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produced by Baptist Press

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July 19, 1982

82-102

Star Football Player  
Picks Theology Over Fame

By David Chancey

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—To the general public Bob Fowler was a star.

To sportswriters he was God's gift to Northern Arizona University ... a super football running back expected to lead the university to the top of the Big Sky Conference.

The expectations were well founded. As a freshman Fowler rushed for more than 1,000 yards and was named conference "back of the week" several times. As a sophomore he again broke the 1,000 yard mark.

His third season he ran for another 1,339 yards and with a year of eligibility to go he already owned conference and school marks for number of carries and for rushing yardage.

Then he quit the team.

Fowler, now a master of divinity student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wanted to devote full time to his studies so he could prepare himself for the ministry he felt God calling him to.

Actually, Fowler had resigned once before, at the end of his freshman year, though for a different (but related) reason.

"I had become very frustrated and confused," he said. "I was getting attention in the press, but I felt as though no one cared for me as an individual. I was more than an athlete. I was a person, but nobody was appreciating me as a person. So, I quit the team."

Fowler returned home to Tucson, but after a few days his father told him he "needed to get a job, go to school or do something" if he was not going to play football.

Fowler left the house "for about 12 hours"—an episode that became the most significant of his life. As he drove around town he found himself in the parking lot of a Baptist church conducting revival services.

Fowler became a Christian that night. "I still was confused about it all, but I knew God would help me," he said. "I can't explain it, but I immediately felt that someday I would preach."

Fowler started school again, his scholarship was reinstated, and he played football for two more seasons. He also became active in campus ministries and in a local church.

"We started a Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter through which four guys became Christians," he said. "We also began 20 dorm Bible studies through the Baptist Student Union."

Fowler also served as a summer minister at the First Baptist Church in Flagstaff, Ariz. and after college graduation he served for a year and a half at the 22nd Street Baptist Church in Tucson before enrolling at Southwestern. He is currently youth minister at Fort Worth's Burchill Baptist Church and continues to work closely with the FCA in the Fort Worth area.

Gaining experience working on a local church staff is not unusual for a seminary student, but for Fowler it has been unique. He is black, and the churches he has served have been predominantly white. "This is a super testimony for Southern Baptists," he said. "This shows that Southern Baptists care about people, not color."

Fowler is interested in the pastorate or teaching church history after seminary. He also eventually would like to serve on a state convention staff in the area of black church relations.

Religious Freedom  
Declared 'Fundamental'

By Duann Kier

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Religious freedom, historically advocated by Baptists, is the most fundamental of freedoms and no outside force has the right to dictate another's inner convictions, a church-state specialist told participants at a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference.

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., said, "Religious freedom goes back to the purpose of God in creation and is rooted in the very nature of God. God dared to create us free beings. This liberty is so sacred, so basic, so inalienable that God refuses to force his will on us. It is, then, morally wrong to force one person to support another's religion."

Dunn told the participants at the conference on Christian citizenship that religious freedom has always been a Baptist distinctive, even though generally most Baptist champions of freedom are honored only after they die.

"Unfortunately, some ... have forgotten history, forsaken their identify as church-state separationists and embraced the medieval doctrines that we have so long resisted," he said. "They claim from the state both freedom and special privilege."

"Democracy cannot long endure in a mere community of selfish interest. If all are seeking the upper hand, the political majority of the moment will take advantage of its power at the expense of the minority. To maintain the political freedom of all, the civil liberties of the disliked few must be protected by the restraint of the many and the strong."

Dunn said that Baptists have rightly understood that freedom "of" religion has to go all the way and become potentially freedom "from" religion or it's meaningless.

"Religious freedom and evangelism are two sides of the same coin. Unless we say 'whosoever will may come,' we have not been good stewards of our freedom. Unless there is real freedom for everyone to say 'no' as well as 'yes' then all the 'yesses' are meaningless, he said.

"Freedom of conscience should be jealously guarded not only for the sake of the individual to whom one witnesses but for the integrity of the witness itself."

Dunn said that to the degree we honor freedom of conscience, our relationship to all persons of other faiths is one of liberty and not tolerance. "Because we see it as universal, we affirm freedom of religious expression for others as much as we claim it for ourselves."

He said that for anyone to claim to articulate the Christian position on a wide range of political and economic subjects is to sin presumptuously.

"The more we know about the complicated problems of economics, politics and social unrest the more certain we are that quick fixes and simple solutions won't work," he said.

Baptists are a people of religious freedom who differ with a good many other Christians who can live happily with creeds or the modern equivalent of creedal statements, Dunn said.

"If Baptists have a distinctive doctrinal contribution," he said, "it must be our belief in soul freedom or the competence of the individual before God."

Samoan Named Language  
Missionary Of The Year

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Ray Viliamu, a native American Samoan who started Southern Baptist missions work in the Samoan Islands six years ago, has been named language missionary of the year by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The stepson of a "high talking chief" in Pago Pago, Viliamu was educated in Texas and is a graduate of East Texas Baptist College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was pastor of First Baptist Church Manakuli, Hawaii, from 1967-76, and director of religious activities for Hawaii Baptist Academy in Honolulu, 1974-76.

In 1976 he returned to his native Pacific island to start a mission church in his parent's home. In about a year, the Happy Valley Baptist Church was constituted and organized as a result.

From those beginnings, Viliamu has started two other missions in western Samoa, assisted in starting a Korean Baptist mission which has since become a church for Korean tuna fisherman in American Samoa, helped start the Samoan Baptist Academy to provide elementary education for Samoan children, and started a seminary extension program to help provide leadership training for Samoan Christians.

The Samoan Baptist Academy now has an enrollment of 15 students and a faculty of three teachers. The seminary extension program has ten fulltime students and four parttime students.

American Samoa includes a chain of six tiny islands in the South Pacific north of New Zealand, with a population of about 35,000.

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Women Of Africa Urged  
To Influence World Peace

By Laura Lee Stewart

Baptist Press  
7/19/82

LIMURU, Kenya (BP)—Baptist women from 22 nations heard challenges to become influential forces in world peace during a six-day meeting of the Baptist Women's Union of Africa at Brackenhurst Baptist International Centre, Limuru, Kenya.

Julia Ojiambo, assistant minister for basic education for the government of Kenya, urged nearly 200 participants to strive first to bring peace into their homes. From there, declared Dr. Ojiambo, peace will spread throughout the community, the nation, the continent and the world.

Kerstin Ruden of Sweden, president of the women's department of the Baptist World Alliance, pointed to the need for more special education, particularly literacy training, and encouraged the participants to take more leadership roles in their churches.

Continuing in that vein, Atinuke Bamijoko of Nigeria declared, "Women can no longer sit in the corner and let their light shine. They must put that light on a lamp post so that it can be seen."

Mrs. Bamijoko, president of the Baptist Women's Union of Africa, expressed a need for more Christian women in many walks of life, particularly in government.

The participants heard reports from each country represented on how women work in their own country and attempt to minister to the needs of people and were urged to continue to recognize the power of prayer.

Davis and Mary Saunders of Richmond, Va., former Southern Baptist missionaries to Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania, urged the women to remember the power and presence of Jesus Christ. "We will never see ourselves until we see ourselves in the presence of Jesus Christ," said Mrs. Saunders. "He is the truth by whom we are measured."

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Her husband, now Southern Baptist Foreign Mission board director for eastern and southern Africa, declared, "Jesus did not say that he is 'a' way. He said that he is 'the' way. He is not another way. He is the only way (that a person can have eternal life)."

In other activities, the women attended Bible study sessions led by Weptonmah W. Carter, teacher, author, lecturer and pastor's wife from Baltimore, Md.; participated in a series of workshops; elected new officers; and held a special parade of flags observance.

The women elected Lillian Jonga of Malawi as president of the Baptist Women's Union of Africa and Rachel Markos of Kenya as vice president. Ethel Codrington of South Africa will continue as treasurer and Beatrice Nokuri of Cameroon will be secretary.

Syd Pearce, who serves with her husband, Boyd, as a Southern Baptist missionary to Kenya, was elected editor of the Organ of News, continent-wide news publication of the Baptist Women's Union of Africa. The Pearces are from Lubbock, Texas.

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(Laura Lee Stewart is press representative for the Baptist Mission of Kenya, organization of Southern Baptist missionaries)

Senate Stalemate Possible  
On Tuition Tax Credit Bill

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press  
7/19/82

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan's proposal to provide tuition tax credits to parents of children attending private and parochial schools may be headed toward an impasse in the Senate Finance Committee.

During a hearing on the proposal two veteran supporters of tuition tax credit on the committee--Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan, D-N.Y.,--questioned the degree of administration commitment to push for the measure. Packwood further questioned how that support might be affected by possible changes in the bill.

Describing the situation as a possible "stalemate," Packwood said he and Moynihan are dissatisfied with the bill as it now stands and pointed to the likelihood that the administration would not support the measure if the panel approved significant changes.

Observers agree that strong support from both the administration and Senate proponents are essential for passage this year. Underscoring the difficulties facing the proposal during a time of fiscal restraint, finance committee chairman Robert Dole, R-Kan., declared as he opened the hearing that "immediate action on any new or expanded tax expenditure with significant revenue impact may not be possible."

Packwood told treasury secretary Donald T. Regan, one of two cabinet members to testify in favor of the measure, that the bill could not pass unless the administration pushed as hard for it as it did on last year's budget and tax cuts. Despite assurances from Regan and education secretary T.R. Bell, Packwood appeared less than fully convinced.

The administration bill provides tax credits of up to \$100 per child for tuition paid in 1983, a figure which adjusts upward to a maximum of \$500 per child in 1985. Families with incomes of \$50,000 or less would qualify for the full credit while partial tax credit would be available for those with incomes between \$50,000-75,000.

Unlike a bill introduced earlier by Packwood and Moynihan, the Reagan proposal would not refund the credit to low income parents whose tax liability was insufficient to benefit from the tax credit. Bell said the administration would oppose the inclusion of such a refundability provision by the finance committee, a move Packwood declared he would seek.

Numerous groups and individuals, including Baptists, restated their support or opposition to the controversial concept.

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Declaring that "Congress may not constitutionally do by indirection that which the Constitution forbids it to do directly," the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs told the committee in a written statement that the proposal violates the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

"Tax credits to those taxpayers who pay tuition to religious schools would lead to an excessive administrative entanglement of government and religion," the statement warned.

It also opposed the plan on public policy grounds, saying, "It is hard to justify beginning significant tax expenditures in support of private schools (which are not a public responsibility) just when Congress is making significant cuts in the support of public education (which is a public responsibility)."

The BJCPA testimony also cited a 1982 Southern Baptist Convention resolution adopted in New Orleans which called on President Reagan to "reconsider his support of a tax credit legislation now under consideration by Congress" and registered the convention messengers' opposition "to all tuition tax credit legislation pending in Congress."

R.G. Puckett, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and editor-elect of North Carolina's Biblical Recorder, warned that the bill "could so entangle religion and politics that two centuries of progress in First Amendment rights to religious liberty and church-state separation could be unalterably reversed."

In contrast with the BJCPA and Americans United positions, Edward E. McAteer, president of Religious Roundtable and a member of Memphis' Bellevue Baptist Church, countered the charge that the proposal is unconstitutional. The Supreme Court, McAteer said, "does not now have, nor has it ever had, a clear, unambiguous position on the issue."

McAteer added that "if Christians, in this country have freedom by law to practice their religion, and part of that practice includes the way they educate their children then the only practical and realistic way to permit the free exercise of religion is to enable Christians to finance for their children the kind of education that is consistent with their religion."

In addition to the questions raised by Packwood and Moynihan, the bill's chances of passage are also diminished by the continued strong opposition of Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., who has led previous successful efforts to turn back tuition tax credit measures in the Senate.

Hollings told the Senate panel that the proposal is a "multi-billion dollar 'bailout' for the nation's private schools." Hollings cited numerous state referenda where "the people themselves have turned down this nonsense."

Proponents of tuition tax credits make a basic mistake in starting with the premise that the federal government has an equal duty to both public and private education, Hollings said. "Let's be clear from the outset that the duty is not equal. The government's duty to the public is to provide public schools. The duty of the government toward private schools is to leave them alone. That's fundamental."