

# Texas Baptist Forum\_112403

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## TEXAS BAPTIST FORUM: Doctrine & missions

Keith Eitel's letter, supported by Paige Patterson and sent to trustees of the International Mission Board, states that doctrinal issues, especially those involving women in places of authority over men, form the foundation for jettisoning all involvement with heretical missionary groups (Nov. 3).



Women are denigrated, as usual, and missionary groups who fail to follow the leader should be dropped.

Eitel, described as “one of the cutting-edge missiologists of our day,” can be seen, perhaps, as the user-friendly spokesman for fundamentalists. The “cutting” has already been accomplished in seminaries and workplaces across the convention. Those who were uprooted and cast out with neither grace nor concern are still feeling the rough “edge” to these actions.

Will we ever realize this movement to control, condemn and castigate those who refuse to kneel in homage to selected doctrine and political mandate is designed to ferret out the Christians who believe in grace without politics, service without bias and commitment without contempt?

It is clear that doctrine divides us. If what has happened to educational

scholars over the last 20 years of fundamental control is an example of current leadership, then it was then, is now and will continue to be a deplorable doctrine.

Eitel's paper concludes with this statement of appeal to the IMB: "Recruit administrators committed to theological renewal of the board." This, as always, demonstrates that this is politics. When did the board accommodate unto itself a theology?

Edward Clark

Danville, Ky.

## **Trap of polytheism**

Malcolm Yarnell of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary warns against the heresy of modalism (Nov. 10). The Trinity is not just God putting on three different faces or modes.

But Yarnell also needed to warn Christians that the doctrine of the Trinity does not present a "social group" of three Gods. Such a social trinity would deny the indisputable witness of both Old and New Testaments that God is one.

Yarnell's insistence that adding the one word, "triune," to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message guards against the heresy of modalism deserves a lot more explanation than his article presented. The early church councils carefully crafted the doctrine of the Trinity in order to preserve biblical monotheism and establish the full divinity of the Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Avoiding modalism by insisting on a social trinity of three distinct divinities falls into the deadly trap of polytheism, or three gods.

Baptists' statements on the Trinity did not contribute to nor create modalists for over two centuries. Judge for yourself. Yarnell seems more intent on defending the 2000 BF&M than he is in defending the doctrine of the Trinity.

Cyrus B. Fletcher

Baytown

## **Church & state**

Former Alabama Justice Roy Moore and his Religious Right comrades would like America to become a Christian theocracy. Church and state would be one and the same; the effect of such a union would be political corruption big-time. Non-Christians and unbelievers would be treated like second-class citizens.

A theocracy established in Jesus' name would displease Christ. Jesus rejected the temptation to rule a political kingdom. The last would be first in his kingdom. He mingled with sinners, talked to prostitutes, touched lepers.

Never-failing love dominated everything Jesus did. He did not coerce anyone to follow him.

Separation of church and state has worked very well in our country for over 200 years and must be maintained. Were Roy Moore's actions done in love, or were they done to promote a self-serving political agenda?

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.

Louisville, Ky.

# Being 'Baptist'

Regarding the editorial on being “Baptist” (Nov. 10), we Baptists need to review occasionally what we profess to believe and check ourselves to see that we not only “talk the talk” but also “walk the walk.”

We sometimes get wrapped up in organization and procedure and forget what the Bible says about our basic tenets.

God has blessed us for many years because we have adhered to our strong beliefs.

Let us not stray.

James E. Biles

Lufkin

# Doctrine upheld

I sadly disagree with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson regarding his criticism of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

I have been a pastor in Dallas since 1977 and am a 1980 graduate of Southwestern Seminary. I have had three children born at Baylor University Medical Center, and I am a member of the Dallas Baptist Association's committee on committees.

But the Lord has led me to attend CBF annual meetings for 11 years.

I always have been welcome to express a mission agenda at CBF meetings. I have experienced genuine and Spirit-led movements of Jesus.

I have never heard or felt any attempt on CBF's part to entice Southern Baptist Convention churches. Nor have I seen any hint of acceptability of homosexual practice.

But I have seen CBF strongly uphold the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, authority of local churches and equality of male, female and the poor and the rich.

“CBF is a Jesus people,” said Daniel Vestal, the CBF's national coordinator, said at 2003 general assembly. This clearly refutes Patterson's statement that CBF denies the exclusivity of Christ for salvation.

Yoo J. Yoon

Dallas

## **Lift up Jesus**

Malcolm Yarnell's speech to a seminary audience, praising the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message for adding “triune God,” is like bragging about a Band-Aid on a scratch of a severed arm.

A letter from seminary professor Keith Eitel accused the International Mission Board of pervasive theological error and needing to synchronize with the theological convictions of the Southern Baptist Convention. It seems the IMB errs by placing women as strategy coordinators.

Being under fire before, IMB President Jerry Rankin said he saved the IMB by asking missionaries to sign the 2000 BF&M. Accountability to the SBC was the reason Rankin gave for firing missionaries.

Causing women strategy coordinators to be fired will be another notch on the gun that terminates workers for the Lord.

The question should not be: Do we save the IMB or missionaries, but how far do we remove troublemakers?

The SBC should stop downgrading women, sticking its nose into the autonomy of the church and individual priesthood, and maintain its priority to reach a lost world. Not by arguing the Bible, but by lifting up Jesus.

If leaders won't do that, God help Baptists to get some who will.

Rex Ray

Bonham

***What do you think?*** Submit letters for Texas Baptist Forum via e-mail to [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto: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.

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