

SBC advised to leave Baptist World Alliance: Reaction to Alliance's "leftward drift"

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A study committee has recommended that the Southern Baptist Convention withdraw its membership and funding from the Baptist World Alliance. Its report cited the alliance's "leftward drift" and concluded that "it is no longer wise stewardship to lend monetary support to an entity whose participants openly oppose many of our most cherished beliefs."

If the committee's recommendation is approved by the denomination's executive committee during a February meeting, it would be considered by messengers (delegates) to the annual meeting of Southern Baptists in June. If approved by that body, the relationship would end effective October 1.

"Continued emphasis on women as pastors, frequent criticisms of the International Mission Board of Southern Baptists, refusal to allow open discussion on issues such as abortion, and the funding of questionable enterprises through Baptist World Aid provide just a surface sampling of what has transpired in recent years," reads the three-page report released December 19.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Denton Lotz reacted to the report by saying it would bring schism to the world's Baptists. "Of course the BWA rejects categorically this false accusation of liberalism," he said in a statement that compared it to McCarthyism. "Of course there is a spectrum of theological thought in all of our conventions, just as in local churches, but we belong to one another because we belong to Christ."

In June, Southern Baptists voted to reduce funding of the alliance from \$425,000 to \$300,000. The nation's largest Protestant denomination has been the biggest contributor to the alliance, which has 210 member bodies. A month later the alliance accepted as a new member the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which

originally was formed to counter the conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention. -*Religion News Service*