

Texas Baptist Forum: Muslim student at Southwestern

May 24, 2014

Patterson was right to distance from moderates

You [wrote](#), “But here’s the real irony: (Paige) Patterson extended the kind of grace to a Muslim he has spent his lifetime denying to fellow Baptists.”

There is actually no irony here. I oppose Patterson’s decision to admit the Muslim student, for multiple reasons, any one of which would sufficient on its own. However, the New Testament calls us to treat brothers and nonbelievers differently. A “double standard” is not a bad thing when you’re talking about two genuinely different things.

In the words of the Apostle Paul: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?” (1 Corinthians 5:9-12)

Patterson’s history of drawing lines and taking stands among believers has been an effort to practice these, and related, principles. His history in this area has nothing at all to do with how we interact with those who make no claim to know Christ.

Aaron Blumer

Baldwin, Wis.

Drop petty disputes and name-calling

As a young pastor who was not around for all the fighting I am pretty disappointed in the childish ways we as Texas Baptists can't seem to move forward, and continue to create a deeper divide during a time when we should really be focusing upon lessening the divide.

Your editorial about Paige Patterson's admission of a Muslim student to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary came across as childish.

Is Patterson a hypocrite in his actions with Baptists he disagrees with, yes. Is his admission of Muslims in light of this laughable, yes. Anyone who reads your website already knows that. To write an editorial making fun of his hypocrisy only creates more tension on both sides of the situation and is definitely not modeling the kind of character we are called to have as believers.

We need leadership amongst Texas Baptists that is going to help us keep our eyes focused upon Christ and the work he has called us to do and not continue to keep our eyes looking back at hurts from over 15 years ago.

I know this is easier said than done for people who lived through this conflict. I have several in my church who recognize this about themselves. They also recognize if we are ever going to move forward we have to forgive. Mr. Knox you are a man of great influence, and I pray you would use that influence for the glory of God, and not for petty disputes and name-calling.

Mike Meadows

Livingston

'Sad day' for Southwestern Seminary

It is amazing Paige Patterson would [allow a Muslim student to attend](#) Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

When I attended Southwestern, Patterson and his buddies criticized then-President Russell Dilday for being too “liberal,” but Dilday never would have even considered allowing a Muslim to attend classes. That violates everything Southwestern has ever stood for.

It also is disturbing that Patterson would [threaten](#) students with expulsion and faculty members with firing if they dared to question his authority. The only authority that should matter is the authority of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Patterson’s actions violate all of those.

It is truly a sad day for my alma mater.

Dave Parker

Oklahoma City

Beyond betrayed to ashamed

I went to a Baptist school, Hardin-Simmons University. To have people of other faiths enrolled there was not only non-extraordinary, it was to be expected and welcomed.

But [a Muslim student at a seminary](#)? Our seminary?

I earned my master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I always have been proud to be a Southwesterner, regardless of the twists and turns through the decades. But this?

A seminary is to be a training ground for ministry, not a solely academic pursuit. It is a place to feed the mind and stir the spirit of those who are called by the Lord Jesus Christ to serve him in vocational ministry.

This? I am ill at learning this. "Betrayed" doesn't begin to describe my feelings. "Ashamed" probably gets more at it.

If not rectified quickly, I intend to return my diplomas post haste.

Earl Powell

Bedford

Muslim student helps seminary program

Sir, perhaps you might do your homework concerning [the student and the archaeology program](#) at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The truth is that while the growing biblical archaeology program at the seminary admittedly ought to adhere fully to seminary policy, it is also attempting to compete on a worldwide scale with institutions in the field that are located at the field. For us to have this student as part of our program has allowed SWBTS a foothold into relationships that will help those of us in the program develop pertinent relationships overseas. Not to mention that his experience from the field has served as a helpful resource for us younger students.

Please remember that in spite of your extremely biased opinion, there always exists at least two sides to every story.

Dawn Soeder

Fort Worth

'We do have a care' for Baylor

The just failure of the vote to dissolve the [Baylor Alumni Association](#) needs further explanation.

Under BAA bylaws, only members who could appear in person could vote,

and a two-thirds majority was required to dissolve. Of 17,000-plus members, fewer than 2,000 live in or near Waco. Baylor President Ken Starr, who supported dissolution, headed a Waco media campaign including press releases, interviews and billboards apparently directed to those likely to be present. Two months earlier, in July, he directed the demolition of our \$2 million Hughes-Dillard alumni building on campus

The vote failed as it should have.

How did it get that far? The BAA membership never was polled and was not kept informed on the private discussions, negotiations and threats from Baylor. BAA President Elizabeth Coker started the discussions with Baylor representatives in the fall of 2012. In 2013, she was succeeded as president by Colin Cox, who also supported dissolution and who presided over the voting Sept. 7, 2013. After the vote, Coker, Cox and a number of officers and members resigned from the BAA board. The board has been reconstituted with new officers and directors and continues to be independent and continues to serve Baylor.

As beloved President S.P. Brooks said in his 1931 Baylor commencement speech, read to that graduating class just days after he died: "Because of what Baylor has meant to you in the past, because of what she will mean to you in the future, oh, my students, have a care for her."

We do have a care for her.

Max Bennett

Weatherford

Petty differences

This is a wonderful time in the history of Baylor University. I am praying that [petty differences](#) will not keep our light from shining bright.

Control of money and power are the primary issues between the Baylor Alumni Association and Baylor University. Personalities should be put aside for the sake of the greater good.

It may be time to let it go! What is more important: To be right or to damage a beautiful institution?

Kaye Patterson

Houston

Fond memories of Glorieta

So sad to read of the [decline of Glorieta](#), and the change of hands.

I have so many memories of spiritual mountaintop experiences:

- My first trip to a “Training Union” week when I was a teenager (1961).
- A very special trip in about 1963 when my mom went with our group as one of the adult sponsors—the only time we made a trip like that together—which let me see her in a whole different light as she interacted with the other youth in our group.
- Attending with my college Baptist Student Union group while I was a college student
- Going with my family as a young adult.
- And finally, getting to go for three weeks as a teacher in the “Lab School” during a series of Sunday School weeks. By that time, I was a writer of curriculum for LifeWay, and we were using one of the units I wrote in the “Lab School” that summer. What a thrill!

Every single trip to Glorieta has a special spiritual memory attached to it for me, because there was just something about that place that draws one

closer to God.

Marsha Barrett

Longview

LifeWay materials 'problematical'

In general, we are quite unhappy with Lifeway Bible study materials. They over-emphasize the Old Testament. They emphasize uniformity for everyone. A recent lesson focused on Peter denying Jesus. We decided in our 3-year-olds' class to ignore that part and emphasize the mutual love between the two after the Resurrection.

An upcoming summer lesson about Daniel and his decision to obey God rather than Nebuchadnezzar is even more problematical. Discussing peer pressure and Christian standards and values, the author says, "The secularization of public schools has made many Christian parents feel that they are swimming upstream against a raging tide."

Public taxpayer-supported schools are by definition "secular." The U.S. Constitution and subsequent Supreme Court rulings are sufficiently clear about separation of church and state. We are supposed to take our children to the churches of our choice and mirror those teachings at home. It also is our responsibility to help our young people understand and support the Constitution, and it is the responsibility of our various governmental levels to provide and support public schools.

The SBC has become so tightly intertwined with the political far right wing that it has forgotten the Constitution. And having forgotten that, it's possible to take out pieces of the document they don't like, such as the religion clauses of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. ..."

Wayne Webb

Katy