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July 8, 1986

86-100

Court Rules Schools May Ban Sexually Offensive Speech

By Stan Haste

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORIC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE Historical Commission, SBC Nashville, Tennessee

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Supreme Court ruled July 7 that local schools may forbid lewd and indecent speech in school assemblies without violating high school students' right to free speech.

In a 7-2 decision delivered by retiring Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, the high court found in favor of administrators at Bethel High School in Bethel, Wash., who suspended a senior student for delivering a campaign speech for a fellow student running for office that included indirect references to the candidate's sex organ.

Matthew Fraser, who had been advised in advance by two teachers that his brief speech was inappropriate and should not be delivered, gave it anyway. During the speech—heard by 600 students, including many 14-year-old freshmen—some of the students "hooted and yelled," while others "graphically simulated the sexual activities pointedly alluded to" in the speech, Burger wrote. Still others, he added, appeared "bewildered and embarrassed."

Fraser was accused of violating the school's "disruptive-conduct" rule, was suspended for three days and had his name stricken from a list of possible commencement speakers. Although he appealed the punishment through the Bethel school district's grievance procedures, the school's actions against him were upheld.

Supported by his father, Fraser filed suit in a federal district court, claiming the actions violated his First Amendment freedom of speech. Both the district court and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed, with the lower panel awarding Fraser \$278 in damages and \$12,750 in legal costs and attorney's fees. The court also ordered the school district to permit Fraser to deliver his commencement address.

In the high court opinion overturning the lower rulings, Burger wrote although "fundamental values...essential to a democratic society must, of course, include tolerance of divergent political and religious views," even unpopular ones, the same values "must also take into account consideration of the sensibilities of others." He added, "The undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views in schools and classrooms must be balanced against the society's countervailing interest in teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior."

Referring to Fraser as a "confused boy," Burger held further that it is left properly to schools to determine what amounts to "lewd, indecent or offensive" speech and conduct. "A high school assembly or classroom is no place for a sexually explicit monologue directed towards an unsuspecting audience of teenage students," the chief justice concluded.

Dissenting from the majority ruling, Justice Thurgood Marshall said he could not reconcile the court's findings with those in a 1968 case in which the Supreme Court upheld the right of high school students to engage in symbolic speech—in the form of wearing black armbands—to oppose the Vietnam War, provided they did not disrupt their school's educational process. In Fraser's case, Marshall contended, school officials failed to demonstrate the student's remarks "were indeed disruptive."

In a separate dissent, Justice John Paul Stevens noted that despite Burger's reference to Fraser as a "confused boy," the chief justice and three others in the majority voted earlier this term to "treat high school students like college students rather than like children." Stevens referred to the court's ruling in Bender v. Williamsport Area School District, a 5-4 decision reinstating a lower court decision that students in the Pennsylvania city's high school who sought to gather during school hours for religious meetings must be given equal access to school facilities as that enjoyed by other extracurricular, non-academic groups.

The difference, Stevens maintained, was that in the Williamsport case "a more orthodox message (was) being conveyed."

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High Court Rejects Pair Of
Church-State Job Disputes

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
7/8/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—In a pair of actions in church-state disputes, the U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review lower rulings that churches may choose not to employ women in pastoral positions without violating a federal anti-discrimination law but that a private athletic club may not refuse to hire employees who are not "born again."

Acting on the last day of its current term, the high court left standing a ruling of the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not subject to the anti-discrimination provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for refusing to hire a woman, Carole A. Rayburn, to a pastoral position. The lower panel held earlier the church's refusal was protected by the religion clauses of the First Amendment.

Appealing that decision, attorneys for Rayburn argued unsuccessfully the government has such a compelling interest in eradicating race and sex discrimination in employment that it should be allowed at a minimum to investigate the Seventh-day Adventist claim that being forced to hire women in pastoral positions would violate its free exercise of religion.

The church claimed government would violate the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion were it to subject the church to the provisions of the Civil Rights Act in the employment of ministers. (85-1071, Rayburn v. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists)

In the other rejected case, the high court left in place a ruling by the Minnesota Supreme Court that a chain of sports and health clubs was forbidden by the state's Human Rights Act to hire and promote only "born again" Christians to management positions.

Minnesota's high tribunal ruled last year the state has an overriding and compelling interest in prohibiting discrimination in employment and public accommodations, an interest that takes precedence over the club's claimed free exercise right.

Attorneys for the Minneapolis-St. Paul clubs failed to persuade Supreme Court justices to review the dispute in spite of their claim that the law, as applied to their clients, violated the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment and was unconstitutionally vague and overbroad. (85-532, Sports and Health Club, Inc. v. Minnesota)

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Seminary Professor Provides
Theological Approach To Leadership

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
7/8/86

Editor's Note: Following is the first of a four-part series on leadership which developed from the Southern Baptist Education Commission's recent National Congress on Leadership.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A theology of leadership must balance servanthood and authority and express the basic values of the Christian faith, according to a Southern Baptist seminary professor.

Ernest O. White noted the "phenomenon of leadership has long intrigued the civilized human race" and the subject of leadership is "the content of much of history's writing." White is the Gaines S. Dobbins Professor of church administration and leadership at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

White, who spoke on "A Theology of Leadership" at a seminar held during the National Congress on Leadership sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission, said leadership, which has become a topic of concern for the future, has historical roots tracing back to Old Testament times.

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In fact, he said, the Old Testament is "perhaps the oldest extant theological study of leadership. Almost without exception, every Old Testament leader is given a moral and theological evaluation."

White observed a key ingredient for leadership is servanthood. The best example of service can be found by examining the life of Jesus in relation to other persons who had needs, he said, noting, "Jesus gave leadership a servant quality in contrast to the popular norms for leadership."

Leaders must not give themselves just to a cause, he observed; they must give themselves to persons as well. "A Christian theology of leadership begins with the incarnational expression of God in Jesus of Nazareth who exhibited the servant model of leadership," he explained.

White said the second dimension of leadership which needs examination in a theology of leadership is the concept of authority. "No more perplexing and confused issue resides in leadership studies than the definition and appropriate place of authority," he insisted.

He noted Baptist beliefs such as "soul competency" and "the autonomy of the local church" have made authority an "especially difficult Gordian knot for Baptist leadership."

According to White, concepts of authority and power often are confused. He said authority is the "right to act or decide," while power is the "ability to act or decide." A leader may have either without the other, he said.

In a theology of leadership, White said, the authority of the leader is not unlimited, but it is a necessary dimension for the effective functioning of the leader.

Service and authority require balance in order for a person to be an effective leader, White said. "Service which carries no authority renders a fearful leadership which is subject only to the demands of the group or the followers, without any vision or direction from the leader," he asserted.

In contrast, authority by itself in leadership becomes oppressive and tends to push toward limitlessness, he said, warning, authority in religious leadership has a dangerous potential.

"It can result in a sole claim to spiritual truth for one's leadership. Such leaders see themselves as divinely appointed and accountable only to God," he elaborated.

Genuine service, however, saves leadership from authoritarianism, White noted.

"It is impossible to lead with the personal care and concern for those led and exercise the domination of authoritarianism. A leadership based on service will be willing to be accountable and responsible for the authority exercised in the practice of leadership," he said.

White also emphasized the expression of Christian values through leadership: "Certain principles are foundational for the Christian faith in all relations of persons with one another, whether as individuals or groups. Leadership, as an arena of human relations, also must exhibit these principles if it is to have integrity with Christian theology."

White concluded the power of leadership has "never been greater than today's leader potency. A conscious theology of leadership ranks as a top priority for Christian leaders."

He noted today's leaders presently can do "what previously had only been imagined." Increased technology and information have given leaders more power than ever before, he observed.

"If there is not a theology to guide such leadership power, we may all be led into oblivion," he said.

Kinchen Elected Leader
Of West Virginia Baptists

ST. ALBANS, W.Va. (BP)—Thomas A. Kinchen has been elected executive secretary-treasurer of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists.

Kinchen, director of the continuing education and doctor of ministry programs at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, will succeed Thomas E. Halsell, who will retire Dec. 31. Kinchen will begin work with Halsell in West Virginia Sept. 12 and will assume his new post Jan. 1, 1987.

A native of Thomasville, Ga., Kinchen has been pastor of churches in Georgia and Louisiana. He also has been a high school and seminary teacher. In addition to his current position at New Orleans Seminary, he has been administrative assistant to the vice president for student affairs, director of church/minister relations and communication and vice president for student affairs.

Kinchen, 39, is a graduate of Georgia Southern College, the University of Georgia and New Orleans Seminary.

He and his wife, the former Ruth Ann Hunter, have two children, Alex, 15, and Lisa, 12.

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Wachs Heads Communications
For N.C. Children's Homes

Baptist Press
7/8/86

THOMASVILLE, N.C. (BP)—Robert J. (Bob) Wachs has been named director of communications for the North Carolina Baptist Children's Homes in Thomasville. In that post, he is editor of Charity & Children, monthly publication of the homes.

Wachs, a native of Pittsboro, N.C., has been associate editor of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, since Jan. 1, 1985.

Wachs is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he studied journalism, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Prior to joining the Biblical Recorder, he was pastor of Tyson's Creek Baptist Church in Bear Creek, N.C. He also was pastor in Virginia and has written for three secular newspapers.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: In (BP) story "Flurry Of Convention Motions Creates Avalanche Of Work," dated July 2, please change paragraph 24 to read:

—A request that the Foreign Mission Board reconsider its policy against appointing deaf persons as missionaries. (Board officials have said the board has no policy against appointment of deaf persons but has received no requests from overseas fields for mission work with the deaf. Field requests determine missionary assignments. However, board officials actively are exploring needs for deaf ministry on the mission fields.)

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Latin American Baptists
Aim At Evangelistic Unity

Baptist Press
7/8/86

LA MERCED, Ecuador (BP)—Latin American Baptists took steps to bolster cooperation in missions and evangelism during June conferences in Ecuador and Venezuela.

Symbolic of a new direction, the former Baptist Union of South America changed its name to the Baptist Union of Latin America while meeting in Ecuador. The change extends participation in the organization to Baptists in Central America and the Caribbean.

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Meanwhile, a First Regional Conference of World Missions was sponsored by Jesus Christ Is the Way Baptist Church in Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, and its Baptist association.

The meetings evidence a growing missions maturity because the Latin Americans' concern "now extends beyond the borders of their own countries to Latin America and to the world," said A. Clark Scanlon, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff member who participated in the Venezuela gathering.

"This means a continued new day in missions when rapidly growing churches in Latin America and other places will be sending missionaries as well as us," Scanlon said.

Sixty-seven Baptist representatives from 15 countries attended the meeting at Baptist Theological Seminary of Ecuador at La Merced, near Quito.

The participants endorsed the idea of several key leaders from each country receiving two years of intensive evangelistic training. The training is available through a specialized discipleship program of the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela.

Selected as the group's general secretary was Jose Missena of Paraguay, who also works as evangelism and church growth consultant for the Foreign Mission Board. The group scheduled another meeting for February in Caracas, Venezuela, to elect other officers and adopt bylaws. The Latin American Baptist women's organization has affiliated with the union, and youth and religious education associations are likely to do the same.

Also under way are plans for a week-long workshop early next year for presidents and deans of Baptist theological institutions in Latin America. Common problems will be discussed, along with ways of sharing resources and ideas for long-range planning.

Participants in the Venezuela conference signed an "Open Missionary Letter" urging "our brothers and sisters of all nations of the world...to examine our world missionary responsibility in light of the Bible...(and to) look for the means to increase the number and improve the quality of missionaries from our churches."

An ongoing emphasis on world missions is necessary for "enlarging the missionary vision of the believers" in all churches, they declared.

The signers included representatives of Venezuelan, Brazilian and Colombian Baptists, Southern Baptists, Campus Crusade for Christ, New Tribes Mission and the Church of God (of Anderson, Ind.).

Scanlon, one of 91 participants at the conference, said he was encouraged that it reflects "a world mission vision on a grass-roots level." A second conference next year already is being planned.

The 130-member Jesus Christ Is the Way congregation, founded in 1984 in a metropolitan area of nearly 400,000 people, is led by Brazilian Baptist missionary Calixto Patricio and Southern Baptist missionary Michael Glenn.

Asian Baptist leaders also met for a second time during June, discussing joint strategies for sending foreign missionaries. Both the Asians and Latin Americans increased their efforts in mission planning after attending a consultation on global evangelization held last summer at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. The consultation brought together leaders of Baptist conventions already sending or planning to send their own foreign missionaries.

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Prayer Covenant Binds
Venezuelans, Missionaries

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press
7/8/86

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Ludwing Villamizar shed a few tears as he read the covenant made by Southern Baptist missionaries in his native Venezuela.

The Latin American had prayed Southern Baptist missionaries would join Venezuelan pastors in a commitment to pray three times daily for evangelization and revival in Venezuela.

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Now the missionaries' covenant was in his hands. They pledged themselves to pray at 6 a.m., 3 p.m. and 9 p.m. daily and to dedicate the first Saturday of each month to prayer and fasting.

"We are together," he said when asked the significance of the resolution. "If we don't work together, we won't get anywhere."

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustee Mark Corts of Winston-Salem, N.C., brought the resolution from Venezuela, where he led a prayer retreat during the annual meeting of Southern Baptist missionaries there. The missionaries asked him to deliver the covenant to Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks and share it with the trustees meeting at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during Foreign Missions Week June 24-30.

During the retreat, Corts led a session on spiritual vision and asked the missionaries to consider what would happen if they devoted three hours a day to praying for evangelization and revival in Venezuela. The missionaries compiled a lengthy list of results, such as new churches and more baptisms, but fell silent when Corts asked whether they were willing to pay the price to see those things happen.

Then one missionary broke the silence saying, "Why don't we?" Others joined in, but the group decided to postpone a decision until later in the meeting. Unknown to them at the time, Bryan Brasington, the mission board's director for western South America, was bringing a video of Parks urging Southern Baptist Convention messengers to pray for "the Lord of the harvest to thrust out laborers."

After they watched the video one evening, the missionaries stood and applauded. The next morning, they made the prayer covenant their first order of business and asked Corts to carry it back to the Ridgecrest meeting. Villamizar, in the United States to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., was at Ridgecrest to speak at Foreign Missions Week and was given a copy of the covenant.

Although missionaries have been working closely with Venezuelan Baptists in many ways, the covenant marked a new level of cooperation, said Villamizar. He particularly was touched to hear the missionaries were resolving to fast, a practice seldom seen among U.S. Baptists but more common in Venezuela. "We're together, and things are going to happen," he said.

The missionaries pledged to pray in the morning for pastors and missionaries, in the afternoon for churches in Venezuela and in the evening for Venezuelan families, the government and the world.

Corts noted the missionaries are praying not just for God to call forth laborers from the United States, but from other countries where Southern Baptists send missionaries.

Villamizar said the four churches he led as pastor in Venezuela commissioned him as a missionary to the United States before he arrived to study. He plans to return to Venezuela for two weeks in August to participate in nationwide evangelistic crusades.

Venezuelan Baptists in 1980 set a goal of having 1 million Baptists in Venezuela by the end of the century. At the time, they numbered about 5,000. By the end of 1985, they counted 7,720 members.

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Wingo: Nation Responds
With Apathy To SBC Crisis

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
7/8/86

ATLANTA (BP)—While Southern Baptists in recent years have been preoccupied with their denomination's controversy, the rest of the nation has yawned.

That is the assessment of journalist Hal Wingo whose job is to keep his finger on the pulse of American life. A Southern Baptist layman, Wingo is assistant managing editor of People Weekly magazine, a publication with 20 million readers.

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"The crisis in our convention is very important," he says, "but it's simply an in-house squabble as far as the rest of the country is concerned. Most people aren't very interested in a family fight."

Wingo, a member of Greenwich Baptist Church in Greenwich, Conn., was a featured speaker at the National Congress on Leadership sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission. He also was one of 40,891 messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta June 10-12.

Wingo has a unique perspective on Southern Baptist events. Although an insider whose "identity is soaked in Southern Baptist life," his career as a journalist for LIFE magazine and then People has left him far from the Bible Belt mainstream of SBC life.

Wingo is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. His father was a Southern Baptist pastor in Texas for 50 years. His sister has been a Southern Baptist missionary in West Beirut, Lebanon, since 1964. His daughter is married to Robert Dilday, associate editor of the Georgia Baptist Christian Index and son of Russell Dilday, president of the denomination's largest seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Wingo's perception is that to most people outside the South, Southern Baptists are "largely misunderstood" or "hardly a matter of curiosity."

"I've spent most of my life trying to explain who Southern Baptists are and why I am one," he says. "The election of Jimmy Carter (in 1976) helped. He put Southern Baptists on the map nationally. Yet there is still an enormous amount of ignorance about Southern Baptists."

Wingo readily admits "there is a world of difference between Southern Baptists 20 years ago and Southern Baptists today." But, he adds, "despite our boasts to the contrary, we are still a regional denomination in many ways."

Perhaps the only way to break out of this regional mentality is "to find new ways to relate the gospel to people's needs," Wingo says. "Maybe one reason people have been ignoring us is that our churches haven't been offering anything that is relevant."

Despite the ignorance and apathy which exist on a national scale, Wingo does not underestimate the importance of the convention's current struggle.

"It is very important how this denomination chooses to resolve its problems," he stresses. "I think Southern Baptists have a sense of worldwide mission that is greater than any other denomination. How we deal with this family crisis will have a tremendous impact on missions."

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SBC Peace Requires Only Simple
Confession, WMU Leaders Told

By Carol Garrett

Baptist Press
7/8/86

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—If people can confess the belief from their hearts and spirits that "Jesus is Lord," all other doctrinal differences don't matter, John Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., recently told more than 2,500 Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union leaders.

"If you want to know how to bring about peace in the Southern Baptist Convention, this is the plan—'Jesus is Lord,'" he said. Hewett was the Bible teacher during the annual WMU conference June 30 through July 6 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Peace does not mean the absence of conflict, he said: "Peace in the New Testament isn't ever the absence of something negative. It's the overwhelming presence of something positive."

Southern Baptists are not called to divide over good things but unite over the best things, he noted, adding, love is the "best thing through which the church finds unity."

"The Spirit never comes to divide brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. He always comes to bring us together. You approach diversity by pursuing love," he said.

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But he warned when the Spirit of God comes to bring unity out of diversity, there will be some who will mock and "say it isn't real."

Southern Baptists have been gifted to serve in different ways because they are called to act in different ways, he said: "We are not to be afraid of our diversity. We are to celebrate it, for how else are we going to reach a diverse world for Christ."

Non-Christians are not dying from a lack of intellect, education or wisdom but from a lack of Christ's love, Hewett said. "The reason we believe in missions is not so people will come to know Southern Baptists better but so they will come to know Jesus Christ," he emphasized.

In other activities during the week, the women heard presentations by missionaries, Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Board representatives and national WMU leaders. They attended WMU leadership and general interest conferences.

More than \$2,600 was given in a special offering for the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

Conference attenders also took part in the first teleconference originating from Ridgecrest. Vision 88 Teleconference focused on the WMU plan to have 2 million members by 1988. The program was broadcast to more than 200 sites nationwide.

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Self-Understanding Called
Benefit Of New Seminar

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
7/8/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—An improved self-understanding, which can be translated into goals to deal with weaknesses in personality and ministry, was the focus of the first Personal and Career Development Seminar offered by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

A primary area of concentration for ministers attending the seminar was to evaluate strengths and weaknesses through feedback from a support group and personality tests, said Terry Peck, consultant in the church administration department of the Sunday School Board and director of the seminar.

The personal and professional needs of ministers typically are not addressed in their daily routine, said Peck, who noted ministers cannot evaluate strengths and weaknesses without receiving feedback for support.

Three ministers attended the first seminar, which had limited attendance to allow for maximum participation by each person. During the six-day conference, ministers spent about 37 hours in conference time, in addition to study assignments which took as much as two hours each evening.

Roger Swann, a missionary to Tanzania who was one of the participants, said people who attend the seminar experience a certain degree of pain when they take an honest look at their personality and their ministry.

Swann and the other two participants agreed the honest appraisal taken in the seminar should help them grow spiritually as well as minister more effectively.

John Tappan, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Clinton, Miss., said he got both positive and negative feedback on his ministry and his personality that will help him better determine the future direction for his ministries.

Tappan said this type of seminar should be a requirement for seminary students to help them get a dose of the reality of ministry to go with the theory they learn.

The other participant in the seminar was a minister of music from Tennessee who recently had been terminated from his church. He said he was attending on the recommendation of a friend who was counseling him regarding future ministry options.

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He said the introspective aspects of the seminar had been "surprising in some areas, but it has helped me deal with the sense of my loss of mission. It also has helped me learn how I should redirect my energies into developing a sense of ministry regardless of the fact I am not exercising it right now."

The three participants agreed there is a need for ministers to take a seminar such as this to evaluate their ministries prior to traumatic experiences in their ministries or interruptions through forced termination.

The Personal and Career Development Seminar is a shortened version of the Personal and Professional Growth Seminar which was introduced 12 years ago and is 11 days long. Peck said the new seminar was an attempt to make the service more affordable and available. Three Personal and Career Development Seminars will be offered in 1987.

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Former NASA Scientist
Becomes Missionary

By Eric Miller

Baptist Press
7/8/86

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—A former NASA research analyst and science professor has become a Southern Baptist missionary to Africa, and his scientific colleagues are ridiculing him.

But ridicule is something Wayne Walton Jr., 45, has had to face even as a college professor because he believes in God, tithes in church and tells his students the biblical account of creation.

Walton and his wife, Linda, and two children, Philip, 12, and Susanne, 10, will live in Ouagadougou, capital of the West African nation of Burkina Faso. After completing French language study, he will direct a Baptist student center near the University of Ouagadougou. She will be involved in a variety of outreach ministries.

Scientists at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and college professors Walton worked with are either atheists or agnostics, he says. When they learned of his missionary appointment last December, they wrote and told him he was "wasting" his life and education.

"One of the professors I worked with," Walton recalls, "on the opening day of class, would go in and tell these students, 'I imagine some of you guys in here are foolish enough to think there's a God. Then you're foolish enough to think this so-called God could create something. You can have your superstitions, but in here, we're going to teach you the truth.'"

Despite criticism from other professors, Walton would present students with the biblical view of creation as an alternative to the evolution theory while teaching historical geology. Several "closet Christian" students thanked him for presenting the biblical view.

Committed Christian scientists are rare, Walton says, and many scientists feel "unless you can put it into a test tube, unless you can put it into a machine and get some readout on it, then it really doesn't exist."

Colleagues have told Walton, "If you need a god, if you need a crutch and you want to call him Buddha or Mohammed, and you can envision in your own mind that he can do these things for you, that's fine. But when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, it's what you do for yourself that makes the difference."

Yet many scientists are lonely and are searching for something, Walton says. They lack fulfillment and their degrees, positions and awards "are vain," he believes. Some abuse alcohol and have extramarital affairs and "try to find something in life that would give them the happiness that they're not getting through their credentials."

Walton admits he was "very, very secular and career-oriented" in his teaching days before joining NASA. The NASA job "was going to be my stepping stone to get me to higher and better places."

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He dreamed of obtaining a large research grant at a big university. Then, "I would retire in a nice cushy job and have lots of graduate students working under me, cranking out papers, with me getting all of the credit for them."

While employed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Walton coordinated distribution of moon rocks to scientists around the world to study. During that time, he noticed what was almost a worship of the rocks even though they were like earth rocks.

The moon rocks sat in stainless steel cans with gaskets. These were encased in nitrogen-filled cabinets in a "beefed up bank vault" which can sustain 200-mph winds for 48 hours without damage.

"We always said were there to ever be an atomic war and essentially the earth was destroyed, here'd stand this one building," Walton recalls. "And if there was ever life that came to this planet from other places and opened it up, they'd say, 'Surely in this place must be man's most treasured possession.' And they'd open up these cans and here'd be just a bunch of rocks."

Having worked for NASA, Walton is attractive to many universities. But he looks at the experience as a gift God gave him "as an opening to a door that perhaps would not be as readily open."

Walton, who is from Springfield, Mo., says he became a Christian as a child. But he recommitted his adult life to Christ as a Southern Baptist just before joining NASA. "It was a period of growing for me and learning about Southern Baptists and what they believed," he recalls.

He grew up believing missionaries were "preachers that went out and lived in little grass huts in the middle of nowhere and preached. I'd just never been around missionaries." Then he married one.

He met the former Linda Porter of Orlinda, Tenn., at Ohio State University. He went there to get a doctor of philosophy degree in mineralogy. She was working on a master's degree in nursing. The government of Nigeria, where she had been serving as a single Southern Baptist missionary, had ruled the advanced nursing degree would be necessary for anyone teaching in the school of nursing where she was a faculty member.

When they married, she resigned from missionary service. But "her hope was that maybe someday God would call me, too, and we could go back to the field as a couple," he says. "It took nearly 15 years for that to come about."

A turning point in his life occurred when he started working with the Baptist Student Union while teaching at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1979. "God helped me see that he could use me in my academic role as well as my student role to be a minister to people and to reach people who were not as easily reached by other individuals."

College faculty members need ministry, he says. Many Christians who share their faith are intimidated by faculty members because of their multiple degrees and high level of conversation.

Walton, who has six degrees, is not intimidated. And he will be witnessing to students and professors in Burkina Faso.

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

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