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86-9

High Court Upholds Aid To Blind Ministerial Student

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Jan. 27 the Constitution's First Amendment ban on an establishment of religion does not mean that a blind student may not receive state vocational funds because he is studying for the ministry at a Bible college.

At the same time, the high court informed the Washington Supreme Court it may apply that state's stricter ban on any form of aid to sectarian institutions if it chooses to do so.

In a unanimous ruling, the court nevertheless reversed a Washington Supreme Court decision that the federal constitution forbids assistance such as that claimed by Larry Witters, the blind ministerial student who has pursued religious training at Inland Empire School of the Bible, a private Christian college in Spokane, Wash.

Justice Thurgood Marshall, who consistently has voted against state efforts to fund sectarian schools at the elementary and secondary levels, disagreed with the lower court's finding that Witters' use of state funds for religious training had the primary effect of advancing religion.

Noting the "well-settled" precedent "that the Establishment Clause is not violated every time money previously in the possession of a State is conveyed to a religious institution," Marshall wrote that Witters' choice to spend vocational funds for religious education was his, not the state's.

He wrote further that no "significant portion" of the funds expended under the Washington program "will end up flowing to religious education," and that Witters' choice does not "confer any message of state endorsement of religion."

At the same time, Marshall stopped short of ruling that the First Amendment's free exercise clause requires states to provide vocational funds to students like Witter. To do so, Marshall wrote, would be to "leapfrog" to a conclusion not warranted, especially because the Washington Supreme Court may choose now to apply its own state's "far stricter" prohibition against spending state funds for sectarian purposes.

In his opinion for the court, Marshall studiously avoided using the rationale expressed by a bare 5-4 majority two years ago in upholding a Minnesota law providing state income tax deductions for parents who send their children to parochial schools. Taking note of Marshall's omission, Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr.--speaking for himself and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Justice William H. Rehnquist--said he joined the opinion "on the understanding that nothing we do today lessens the authority" of the Minnesota ruling.

Justices Byron R. White and Sandra Day O'Connor also issued separate concurring opinions.

Witters' long legal battle began in 1979, when he applied for assistance under Washington's vocational rehabilitation law in order to pursue a program of education leading to service as a pastor, missionary or youth director. But the Washington Commission for the Blind denied the request, citing the state constitution's ban on aid to sectarian institutions. That ruling was subsequently upheld by a state hearings examiner, who also cited the state constitution.

After exhausting his appeals to state administrative authorities, Witters filed suit in a state superior court. But that panel affirmed the administrative rulings, leading Witters to appeal his case to the Washington Supreme Court.

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That tribunal, however, declined to ground its ruling in the state constitution, choosing instead to apply a 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision setting down three tests in such cases: the law in question must have a secular purpose, must have the primary effect of neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, and must not excessively entangle church and state.

Justice Marshall's Jan. 27 decision for the court agreed with the Washington Supreme Court finding that the law's purpose was secular. But it disagreed with the lower panel's ruling that the "primary effect" of the law was to advance religion impermissibly. Neither tribunal spoke to the "excessive entanglement" test.

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Sunday School Assesses Needs
For Continuing Growth Trend

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
1/28/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Now that Southern Baptists have ended an enrollment emphasis which led to the highest Sunday school enrollment ever, it's time to evaluate Sunday school materials and seek new ways to reach people, according to Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school department at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

With an enrollment of 7.9 million, Southern Baptists are riding the wave of a six-year increase with four years of record high enrollments. That has paved the way for continued growth, but enrollment will need to increase more rapidly to reach the goal of 10 million by 1990, Piland said.

A Bible study plan for non-Christians will be introduced in October as a new approach to outreach that will help increase enrollment, Piland said.

Sunday school literature has constantly changed since the first publication of "Kind Words" more than 100 years ago. Those changes are necessary to keep pace with trends and methodology, Piland points out.

A formal review of the distinctives of Sunday school, church training, music and missions literature was completed in 1984. "With this study in hand, we feel now is a good time to take a look at our Sunday school literature and see if changes are needed to better meet the needs of churches," Piland explained. "We will be looking at Bible content, teaching methods and literature format in an effort to provide Sunday school periodicals which meet the needs of our Southern Baptist churches," he said.

Piland said meeting the needs of churches ranging in size from as few as ten members to 10,000 or more is a difficult task. "We are the servants of the churches and we gladly serve in that role. We want to produce what helps them," Piland said.

Changes developed from this study will not be apparent in the literature until about 1990. No matter what changes are made, Southern Baptists will continue to have the same basic text for Sunday school Piland said, adding: "The Bible is our textbook and everything else is resource materials."

In addition to the curriculum study, an immediate examination of the literature editing and production processes was prompted by concern about errors in a July 1985 Sunday school lesson. "There are lessons to be learned from that experience," Piland said. "We learned that we must always be very close to our people. We can always communicate more effectively."

While the literature is under scrutiny, the teacher may be the most important element of a successful Sunday school. "When people remember Sunday school, they may not remember what was taught, but they always remember a teacher," Piland pointed out.

Included in the 1985-90 Bold Mission Thrust goals is a plan to develop evangelistic Bible studies at time other than the traditional Sunday morning hour. Outreach Bible Study is an effort to reach unsaved persons through Bible study groups in homes and other places away from the church where non-Christians might be more comfortable.

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"Invitation to Life," to be available in October, is an eight-lesson Bible study prepared especially for the Outreach Bible Study project.

"Outreach Bible Study and other such projects will be necessary if Southern Baptist Sunday schools are to continue to grow," Piland said.

The complex society of today makes Sunday school growth more difficult than it might have been in the 1950s when Southern Baptist Sunday schools experienced rapid growth with a campaign called "A Million More in '54," according to Piland.

"The church no longer is the focal point of community life. As we work in new areas and with different ethnic backgrounds, we are moving away from the church tradition. That makes outreach, discipleship and new methods important in reaching people for Christ," he said.

Reaching people will be a strong emphasis of Challenge 10/90, the goal for a Sunday school enrollment of 10 million people by 1990. "It's 10 million people. We will be centering on people," Piland explained.

Goals such as Challenge 10/90, 8.5 by '85 and A Million More in '54 are crucial to the success of enrollment campaigns. "But those goals must be personal. Every Southern Baptist needs to catch the vision of reaching people for Christ," he said.

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

Bush Calls For Revival
Of Nation's 'Moral Vision'

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
1/28/86

WASHINGTON (BP)--Vice-President George Bush says that while there may be "a solid wall between church and state, there should be no solid wall between church or synagogue and politics."

During an address to more than 500 members of Jerry Falwell's newly organized Liberty Federation, Bush praised the re-emergence of fundamentalists in American political life.

"America is in crying need of the moral vision you have," Bush said. "The country needs a message of hope, love, rebirth of freedom and love of God."

Recalling the withdrawal of many fundamentalists from politics during the 1920s, Bush said those leaders took with them a certain moral perspective. He described recent political involvement by religious political conservatives as "a great revival of an old American tradition."

The vice-president encouraged Falwell's organization to meet its goals of registering one million new voters during 1986 and getting 20 million conservative voters to the polls during upcoming senatorial elections.

Bush called "liberal" opponents of Falwell and other conservative leaders "hypocritical" for allegedly saying it is "all right" for liberal clergymen--such as Jesse Jackson, a 1984 Democratic presidential candidate, and Robert Drinan, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives--to participate in politics but then criticizing the involvement of conservatives. Bush said liberals have accused fundamentalists of "moral McCarthyism," but claimed the charges are untrue.

Pointing to the country's need for "more moral leaders," Bush said the United States is a "moral as well as a political union."

"There are many denominations and faiths," he contended. "But all Americans are united around basic principles--the principles of love, tolerance, respect, decency and reverence for a loving God."

Bush told those attending the luncheon he shares their views on abortion, pornography, school prayer, national defense and support of foreign "freedom fighters."

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He said he cannot believe the country's founders intended the Constitution "to prohibit school children from opening their school day with a simple, non-sectarian, voluntary prayer their parents taught them" or "to protect smut dealers."

"I can't believe the founders meant the Constitution to say 'no' to prayer and 'yes' to porn," Bush said.

Bush was the keynote speaker during the first national meeting of Falwell's Liberty Federation, which was chartered in early January. The session with Bush was the only segment of the two-day program open to the press.

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Uganda Missionaries
Unharmed In Fighting

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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries in Uganda reported they were safe and moving about with caution Jan. 27 as the rebel National Resistance Army consolidated control of Kampala, the Ugandan capital.

Missionaries in Kenya monitored shortwave radio broadcasts Jan. 27 from Jim Rice in Kampala, who said he and the other 11 missionaries in the capital were unharmed and violence had subsided. Rebel forces also took Entebbe and Jinja, the country's second largest city, as government troops reportedly fled toward Kenya and Sudan.

Missionary Jimmie Hooten in Jinja reported by shortwave radio Jan. 27 that his family and journeyman John Dina also were safe. A well-drilling vehicle belonging to the missionaries was stolen, rammed into a pole and abandoned, but Hooten and Dina recovered the vehicle and returned it to the mission compound in Jinja.

In Kampala, the Baptist bookstore and other mission properties were reported undamaged.

The missionaries likely will remain in Uganda as the fighting ends, though temporary evacuation to neighboring Kenya is an option. "They have been through so much with (former Ugandan dictator) Idi Amin and the changing of governments that have followed that they know pretty well when it becomes imperative for them to leave if they can get out," said Davis Saunders, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa.

The U.S. State Department and rebel leader Yoweri Museveni discussed an airlift for embassy personnel and other Americans, but it may prove unnecessary. Roads to Kenya were expected to reopen by the end of the week and news reports indicated the United States appeared ready to recognize a government headed by Museveni. His National Resistance Army forces seem to be disciplined and not violent toward the civilian population, according to officials. Missionaries in Kampala confirmed that impression.

Thirty-one Southern Baptist missionaries and journeymen are assigned to Uganda, but about half of them are currently in Kenya or in the United States on furlough.

Ousted head of state Gen. Tito Okello held power for barely six months after overthrowing the government of Milton Obote last July.

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Nigerian Visa Restrictions
To Limit Missionaries, Work

By Anita Bowden

Baptist Press
1/28/86

LAGOS, Nigeria (BP)—The government of Nigeria has imposed visa quotas which will require some Southern Baptist missionaries to leave the country and limit the type of work new missionaries may do.

The quota, expected for months as part of the government's attempt to nationalize jobs, became effective Jan. 22. But no missionaries will have to leave the country for 18 months, according to John Mills, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for west Africa.

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Twelve missionaries working with the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho will be most immediately affected because their visas will expire in 18 months. In two years visas will expire for about 20 more. Included in this group are nurses, field evangelists and those working with the pastors' schools in Kaduna and Owerri and with Theological Education by Extension. None of these visas may be renewed and no new visas will be approved for missionaries in these jobs unless further policy changes occur, Mills said.

Two-year renewable visas will be available for missionary doctors, administrators, student workers and those involved in non-theological education. There are 117 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Nigeria, where missions work began in 1850.

News of the quota came in a phone call from Fred Levrets, executive secretary of the mission. He plans to talk with immigration officials about the implications and send more detailed information in written form to the board, Mills said. Other mission organizations also are facing visa restrictions, according to Levrets.

Though the quota as currently interpreted could seriously damage missions work in the country, Mills is optimistic that some adjustments could be made to ease the situation. He also noted that policy changes have been frequent in Nigeria.

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Six Teenagers Named
National Acteens Panel

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Six teenage girls have been selected as the tenth Acteens National Advisory Panel.

The girls were named panelists by Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention, at the recent WMU Executive Board meeting.

Acteens is a Southern Baptist missions organization and involves girls in grades seven through twelve in the study of missions.

The panelists are Meridith Moorhead, Anderson, S.C.; Christy Willenbrecht, Lander, Wyo.; Holly Benzenhafer, Prentiss, Miss.; Susan Shell, Clinton, Ark.; Sabrina Stephens, Reidsville, Ga., and Jayme Tipton, Amarillo, Texas.

Selections are based on scholastic achievement, school and church activities and accomplishments in Studiact, the individual achievement plan for Acteens.

In addition to their applications and written testimonies, candidates had to be recommended by their pastor and Acteens leader.

Their activities include writing for Accent, the monthly missions magazine for Acteens, and appearing at state and associational WMU related meetings. They also will be pages at the WMU Annual Meeting June 8-9 in Atlanta, and at the Southern Baptist Convention which immediately follows.

The girls were selected from more than 130 teenage girls nationwide who applied to serve on the six-member panel. They will serve until Dec. 31, 1986 when selections for new panelists begins.

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