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October 20, 1986

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Supreme Court Rejects  
Challenge To Ambassador

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The nation's highest court has refused to review a challenge to the constitutionality of formal diplomatic ties between the United States and the Holy See.

The Supreme Court without comment rejected the efforts of a group of religious bodies and individual taxpayers to contest the legality of sending a U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, also known as the Vatican. The decision was handed down Oct. 20.

Following President Reagan's January 1984 appointment of William A. Wilson as the first ambassador to the Holy See in 117 years, 20 religious groups and more than 80 individuals joined Americans United for Separation of Church and State to challenge the action in a suit filed in the U.S. District Court for Eastern Pennsylvania. That panel, however, ruled in May 1985 that plaintiffs had no legal standing to bring the suit. Even if standing had been granted, the panel ruled the plaintiffs would have lost because the Constitution confers on the president the authority to conduct foreign policy, including the appointment of ambassadors.

Last March, a three-judge panel of the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia affirmed the lower court ruling.

In making a final appeal to the nation's high court, the plaintiffs agreed their chances would be better if Americans United was not the lead petitioner. Accordingly, the case was re-fashioned as American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. v. Reagan to highlight that most of the plaintiffs were churches and other religious organizations.

"It is extremely frustrating when churches are unable to enforce one of the most fundamental guarantees of the First Amendment," said James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. "Government must remain neutral in religious affairs, and it certainly has no business playing favorites. The churches didn't even have the benefit of a trial in this case."

The Baptist Joint Committee filed a friend-of-the court brief urging the high court to review the case.

"We are very disappointed that the Supreme Court is unwilling to confront a popular president on matters of grave constitutional concern," said Oliver S. Thomas, Baptist Joint Committee general counsel. "In effect, the court has allowed the president to characterize this diplomatic relationship as being with the Holy See in spite of the Holy See's statement to the contrary, indicating that the relationship is with the Roman Catholic Church. By doing this, the court surrenders to the president its assigned role as final arbiter of the Constitution.

"Perhaps the most discouraging element in the case has to do with the standing issue. The plaintiffs have alleged specific injuries as well as the stigmatic injury resulting from this overt act of government discrimination, yet the court says we don't have standing to file the lawsuit. It leaves churches wondering if we can ever have standing to enforce the establishment clause against the executive branch of government."

Thomas said he hopes the Baptist Joint Committee's action in the case will not be perceived as anti-Catholic sentiment on the part of Baptists. "We would be equally concerned if the diplomatic relationship were with the Southern Baptist Convention," he explained.

Although the position of U.S. ambassador to the Holy See had been vacant since Wilson's resignation last May, the Senate recently confirmed the nomination of Frank Shakespeare to fill that post. Shakespeare formerly served as U.S. ambassador to Portugal.

Robert L. Maddox, executive director of Americans United, said, "We think that the Constitution has been dealt a blow by the U.S. Supreme Court in not hearing the Vatican case. We intend to file a petition for rehearing immediately. We will be watching the activities of the embassy at the Holy See for church-state violations, and we plan to seek legislative redress of the whole appointment process."

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Supreme Court Rejects  
Minister's Appeal Of Ouster

By Stan Haste

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WASHINGTON (BP)—A former United Methodist pastor has failed to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to review his church's decision to place him in involuntary retirement because of his alleged inability to get along with congregations.

O. Lloyd Hutchison was declared "unappointable" in 1981 by the Board of Ordained Ministry of the East Ohio Conference, a unit of the United Methodist Church. The action subsequently was affirmed by votes of the conference in open session in 1981 and 1982, by conference Bishop James S. Thomas and by the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church, the denomination's highest tribunal.

Following those actions, Hutchison took church officials to court, claiming fraud, collusion and defamation. He told a federal district court church officials "created a false picture" of his ministry by falsifying records pertaining to relationships with parishioners in the churches he served.

But the court, citing Supreme Court decisions dating to 1872, declined to settle the dispute on grounds it had no "subject matter" jurisdiction. The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower ruling last April.

In its opinion affirming the district court, the appellate panel noted the Supreme Court "has steadfastly upheld the First Amendment's command that secular authorities may not interfere with the internal ecclesiastical working and disciplines of religious bodies," except in some instances of internal disputes over the disposition of church property.

Attorneys representing the church asked the high court not to disturb the lower rulings. "The very existence of a church can ultimately turn upon its ability to freely choose who will preach its values," the lawyers wrote. "That choice must remain unfettered by judicial oversight."

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Baptists Meet With Pope,  
Archbishop Of Canterbury

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10/20/86

ATLANTA (BP)—Three Southern Baptists had personal audiences with Pope John Paul II. in Rome and Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie in London in mid-October.

The Southern Baptists were James P. and Margaret Wesberry of Atlanta and Erle Cocke of Washington.

Wesberry is executive director of Lord's Day Alliance of the USA and pastor emeritus of Morningside Baptist Church in Atlanta. He recently has written a book titled "The Lord's Day." He presented a copy of his book and a plaque to the pope in Rome and the archbishop in London.

Cocke is public relations committee chairman of the Lord's Day Alliance. He is a member of Briggs Memorial Baptist Church in Washington. The Baptists also were accompanied by Harmon Caldwell, a Georgian who is on the board of directors of Lord's Day Alliance.

While in Europe, the group also will visit with John Roberts, general secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society of England, and other religious leaders.

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Parks Challenges Students  
To Be 'Kingdom Builders'

By Susan Shaw

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—Dozens of students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary walked the aisles of Alumni Chapel making commitments to service in response to a challenge by Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, to be kingdom builders instead of empire builders.

Parks' message concluded World Mission Week, a major emphasis on world missions at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. During the week-long effort, more than 70 classes were closed and turned over to mission representatives to discuss world mission needs and opportunities.

The purpose of the emphasis—which included forums, lectures and chapel services—was to "capture a fresh vision of the world and to dream again in this critical juncture in Baptist life," said Richard Cunningham, professor of philosophy and coordinator of World Mission Week.

Comparing today's Christians to the religious people of Jesus' day, Parks warned of misunderstanding the nature of the kingdom of God as those people did.

He pointed to major misconceptions about the kingdom of God—the people of Jesus' time tended to glorify the past; they assumed God's power was to flow to them instead of through them; they wanted to build a self-centered kingdom instead of a God-centered kingdom.

These religious people "thought they had to control." That is why they had "laws upon laws," Parks explained. They did not realize "the Spirit would blow to prostitutes and jails and seldom through the Sanhedrin and across the altars and through the temple."

"Theirs was a kingdom of law, not grace," he added, but admonished, "You can't control grace like you can law. You can't have God's spirit in control and be in control yourself."

He also warned of seeing the kingdom of God as one of creed rather than faith. "You can control creed," he admitted, but "living faith is between a person and God."

Parks cautioned against translating the blessings of the kingdom into material terms.

"Not one word in Scripture undergirds the misconceptions that serving God is for self-benefit," he insisted. He pointed to something wrong with a type of Christianity which insists that material gain is to be expected in return for obedience to God and that pain and suffering are indications of sin.

"What happened to Jesus?" he asked. "Did he miss out on what God wanted? Why did he live and die in poverty?"

Parks answered his own question, "Jesus could not set up a kingdom to serve himself and redeem the world at the same time." He then asked his audience, "Are we willing to be kingdom builders, or will we insist on building empires?"

He reminded his listeners, "God is calling us to bring the peoples of the earth to him, not just a handful of Americans."

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Southern Baptist Colleges Can  
Transmit Values, Walker Contends

By Lonnie Wilkey

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Church-related educational institutions not only can transmit values, they have a responsibility to do so, claimed a leading Southern Baptist educator.

Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, responded to recent remarks made by Olin Robison, president of Middlebury College in Vermont, during the 20th National Religious Liberty Conference in Washington.

Robison, a Baptist, told participants at the conference sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs that colleges and schools should not be expected to teach values.

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"To contend that values cannot be changed in college adults denies some of the very basic commitments of the Christian experience," Walker said.

Walker disagreed with Robison's statement, "There is no prospect of graduating young adults who are morally strong, ethically concerned and generously dedicated to the public good unless you admit 18-year-olds who already possess those qualities."

"It bothers me that he would open the possibility for church-related colleges to deny their responsibilities by simply saying, 'We only work with what we get,'" Walker said.

Robison's statement also "denies the concepts of the possibility of a conversion experience and the impact of students modeling after faculty members who demonstrate Christian qualities in their own life," Walker added.

He noted Christian commitment on the part of institutions of higher education "makes it possible for real conversion experiences to take place among adults who may not have had adequate understanding of or perhaps opportunity for earlier Christian commitment."

Walker agreed with Robison that the transmission of values cannot be relegated to public structures. Church-related schools, however, are not and should not be bound to that policy, he contended.

"The committed Christian college can make an impact in the development of values in its students," he said.

Walker said the major problem in seeing that institutions can contribute to the development of values comes from the failure to recognize the importance of significant role models that are provided by faculty members.

"Frequently faculty members can have an impact on young adults which other previous models may not have been able to communicate," he said. "If the instructors in an educational institution are persons who demonstrate Christian morals in their own experience, it is inevitable that their students could be influenced by the same types of morals."

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Emeritus Foreign Missionaries  
Recall Dreams, Retain Visions

By Craig Bird

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Baptist Press  
10/20/86

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Most of them grew old on the mission field.

But while the 67 retiring missionaries no longer can dream the dreams of youth, the vision of sharing the gospel still burns brightly in their lives.

The group, with a combined 1,962 years of overseas service, was honored Oct. 13 at the annual Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board recognition service. And the talk was of memories, thankfulness and the future.

Sentiments of "I just wish I could extend (missionary service) a little longer," and "if I had another life to give, I would give it in the same way and in the same place," were mixed with challenges to those in the audience for someone to "come take my place—there is still so much to be done."

In fact, three members of the group will not even be returning to the United States for retirement.

Lila and Joseph Mefford Jr. are staying in Spain where they have worked for 33 years, and Mabel Summers, who refused to evacuate Beirut even once during her 35 years as an appointed missionary, remains in that war-torn city.

"We all talk a lot about Bold Mission Thrust" the SBC effort to share the gospel with the entire world by 2000 A.D., Bob Smith, chairman of the board's trustees, told the audience at Bon Air Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. "But nothing is bold until it's been done. And these people have done it boldly."

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Board President R. Keith Parks, noting the long tenures, said, "As you have walked these years with God, you have absorbed qualities of grace from him that are clearly evident to us who observe your lives."

Those 67 lives were invested in 40 countries. The "seniors" were Edgar and Zelma Hallock Jr., who spent 45 years in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Seven missionaries had worked for more than 40 years, and 51 of the 67 for more than 30.

The Hallocks had four generations on hand, including his 97-year-old mother; their son, who is a board trustee; and their grandson.

Almost every speaker praised Southern Baptists and the Foreign Mission Board for the support which had underpinned their careers.

Julia Luper, who with her husband, Dan, spent 38 years in Equatorial Brazil, recalled M. Theron Rankin, executive director of the board at that time, "promised us if we would give our lives to missions, the Foreign Mission Board would try to take care of everything else. That promise has been kept remarkably well."

The Cooperative Program, the plan through which Baptists voluntarily support a wide range of convention programs, was cited numerous times for allowing missionaries the freedom to minister without worrying over financial burdens.

"Over and over we saw Cooperative Program dollars converted into miracles on the mission field," related Harold Hurst, who worked for 27 years in Honduras, Panama and Mexico with his wife, Alice.

Farrell Runyan, who spent 18 years in Nigeria and 18 more in other West African countries with his wife, Elizabeth, defined success from a retiring missionary's viewpoint.

"During five years as an evangelist in the United States (between his two stints with the board) I saw 40,000 professions of faith. And in Senegal (West Africa) we averaged one baptism a year and were proud to get it," he explained. "Were we more successful preaching revivals where hundreds responded or when we worked for months without seeing anyone come to Christ?"

"I think we were successful in both situations—because we were where God wanted us to be doing what God wanted us to do. We surrendered to Jesus Christ, and geography was inconsequential to us."

Runyan closed with a description that defined the legacy of all 67.

In leading people to a commitment to Jesus Christ, "we have begotten, not children who will carry on our name, but children who will carry on the name of the family of God."

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(BP) photo and list of retired missionaries mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.