

letters_62303

June 20, 2003

Posted: 6/20/03

TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM: No compulsory creeds

A recent letter suggested B.H. Carroll, James P. Boyce, John Broaddus and E.Y. Mullins all used confessions of faith in a creedal manner (June 2). I beg to differ.

In the "Centennial Story of Texas Baptists," published in 1939, the editor summarizes 12 Baptist distinctives that have generally characterized Baptists since our beginnings.

E-mail the editor at

marvknox@baptiststandard.com
--

Articles 7 and 8 state:

"The right of every believer to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself versus authoritative creeds and dogmas, officially decreed and to be accepted and believed without doubt or denial.

"The religious efficiency and sole authority of the Bible versus the Bible as supplemented and interpreted by ecclesiastical decisions and dogmas."

Baptists have long had statements of faith. They have never been compulsory or authoritative creeds.

Paul Powell, Dean

Truett Theological Seminary

Waco

Crystal-clear Calvinism

In his article titled “Baptists urged to 'reframe' their discussion about Calvinism” (June 2), it sounds as if Dan Stiver wants to reframe the debate on Calvinism in terms of attractiveness of the concepts rather than biblical soundness.

The primary objection to Calvinism—I prefer the term “sovereign election”—raised by most people is that essentially it is not fair. No one would protest the concept of God's looking down the corridor of time to see who will make the right decision to receive his Son in faith as being fundamentally unfair.

But if this is the concept the Apostle Paul was describing in Romans 8, as most people assume, why did he anticipate and then refute the “that's not fair” argument in Romans 9? The only reason I can think of is that he knew he was describing an unpopular concept—that ultimately it is God who determines who will receive mercy and who will receive justice.

No, the doctrine of sovereign election is not very popular. I don't know anyone who was born a Calvinist. I struggled with the doctrine for a long time, testing it against one passage of Scripture after another, until I finally began to understand that all things are from God and through him and to him—not me.

It is all about God's glory, not mine. Then the beauty of this doctrine became crystal clear. And now, like John Piper, I can delight in it, because I delight in God.

Roger Holtzclaw

Houston

All Scripture inspired

I notice that a new interpretation of the Scriptures has seemingly been expressed by some in our convention regarding the fact that we are to adhere to the teachings of Jesus more than the teachings of Paul.

The Bible is the word of God—all of it. Second Peter 1:20-21 states, “First of all, no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will ... but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” This means that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible. The whole Bible.

The four Gospels were written by the Spirit. The same author gave us the epistles of the New Testament. Several books, but one Author.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, we read, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” Not just the Gospels, but all Scriptures. We must accept them all as valid—and inspired of God.

Ewell J. Humphreys

Fort Worth

Biblical worldview

George Barna can report and interpret his polls and research, but I challenge his definition of what one must believe and promote in order to have a Christian or a biblical worldview (June 2).

When I read his eight principles he uses to define a biblical worldview, I found no mention of eight other principles he needed to include—exclusive

monotheism (though he does mention God as Creator); spirit and life as the basis for mind and soul; the reality of the created world (the Logos did become flesh, not soul or mind); time as linear, not circular; the reality of faith and repentance; effective witness, ministry and mission; the centrality of resurrection in eschatology and hope; and the basic necessity of personal relationship holding one's worldview together into a coherent whole.

I can only hope Barna is not just parroting the latest popular theological correctness on one narrow view of what constitutes a biblical worldview.

Cyrus B. Fletcher

Baytown Posted: 6/20/03

Mongrelized worship

It sounds as if Rick Stone's rebuttal (May 12) to Mindy Foti's letter (April 14)-"It isn't what we like; it's what God likes; not where we are comfortable, but where God is worshipped"-is saying, in effect, "God doesn't like what you like, but he does like what I like."

This refrain is heard repeatedly-"not what we like, but what pleases God."

Who decides?

If we do not find an atmosphere reverent, then our worship is compromised by boredom or distraction.

If we are turned off, either by the still, small voice or the joyful noise, there is a thin line between compromising and being compromised.

Both voices are valid, but must every congregation mongrelize?

In our eagerness to "grab market share," we try to mix oil and water.

Why can't "alternative" for traditional churches mean "alternative" to what everyone else is doing, not "alternative" to what we are already doing so well?

Jim Cymbala, Rick Warren and other contemporary proponents and pioneers urge caution in forcing a viable fellowship to uproot. Rather, new areas, new congregations—a point largely missed in the amateurs' rush to clone.

"Blended worship" suggests "blended families," by definition something lost, through death or divorce—a substitute for the ideal, requiring more effort, too often resulting in more a "suspension" than a "solution."

Respect, on the one hand, seems to mean tolerance, on the other, forced conformity.

Harriet Kelley

Dallas

Missing the mark

I take issue with the following statement Marv Knox makes in "Christians must not block path to Middle East peace" (June 2): "Still others point to the Palestinians' long occupation of the land and conclude Palestinians hold at least as much right to the land as Jews."

This statement seems to indicate he too has succumbed to the false notion that there was once a Palestinian nation, or even a large number of Arab-Palestinian people located within the present-day boundaries of Israel. This is "the big lie" the present-day Arab-Palestinian people, most of whom were originally from the country of Jordan within about the last 70 years, have been trying to convince the rest of the world.

If Hitler were alive today, he would be proud of their methods and efforts to legitimize such a lie—and laugh at the ignorance of history, naivete and gullibility of the rest of the world.

However, let me quickly and fervently state, I think the Baptist Standard is the best Southern Baptist state denomination paper in existence, and the one that best tells it like it is! Also, I think Marv Knox is still “on the mark” 99 percent of the time—he just took his aiming eye off the target a second this time before he pulled the trigger.

Joe W. Telford

Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

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.

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. They may be edited to accommodate space.

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.