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78-28

Court Declines To Resolve  
Dispute Involving Gays

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Overruling three dissenting justices, the U. S. Supreme Court refused to decide if a state university may deny official recognition to a homosexual student group.

The high court action leaves standing a lower federal court ruling that Gay Lib, an organization of homosexuals at the University of Missouri, may not be denied such recognition, which carries with it access to university facilities for its activities.

Justice William H. Rehnquist, who, along with Justice Harry A. Blackmun and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, objected, accused the court majority of retreating to a "judicial storm cellar" to escape the volatile issue.

Rehnquist went on to scold the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals for overturning a decision favoring the university's position by a federal district court in Missouri.

The district court held that the university had not denied the gay students' free speech and association rights by denying them status as a campus organization. The Court of Appeals voted 2-1, however, to overrule the district court and force the university to recognize the group.

Rehnquist argued that because of the "divergence of judicial views which may be expected from conscientious judges on difficult constitutional questions such as this," he would have granted a full hearing.

Rehnquist, generally regarded as the high court's most conservative member, left little doubt that had he been given the opportunity to rule on the case, he would have sided with the position of the university.

Citing the view of the university that recognition of the homosexual group would inevitably lead to violation of the state's anti-sodomy law, Rehnquist said that "this danger may be particularly acute in the university setting where many students are still coping with the sexual problems which accompany late adolescence and early adulthood."

Rehnquist also called attention to a statement of purpose of the homosexual group which included bringing pressure for the repeal of the sodomy statute. "From the point of view of the university," he went on, "the question is...akin to whether those suffering from measles have a constitutional right, in violation of quarantine regulations, to associate together and with others who do not presently have measles, in order to urge repeal of a state law providing that measles sufferers be quarantined."

Trustees Say Dismissal  
Charges Not Valid

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LIBERTY, Mo. (BP)--Trustees of William Jewell College have announced that they have found no validity in charges that the school's dean of religious life was fired because he differed with the school's Bible department.

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Elton Johnson charged he was dismissed last November because of differences with teachers in the Bible department. He said the issue came to a head when he supported a resolution at the Missouri Baptist Convention, introduced by Fred Powell, pastor of Pisgah Baptist Church, Excelsior Springs, Mo., which condemned certain teachings in the Bible departments of Baptist schools.

At the core of all allegations are charges that the chairman of the Bible department, David Moore, does not believe in a "personal devil," according to a report in the "Word and Way," Missouri Baptist paper. The charges had stemmed from a report in the "Kansas City Star," which Moore said took him out of context.

Moore told the "Word and Way" that he believes "Satan is a personal spiritual being..." and that "Evil is made personal in the New Testament where Satan--the Accuser--is the main source."

College officials said the firing, which took place one week after the Missouri Convention met, had nothing to do with Johnson's actions at the convention or with his charges against the Bible department. The trustees, after investigating Johnson's allegations, said the department's teaching "is compatible with both high academic standards and with the traditional expressions of the Christian faith endorsed by the Missouri Baptist Convention and Southern Baptists at large."

Noting that the firing was planned before the convention, Daniel Lambert, special assistant to President Thomas Field, said, "We can only say that he was dismissed because of administrative reasons and hope people will believe us...We cannot talk about what was in the letter of dismissal without making the college responsible from a legal sense...President Field was advised against making any public statement because of the threat of litigation."

Johnson, now pastor of First Baptist Church, Joplin, Mo., said the letter of dismissal characterized him as disloyal to the school. He declared he has not been told how he was disloyal and called the trustee investigation a "whitewash." He met with a three-man committee from the trustees during the three-month investigation.

The Powell resolution which Johnson supported was amended during the convention to "...commend...colleges for unapologetically teaching the Bible as the word of God" and to encourage the colleges "to use the (statement of) Baptist Faith and Message as an expression of the generally accepted views of the Baptist faith..."

Powell said he has been drumming up support from Missouri pastors to oppose "false teaching in Baptist schools, and we will be relentless until we succeed."

He said, "We zeroed in on Satan because this is the only thing that is set in concrete. It is the only thing we can prove...We have heard about problems at the college for seven or eight years but we only have hearsay evidence."

Some have charged that Moore does not believe in miracles or in the virgin birth of Christ, charges he hotly denies. "I just finished teaching about miracles, and I said clearly that miracles are an act of God in history," he said. "The doctrine of the virgin birth is accepted openly by me. I teach it in my church and preach it in churches I serve as supply or interim preacher...I will challenge anybody to say that everything in my life is not centered around a commitment to Jesus Christ..."

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Oil Boom In North Sea  
Means New Opportunities

By Irma Duke

Baptist Press  
2/27/78

ABERDEEN, Scotland (BP)--The first Southern Baptist-related church in Scotland previews evangelistic possibilities as the North Sea oil boom continues.

The church, International Baptist Church of Aberdeen, constituted in mid-January, already has launched a diligent search for a pastor. Southern Baptist Missionary James Spaulding serves as pastor now, but he has other work to do in evangelistic outreach to Scots and internationals.

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Ten churches could easily be started within a 15-mile radius of Aberdeen, said Spaulding, who has a personal goal of adding a church a year.

"The Baptist Union of Scotland realized the growth boom and the influx of Americans here; so we were invited to help with the evangelistic outreach," the missionary explains. The Spauldings, the first Southern Baptist missionaries stationed in Scotland, arrived in July 1977, at the invitation of the Baptist union.

When the missionary family arrived, they found a congregation of about 20 people composed of Americans employed with various companies involved in the North Sea oil boom. Today the church has 71 full members, two awaiting baptism and four associate members. They meet in a congregational church building in downtown Aberdeen.

The ripest areas of growth for their church and other churches include new communities developed in connection with the oil boom. These communities are largely made up of internationals, the majority Americans. Many of them are Christians and see the need for Christian fellowship and growth. Spaulding estimates at least 1,300 foreign families live in Scotland.

The international influx began with the start of North Sea oil refining in 1975 and has steadily increased as oil production has expanded. The first oil refined from Great Britain's portion of the sea was piped from Dyce, Scotland, just outside Aberdeen. The influx in this area is expected to continue for 50 years. "There appears to be no end to the opportunities before us," Spaulding said.

Two new developments are within five miles of International Baptist Church. One new housing project has a population of 6,000 now and a projected growth to 14,000 in 10 years. Only one church, seating less than 100, is in the area. Another area has a totally new population of 8,000 with an expected growth to more than 22,000 in 10 years--and has no churches.

Work with the Scottish people has been much slower than with the internationals, however, Spaulding said, noting a widespread disinterest in the church and evangelistic outreach among these people. "Europe in general considers itself as living in a post-Christian era," he observed. Many church buildings in Scotland stand idle. Scotland is Christian in name, he said, but many of the people "have lost their evangelistic fervor."

Scottish Baptists, however, are one of the most forward-looking groups of Baptists in Europe, according to J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. The Baptist Union of Scotland has more than 150 churches and 12 associations with a total membership of 16,000.

These Baptists have set goals for their evangelistic outreach much like the Bold Mission Thrust goal of the Southern Baptist Convention. They are calling for a doubling of membership and have already seen a 90 percent increase in stewardship in the last two years. Their foresight brought the Spauldings to Scotland to help with evangelism.

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Irma Duke, news editor and information coordinator for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, wrote this report during a trip to Europe and Asia.

(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers by the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Burmese Baptize  
6,215 In One Day

Baptist Press  
2/27/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--Even the most ambitious dreams of the Kachin Baptists in Burma fell short of reality.

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The Kachin Baptist Convention, composed of tribal people adjacent to Burma's Chinese border, had hoped for 50,000 people at their December centennial celebrating the 100th anniversary of the coming of American Baptist missionaries to Naung Nang, Myitkyina. They prepared for the crowd by gathering 350 cattle, 750 pigs, 1,000 chickens and 5,000 baskets of rice.

A letter from Victor San Lone, general secretary of the Burma Baptist Convention, to the Baptist World Alliance, now reports what really happened:

--73,421 people actually registered their names at the registration office, and total attendance was near 100,000.

--6,215 new converts were baptized in the Irrawaddy River.

--More than 35,000 people joined in observance of the Lord's Supper.

The Kachins reported a church membership of 57,000 baptized Christians and a total Christian community of 170,000 in early 1977. They are part of an overall Baptist membership of 321,525 in Burma. These are large figures in the midst of a population judged to be 85 percent Buddhist. Missionaries have not been permitted in Burma since May 1966.

San Lone's letter to the Baptist World Alliance said that "the Kachin people made it a point to be present at the big meeting to give thanks to God and consecrate themselves anew," some of them traveling more than 10 days through the hilly country to get there. The Christmas Day worship service saw 35,000 people seated at communion.

For the mass baptism, San Lone reported, "The candidates and 100 ordained pastors marched to the Irrawaddy River in procession carrying banners of the Cross."

Kachin Baptists made plans for a three-year evangelistic outreach, and decided to open two new mission fields. Six hundred volunteered to implement the program, 300 more than needed.

"The people selected (from the volunteers) are now undergoing 40 days of intensive training to serve as a task force for evangelistic outreach," San Lone reported.

Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, cited the report from the Kachins as "further evidence" of the strength and fervor of indigenous Christians in Burma. Since a socialist government came to power in 1962, statistical tabulations showed Baptist members (baptized believers) grew from 207,345 to 321,525 in January 1977.

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Panamanians Face Treaties  
With Mixed Emotions

By Alan Neely

Baptist Press  
2/27/78

PANAMA CANAL ZONE (BP)--Land on which church buildings stand will become the property of the government of Panama if the U. S. Senate ratifies the controversial Panama Canal treaties.

Although Baptist leaders interviewed in the Canal Zone anticipate little problem, they still don't know quite what to expect. Most interviewed favor ratification, and expect it to go through; others express misgivings.

Churches in the Zone would have to buy their property from Panama for "a nominal fee," following ratification. Two pastors interviewed, Silvester Scarlett of First Isthmian Baptist Church and Wilfred Morgan of Bethany Baptist Church, expressed uncertainty about what the phrase "nominal fee" means.

U. S. Sen. Howard Baker, R.-Tenn., who recently visited Panama on a fact-finding trip, agreed the phrase is ambiguous. He asked Ambler Moss, deputy assistant secretary of state traveling with him, to comment. Moss conceded the meaning lacks clarity but added he does not believe the churches would have to pay exorbitant prices for the Canal Zone land.

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The attorney for the Southern Baptist Mission in Panama, a member of one of the most respected law firms in Panama, explained that "nominal fee" in Panama is "legalese" for "one dollar."

Another Panamanian pastor, Luis Sealey, whose congregation, the Calvary Baptist Church, worships outside the Zone, feels Zone churches should pay a reasonable sum of money for their property. "They should not be expected to be given everything," insisted Sealey, who labels Ronald Reagan's opposition to the treaties as "reckless."

Scarlett raised another question--will the churches have to pay taxes if the treaties are ratified? "The majority of our people are domestic servants," he said. "It would create a real hardship if the government were to change the tax free status of our churches."

The treaties do not deal with the issue of a possible taxation of churches, and Scarlett was the only person who spoke of it. One thing is clear, however. If the treaties are ratified the churches (Protestant and Catholic) in the Zone will lose many privileges they now receive from the Panama Canal Company, a U.S. government company which operates the canal and owns housing and operates such things as stores and utilities.

Reynaldo Topping, president of the Panama Baptist Convention, spoke frankly of how the new treaties could affect his congregation, located only a few hundred yards from the canal.

All the members of the congregation live in Panama Canal housing. They and the pastor enjoy the medical, commissary, educational, and recreational privileges of the company employees. If the treaties are ratified, Topping said, "basically things will go on for us, although the fringe benefits that we receive from Pan Canal will cease. There is uncertainty and anxiety, but after all we can't do anything about whether the treaties are ratified or not."

Another pastor, Clifford Welch of Margarita Baptist Church in the Zone, feels that initially ratification of the treaties would hit the Panama Baptist Convention hard financially. The implication is that North American churches, because of their financial strength, have tended to overshadow Panamanian congregations.

Most Baptist leaders in Panama approve of ratification and feel failure to do so would lead to "serious trouble," which could include bloodshed and expulsion of Southern Baptist missionaries. Not everyone interviewed, however, agreed that trouble would necessarily affect Baptist work.

And not everyone interviewed is pleased with the prospect of Panama's gaining control of the Canal Zone, although even they have resigned themselves that the Senate will likely ratify the treaties. Those from the U.S. who work in the Canal Zone and who stand to lose their present positions listed a number of reasons why the Canal should not be turned over to Panama now or in the foreseeable future.

They say it will create severe hardships on many U.S. employees of the Canal; the Panamanians are not yet competent to operate the Canal; the country is in severe economic straits, and the Panamanians think that securing the Canal will be a cure-all for their problems.

All the Panamanian pastors interviewed spoke with strong feeling in favor of maintaining the tradition of religious freedom that the churches have experienced in Panama.

When asked if he saw any reason to believe that the ratification would threaten religious freedom for Baptists or other Christian groups in the country, Scarlett responded, "No, I would not say that I have any ground for that type of fear--absolutely no ground at all. But we know that anything can happen."

In the event of ratification what do the pastors see as the immediate effects in Panama on Baptist work?

"Not too much as far as I can see," responded Morgan. "We enjoy full freedom of religion here in the Zone and throughout the Republic of Panama, and if that continues, we should not be affected in any way. Neither do the pastors believe ratification of the treaties would affect the freedom of religion."

Even Southern Baptist missionaries, who have a policy of avoiding political statements in countries in which they serve, favor ratification and anticipate adverse repercussions if it fails. All interviewed expressed unanimous support for ratification.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate faces the thorny problem of whether to ratify the treaties, with or without amendments. Some contend that ratification will weaken the U.S. security and commercial interests and lessen its world leadership; others disagree and contend it would be unfair to retain the Canal against wishes of Panamanians, who have ratified the treaties.

Whatever the decision, it will cause major impact in Panama.

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This is condensed from articles scheduled for the April, 1978, issue of "World Mission Journal," written by Alan Neely, professor of missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C. He and Furman Hewitt, associate professor of Christian ethics at the seminary, traveled and interviewed Baptist leaders and missionaries in Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Belize. Neely, a missionary in Colombia for 13 years, has worked on many occasions in the Canal Zone and his oldest daughter, Jennifer, attended Canal Zone Junior College and was a member of Balboa Heights Baptist Church.

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Vocal Ensemble Makes  
Paradise A Mission Field

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A vocal ensemble from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary made a tourist's paradise its mission field when it spent two weeks teaching and performing missions through music in Hawaii.

The ensemble was invited by the Hawaii Baptist Convention because of a "great need" convention leaders believed churches had for music training in their state where there is only one full-time minister of music.

Phillip Landgrave, professor of church music and the 27-member ensemble's director, spoke highly of the group's experience. "The people were open, willing, and there was an abundance of talent," he said. "They had a natural warmth, and they inspired us to give more."

The group gave private lessons, showing pastors and lay leaders skills in song leading and conducting. It also divided into teams of three or four and went out to local churches to train choirs. The ensemble sang for the state evangelism conference, schools, a radio program, hospital and several churches.

But the group emphasized its teaching rather than its singing because, "we didn't come to do for them, but to enable them to do," Landgrave said. One church leader told them he believed Hawaiian churches were advanced by several years in their music ministry through the ensemble's efforts.

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*See Story on pp 3-4  
re David Moore*



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