



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 2, 1984

84-35

## Two Grades Back In Class At Beirut Baptist School

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Students in the 11th and 12th grades at Beirut Baptist School returned to classes Feb. 29, nearly a month after fighting forced schools in west Beirut to close.

Missionary principal Jim Ragland, from Wetumka, Okla., planned for 10th graders to return to class March 1.

School buses are not operating and preschool through ninth-grade students are not returning to school because scattered fighting and acts of violence have continued in west Beirut, Ragland said.

Isam Ballenger, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for Europe and the Middle East, said the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Monsouriyeh also is operating. Shelling in that area forced administrators to cancel final exams and close the seminary Feb. 14.

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Gambling Opponents  
See Signs Of Victory

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The game is far from over, but gambling opponents may be on their way to a surprising, lop-sided victory in the latest contest over legalization of gambling.

In recent months, legislators in at least 18 states have been debating various proposals to establish state-run lotteries, pari-mutuel betting on horse races and casino gambling. By the final day of February, however, not a single proposal had been approved.

The results have surprised people on both sides of the issue. The odds-on favorite in the state-to-state confrontation has been the high-powered, high-financed gambling industry which already has at least a foothold in all but four states. Only Hawaii, Indiana, Mississippi and Utah have no form of legalized gambling.

In addition, some public opinion polls have indicated as many as 80 percent of Americans seem to favor some form of legalized gambling under certain circumstances.

Despite such odds, Larry Braidfoot of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, believes Southern Baptists have been instrumental in stalling the early momentum achieved by gambling supporters.

Braidfoot, who directs the agency's program of Christian citizenship, claimed the hottest issue--state-operated lotteries--is "only one dimension of an ambitious effort to extend the reach of America's gambling industry into the potentially lucrative Sun Belt."

Ironically, the targeted area also lies within the heart of the 14.1 million-member Southern Baptist Convention. Long known as staunch opponents of gambling, Southern Baptists have recently been living up to that reputation.

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The convention's Christian Life Commission discussed anti-gambling initiatives with several experts on gambling and with Baptist leaders from 11 states at a consultation last fall. With help from six Baptist state conventions, a special research project was conducted for the agency by a criminal justice expert.

In the latest effort to combat the pervasive problem, the commission and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board are cooperating to provide a packet of new resource materials on gambling issues to be mailed soon to every Southern Baptist church.

In the states, editors of state Baptist newspapers have joined forces with other groups to halt a lottery drive that boasted widespread support in state-wide polls last fall.

Nearly 400 Missouri Baptists recently delivered 4,180 hand-written letters--all opposing a state-run lottery--to the state capitol.

Another blow to lottery hopes was dealt by a public statement from Missouri Christian Leadership Forum--a move Missouri Baptist Word and Way editor Bob Terry called "one of the unprecedented acts of unanimity among Christian groups" in that state. The forum, composed of leaders of 17 denominations, labeled the lottery "bad public policy" and called inst ad for needed tax reform.

Lottery resolutions in the Missouri house are now lodged in committee following public hearings. Though a lottery bill in the state Senate can be taken up at any time, most legislative observers expect it to die for the current sessions due to lack of support.

Ira Peak, director of Missouri Baptists' department of Christian moral concerns and coordinator of the "offering of letters," is "cautiously optimistic" about the outcome. But he harbors no illusions about the future challenge. "If lottery legislation fails this time around, it will be only a temporary setback," he explained. "They (lottery proponents) will be better organized next year."

On the other hand, Peak has been "greatly encouraged" by the response from Missouri churches. "We have shown the religious community can offer a united front," he said. "I think we've earned our spurs; we've gained some credibility."

Similar results have been reported in Kentucky. Though lottery legislation initially seemed to "be going through the General Assembly like a cyclone," Western Recorder ditor C.R. Daley believes state legislators "are getting the word that there is opposition."

A proposal to amend the state's constitution to allow for a state-run lottery won overwhelming approval in the Senate, but action has slowed in the House. "Chances are pretty good it might get lost in the last-minute haste and shuffle" as the session nears adjournment, Daley observed. Though disappointed that Martha Layne Collins, the state's South rn Baptist governor, has "backed off" on the issue, Daley said response from grassroots Kentucky Baptists has been "considerable."

In addition to Missouri and Kentucky, proposals to legalize various forms of gambling have been on legislative agendas in the last year in at least 14 other states with substantial Southern Baptist populations: Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Thus far, however, the gambling industry has failed to win a single hand. Three lottery bills introduced in the Virginia General Assembly were squelched in committee. A lottery bill which has reached the Senate floor in New Mexico was defeated by a surprising 2-1 margin. Pari-mutuel drives in Indiana and Georgia seem to have fizzled.

In Texas, where pari-mutuel betting has long been a perennial issue, a pari-mutuel bill was approved in the senate but lost by a single vote in the house, due in part to pressure generated by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. The next round, when the legislature reconvenes in 1985, will again be "extremely close," predicted Weston Ware of the Texas CLC staff. "It gets tougher every year," he added.

Lottery and pari-mutuel proposals remain active in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Oklahoma.

In Alabama, where racetrack lobbyists are pushing for local referendums, a survey conducted for The Birmingham News indicated 74 percent of the people in Birmingham and 72 percent in the surrounding county favored a proposed racetrack for that area.

In Tennessee a pari-mutuel bill passed a House committee and will be taken up by a Senate committee when the legislature reconvenes March 5. According to Jerry Self, public affairs consultant for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, a proposal for a constitutional amendment on lottery also has been introduced.

The status of lottery in Oklahoma is "in limbo," according to Baptist Messenger editor Richard McCartney, who has penned a series of editorials opposing the measures. Pro-lottery bills have been introduced in both the senate and house, but recent passage of a one-cent sales tax "seems to have taken some of the steam out of the lottery drive," McCartney said.

In Mississippi, seven bills have been introduced which would legalize pari-mutuel betting, lottery or bingo.

Paul Jones, director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, said gambling proponents have been "trying to pull together a coalition of persons interested in legalized gambling, but I don't think they will succeed. They're realizing it's going to be a tougher fight in Mississippi than they originally thought."

From a national perspective, Braidfoot also is hopeful. But he and other gambling opponents recognize the battle is far from over.

"The efforts of Southern Baptists and other concerned citizens are bearing fruit," he said. "But persistence is necessary since the gambling challenge promises to continue."

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1984 Convention Broadcast  
Planned By BTN And ACTS

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists will take a historic step into the telecommunications age June 12-14, when portions of the Southern Baptist Convention will be broadcast live from Kansas City, Mo.

Lloyd Elder and Jimmy Allen, presidents of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and Radio and Television Commission, respectively, announced the two agencies will jointly broadcast approximately five hours of the annual convention.

BTN (Baptist Telecommunications Network) and ACTS (American Christian Television System) will broadcast the segments of the convention directly into churches and homes for the first time in the history of the denomination.

The live broadcast will begin Tuesday morning, June 12, with the president's address by James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas. Election of officers will be covered Tuesday afternoon when the nominations are made for the office of president of the convention.

A new president of the SBC must be elected this year because Draper is serving his second one-year term, the limit according to convention bylaws.

The Tuesday evening broadcast, beginning at 6:30, will include a taped delay of the Sunday School Board's afternoon report to the convention, followed by live coverage of the Home Mission Board report and official dedication ceremonies of BTN and ACTS, under the direction of Elder and Allen.

The convention sermon by Russell H. Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, will be broadcast live at noon on June 13.

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The annual report of the Foreign Mission Board will be broadcast Wednesday evening at 7:45, featuring President R. Keith Parks and missionaries.

"BTN has the potential to dramatically increase the participation of Southern Baptists in their convention," according to Elder.

He noted 293 church leaders attended the first SBC in 1845 in Augusta, Ga., and 22,872 messengers participated in the largest convention in Atlanta in 1978. "The number to see the 1984 SBC should far surpass any of these," Elder predicted.

"Broadcasting portions of the 1984 SBC from Kansas City represents a communications breakthrough and a gigantic step forward in grassroots participation for Southern Baptists," Elder continued.

Allen said, "We are delighted to be able to access homes and churches with the good news of what God is doing through Southern Baptists and with the challenge of what God wants to do through us in the future.

"We are beginning a new age of communicating with the people of this nation," Allen emphasized, "and we are praying the Holy Spirit will breathe on that communication to the glory of our Lord Jesus."

Elder and Allen jointly expressed appreciation to Fred Wolfe and members of the committee on the order of business for allotting Tuesday evening program time to the dedication of Southern Baptists' first step into the telecommunications age.

In addition to the live telecast segments, some parts of the Pastors' Conference and the WMU Conference will be taped by the Radio and Television Commission for use at a later date.

Theme interpretation sessions for the convention also will be taped, along with opening ceremonies and congregational singing. These will be used to prepare a one-hour highlight tape of the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention, which pastors can review to report to churches about the annual meeting.

Any church with a BTN telecommunications system installed will be able to receive the live broadcast signals from Kansas City. The broadcasts will be available in homes where ACTS stations are operational.

Churches and associations interested in having equipment installed to receive the historic broadcasts should contact the Broadman sales department of the Sunday School Board.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB Bureau of Baptist Press.

13,000 Make Decisions  
In Two Luzon Crusades

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--More than 13,000 people made professions of faith in Christ during two Baptist evangelism crusades on the island of Luzon in January.

Missionaries believe the political and economic instability that has become widespread during the past few months has heightened the people's openness to the gospel.

Seventeen new churches were formed and plans were made for 30 others during one crusade, in which 56 American preachers and Southern Baptist missionaries from outside the country worked with national pastors and missionaries in the Philippines.

A total of 8,288 people were reported to have made decisions for Christ and 421 were baptized during this church-planting effort. The two-week period was divided equally between evangelistic meetings and doctrinal studies.

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Seven pastors and seven laymen from America helped produce 5,050 decisions for Christ in a simultaneous, more localized campaign in central Luzon. At its closing services 117 people were baptized.

In Olongapo on the Subic Bay, site of one of the United States' largest overseas naval bases, 1,150 decisions were reported in one church. In another church, which uses four unpaid pastors, 30 baptisms resulted from 90 decisions.

Southern Baptist missionaries compare such evangelistic success on Luzon to a similar occurrence several years ago during unrest on Mindanao, the Philippines' other main island.

Many of the 100 American evangelists scheduled to participate in the larger crusade canceled their plans as foreign media sent home pictures of turmoil in the streets of Manila.

Parts of Manila have been the scene of protests by Filipino minority political factions, which rallied together after the unexplained August slaying of government opposition leader Benigno Aquino.

Amid these uncertainties, Southern Baptist missionaries and national Baptists are stepping up their evangelistic witness.

"The difficulty gives us a greater opportunity of sharing what God does in Christ," said Les Hill, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines.

Missionaries are free to propagate the gospel in the Philippines, except in extremely rare cases where safety becomes a factor--such as when government troops move in on armed opposition groups hiding in rural areas. "My own impression is that we'll never have a freer time than we do now," said Hill. "We're free to go anywhere and preach anywhere.

"Things are not nearly as disrupted as they appear to people outside the country," he added. Most mob-related turmoil is confined to certain sections of Manila, Hill said. And most actual military action against political insurgents occurs in remote, mountainous areas.

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Missionary Wields God's Word  
To Silence Spiritist Leader

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

LUZON, Philippines (BP)--When an old man with a cane rose to confront Rolla Bradley with spiritist teachings, the Southern Baptist missionary met him with the word of God.

And the people of a barrio in Pangasinan province were rejoicing the next day.

Bradley and his wife, Genevieve, were in the Philippines for the 14-day evangelistic crusades in which Southern Baptist missionaries from seven Asian countries participated in January. On the second day of their visit the Bradleys found themselves at the head of an open-air service with about 100 shirts and faces visible through the night.

As the singing began, they spotted a woman wearing a white hooded shirt with "SPIRITISM" written across the front. Bradley prayed Satan's powers would be bound during the service. Then he struggled through the sermon, later saying he had felt the presence of evil and had experienced difficulty in preaching.

As the service was concluding, an old man in the center of the group stood up, supported by his cane. He told Bradley and the interpreting pastor the Bible taught people to forget Jesus' teachings.

"He was a spiritist leader in the village and seemingly had many of the people confused by his teachings and his supernatural powers," said Mrs. Bradley.

Bradley told the man God is the only source of truth, Jesus is Savior and contrary teaching is of Satan. He said he wanted him to come to eternal salvation through Jesus. Bradley told the old man he loved him and would pray his eyes would be opened to the truth.

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The man seated himself.

"The next day the pastor said the people were rejoicing that the old man had been silenced before the whole community," Mrs. Bradley reported.

Bradley, from California, and his wife, from Texas, reported 61 decisions for Christ in their crusade work. He is a general evangelist in Korea.

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Note to editors: This is a side bar to BP story "13,000 Make Decisions In Two Luzon Crusades"

Coffeehouse Ministry Boosts  
Baptist Church In Sarajevo

By Evelyn Benfield

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

SARAJEVO, Yugoslavia (BP)--Their Winter Olympics coffeehouse didn't turn out to be the international ministry Baptist representatives and Yugoslav Baptists had envisioned, but it did rejuvenate Sarajevo Baptist Church.

The church building had been renovated and the coffeehouse set up as a meeting place for Christians, a witnessing point and an alternative gathering spot for Olympic visitors.

But restrictions on the distribution of invitational leaflets meant the biggest part of the Olympic crowd didn't even know the coffeehouse was open. Word-of-mouth invitations attracted mostly church families, their relatives and friends.

One of those was 20-year-old Mira, which means "peace" in Serbo-Croatian (the major South Slavic language spoken in Yugoslavia). The niece of a member, she spent a lot of time with the group during the 12 days of Olympic competition. At the end of the two weeks, she requested baptism and spoke of being born again.

A Sarajevo dentist who had not attended the church for years participated in the coffeehouse Bible study. As he expressed appreciation for new spiritual insights, he referred to himself as a brother and a fellow believer.

Baptist representatives Tom Stallworth and Jim Smith, who live in Austria, took medicine to the church's oldest member several times. Olga, 84, was ill, lived alone and had not attended church for some time.

She also was upset because her landlord was threatening to evict her. She lived close to the road to the Olympic bobsled course. During construction of the road, one of the walls of her home was damaged. Her landlord demanded she fix it.

She was overjoyed when Stallworth and Smith gave her money for the repair. They also brought two of her fellow church members through deep snow and up a mountain pass to visit her.

The Baptist ministry started on a sour note on the Olympics' opening day. Authorities picked up a prominent Yugoslav Baptist and questioned him for three hours. Because Baptists failed to register their intentions before the deadline set by government officials, they were told to collect the invitation leaflets they had distributed and not distribute more.

Even so, the coffeehouse was allowed to remain open and the six-member congregation reaped the benefits. Without a pastor, they had been meeting in a home during the cold winter months. A \$6,000 allocation from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board enabled them to replace the church's heating system and ready the building for worship.

The congregation was not only encouraged but will likely increase. About 20 people expressed an interest in attending services.

Marijan Hlastan, a Yugoslav pastor, has promised to visit Sarajevo and preach for them once a month and to bring along active laymen to assist. Baptists believe the Olympic city of half a million will have a stronger Christian witness than before.

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Other Baptist representatives who assisted in the coffeehouse ministry were Charles Thomas, stationed in France; Albert Craighead, Italy; and Paul Thibodeaux, Yugoslavia.

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Evelyn Benfield is the Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Austria.

Draper Reviews Presidency  
As Final Term Concludes

By James H. Cox

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptists are less likely to "kill each other" now than they were two years ago, James T. Draper Jr., feels.

The president of the 14 million member Southern Baptist Convention said he hopes that is the "contribution I've been able to make" in 21 months of his presidency.

At an interview during the Kentucky Baptist evangelism conference, Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, said he felt when he ran for the SBC presidency in June 1982 the convention needed someone who could "stand with his convictions" and at the same time "be a healer." He referred to a strong "air of tension" at that time between factions within the denomination.

Draper indicated that, to his knowledge, he is not now "saying anything different" than he was saying then. He still believes firmly in the authority and authenticity of the scriptures and doesn't think "we've changed anybody's mind" on that.

But what has changed, he said, is "more openness" among SBC institutional leadership "to input and inquiry." Draper thinks both sides are showing "more willingness to accept some diversity" where they once weren't.

One of the greatest things to come from all this, he explained, is "an admission" by institutional leadership that Southern Baptists have some "substantive differences." Admission of that fact is "a giant step" toward dealing with it, Draper said.

Turning to another topic, Draper thinks women's ordination is potentially the "most emotional and explosive" issue Southern Baptists currently face.

While he agrees it is essentially "a local church matter," he is also personally opposed to women's ordination. He says that evaluation is not based on "male chauvinism" or on the belief a woman "can't manage a church" but comply with his "understanding and interpretation" of the scriptures.

Draper sees the issue as "extremely sensitive" for Southern Baptists for some time to come but suggests Southern Baptists should not make women's ordination "a test of fellowship." Draper hopes there will not be a push for a resolution in the 1984 convention encouraging women's ordination, and also hopes no one will bring one opposing it.

As he enters the final three months of his second and final one-year term as president of the SBC, he assessed the toll it has taken on him, his family and his congregation.

Draper says that, by the time his second term ends during the convention meeting June 12-14 in Kansas City, Mo., he will have traveled a quarter of a million miles.

He's been away from home "almost solidly" from Monday through Friday each week. But in these two years, he will have missed only 15 Sundays from his pulpit, and averaged one Wednesday night out of four being present.

He claims his congregation is "very understanding." When approached by local pastors to consider running for president of the convention some six or seven months before the election, he shared the matter with his deacons and they prayed together during those months.

He reported his deacons' meetings have been "transformed" and have turned from business meetings into prayer meetings, reports of personal acts of ministry and visitation.

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In these two years his 6,000-member church has seen its offerings increase from \$2 million to \$3.5 million, Sunday school attendance climb by at least 20 percent and a significant portion of the budget continues to be fed into the Cooperative Program (11th among churches in Texas last year).

As far as the personal toll of the SBC presidency goes, Draper says he physically "couldn't do it again." In all that travel, he discovered he was expected to speak everywhere he went, and to know "everything" on every issue. He found the SBC presidency causes "tremendous emotional pressure" in addition to the physical strain and if he had to do it again he might request a research assistant.

He admits he is "physically tired" and that the "only real mistakes" he has made, revealed through the press, came when he was very tired. Draper indicated his desire to answer questions is both his "strength and weakness" since his statements are often misconstrued, particularly by the secular press.

There haven't been any "particular strains" on his home life, he discloses, because his three children are grown and his wife, Carol Ann, has traveled with him a great deal. The SBC Executive Committee agreed to fund her travel anytime he "deemed appropriate" so on lengthy trips, she has accompanied Draper.

Draper says he thought he knew Southern Baptists as one of their pastors. But when he became SBC president he realized the "mechanics" of the structure were "staggering." He speaks of the denomination's "massive size" and Cooperative Program receipts over \$2.25 billion.

His greatest surprise as president was not really a "surprise," he pointed out, but the warmth with which he has been received "everywhere I've been."

Southern Baptists are basically people who "love the Lord, love the Word and love each other" is his candid observation, calling their welcome to him "gratifying."

Finally, Draper offers some advice to the person who will succeed him when Southern Baptists elect a new president in June. He should, first of all, "weigh carefully" everything he says, to determine if he will be misinterpreted or misconstrued.

Then, he must be "consistent" in what he says.

Finally, he must "preside fairly." Draper said he worked so hard to accomplish that at the 1983 SBC sessions in Pittsburgh, he went to them "in neutral," often forgetting which side he personally favored. If an SBC president can do that, he will have served his denomination well, Draper believes.

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Razor-Wielding Man  
Robs Missions Conference

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Members of Riverside Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., took the Bible literally recently when a man robbed them of \$300 and \$1,000 worth of jewelry.

They prayed for one who "despitefully used" them.

About 30 people had gathered to hear Southern Baptist missionary David Ford tell of his work in Argentina when the robber interrupted the meeting, put a barber's straight-edged razor to the throat of one of the women and took the money and jewelry.

Pastor James Patton said the group then postponed the talk by Ford and prayed for the robber instead. "We are a small church but we try to give away as much money and food to the community as we can," Patton explained. "We feel he (the robber) needs Christ in his life and he needed those material things at this time."

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The group was praying before eating when the man entered the only unlocked door in the building. He then walked his hostage (the pastor's wife) around with him with the razor always near her throat, and had her go through the purses and pockets of the others and remove the jewelry and put whatever he wanted in his coat pocket.

Patton, Ford and an elderly man were the only males in the group. Ford, who is from Missouri, had not been accompanied by his wife.

Police were able to get only a partial description of the robber since he wore a hooded sweatshirt pulled tight around his face. Patton said the man was not a member of the church but he couldn't tell if he were from the local community.

"I am thankful no one was hurt," Patton said. "Human life is more important to us than the material things--but that is not to say we will leave the door open next time."

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Language Missions Awards  
Honor Pinson, ABS Staffer

By Everett Hullum

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

LOS ANGELES (BP)--William Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, has been named recipient of the 1984 Mosaic Missions Award.

The award, given annually at the Language Missions Leadership Conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, recognized Pinson for efforts to "equip ethnic leaders" for the task of beginning and developing language-culture churches.

As president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., Pinson pioneered in creation of Ethnic Leadership Development (ELD) centers, pointed out Oscar Romo, HMB language missions director. The Board now funds and staffs the more than 40 centers nationwide. In the three years since the first center was opened jointly by Golden Gate seminary and the Home Mission Board, more than 900 ethnic leaders have been trained in seven different languages.

Pinson's dream of ethnic leadership development "has become a reality," Romo noted.

In the other major award of the conference, Maria Martinez, director of marketing for the American Bible Society, was given the Kaleidoscopic Missions Award.

Martinez's honor represented the contribution made by the Bible society to language missions. In the past year, SBC language churches distributed almost 33,000 Bibles in 39 languages, valued at \$60,000, all made possible by gifts of the society.

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#### News Analysis

Most Grove City Coverage  
Missed Case's Main Point

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press  
3/2/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--If it is true most Americans rely on television to learn what's happening in the world, those citizens missed the main point of an important Supreme Court decision announced Feb. 28. But it wasn't their fault.

They missed it because broadcast accounts of the high court's decision in Grove City College v. Bell focused almost exclusively on a subplot of that celebrated case rather than on the main plot.

In the decision, the court decided Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, designed to eliminate sex discrimination in colleges receiving federal aid, applies only to those specific programs in the schools where such discrimination is proved but not to all programs.

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That reasoning, set forth in a single section of the court's opinion, was immediately and understandably attacked by women's organizations and other civil rights groups as running contrary to the clear intent of Congress in passing the statute a dozen years ago.

But if one relied entirely on television and radio coverage or even on most newspaper accounts, the larger and more fundamentally important legal question in the case was missed.

After all, the suit against the government was filed, not by women's organizations, but by a college whose principal argument was the federal government had no right to demand burdensome paperwork demonstrating compliance with a public law which the school contended did not apply.

To put it another way, the Grove City College decision will have more profound impact on private colleges and universities across the country than it will on the progress of women's rights.

Like Grove City College, most private colleges and universities do not discriminate against women anyway. And the decision applies only to private schools rather than to public institutions.

Grove City's problem with the statute had nothing to do with a desire to escape its responsibilities to women students. What it was about has to do with the increasingly critical question of whether agencies of the federal government have statutory or constitutional authority to regulate the internal affairs of private institutions that receive no direct federal assistance.

What the court decided unanimously in Grove City College--and this was the main plot--was the mere receipt of Pell Grants by individual students at the once-Presbyterian school amounts to a federal subsidy to the college. From that premise, the court reasoned, the school must submit annual assurance-of-compliance forms for its students to continue receiving the grants.

As damaging as the ruling may prove to be for the advance of women's rights--and that in itself is a debatable point--it may well represent the beginning of a new era of federal regulation of private schools.

On another constitutional level--that of separation of church and state--the case could have far-reaching implications as well.

Now that the court has held that indirect assistance in the form of grants to students amount to subsidies to their schools, will a majority of the justices apply the same reasoning to instances of similarly indirect aid to parochial elementary and secondary schools? Will they, consistent with the Grove City College ruling, agree such schemes as tuition tax credits and deductions are in fact subsidies not only to parents but to the schools themselves?

Perhaps not, judging from a 5-4 decision last year upholding the constitutionality of a Minnesota tax deduction benefit to parents who send their children to parochial schools.

If that and other such plans are upheld, will the court remain consistent with its Grove City College reasoning and hold that because public assistance is a subsidy the government has the legal authority to regulate parochial schools at the elementary and secondary levels?

These questions have profound implications for every private school in the country and lie at the heart of what Grove City College v. Ball was about.

You would never know it from the coverage of the case on the tube.



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