

Letters: Local church autonomy; Second amendment; Inerrancy

February 28, 2018

RE: [Commentary: Illuminating a theological and ethical line in the sand](#)

Today, you published a commentary article online titled, "[Illuminating a theological and ethical line in the sand](#)." That article, authored by the pastor of FBC San Angelo, needs a serious rebuttal. I am no longer a Baptist in Texas, but I maintain deep roots to that state having grown up there and served there until recently. I hope you will reach out to find someone who disagrees with this particular writer's horribly warped interpretation of "local church autonomy."

He asserts in this article that the BGCT was more honoring of this foundational Baptist principle than CBF in their decision to change the hiring policy. Clearly he either didn't know that welcoming and affirming congregations in Texas were told that they would not be allowed to have messengers seated, or members serve in BGCT ministries, or representatives from those churches serve on BGCT boards. Such an omission is either an absence of knowledge on his part, or a distorted view of what it means for congregations to be free. Either reason should have been disqualifying. He and his church may hold a different position concerning marriage equality and the acceptance of LGBT persons in their congregation, and they can freely choose who they will participate with in terms of missions and giving. Those are examples of local church

autonomy. Telling a congregation that because of a decision their members have made that they are not allowed to participate in missions and giving with a larger body is not a recognition of local church autonomy.

It doesn't matter what the BGCT decided concerning congregations that are welcoming and affirming. If they want to prohibit the participation of a congregation because of their acceptance of LGBT people that is definitely their right to have voted on at a General Meeting like they did. But we should all recognize that it is an exercise in moral, ethical, biblical, and theological gatekeeping.

Not an exercise in "local church autonomy."

Whatever the Baptist Standard decides to do in response to this email and the concerns I have raised about the commentary published today is up to you and your organization's structures. I just hope that one of the institutions that has formed me through the continual application of open dialogue pursues a dissenting voice for this piece. *[Ed. note: Such a "dissenting voice" was also published at the same time as the article being referred to: "[Commentary: Joined in Christ, even when we disagree.](#)"*]

Thank you for your time,

*Will Thomas-Clapp
Falls Church, Va.*

"Yet the governing board is dictating to the local church how to behave in this case. The new standards of the CBF regarding sexual ethics have been moved on affiliating churches."

Two points: First, the above quote by James Hassell is a lie. Read [Steve Wells' opinion piece](#). Read the Illumination Project's report. You will clearly

see that CBF values and maintains the autonomy of the local church. Local churches within CBF are free to continue their discrimination and exclusion of whomever they desire.

Second point: May God help the LGBTQ+ youth who are at FBC San Angelo. Please know that you are loved just the way you are. Please know that there are churches who will welcome you just as you are — just as God has created you to be. Please know there are those of us within the Baptist tradition who do not adhere to a static, rigid, and decontextualized reading of Scripture. The arms of God are wide and welcoming.

*Bryce Null
Columbia, Mo.*

RE: Voices: Waiting, watching and tallying the dead

Another day, another White House scandal and/or school massacre. How much longer will the voters continue to hide their heads in the sand and pretend this is normal in what was once the greatest nation on earth?

The myth of the Second Amendment is more important to many voters than the lives of our citizens. How many times have you heard the Amendment quoted in its entirety, although it only contains one sentence? Did you know it doesn't mention guns? ("Arms" are anything from rocks to nukes). If there was a "well-regulated militia," who would "regulate" it? The very government the NRA rails against. Is your "right" being "infringed"? Try getting on a plane or into the NRA convention with a gun.

Let's call it what it is: Political figures trading influence for blood money from the NRA. When Trump and other Republicans talked with students

affected by the massacre, did they wash the blood from their hands? Even Pilate had the decency to do that. How about raising the age to buy an assault rifle? Seems to me the students of America are showing more maturity and morality than the supposed adults among pro-death Republicans who have sold their souls to the anti-American, pro-terrorists, merchants of death in the NRA.

Doubt my description of the NRA? Read the angry letter President Bush (41) sent, resigning his lifetime membership.

Carl L. Hess
Ozark, Ala.

RE: Voices: How I came to affirm inerrancy

“θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος” was timeless truth through Paul (2 Timothy 3:16).

God-breathed and profitable is timeless truth for all time. Or it should be if we are people of the BOOK.

Man ought not aver anything about the nature of salvation, redemption, or any doctrine apart from what Scripture has plainly said. The Holy Spirit described the nature of Scripture through Paul as θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος: God-breathed and profitable for many divine purposes and uses, “to equip the man of God for every good work.” The word inerrant is not used by the Holy Spirit. NEVER add to Scripture lest we become heretics. (Rev. 22:18-19, applies to the Revelation, and I aver to all Scripture.)

Who has the right to impose, to interpose or interject any term which the

Spirit did not Himself as God inspire Paul to use in describing “All Scripture”?

These ‘scholars’ imposed this word regards Scripture, built a false doctrine of division, made it a CREED among Baptists. Any CREED violates 400+ years of Baptist doctrine, the priesthood of the believer.

Inerrant? The prophets of inerrancy prosecuted an unholy war. So the word is anathema to me and to the hundreds of missionaries whose ministries were destroyed, and lives turned upside down by this warfare. They were recalled for refusing to bow at the altar of I will not say the word again.

“θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος” is timeless truth through Paul.

God-breathed and profitable is timeless truth in the 21st Century.

Maurice Harding
La Grange, Texas