

letters_60203

June 4, 2003

Posted: 5/30/03

TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM

Who's good enough?

In the summer of 2001, I had the distinct pleasure of going to Spain on a mission trip through the Baptist General Convention of Texas with a group from Howard Payne University's Baptist Student Ministry.

One week was spent in Alcobendas, at the only Baptist seminary in Spain. David and Susie Dixon served there, and I had the honor of meeting them.

E-mail the editor at

marvknox@baptiststandard.com

While there, David and I pondered the possibility of International Mission Board missionaries being required to sign the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. I remember his statement that he would never sign it. Recent reports of his termination indicate he kept his word.

My memories of David and Susie Dixon are of wonderful, God-fearing ministers who loved the people around them and served with integrity.

If people of their caliber are not good enough for the IMB, who is? God forbid that the IMB prefer less-qualified people who will be controlled by a man-made document over God-fearing people of integrity like the Dixons.

David Tankersley

Abilene

Heritage upholds termination

Historically, Baptists have opposed creeds when the state enforced them against the conscience of its citizens or when they were implemented as a means of salvation.

While avoiding connectionalism, 19th and early 20th century Southern Baptists did not, however, oppose creeds as means of doctrinal accountability for missionaries, administrators, professors, pastors or church members.

B.H. Carroll, James P. Boyce, John Broadus and E.Y. Mullins all used confessions of faith in this creedal manner. Carroll's book "Baptists and Their Doctrines" and Mullins' selected writings in the 1997 edition of "Axioms of Religion" make this indisputably clear. These men even used the word "creed" in a positive fashion with the above qualifications.

The IMB's termination of missionaries over the 2000 BF&M is consistent with SBC heritage and history in general and the IMB's stance in particular.

David Mills

Auburn, Ga.

No. 1 responsibility

As a pastor's wife, I appreciate your recent article giving a small glimpse of this life I live (May 19). It's not something that can be defined, described or even comprehended at times.

While the church very often gets the idea that we pastors' wives belong to them, the truth is we don't. My husband is, in a sense, "theirs," but I am delightfully my husband's!

In spite of the misconception, my No. 1 responsibility in the role of pastor's wife is to make my husband's role as pastor easier. I have the privilege of listening to, encouraging, challenging, admonishing, adoring and standing beside the love of my life.

It's really that simple, if I'll let it be.

Tessa Hall

Haskell

Main gift

I enjoyed the article on pastors' wives (May 19). I'm a pastor who is lucky enough to have a wife who looks like a doll, plays the piano, sings and cooks all exceptionally well.

But I want to also mention something the article did not: Whether most will admit it or not, a pastor's wife's main gift is encouraging her husband and increasing his confidence.

Even though my wife is talented in many ways, her most important quality to me is her encouragement. I would not be near as confident in ministry without her, and it has nothing to do with how talented she is musically or with culinary arts.

Jason Covington

Aspermont

Christian flag

During Memorial Day weekend, we paid tribute to those who gave their lives for our freedom. Our adult Sunday School department is made up of senior adults age 85 and older. On Sunday, we paid tribute to those who gave their lives that we might enjoy the Christian freedoms we have.

We owe a great deal to Jesus, the apostles, the early church and others, who gave their lives that we might have the freedom to read Scriptures. To honor them, we recited the pledge to the Christian flag.

I had not done that since Vacation Bible School days. If all of us would commit an allegiance to that pledge, we would be truly “one brotherhood in service and in love.”

Robert Dillard

San Angelo

Guilt offering

We pass by them every day. The homeless people begging for money with a sign that ends with, “God bless.”

Every once in awhile, the thought of driving on without doing anything causes us to feel guilty, and we already have enough guilt. So, to cure our guilt, we reach into our pockets, hoping not to be stuck with only 10s and 20s, and pull out a couple of wrinkled bucks.

We hold our offering out the window knowing we have accomplished something for the good of humanity and liberating ourselves from guilt for another day.

And they say money can't buy happiness.

ONLINE
ONLY

But then those ladies come to church. Most good Baptist know them well-Lottie, Annie and Mary. They come with their missionaries, who show slides of pitiful-looking people in pitiful places. They remind us we can't go on without doing something. We even listen to sermons that leave us with guilt, the kind that must be paid for. So, we reach deep into our pockets, hoping not to be stuck with only 10s and 20s, and pull out a couple of wrinkled bucks.

We hide our guilt offering in an envelope because we know we shouldn't give our alms for people to admire. We lay our offering in the plate, knowing we have accomplished something for the Kingdom and, again, having liberated ourselves from guilt.

Is it guilt or concern for souls that controls your pocketbook as you give to missions?

Jason Burden

Chilton

Tension of differences keeps faith vibrant

When men start messing with God's work and with God's called men, then they are setting themselves up as gods.

How can one find a man whom God has called to do his work? Note the prediction of Herschel Hobbs in "The Baptist Faith & Message":

ONLINE
ONLY

"At times one hears the prediction that Southern Baptists are about to

divide over their faith. In this writer's judgment, this is most unlikely.

“Baptists have always agreed on basics but have had their differences on details. This is because they have a living faith rather than a creedal one. The tensions created by these differences have kept their faith vibrant.

“In all likelihood, the only thing that would divide Southern Baptists with regard to their faith would be for one group—to the right or left of center or even in the center—to attempt to force upon others a creedal faith. So long as they hold to the competency of the soul in religion, they will remain as one body in the faith.

“The very differences which disturb some will serve as counter balances between extremes, with the vast majority remaining in between as always.”

Percy Calk

Comstock

Suspicious instead of accepting

I've just read your editorial about the mission boards' use of the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message statement, making it creedal (May 19).

I'm afraid the younger generation of Baptists, especially those who have not studied Baptist history, are not aware of how the enemies of Baptists have used religious creeds to harass them and to try to force them into theological molds counter to their consciences and contrary to their understanding of Scripture.

ONLINE
ONLY

Statements of faith have always been acceptable to Baptists as indicators of what the majority thinks the Bible teaches, but not as “instruments of doctrinal accountability” requiring theological conformity.

In the past, Baptists could cooperate even when they did not completely agree with all the points in a statement of faith. Sadly, that no longer seems to be the case. Apparently there are some who are so afraid of “liberalism,” however they may define that, that they feel they must force all who cooperate with them to pledge allegiance to their formal statement of faith or else be forbidden to cooperate.


Such fear certainly is not the product of love, for “perfect love casts out fear.” Lack of love makes people suspicious instead of accepting.

David King

Marshall

Playing God

Why the firing of the International Mission Board missionaries who will not affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message?

Is it because they have committed some great sin or have they been teaching false doctrine? No! It is because they will not sign a document of man. These missionaries have proven themselves to be sound in doctrine and faithful in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, this is nothing less than persecution of our very own. With such evil in our own ranks, will God bless? 

What about the calling of God in these missionaries lives? Did that change when they refused to sign? Again, no! The leadership has taken the role of determining God's will for these saints. Where they once recognized their calling into missions, they now deny for reasons that are unbiblical. Is this not playing God? Is this not wickedness? Of course, it is!

Is the Bible their real authority? Not anymore. It is the 2000 BF&M. They

judge men by it now.

And after all, when a president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention stated, "The Bible is not enough", the leadership of the SBC said, "Amen." Oh, ye hypocrites, will you not repent?

Kenneth Martin

Ira

Heart aches for those who must decide

I awoke with a prayer for our Southern Baptist missionaries. I tried to imagine what it would be like to feel and answer the call from God to take the gospel to all the world. What is it like to devote yourself to training and education for years so you can better lead lost people from other cultures to know Jesus Christ? What is it like then, when years later, you face an ultimatum to either sign a list of interpretations of what the Bible says or lose the support that allows you to share the gospel with your assigned people?

Do you sign because you agree with every statement?

ONLINE
ONLY

Do you disagree with one or two statements, but sign because God wants you to continue taking the gospel to the lost?

Do you sign because what matters most is reaching the lost, not teaching what Baptist believe?

Do you refuse to sign, because in your understanding of God's word, signing a statement that says you support all these interpretations would be a lie?

Which is most important, continuing to tell others the good news of Jesus

Christ or standing up for your Baptist heritage and beliefs?


I am thankful to God that I do not have to make these decisions. God knows my heart aches for those who must.

May God have mercy on souls who will remain lost forever because of actions taken by religious leaders.

Charles McFatter

Semmes, Ala.

Time of resurrection

Val Borum's explanation of the day of Jesus' crucifixion (April 14) fails to take into account Jewish law connected to the first day after the day of Passover. 

Since the day after the preparation (Passover) is a "High Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:7), it would have been impossible for Joseph to place the Savior into the tomb Thursday. Joseph rolled the stone to the opening, but did not finish. These two events can only mean that Joseph stopped for a reason, and that is Thursday being a High Sabbath. No work on that day. This means it was imperative that Christ be placed in the tomb, on Wednesday, close to 6 p.m.

Necessary for Christ to fulfill the type of Jonah, three full nights and three full days. No other scenario will fit Scripture than Jesus Christ being placed in the tomb almost at the stroke of 6 p.m. Wednesday.


Placed in the earth Wednesday 5:59 P.M. Thursday to 6P.M. Friday. 1st day. Begin 6P.M. Friday to 6P.M. Saturday 2nd day. Begin 6P.M. Saturday to 6P.M. Sunday 3rd day.

Scripture proves our Savior arose on the third day, which was at the close of the Jewish day, on Saturday closing the Old Testament, for the dawning of a new day, Sunday. Matthew 28:1 states dawning (drawing near) toward the first day of the week Sunday would be 6 p.m. When the women arrived, our Savior had already arisen.

James Parks

Dallas

Verdict is in

What has fundamentalist leadership done for the Southern Baptist Convention and, more importantly, for the kingdom of God? The verdict is in. 

Since 1991 and the completion of the national fundamentalist revolution, average church membership has fallen from 400 to 380.

Fewer church members are enrolled in music ministry and missions education. Sunday School enrollment, once the preferred vehicle for evangelism, has decreased despite a 5.7 percent growth in church membership.

Most troubling, our baptismal rate is flat. Today, Southern Baptist churches average 9.23 baptisms per year. In 1979-80, as the fundamentalist movement began, that number was 11.99 annually.

Since the national fundamentalist revolution came to fruition, each Southern Baptist church on average is baptizing three fewer new believers annually.

One area has seen significant growth. Total gifts to Southern Baptist

institutions have increased 77.2 percent since 1991. So, while local churches have fattened the coffers in national, state and associational offices, Southern Baptists have lost ground in the battle for souls.

Behind these statistics are stories of faithful Christian workers brought down, not by misdeeds, slothfulness, false teachings or immorality, but because they cling to the priesthood of the believer, the authority of Christ as the Word and a non-creedal ecclesiastical authority.

The fundamentalist appetite will not be satisfied until every paying job in an SBC organization is held by someone clearly identified with the movement and willing to sign a man-made creed as a display of total allegiance.

What hath the revolution wrought?

Bobby Quinten

Bedford

Autonomy of the church trampled

You accused some of fighting when they cried from slander and lies.

You said, "Follow the wisdom and guidance of God-appointed leadership, whether we necessarily understand or agree."

You replaced the Bible with rules as the doctrinal guideline.

ONLINE
ONLY

You told God women couldn't teach men. "Lord caused the donkey to speak" (Numbers 22:28). Would you prefer donkeys?

Your approval of women as missionaries but not as pastors or chaplains is hypocritical.

Your decreeing a wife should stay home shows your attitude of superiority.

You made the partnership of husband and wife a pecking order.

You made 'inerrancy' above God's word of loving your brother.

Your jealousy of another convention kept \$125,000 from the Baptist World Alliance.

You say you're right because of the money given you.

You requested all money for yourself regardless of others doing God's work.

You said individual priesthood was too much freedom, so you buried what was born at Calvary.

Your required creed signing removed and prohibits many called by God.

Your triumph of dominance and control has trampled me.

I am the autonomy of the Church, and you have fooled the majority into changing Baptist principles, which earns you more than enough rope to hang yourself.

Rex Ray

Bonham

Attack on Iraq was illegal

Charles Wade did not speak for me and many other Baptists I know when he wrote about our government's premeditated, unprovoked military attack on the people of Iraq in such antiseptic terms. Neither the people nor the government of Iraq has done anything to justify calling them our "enemies." Therefore, the word "victory" was also inappropriate.

ONLINE
ONLY

The attack was illegal and immoral. Jimmy Carter explained why this was not a “just war” in the traditional Christian sense. The UN Charter is a treaty adopted by the U.S. Senate. The attack was illegal because it clearly violated Article 2, Sections 3 and 4, of the UN Charter. It also defied the will of the UN Security Council.

Now that the fighting has ended, we know Iraq did not have “weapons of mass destruction.” We also know our government misled us about that fact.

My prayer is for the rebuilding of America—that we would live up to our hopes and not down to our fears; that we would restore the national character and values that existed before 9/11.

My prayer is that Baptists would have the courage and integrity to rise above the idolatries of nationalism, political ideologies and political figures. If we cannot stand for the teachings of Jesus, and stand against the killing of innocent human beings, what could we possibly have to say to the rest of the world?

We might do well to consider the words of Joshua 24:15: “Choose this day whom you will serve.”

Charles Reed

Waco

What do you think? Submit letters via e-mail to marvknox@baptiststandard.com or regular mail at Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267. Letters must be no longer than 250 words.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.