



--- FEATURES
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76-158

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a four-part series on "Moral Issues in the '76 Elections," by Dr. C. Welton Gaddy of Nashville, director of Christian citizenship development for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The series will focus on informed voting, economic issues, civil and religious liberties, and responsible government.

First of Four Parts

Moral Issues in Elections
'76--Focus: Informed Voting

By C. Welton Gaddy

One candidate in a county school board election received 80,000 votes. On election day, he was incarcerated in a mental hospital as a result of having been arrested for breaking into a public official's office armed with a handgun.

That candidate did not win the election. That's good news. However, the number of votes he received is alarming. Citizens had heeded the challenge to vote without acquiring the kind of information which would have enabled them to vote intelligently. That's bad news.

As this nation's Bicentennial celebration comes to a close, citizens have an opportunity to vote for the public leaders who will shape the course of their government for years to come. On November 2, 1976, decisions will be made regarding the occupant of the White House as well as leaders in the United States Congress, state capitals city councils, and local government agencies.

Given the sad prediction that as many as 70 million voters may not cast a ballot this year, civic organizations are right in urging every citizen to get out and vote on election day. However, one additional emphasis is needed--cast an informed vote!

Every citizen has a democratic responsibility to vote. Every Christian citizen has a moral responsibility to vote intelligently. Followers of Christ have been commissioned to function as moral salt and light in the world (Matthew 4:13-14). Historically the people of God have been committed to that "righteousness" which "exalts a nation" (Proverbs 14:34). In a situation where the majority of voters cannot distinguish between candidates' major positions, careful listening and intensive study should precede election day. Voting is not enough. Informed voting is essential.

Here are some suggestions for Christian citizens on how to prepare to vote:

1. Study the issues. Elections are not popularity contests. Votes should be cast on the basis of sound reasoning in relation to a candidate's stand on various issues. At the national level, much can be learned about the political ideas of presidential contenders by studying the platforms of their respective parties. Regarding the position of each candidate, seek answers to questions such as: What are the person's priorities? Is the candidate responsive to questions regarding his idea? Do the candidate's plans for financial expenditures comply with his stated goals for service?
2. Investigate the candidates. As much as possible, know all of the candidates--local, state, and national--for whom you vote. Information about both personal life style and political competence is important. However, unless a major moral or character flaw is discovered, give more weight to evidence of a candidate's political capabilities than to details of his private life. Inquire as to how the candidate would be accountable to the public if elected. Ask questions such as: Will you hold news conferences regularly? Do you favor official meetings which are closed or open to the public? How do you plan to stay in touch with the citizenry?
3. Raise moral questions. Though Christians cannot legitimately expect the government to do the work of the church, concern for the support of basic moral principles is in order. When any candidate holds to positions which violate the fundamental moral concepts of freedom, peace and justice, there is cause for alarm. Amidst evaluations of "Is it economically possible?" and "Is it politically popular?" do not hesitate to ask "Is it morally right?"
4. Avoid the one-issue fallacy. Support of or opposition to a candidate should be based on more than one issue. Agreement or disagreement with a candidate's position on a single concern must not be allowed to blot out the candidate's stance on other concerns. Otherwise a person could be "right" on the one matter you consider most important and "wrong" on all other matters (or vice versa). Similarly, neither a candidate's political party nor religious affiliation should be the sole determinant of a vote. For example, Southern Baptists must neither support nor oppose Jimmy Carter simply because he is a fellow Southern Baptist. Episcopalians should neither support nor oppose Gerald Ford because he is an Episcopalian. Many other factors merit consideration.

5. Carefully distinguish between campaign promises and political realities. Rhetoric aimed at winning voter support needs to be tested by social, economic, and political possibilities. Important to know are answers to questions such as: Does the office sought actually have as much power as the candidate thinks? Can the candidate's policies be approved by the proper decision-making bodies, financed by available taxes, and enforced by officials of justice?

For Christian citizens, it may be that the most important moral issue in the '76 elections is whether or not we will enter the electoral process responsibly, vote with informed convictions and thus demonstrate moral integrity.

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Dr. C. Welton Gaddy is director of Christian citizenship development for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Baptists Urged to
Vote Intelligently

Baptist Press
9/23/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--"Southern Baptists must neither support nor oppose Jimmy Carter simply because he is a fellow Southern Baptist," a Baptist specialist in Christian citizenship development declares in the first of a four-part series of articles on moral issues in the 1976 elections.

Neither, he said, should Episcopalians support or oppose Gerald Ford because he is an Episcopalian.

In the series, which will be carried by Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) news service, C. Welton Gaddy of the SBC Christian Life Commission urges potential voters to base their decisions on a wide range of information.

The first article, on informed voting, calls for Christians to study the issues, investigate the candidates, raise moral questions, avoid the "one issue fallacy," and carefully distinguish between campaign promises and campaign realities.

"Our purpose in producing the series is to nurture Christian citizenship in a non-partisan manner, which will, in turn, encourage more intelligent voting at the polls at all levels," said Gaddy, the commission's director of Christian citizenship development.

Other articles in the series will focus on economic issues, civil and religious liberties and responsible government.

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Fire Damages
Hurricane Survivor

Baptist Press
9/23/76

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss. (BP)--The last remaining structure surviving Hurricane Camille's 1969 destruction of Gulfshore Baptist Assembly here has been damaged by fire.

The fire caused considerable damage to the old gymnasium which was being remodeled as a classroom and auditorium building. The building was insured and cause of the blaze is not yet determined.

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Owen Named Executive
Director of Northern Plains

RAPID CITY, S. D. (BP)--Roy W. Owen has been elected executive director of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention, succeeding John P. Baker, who will retire Dec. 31 after nine years as the convention's chief executive. Owen will begin work Oct. 15.

Owen, 52, associate executive director and director of missions for the Colorado Baptist General Convention since 1974, will also serve as editor of the Northern Plains News, publication of the four-state convention.

The Merkle, Tex., native previously served on the staff of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, 1968-74. He was associate director of the board's division of associational services when he joined the Colorado staff.

He has also held pastorates in Texas, Arizona and California and has directed associational missions in western Colorado and North and South Dakota.

The Northern Plains Convention, organized in 1967, is among the younger of the 33 state or regional conventions in the 131-year-old Southern Baptist Convention. According to 1975 statistics, it has 16,408 members in 96 churches in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. The SBC has 12.7 million members in 34,902 churches in 50 states.

Owen is a former U. S. Marine and is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Claypool Accepts
Mississippi Pastorate

Baptist Press
9/23/76

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--John R. Claypool, pastor of the 5,000-member Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, has resigned to accept the pastorate of the 500-member Northminster Baptist Church here, effective Dec. 12.

Claypool, 45, a speaker heavily in demand around the Southern Baptist Convention, said he made his decision to move because his new position will allow him to devote more time preaching, counseling and writing.

Before coming to Broadway Church, where he was pastor for five years, Claypool served for 11 years as pastor of Crescent Hills Baptist Church, Louisville.

A native of Franklin, Ky., he is former chairman of the SBC Christian Life Commission and preached the annual SBC sermon at the 1971 convention in St. Louis. He is a graduate of Baylor University and holds a doctor of theology degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

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Lester Named to Faculty
Of Southern Seminary

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Andrew D. Lester, director of the department of pastoral care and the school of pastoral care of North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem, has been named associate professor of psychology of religion at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

A graduate of Mississippi College and Southern Baptist Seminary, Lester has held his current post since 1971. He also serves as visiting lecturer in religion for the graduate school of Wake Forest University and visiting professor of pastoral care at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C.

Lester is the author or editor of three books and has written a number of articles for several periodicals. He is a former pastor and minister to youth at churches in Tennessee, Mississippi and Kentucky.

The Coral Gables, Fla., native will assume his teaching duties at Southern Seminary in the spring semester. His appointment brings to nine the number of new faculty members added during this academic year.

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Lindsey Chairs Baptist
Standard Search Committee

Baptist Press
9/23/76

COLLEGE STATION, Tex. (BP)--Jim Lindsey, director of university news services for Texas A & M University here, has been named chairman of a five-man committee to select a successor to John J. Hurt Jr. as editor of the Baptist Standard.

Hurt, a Southern Baptist editor for nearly 30 years, will reach mandatory retirement age next April. He has edited the Baptist Standard, weekly news publication of Texas Baptists, since 1966.

Other members are Joe Pickle, a retired publisher from Big Spring, Tex.; Joe Trull, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Garland; Ed B. Bowles, pastor of First Baptist Church, Beaumont; and Presnell H. Wood, pastor of Park Place Baptist Church, Houston. All are members of the Standard's board of directors.

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