



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasty, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 21, 1985

85-74

Church-State Expert Urges No School Prayer Amendments

By Stan Hasty

WASHINGTON (BP) A nationally known church-state authority has urged a U.S. Senate subcommittee to reject amendments to the Constitution to restore state-sponsored vocal prayers and institute periods of silent prayer in public school classrooms.

Dean M. Kelley, director for religious and civil liberty for the National Council of Churches of Christ, told the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution "government has no business establishing periods for either spoken or silent prayer during the school day."

Because prayer is a "deeply personal matter," Kelley declared, "communication between an individual and God is possible at anytime...free from government pressure or suggestion."

Kelley was testifying for a broad coalition of religious and educational organizations, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, that work together to oppose government-regulated religious activities in public schools.

In introductory remarks, subcommittee chairman Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, said the June 19 hearing was called in response to a U.S. Supreme Court decision in early June striking down an Alabama law that would have required public schools to open each day's activities with a period of silent prayer or meditation.

Although the high court strongly suggested periods of silence without instruction or suggestion they be used for prayer would be accepted, the 6-3 majority held the Alabama statute invalid as a violation of the Constitution's ban on an establishment of religion.

Hatch, who favors both vocal and silent prayer amendments, acknowledged in his remarks the two approaches "are substantially different" in both public policy and constitutional respects.

Last year, the Senate decisively rejected a vocal prayer amendment pushed by President Reagan. The measure fell 11 votes short of the required two-thirds majority for passage, even though most Senate observers had predicted it would pass overwhelmingly.

For its part, the House of Representatives did not act on the proposal.

In his testimony opposing both vocal and silent prayer amendments, Kelley said the school prayer coalition considers them "unjust, unwise and unnecessary."

"The potential for injustice," he testified, "lies primarily in the fact that there is no way to protect fully the rights of students who belong to religious minorities or to no religious group."

He labeled the proposals "unwise" in that they would "authorize practices in public schools that would permit government intrusion into a realm sacred to the family and the church" and "do a real disservice to what we understand to be genuine Biblical faith."

Kelley quoted Jesus' instructions on prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 6: "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men.... But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

--more--

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

Constitutional amendments are "unnecessary," Kelley insisted, "since any person can pray to God at any time or place." He added: "The Supreme Court cannot prevent it...nor can the Congress enable it."

The veteran church-state specialist also urged churches and church people to turn their attention instead to other means of providing for religious instruction and activities already upheld by the Supreme Court and approved by Congress.

He said pressure should be brought to bear on local school authorities to provide classroom instruction "about the important part religion has played in human life, in history, in art, music and literature," and quoted from the landmark 1963 Supreme Court decision on religious exercises in schools, "that one's education is not complete" without it.

In addition, he pointed to the National Council's support of the Equal Access Act passed by Congress last year and signed into law by the president, a law according groups of students who wish to meet for religious activities the same access to public school property before and after school provided other extracurricular, non-academic groups.

--30--

Survivors In Bangladesh
To Get About 200 Wells

Baptist Press
6/21/85

FENI, Bangladesh (BP)---Responding to government requests for aid, Southern Baptist missionaries will see that about 200 tube wells are sunk into the soft soil of the Bangladesh coastline, where fresh water supplies were destroyed in a cyclone May 26.

Missionaries expect also to supply materials for bamboo homes with corrugated tin roofs, at a cost of about \$500 per structure, and to import ducklings from Bangkok, Thailand. To get the farm-homestead culture of the area back on its feet, the government requested two million ducklings. Southern Baptist relief efforts are expected to total about \$100,000.

Man-made ponds and canals, used by the people as water wells, were all tainted when tidal waves in front of the storm washed over a 2,000-square-mile area. More than 200,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. Conservative estimates numbered the dead at 10,000.

Early in June, missionary R.T. Buckley, coordinator of relief for the Bangladesh Baptist Mission, brought the machinery for 50 wells to the mission station at Feni, about 15 miles from the northwestern edge of the devastated area. Working out of Feni, teams of about five men will put down the wells under Buckley's direction during the next several months.

Because fresh water in the coastal area is found relatively high--about 20 feet underground--each team will be able to sink two to three wells a day. Total cost to set up each well is \$100 to \$200.

Much of the new well machinery will be cast by students at the Christian Industrial Center in Faridpur, a vocational school run by the Baptist mission. Fifty well heads were already on hand when the storm hit.

The massive tidal waves developed as the cyclone built fury in the Bay of Bengal. As the cyclone moved northward, it hurtled the towering waves at the point of the bay where the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers empty out into a delta. Squeezed into the delta, the surge inundated whole islands.

Buckley, from Picayune, Miss., spent much of the first weekend in June, a week after the storm, touring the district of Noakhali in the delta, surveying needs and listening to stories. One new group of Baptists, in the village of Char Alexander, suffered devastating personal loss but no loss of life.

--30--

High Court Rules 'Lust' Is
Invalid Obscenity Guideline

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)—Upholding all but one of its provisions, the U.S. Supreme Court nevertheless declared invalid a section of a Washington state obscenity law banning materials that might occasion lust.

In a 6-2 decision announced June 19, the high court reversed a federal appeals panel that had thrown out the entire statute on grounds its definition of "lust" was overbroad. That panel erred, the high court ruled, by not choosing instead partial invalidation of the law.

Nothing in the majority opinion, written by Justice Byron R. White, altered the court's most recent attempt to define obscenity, a 1973 decision holding in part that a film or publication is obscene if "taken as a whole, (it) lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

At issue in its most recent decision was a Washington state "moral nuisance" law that took effect in 1982. Within days of its effective date, seven separate lawsuits were filed against the statute, all of them consolidated in lower courts as one case.

The Washington law defined "moral nuisance" as any place "where lewd films are publicly exhibited as a regular course of business" and any place of business "in which lewd publications constitute a principal part of the stock in trade."

Among other terms in the law, the word "prurient" was defined to mean "that which incites lasciviousness or lust."

Instead of invalidating the whole statute, the high court held, the lower panel simply should have stricken the word "lust."

That panel, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, declared the whole law invalid "on its face" based on the determination the Washington legislature had intended to include materials that merely stimulated normal sexual responses.

Justice White agreed with the lower panel's conclusion that the idea of preventing lust was too broad, but declared the defect should not have occasioned invalidation of the entire law.

Justice William J. Brennan and Thurgood Marshall dissented, contending the law as a whole "is substantially overbroad and therefore invalid on its face under the First Amendment because it defines 'prurient' in such a way as to reach constitutionally protected material that stimulates no more than a healthy interest in sex."

--30--

Food Shortages Slow
Feeding In Ethiopia

Baptist Press
6/21/85

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)—Food shortages are hampering Southern Baptist famine relief efforts in Ethiopia. But missionaries and volunteers remain optimistic and are seeking additional volunteers to aid in the hunger relief project.

While rains closed roads to a feeding station in remote Rabel, the center's population soared as people in destitute Welo province to the north heard about the feeding station and walked miles to camp around it. Twice recently, the center ran out of food.

At the same time, the government has delayed giving approval to Southern Baptist plans to open four new feeding stations in nearby Merhabete province until the mission can work out a way to provide an adequate food supply.

Difficulty in moving food from the coast to more central warehouses is at the heart of both problems, said Davis Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for Eastern and Southern Africa.

--more--

While missionaries continue to negotiate with the various relief agencies about supplying food for new stations in Merhabete, they have promises from the British Royal Air Force to continue air drops to Rabel for another two months, he said. When food ran short recently, the RAF was able to fly grain from the port in Djibouti to warehouses in Addis, where it was repackaged so they could drop it at Rabel. The center was never without food for more than a day.

The mission also has permission to fly grain trucks waiting in the Republic of Djibouti to Addis so they can be put into use, Saunders said.

The Rabel station has been almost overwhelmed with people from Welo Province, said missionary Lynn Groce. The station gives most people a month's dry rations to take home with them, keeping only the sick for daily feedings and medication. But the number of hungry people camped outside the station awaiting dry rations has swollen from 150 to 400 in recent days.

In spite of difficulties, the Baptist mission is proceeding with plans to open four feeding stations and an operations center in Merhabete, where Groce says conditions are the worst he's seen since Rabel. Merhabete is so far off the beaten track, he said, that no other relief agencies have worked there. About 100,000 of the 272,000 people who live in the district are registered with the Farmers Unions as needing help.

The mission has requested 21 volunteers for at least six months to help with the expanded feeding program. Because of the critical need, the Foreign Mission Board is enlisting them while awaiting government permission to open the centers.

The mission asked for a field supervisor for the operations center in Alem Ketema, the Merhabete district capital, and four assistant field supervisors for the four feeding stations to come as soon as possible. They also asked for a transportation supervisor to live in Addis, an assistant project supervisor to help volunteer Ed Mason in Addis, a water development engineer and an agriculturalist with an interest in soil conservation and forestry. Other urgent needs are for a doctor to work with all feeding stations in Ethiopia, 10 nurses and a veterinarian.

--30--

SBC Messengers Give
\$77,428 To Hunger Relief

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
6/21/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Messengers to the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas gave \$77,428 to their denominations' hunger relief program in a special offering taken on the second evening of the three-day meeting.

The hunger relief offering had been proposed in the convention's opening session by messenger Cecil P. Staton of Welcome, N.C.

Contacted after the convention, Staton said he was pleased with the positive response to his motion, although he was disappointed that less than half of the record 45,000-plus messengers were present when the offering was taken.

The 27-year-old pastor said the idea for suggesting the offering came a few weeks before the convention as he was studying for a sermon in support of the North Carolina state convention's world hunger emphasis.

"It was so clear from the Bible that the problem of hunger is something we Christians ought to be doing something about," he said. "Also, I was weary of all the conflict in the denomination, and I wanted to see something positive happen at the convention."

When he discovered that on a per capita basis Southern Baptists' record 1984 hunger relief contributions of more than \$7.1 million represented only 50 cents per person, Staton's motivation increased.

--more--

"I told my congregation if a group of rock singers could raise \$6.5 million on the first royalty check for 'We Are the World,' surely Southern Baptists could do better than 50 cents a person."

Trinity Baptist Church of Welcome is certainly doing better than that. While the congregation of 70 members is paying for a new building, it already this year has given more than \$1,000 to the SBC's program of world hunger relief.

--30--

Personal Gifts, Shared Ministry
Can Restore Boldness To SBC Task

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
6/21/85

EUSTIS, Fla. (BP)—Every Christian has God-given gifts and abilities which can be applied to restore boldness to the denomination's Great Commission task, according to Joe Stacker.

Stacker, secretary at the Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department, told associational leaders at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly in Eustis a divine interdependence should point Southern Baptists toward sharing ministry in churches.

Stacker said shared ministry out of a common commitment to God's mission also should be the primary focus of the denomination.

"I'm concerned about all the arguing going on in the convention. The jealousy and prima donna attitudes have got to go," he said. "We know what our task is, and there are enough of us in the middle who care about missions and evangelism to move Southern Baptists toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission of Christ," he said.

"Together, by sharing the ministry, we need to get on with the job of reaching people, developing believers and strengthening missions.

"Christianity is at its best when it is shared through pastors, staff members, deacons, volunteer leaders and church members," Stacker said. "God shared himself with us."

"Shared ministry is a rediscovery of the New Testament way of ministry," he explained. "It is a biblical approach to relationships and a method of doing Christian work.

"Pastors and deacons are not supposed to be the sole directors and leaders of the church," Stacker said. "They are to influence, guide and lead in the direction God would have them go. The pastor is the shepherd of the flock who leads for the joy of it. It's time we recaptured the basics of the priesthood of the believer and the competency of the believer.

"Greatness is not achieved because of rank in the church but because of the role in which we serve," he said. "The paradox of Christianity is that servanthood is power and success is faithfulness," he said. "Authority comes from the willingness to serve and the many jobs of the church."

"I share the Great Commission task with everyone in the church," Stacker said. "If we're not obedient as Christians, we can't expect Jesus to be with us."

Shared ministry, where all Christians are encouraged to be accountable and responsible for witnessing in participation in the life of the church, will bring benefits to the fellowship, according to Stacker.

"Some churches want pastors who are corporate managers or executive managers to put everything on order," he said. "Church members have to open up their minds, hearts and pocketbooks. What we need are amateurs who will lead in churches out of commitment and love.

"Being a Christian is a shared responsibility and a shared ministry," he said. "We're dependent in each other because that's how God made us," he concluded.

--30--

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN. 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION