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Homosexuality: The
Issue of Legalization

By Harry N. Hollis Jr.
for Baptist Press

Many people in America are struggling with the problem of homosexuality. Some denominations are debating whether to ordain homosexuals into the ministry. School boards discuss the matter of homosexual teachers in the classroom. Gay liberation activists work for acceptance of homosexuality as a normal way of life.

The issue that concerns us here is the legalization of homosexuality. Should laws govern homosexual behavior, or is it simply a private matter between consenting adults?

Before we deal with whether homosexual acts should be legalized, Christians must first examine what the scriptures say about homosexuality. In this brief article we cannot examine all relevant passages, but some general comments will be made.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament condemn homosexuality. The Old Testament in Leviticus 18-22 speaks against it, and Leviticus 20:13 even prescribes the death penalty for homosexual acts. But the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 condemns homosexuality without such prescriptions. Paul says in these verses that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This scripture places homosexuals in the same category with the immoral, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and robbers. Paul says (1 Corinthians 6:11) that the Corinthians had been delivered from these practices. This means that homosexuals have the hope in Jesus Christ of being delivered from that which would keep them from inheriting the kingdom of God.

In the Old Testament and the New, there is a recurring theological principle that it is God's intention for a man and a woman to join together in a one flesh relation. This idea appears in Genesis 2:24, and it is repeated by Jesus in Matthew 19:5 and by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:16.

In summary, it is evident the Bible teaches that a morally responsible, loving heterosexual relationship is God's intention for his creation.

Further, the Bible teaches that homosexuality is contrary to God's intention for his kingdom. Homosexuality is placed with other practices that block one from inheriting the kingdom. The Bible further teaches that homosexuals have the hope of deliverance through Jesus Christ.

The biblical teaching on homosexuality clearly indicates it is contrary to God's intention. But we still must deal with the question of legalization. Does the majority have the right to impose what they believe about homosexuality on the rest of society? Is the practice of homosexuality simply a private matter, or does it affect all of society?

There are some people who reject the view that homosexuality should be regulated by law. They say that what consenting adults do in private is their business as long as it does not hurt anyone else. Some people in this camp would say that homosexuality is not abnormal, only a different kind of sexual expression.

The newly militant gay liberation people, for example, say they have every right to practice homosexuality openly without fear of legal sanctions. It is the society that is sick, not the homosexual, they say.

In spite of arguments to the contrary this writer believes that laws should continue to prohibit homosexual behavior for the following reasons:

1. Homosexuality is not in the best interests of a society. It will lead not to health but to serious problems in the social structure. Therefore, a society has a right to regulate such behavior in the interest of healthy functioning and order.

2. Homosexuality is not simply a private matter; it affects others as well. It affects the children of families that are sometimes broken up by homosexual affairs. It affects the mate who is traumatized by the discovery that he or she is married to a homosexual. It affects young people who are made uncertain about their own identity when they find themselves in the class of a homosexual teacher.

3. The law should uphold community ideals. It serves not only to regulate but to instruct. If homosexuality is legalized, it will receive a sanction that it does not now have in most states. Thus more people, especially young people, will be influenced to pursue a way of life which can lead to anxiety and pain.

Some suggested actions that Christians can take to deal with the issue of homosexuality in general and with homosexuals in particular include:

1. Seek to educate people about what the Bible teaches concerning homosexuality. Stress the teaching that homosexuals can be helped through the power of the gospel.

2. Work to correct the myths about homosexuals that hamper understanding. The harsh stereotypes of the past must be resisted along with the new myths often used by the gay liberation propagandists.

3. Work to see that laws dealing with the regulation of homosexuality are just and that fair enforcement procedures are followed. The aim of such laws should be rehabilitation through guidance and counseling. It will not change homosexuals to put them in overcrowded jails where homosexual practices are already rampant. The most skilled counseling should be required.

4. Encourage church leaders to provide services through the church to help homosexuals. Work to get people in the church to show compassion for the homosexual.

5. Help the families of homosexuals. The sudden discovery of homosexuality can severely disrupt a family's life. See that support and counseling are provided for families shaken by such an experience.

This article is based on the biblical belief that homosexuality is contrary to God's intention. It is written not in a spirit of condemnation but is intended in a spirit of Christian compassion.

It is this writer's view that there should be laws to control homosexuality.

Hope for change, however, does not lie in these laws but in positive rehabilitation efforts. The best hope for change lies in the power that a relationship to Jesus Christ can bring to all human lives. (BP)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third in a five-part series on contemporary moral issues and the law written by Harry N. Hollis, Ph.D., director of family special moral concerns for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Court Refuses to Hear
Arkansas Abortion Case

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court will **not** hear the appeal of an Arkansas man who performed an abortion in violation of the state's anti-abortion law.

At issue was a portion of the Arkansas law which prohibits non-physicians from performing abortions. The statute also forbids abortions performed by physicians except under certain conditions, including danger to the woman's life or health, the likelihood of severe fetal deformity, rape, incest, and others.

The Arkansas Supreme Court ruled earlier that Al C. Hightower, who challenged the law, had no standing to seek review of the entire statute, but only that portion which applied to him. It then rejected his contention that no distinction should be made between doctors and laymen in the regulation of abortion.

Hightower brought the suit after being convicted of performing an abortion procedure on a 19-year-old woman which left her with a severe infection. After the illegal procedure, she had to go to a hospital for the abortion to be completed.

By refusing to hear the case, the U. S. Supreme Court lets stand the lower court's decision upholding Hightower's conviction.



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Coalition Seeks Removal Of TM From Public Schools

NEWARK, N. J. (BP)--An ad hoc coalition was to file a suit in U. S. district court here on Feb. 25 seeking the removal of Transcendental Meditation (TM) programs from public school systems throughout the United States.

John E. Patton, a Maplewood, N. J., attorney said the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, as well as federal and state officials, were to be named as defendants in the suit.

Charging that TM is a "thinly disguised form of the Hindu religion, the Coalition for Religious Integrity, which calls itself a "nationwide organization representing various denominations and non-religious groups," says TM's presence in American public schools violates the establishment of religion clause of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

Meanwhile, it was learned that the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington has included a discussion of TM--and use of public funds to promulgate it--on the agenda of its semi-annual meeting in Washington, March 1-2. That discussion is not related to the coalition's suit.

At an earlier news conference in New York, the Coalition for Religious Integrity, which includes Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a Washington, D. C.-based body, called upon federal executive and legislative leaders to "take immediate steps to halt this blatant intrusion of religious beliefs and practices in the public school system."

Albert J. Menendez of Americans United for Separation of Church and State said courses in TM are taught in four New Jersey school districts and an undetermined number of other places in the country.

The courses in New Jersey, he said, are supported with federal funds advanced by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare under Title 111 programs administered by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Brooks Alexander of the Berkeley (Calif.) Christian Coalition said at the news conference that he is a former TM meditator who is now "convinced not merely that TM is a religion but that it has been deliberately disguised by Maharishi and his corporate employees so as to qualify for governmental funding."

Menendez, said that "TM is merely a subtly disguised form of Hinduism and that the continuation of such programs in our schools clearly violates the Constitution.

"Americans United has been in the forefront of the fight for a governmental structure free of sectarian religious influence," he said. "Our actions have resulted in significant court decisions voiding the expenditure of tax dollars on religious programs. We consider the presence of TM in our American school system as among the most blatant and insidious examples of constitutional violations we have ever seen."

In a letter to state and federal authorities, Samuel A. Jeanes said that "religious liberty is jeopardized" when government funds such projects. Jeanes is pastor of First Baptist Church, Merchantville, N. J., and chairman of the Coalition for Religious Integrity.

Representing the coalition at the news conference were Jeanes, Alexander, Menendez, and Joseph Duffy of Hoboken, N. J., the coalition's executive director. Patton and Michael J. Woodruff of Santa Barbara, Calif., attorneys for the coalition, were also present.

High Court Will Not Stop
Mass in University Dorm

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--A decision of the U. S. Supreme Court not to hear a case will permit a Roman Catholic priest to continue celebrating mass in a student dormitory at the University of Delaware.

Although the high court did not actually affirm the ruling of the Delaware Supreme Court holding the religious services constitutional, the effect of the decision not to consider the case is to leave standing the lower court position.

The religious services have been conducted in a dormitory commons area since September 1973 by a priest from the Wilmington Diocese, with the approval of the Catholic chaplain assigned to the university. Upon the request of a number of students, the chaplain arranged for a priest to hold weekly mass on Sunday mornings.

The University of Delaware protested immediately, citing a provision in the school's charter which states that "the university shall never be managed or conducted in the interest of any party, sect or denomination."

In addition, university officials cited a 1971 document dealing with policies designed to govern all student ministries at the school. That document provided that properly registered groups could use space in the student center and other buildings for meetings and social gatherings, "but not for worship services."

When the priest and chaplain refused to comply with university regulations, the school sought an injunction barring them for conducting the services. The Delaware Court of Chancery denied the petition, holding that the use of the dormitory facilities for religious services did not amount to an establishment of religion as prohibited by the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

At the same time, however, the court held that the university's refusal to permit the services was not a violation of students' free exercise of religion rights.

On appeal, the Delaware Supreme Court agreed with the lower court that the services did not unconstitutionally establish religion. It held further that the university's denial of its dormitory facilities for such services did violate the students' right to the free exercise of religion.

In a written brief to the U. S. Supreme Court, University of Delaware officials argued that the decision "is of extraordinarily widespread consequence" in that "it authorizes every religious denomination to commandeer facilities for the conduct of religious worship services at every tax supported educational institution."

They also contended that the judgment of their state's Supreme Court conflicts with previous actions of the nation's highest tribunal.

On the other side, the priest and Catholic chaplain, joined by the bishop of Wilmington, argued that the lower ruling "is of limited application, applying only to the use of college residence hall meeting rooms by student residents on Sunday mornings." To rule otherwise, they said, would violate the students' free exercise rights.

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Baptist Union Formed
In Bangalore, India

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BANGALORE, India (BP)--The Karnataka Baptist Union of Churches was officially inaugurated in services here. The union marks the beginning of official cooperation between congregations in the state of Karnataka.

Southern Baptist missionaries, limited to medical and educational roles in India, were present for the services. Other guests included J. D. Hughey, area secretary for Europe and the Middle East for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex.; David Wong, president of the Baptist World Alliance; and B. R. Moses, president of the Baptist Union of India.

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The union began because Baptist churches wanted to establish fellowship with each other, according to Dr. Rebekah A. Naylor, Southern Baptist missionary physician stationed in Bangalore. A pastors' prayer fellowship was organized and initial discussions concerning union began.

Three major groups united in the fellowship are the Indian Baptist Mission (the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries) with the Bangalore Baptist Hospital and the associated churches; the United Evangelical Mission with its churches and schools; and the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

J. Ebenezer, a pastor with the United Evangelical Mission, was elected president of the Karnataka Baptist Union; B. Ananth, a pastor, vice-president; Southern Baptist missionary William C. Mason, treasurer; and John Rangor Rao, pastor of Bangalore's Calvary Baptist Church, secretary.

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Record Relief Funds Total
\$1.67 Million in 1975

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RICHMOND (BP)--In 1975, Southern Baptists gave \$1.67 million to world relief through their Foreign Mission Board. Of that total, almost \$1.4 million has been appropriated, including \$145,000 so far in 1976.

The balance is available for emergency use in response to times of crisis or natural disasters such as Guatemala's recent earthquake. These funds enabled the board to send money, now totaling \$100,000, immediately to Guatemala rather than having to await money given for the disaster, according to Baker J. Cauthen, the board's executive secretary.

"In the administration of relief," Cauthen said, "We do well to have in hand at all times funds which can be called upon without delay. It is our purpose to administer these funds wisely so that immediate assistance can be given to suffering whenever it occurs and response can be immediate to disasters when they strike unexpectedly."

The 1975 appropriations went to 19 different countries and included purchases of food, seed, medical supplies, clothing and tools; funding of water wells and irrigation projects; construction of homes and rebuilding of churches.

The country receiving the largest amount of aid was Bangladesh, which received \$729,194. In the wake of a devastating flood in 1974, missionaries sought to help some of the more than 15 million persons left homeless and hungry.

Included were irrigation and farming projects to help Bengali families provide for the present and the future, food-for-work programs, the distribution of fish and ducks to provide a high protein diet, and construction of small sturdy homes that will not be washed away.

Relief work with war refugees and victims received the next largest appropriation. Vietnam received \$165,000 and Thailand received \$39,000 for use with Vietnam and Laotian refugees. Angola, split three ways by civil war, received \$110,000 and Angolan refugees in Portugal received \$20,000. Missionaries had to leave Vietnam, Laos, Angola and Mozambique during the course of 1975. Lebanon received \$30,000 to aid victims of the civil war there.

In circumstances where missionaries could not complete relief plans, relief dollars appropriated were returned to the board's reserve for relief.

Africa continued to suffer through drought in some areas and floods in other parts of the continent.

Nations in both West and East Africa experienced continued droughts and shortages of water. Upper Volta, Benin (Dahomey), Kenya and Rhodesia received aid for well-digging and drought relief. Uganda received money for vitamins, food supplements, salt, fertilizer and trees.

Botswana received an appropriation for permanent flood relief equipment. In Ethiopia, a dam, irrigation system and well were provided.

Recife, Brazil, received \$57,000 for flood relief, and Korea received an appropriation for the permanent flood relief fund maintained by missionaries.

Hurricane relief work in Honduras, begun in 1974 with appropriations of \$40,000, was completed in 1975 with an additional \$10,000. Earthquake relief work was done in Turkey.

Other relief work included better breeding goats for the Philippines and aid to victims of a bus wreck in Dominica.

Money for Southern Baptist foreign missions comes from individuals and churches, primarily through the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. In addition, gifts earmarked for world relief continue to increase. All gifts designated for world relief are used on mission fields for that purpose, board officials stressed. The Foreign Mission Board will provide information about the use of relief funds in a special pamphlet, "The World is in Trouble: Southern Baptist Response," a spokesman said.