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TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM

Tricky numbers

Paige Patterson generally is being credited with great success at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (June 30). I must disagree.

He has led in academic flim-flam. For proof, ask any Southern Baptist if he has heard of Southeastern College at Wake Forest. I doubt if you will find one in 50 who has. The college was begun at Southeastern Seminary in 1994 under Patterson's leadership and is one of the new undergraduate endeavors that fundamentalist leaders are operating under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Convention seminaries.

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According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in the fall of 2001, Southeastern had a total enrollment of 2,044, of whom 556 were undergraduates. That same academic year, about one-third of the degrees awarded were undergraduate. Keep your eyes open for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's undergraduate program, especially if the seminary's numbers begin to falter.

The seminaries have entered direct competition with Baptist colleges and universities—a mission for which they were not designed, to which they were not appointed, and one which they can hardly accomplish with a

quality result.

Why aren't these truth-loving denominational leaders being more forthcoming with Baptists about their activities? The seminaries bear little resemblance to what they were before fundamentalist control, and the numbers that are reported represent very different things than what most Baptists would expect.

The new leadership may be honest by their own definition, but I would not buy a used car from them.

Wayne Barrett

Huntsville

Southwestern praise

First, I do not feel under pressure nor intimidation to speak my mind. I am a student and part-time worker at Southwestern Seminary.

Second, I have gotten to know Dr. and Mrs. Ken Hemphill well. They are good people, and I believe them.

Third, I also have become familiar with many Southwestern trustees. They did not force Hemphill out or force him to remove David Crutchley as the dean.

Fourth, while it is sad to be losing Hemphill and possibly losing Stephen Stookey and Karen Bullock, there still are many top-notch professors here whom I have learned a great deal from.

Fifth, I used to take what was written in this paper with a grain of salt, but not anymore. You do not want to report the facts of stories. You seem too eager to forget about grace and love. You would rather cause strife. I am

never reading this paper again.

I look forward to getting to know Paige Patterson and finding out what he really is like before I make any judgments about him.

Thomas Smith

Fort Worth

Trivializing incident

What value is there in an award given to oneself? Paige Patterson chose his own search committee. Every Southwestern trustee owes his seat to Patterson. No one serves as a trustee of any SBC institution without his tacit approval.

Prayer and God's will are trivialized by incidents like this.

Phil Lineberger

Sugar Land

Crystal clarity

Not since Galileo was forced out of the church has a man been as forceful in expressing the “crystal clear” interpretation of biblical teaching as that expressed by Paige Patterson (June 30). □

Galileo spoke of a round Earth, while the Bible speaks of the corners of the Earth. Like Galileo in his day, today missionaries are being removed from church vocations because they do not subscribe to the “crystal clear” understanding of Patterson.

To understand the “crystal clear” understanding expressed by Patterson, look at Galatians 3:28 to understand why women have no place in leading Christian congregations. God needs help in selection of leaders, and Patterson stands ready to speak for God. God's word is not dependable in that task. If God calls a woman to a place of leadership, do not tell Patterson.

Neither share with him that the Earth is a sphere. He probably believes, as those who believed in the days of Galileo, that if the Scripture is without error, then the Earth is flat.

God's word is definitely without error; however, all of us, including Patterson, make errors in Bible interpretation.

Bill Osborne

Houston

Faith & football

I couldn't believe my eyes when I read Gerald Johnson's comment in “Patterson & Parcells” (July 14). He said, “Anyone who does not think Southwestern Seminary will be better with Paige at the helm because he is a 'fundamentalist' might as well say the Dallas Cowboys won't be better with Bill Parcells because he was a New York Giant.”

Comparing our standards of faith to football? Wake up, Texas Baptists!

Marci Parrott

Denton

God's accountability

As a graduate of both Southern and Southwestern Baptist seminaries, I've seen firsthand the change wrought in God's name.

Jesus called such doctrinal “purists” hypocrites. They sought their own interpretation of God's word and destroyed those who did contrary. The Apostle Paul would have had another word for what Southwestern's trustees have done: “anathema”!

Karen Bullock was right stating one of the “viruses” infecting the church is ministers being god rather than showing God.

The effect of the change of leadership will undermine the ministerial integrity and capability of the seminary's mission.

Speaking of integrity, I give you a definition, not mine: “Integrity is a choice. It is constantly choosing the purity of truth over popularity.” The trustees have sought man's popularity and glory rather than God.

The rigid doctrinalism coming from Southern Baptist leadership denies any grace and academic freedom.

The world is dying and going to hell while these trustees serve themselves and their position. They should heed Jesus' words, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” before they condemn the innocent. Already, the wounds from this coup d'etat are manifest in mean-spiritedness.

The trustees should beware. God will not share his glory. They will be held accountable by God for their actions. God is more powerful than the SBC.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “They that have despised the word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away.”

Austin R. Robinson

Arlington

Freedom vs. bondage

In the letter to the churches in Galatia, the Apostle Paul said: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6).

As I understand what Paul is expressing to the churches, he is advocating that legalistic rules-based religion moves a person toward spiritual bondage, as opposed to the spiritual freedom that believers have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

What might be a parallel to the teachings of the Judaizers today? Is it possible that a document of theological accountability that Southern Baptist missionaries are required to sign could be something Paul might describe in the same terms as he did the advocacy of circumcision?

I wonder if the most influential missionary of the first century would say that the signing of a document has no value. If we believe the Scripture to be true, and I do, then “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Charles Risinger

Gilmer

New requirement

Pete McGuire claims, "In 'The Baptist Heritage,' Leon McBeth writes, 'In 1920 the Foreign Mission Board drew up a 13-point doctrinal statement to be signed by all its missionaries'" (June 9).

If this is an accurate quote, it apparently never was implemented.

We were appointed in 1952 and served for 41 years as missionaries in Uruguay. At appointment, we were simply asked to write up our principal doctrinal beliefs. I believe mine was very simple and brief, less than one page in length.

Occasionally, the personnel department would question the doctrinal statement presented by a candidate, but once he/she arrived at this stage, it was almost a given that the appointment would be approved.

I never heard of a 13-point doctrinal statement that all missionaries had to sign. We did not have to sign any list of doctrines prepared by others. I have talked with numerous veteran missionaries, and they say the same.

So, I think it is important that McGuire's statement be challenged. He attempts to use the quote from McBeth's publication as the basis for saying that the present requirement of signing the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message is nothing new. If the present requirement can be justified, other grounds that are valid must be found for supporting it.

James Bartley

Waco

Missions challenge

As a director of missions, a former International Mission Board missionary and now a trustee of the IMB, I would like to challenge Texas Baptist churches.

The Standard reported on the financial shortfall the IMB is facing. I was in the Framingham meeting of the IMB where we were discussing how to address the \$10 million dilemma.

Visiting our committee meeting was a missionary recuperating from injuries his family sustained by a terrorist attack. In the midst of our discussions, this missionary demonstrated Christian values when he observed that we have about 5,000 missionaries. He stated that if we as a board would cut the salaries of the missionaries \$2,000 per year, we would cover the shortfall in one year. While our board would never entertain that suggestion, our committee noted his commitment to the Lord's work.

Leaving the meeting, it occurred to me that in Texas we have as many churches as we have missionaries on the field. If a missionary would be willing to make such a sacrifice, how much more should we who enjoy churches like "ivory palaces" be willing to sacrifice?

If each church in Texas gave \$2,000 more to the Lottie Moon Offering, in one offering the shortfall would be covered.

What a tragedy to turn away or delay the people God is calling because we must build bigger buildings or remodel our palace instead of caring for God's called.

I challenge every church to increase their offering this year.

Kyle Cox

Galveston

Weaker program

What I admired most about the Southern Baptist Convention was the missions program. Now that they have substituted confrontation for love, it appears weaker, and the program suffers. What a shame.

R. Terry Campbell

Big Canoe, Ga.

Baptist unity

Thank you for your honest plea, "Support at least one missions cause" (July 14). Perhaps sagging finances for missions will be the proverbial 2×4 board the Holy Spirit will use to gain the attention of our denominational leadership.

Jesus prayed for our unity in John 17:20-23. He said our unity would validate his own mission here. Did not God answer Jesus' prayer for our unity? I think the answer must be an emphatic "no."

So, why do we see such disunity in our Baptist ranks? Only one explanation comes to mind—the father of lies and vanity has led us into such a state of willful and selfish rebellion that we have become apostate—beyond God's unifying touch, until we repent.

Leaders on both sides have lowered sarcasm, criticism, boasting and pettiness to new depths of hedonism (their rhetoric makes them feel good and they are praised by some for their rhetoric).

Sadly, we now see that lack of unity is financially detrimental to all camps and hinders the gospel of Christ in our state, nation and world. Perhaps the day of our leaders' repentance is not so far off.

Marcus W. Norris

Amarillo

Heart condition

Speeches are interesting to study.

The standard collegiate rule for determining if a statement is true or false is if any part of the statement is false, then the entire test statement is to be considered false.

On the basis of this premise, Tony Campolo's "messages" to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (July 14) can be classified like the image of Daniel 2 as a mixture with "its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay" (Daniel 2:33).

Society "may" be willing to have its surface issues dealt with "if" the heart is left alone. The surface social issue-problem-is the evidence of the condition of the heart. God's salvation through the Lord Jesus is the heart solution of all social problems.

Will we ever learn?

Ernest V. May Jr.

Livingston

Talking 'trash'

After reading the article on Tony Campolo (July 14), I now understand the problem with all Southern Baptist organizations, including the BGCT. Why do we have an American Baptist member speaking such trash at an assembly of one of our associations?

To admit his wife believes homosexuals should be allowed to marry is the most disgusting thing I have heard of at any meeting of any Baptist association or convention. His statement on dispensationalism as being unbiblical and “weird” only shows why sociologists should stick to sociology and let theologians handle theological issues.

Mick Tahaney

Port Arthur

Baptist mockery

As I read articles about the SBC and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, I wonder what has happened to the old Southern Baptist denomination I joined 40 years ago.

I disagree with both sides on some issues. I think a mistake was made when Paige Patterson was elected president of Southwestern Seminary. Al Mohler from Southern Seminary seems to think he is the only one to have the true doctrine.

Then I read about Tony Campolo speaking to the CBF convention. I would have thought they would have gotten someone else than an American Baptist to speak. From what I have read, he is too liberal for me. He says that the “Left Behind” series is false theology; then he says human

governments are the Babylons of Revelation. Does he know more than the authors of "Left Behind"? By the way, I don't fully agree with those authors.

Brian McLaren was supposed to speak at one of the seminars. I have read several of his books, and while I agree with him on some ideas for church growth, I feel that he leans too much to postmodernism.

I would have no problem with a woman pastor if she has been called. I believe homosexuals should not be discriminated in the secular workplace, but there should be no homosexuals leading churches or marrying.

I feel that both sides are making a mockery of the church and leading to the average Christian getting disgruntled and dropping out of "Baptist" religion.

Robert McIver

Garland

Sharp divide

I was astonished by David Currie's remarks calling Paige Patterson "arrogant, asinine and ignorant" and a "theological pervert" as not only hateful, but un-Christian (July 14).

There are many issues that my Bible is very clear. On the Christian stage of ideas and seeking truth, Christians should be able to express their views on these matters without resorting to such detestable behavior.

Currie owes Patterson and Texas Baptists an apology. This kind of rhetoric defines the sharp divide we have among Texas Baptists.

Steve Joiner

Buffalo Gap

Political correctness

I was almost ecstatic to read the remarks made by Ergun Caner at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference about “political correctness” and about “hyphenated” Americans (June 23).

Those remarks are way overdue! It is startling that so many today accept and promote this claptrap without a thought.

One of the most arrogantly self-righteous and patronizing terms is “Native American” to refer to the American Indian. (Does that make the rest of us “Alien Americans”?) Anyone born in this country is a native American. That is what the language plainly means, and 99 percent of us are both thankful for and extremely proud of this.

The second verse of the hymn “America” says this beautifully, beginning with the words “My native country, thee” Multitudes of our citizens have given their lives for our “native” land, so please spare the insults!

Our country, contrary to the politi-correctors, is not populated by various sub-species of Americans. Note the Great Seal of the United States as it appears on a \$1 bill. The motto is “E Pluribus Unum.” It is not “E Pluribus Pluribus”!

James W. Mims

Midland

Legalized attack

I regret our Supreme Court justices have no theological education toward knowing that God has no blindness to “privacy of persons” and nothing can be hidden from his vision.

How did they miss the point that this is a Christian democracy under God and Immanuel called Christ who destroyed the city of Sodom, from which the satanic behavior derives its name?

Freedom without discipline breeds a heathen, but this nation was set aside by God to await the “coming of Christ/Immanuel,” and it was by him that this landmass could become a Christian anything!

These supreme justices have lost sight of God's precepts of morality and godliness, and they need to be removed. America's blessings have always been under satanic attack, but we do not need it legalized.

B.D. Norman

Dallas

Supreme Judge

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that forbids homosexual sex. They said, “The state cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime.”

It was reported as a 6-3 decision, but, actually, the decision was 6-4.

They left out the dissenting vote of the Supreme Judge who wrote: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death” (unless you

repent).

Every problem we are plagued with today would be solved if we just allowed the Supreme Judge to guide us.

Roland A. Baylor

San Antonio

Ten Commandments

I am sorry Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore lost his battle to keep a granite monument containing the Ten Commandments in the rotunda of the state judicial building. Most people probably paid very little attention to it. Yet he was attacked with two lawsuits demanding its removal.

The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the constitutionality of the Ten Commandments on display on public property.

In West Chester, Pa., a group of atheists said they were offended and intimidated by a plaque of the Ten Commandments on a wall of the Chester County Courthouse, which had been there since 1920.

They hired the ACLU. A U.S. District Judge ruled in favor of the ACLU and the atheists. Chester County is appealing this case.

Moore is committed to upholding the written law of the Alabama Constitution and the U.S. Constitution with a First Amendment that has only one purpose, "to allow the freedom to worship that God upon which this nation was founded," Moore said.

Moore was defending his rights under federal and state law to acknowledge God as the ultimate authority in the land and thereby stand true to the original intent of our Constitution.

This isn't just about a granite monument with the Ten Commandments on it.

It's about protecting our religious freedoms and Christian principles.

Marilyn Green

Dallas

Crime statistics

Regarding the article on the authors who wrote about the faith connection in “The Matrix” (July 14), yes, violence is part of Scripture.

Show me the statistics on the number of violent crimes committed by people who said they were reading violent episodes in the Bible and got the idea for committing a violent crime. Then show me the statistics on the number of violent crimes committed by people who said their idea came from seeing violence on TV or in a movie.

Get my point?

Judy Norman

Dallas

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