

Southern Baptists resolve to love the transgender sinner

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BALTIMORE—The Southern Baptist Convention condemned acts of abuse or bullying against people who identify as a gender different than the one assigned at birth but said Scripture does not support the transgender experience.

Messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Baltimore passed a resolution describing “the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes” as part of God’s design and stating “distinctions in masculine and feminine roles as ordained by God are part of the created order and should find expression in every human heart.”

Against ‘normalizing’ transgender experience

For that reason, the resolution says, “cultural currents” including medical treatments of “gender dysphoria,” attempts by lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender activists to “normalize the transgender experience” and public schools “allowing access to restrooms and locker rooms according to children’s self-perception of gender and not according to their biological sex” all run contrary to biblical teaching as summarized in the Baptist Faith & Message, the SBC’s official doctrinal statement.

✘ C. Barry McCarty of Atlanta, Ga., chief parliamentarian for the Southern Baptist Convention since 1985, instructs messengers June 10 on proper procedure for motions. (BP Photo)The SBC resolution invites “all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the gospel.” It affirms “that we love our transgender neighbors, seek their good always, welcome them to our churches and, as they repent and believe in

Christ, receive them into church membership.”

Southern Baptists oppose, however, “efforts to alter one’s bodily identity” through treatments like cross-sex hormone therapy or gender reassignment surgery, “cultural efforts to validate claims to transgender identity” and efforts by the government to validate the lifestyle “as morally praiseworthy.”

“Our love for the gospel and urgency for the Great Commission must include declaring the whole counsel of God, proclaiming what Scripture teaches about God’s design for us as male and female persons created in his image and for his glory,” the resolution concludes, citing Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 20:27 and Romans 11:36.

The resolution cites a 2011 survey showing 700,000 Americans identify as transgender.

Warning on near-death experiences

Messengers also adopted a resolution warning against books and movies suggesting near-death experiences prove the existence of heaven or hell. A resolution on “the sufficiency of Scripture regarding the afterlife” says many books and movies claiming to tell about an experience of the afterlife “cannot be corroborated” and “contain details that are antithetical to Scripture.”

“Many devout and well-meaning people allow these to become their source and basis for an understanding of the afterlife rather than scriptural truth,” the resolution states.

Because “the doctrines of the afterlife are critical to a full understanding of salvation and repentance,” Southern Baptists “reaffirm the sufficiency of biblical revelation over subjective experiential explanations to guide one’s understanding of the truth about heaven and hell.”

Resolutions committee member Chris Osborne, senior pastor of Central Baptist Church in College Station, said the resolution was a general criticism not directed to any particular book or movie.

During an earlier business session, however, Thomas McCracken, pastor of Community Church in Salem, Va., brought a motion asking LifeWay Christian Resources to “cease all sales, support and distribution” of *Heaven is for Real*—a 2010 best-selling Christian book and 2014 movie about a 4-year-old son of a Nebraska pastor who reported he visited heaven during a near-death experience in 2003.