

Charlotte-born author urges single women to aspire to greatness

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seminars, a best selling book, college tours, a summer camp for teens and a web site.

"God wants the best for us," Patterson said. "Many sisters are what I call 'drama

queens' and I know that God has a plan for us."

Patterson said women have to get on board with what God has planned for them and release the negative.

"A lot of women get their

kicks out of putting me down," she said, adding that male-bashers are the kind of women who relish in seeing black men fail.

Patterson said women who have the mindset that all men

are dogs end up attracting them.

In the book, Patterson writes about other issues that keep women single such as "shacking up," which she said develops bad relationship

habits, and trifling friends, which she said people need to let go.

The foundation for her book, Patterson said, is tied directly to her childhood in Charlotte. "Charlotte is such a great

place to grow up in. I got to see a lot of African Americans come together in positive ways and it showed me that black folk can come together and do positive things," she said.

Biblical disputes revive the question: What is an evangelical?

By Richard N. Ostling
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

University of Akron (Ohio) polling finds evangelical Protestants are the largest segment of actively religious Americans, outnumbering Roman Catholics. But the definition of "evangelical" is open to dispute.

That issue arises with "Thy Kingdom Come: An Evangelical's Lament" (Basic Books), a caustic tract by historian Randall Balmer of Barnard College in New York. He says the evangelical activists' agenda "is misguided, even ruinous" to "the nation I love and, ultimately, to the faith I love even more."

Unlike many recent books that attack the "religious right," Balmer grabs attention by claiming to defend God and country from within evangelicalism, though he acknowledges that many would deny him that label.

The loosely knit evangelicalism includes millions like lay Episcopalian Balmer in plu-

ralistic "mainline" denominations, as well as members of conservative denominations and congregations.

By Balmer's definition, an evangelical "takes the Bible seriously" and often literally, emphasizes personal conversion to Jesus, and sees a necessity to evangelize.

Similarly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) theologian Jack Rogers says evangelicals believe that people need a personal relationship with God through Christ, the Bible is the final authority for salvation and life, and everyone should hear about Jesus.

Like Balmer, Rogers has had his evangelical credentials questioned because he advocates full acceptance of same-sex couples and gay clergy, as in "Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality" (Westminster John Knox). Years ago, he taught at evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary and opposed gay behavior.

Balmer complains that evangelicals refuse to read Paul's "apparent condemna-

tions of homosexuality" as rooted in, and "arguably" limited to, "the historical and social circumstances of the first century."

Conservative scholars have published thorough rebuttals of the Balmer-Rogers stance.

Balmer is equally agitated about abortion, which set the pattern for later evangelical activism on gay issues. A libertarian, he believes abortion is "properly left to a woman and her conscience."

He charges that conservatives grabbed abortion "as the issue that would propel them to prominence," indicating that moral principle wasn't involved, only "shameless pursuit of affluence and power" through politics. He likewise says conservatives within mainline denominations exploit the gay issue to build their power base.

Defending that harsh judgment, he says evangelicals "take pride in a kind of slavish literalism" on the Bible, which never forbids abortion as such. Conservatives say bibli-

cal teaching requires opposi-

Balmer believes the activists "would love nothing more than to dismantle the First Amendment and enshrine evangelical values and mores as the law of the land," impose "intelligent design" upon biology classes, and end separation of church and state. Of course, liberal agitators continually enshrine the opposite values.

Balmer says, "I'll put up my credentials as an evangelical against anyone," and expects to be cast out because of this book, including possible ouster from the masthead of Christianity Today, the movement's flagship magazine.

Asked whether Balmer and Rogers are evangelicals, that magazine's editor David Neff (another lay Episcopalian) says they're "in a very small minority" on issues like gays and abortion. He'd consider them still within the fold "if they employ evangelical discourse and display evangelical piety," basing conclusions

on the Bible rather than on current social science.

Neff considers Balmer and Rogers part of the evangelical family the way Woody Allen is Jewish - not representative of the group but shaped by it.

The question remains: Does Christianity have social ramifications? So preach the non-evangelical Protestants who enjoyed political influence through much of the 20th century. Balmer appears to

believe the less activism the better and that faith is purer and more effective when it's unsoiled by politics.

He pronounces both the mainline denominations and the Democratic Party "virtually moribund."

On the Net:
Balmer bio:
<http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/religion/balmer.htm>

Black Episcopalians: Minority concerns trump gay ordination

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RICHMOND, Va.—National Episcopal leadership is focusing on the issue of gay ordination at the cost of addressing minority concerns, and is enlisting African bishops to fight a battle that's not theirs, speakers told a gathering of black Episcopalians Tuesday.

The church should look instead at fighting poverty and racism, and address the

conservative versus liberal divide that underlies the gay debate, speakers said at the 38th annual conference of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

The national group, which represents close to 400,000 black Episcopalians, is meeting in Richmond all week.

About 500 clergy and parishioners are expected to attend discussions of topics such as reaching out to young

black boys and strengthening the nation's historically black, Episcopal colleges.

At a luncheon Tuesday, speakers touched on everything from increasing black leadership in the largely white denomination to breaking down intraracial barriers between African and African-American Episcopalians.


Reaction was strongest, however, on the ordination of

gays—an issue that black leaders say has ballooned out of proportion.


"We waste our time trying to figure out who's sleeping with whom, instead of being about doing the work of mission and ministry," the Rev. Sandye Wilson, the group's immediate past president, told an applauding crowd. "Don't get sidetracked."

Please see MINORITY/8B

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Rev. Dr. George Cook, Pastor Greater Mt. Sinai, Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC	Tues. Aug. 22, 2006 7pm
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