stop A&M from becoming "just another college."

However, Dr. Carolyn Adair, director of student activities, said the letter was "full of misinformation, wrong information, and information taken out of context." The College Republicans was charged with violating fund-raising activities and providing false information to prospective contributors.

But those crazy conservatives stuck to their guns, and Percival defended her actions by saying that the letters contents were "totally within the realm of possibility." Way to go, Percival! Hopefully other students will recognize the courage it took to face these charges with such a lame argument, especially in light of the fact that Culturegate successfully disenchanting many conservative Aggies in the process.

For those who believe sufficient evidence still does not exist to give the College Republicans a big thumbs up for its courage in the face of adversity, one can always look at Phil Gramm's political rally to announce his candidacy for president. In an effort to stifle all other points of view and protect the sanctity of the conservative agenda, certain College Republicans accosted protesters and attempted to block and confiscate signs which were not entirely conservative in nature.

It takes a lot of gumption to violate the First Amendment for the sake of one's own organization. My respect for the organization probably tripled that fateful day.

Finally, ignoring the concerns and opinions of the generally conservative student body appears idiotic. It would seem that any conservative organization which does not successfully demonstrate the values and opinions of most of the conservatives on campus has no need to exist. But in reality, the College Republicans is simply an organization focused on representing the most extreme of values — and where would society be without conservative extremists? Probably flushing down the toilet of socialism.

So the next time you consider making a scathing remark about the College Republicans, also consider the kinds of values the organization reflects among all of its adversity. The courage needed to defend extreme and insensitive ideas is something all good Aggies should admire.