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87-43

Educators, Legal Representatives  
Examine Autonomy And Accountability

By Lonnie Wilkey

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Court cases involving the separation of church and state, including a pending Supreme Court decision which could "ultimately destroy" church-related institutions, were dissected during the National Conference on Autonomy and Accountability in Nashville, Tenn., in mid-March.

The meeting was sponsored by the Center for Constitutional Studies, an ecumenical organization headquartered at Mercer University, a Georgia Baptist Convention-related institution in Macon.

Basil M. Thomson, general counsel for Baylor University in Waco, Texas, noted the Supreme Court case Corporation of Presiding Bishop v. Amos has the "potential of ultimately destroying" religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

The case centers around the question of whether churches and their related institutions can decide for themselves whom to employ in any position. The Civil Rights Act of 1972 exempted churches from a ban on religious discrimination in employment.

Last fall, however, a U.S. district court ruled the 1972 provision unconstitutional in a case involving employees of a Mormon Church-owned business who were fired after failing to meet requirements that would have qualified them for the privileged church status of "temple recommends."

Thomson said if the Supreme Court upholds the district court's ruling, church-related institutions could be required to hire atheists, agnostics and other non-Christians, even in religion departments.

Edward M. Gaffney, professor of law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, said the district court made "four major errors in how it set up standards for review of employment discrimination cases."

Gaffney noted the district court:

- Confined religious activities to those which are directly related to spreading or teaching of religious beliefs, doctrine or practices of the sacred rituals of the church.
- Explicitly used secular standards in order to evaluate the religious quality of church activities.
- Refused to grant constitutional protection to sincerely held religious tenets of the Mormon community because Mormons were inconsistent.
- Confined religious activities to those that are compelled by religious doctrine.

"This constitutional nonsense is being propagated as if though it were clear doctrine," Gaffney charged.

He argued free exercise is available for sincerely held religious beliefs. Secular courts, he added, are not the place to argue out the legitimacy of those claims. "That is why we have theologians, that is why we have pastors, that is why we have church-related schools," he said.

Both Thomson and Gaffney predicted the Supreme Court would overturn the district court's ruling. They also agreed educators should not be complacent in dealing with church/state court cases.

"Educators don't have to agree with one another's particular educational goals in order to protect the most vulnerable among us from governmental interference with academic freedom and educational autonomy," Gaffney said.

He called for educators to "get their educational houses in order" and find the courage to "resist the emperor whenever he tries to diminish the rightful autonomy of the church and the institutions she needs to engage in her mission to the world."

Grove City (Pa.) College President Charles S. Mackenzie urged conference participants to give "careful attention" to the proposed Civil Rights' Restoration Act.

The proposed bill, Mackenzie said, would overturn the 1984 Supreme Court decision in Grove City v. Bell that ruled government interference on campuses was limited to the specific programs receiving federal funds.

Mackenzie called the proposed bill "an incredible expansion of government power over every entity in American society which even remotely or indirectly benefits from government."

Participants in the national conference heard Leon Conlon, associate general counsel for Loyola University of Chicago, explain his school's court defense in Pime v. Loyola University of Chicago, a case that dealt with the legal right of church-related institutions to make faculty appointments based on religion and value-related criteria.

Loyola, which originally lost the case, won on appeal because legislative history has shown independent universities should have discretion in matters such as the right to exercise preferential hiring of faculty members, Conlon reported.

In another session, R. Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University, addressed the issue of piety and intelligence. "I believe the future of our schools, if we have a serious commitment to our church-related heritage, should be built around an uncompromising commitment to 'pious intelligence,'" he said.

Godsey observed piety that cannot "bear the counsel of the mind is no piety at all." He challenged educational institutions to "bring together superior educational possibilities with a confessed religious perspective."

"Our highest good lies in bringing together genuine academic excellence with a profound sense of devotion," he said.

The Center for Constitutional Studies was organized in 1977 at the University of Notre Dame for the purpose of identifying, analyzing and responding to legal issues affecting the autonomy and the viability of church-related colleges and universities. It was moved to Mercer University in 1983.

The national board of advisors for the center include two Baptist agency heads -- James M. Dunn, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and Arthur L. Walker Jr., Southern Baptist Education Commission.

Baptist Hunger Gifts  
Top \$9 Million In 1986

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NF-CD (CLC)  
By Tim Fields

Baptist Press  
3/23/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn, (BP)—Southern Baptists gave more than \$9 million to worldwide hunger relief in 1986, the second-largest amount ever given through the denomination's Foreign and Home Mission Boards.

The 1986 total of \$9,089,279 was 23 percent less than the record \$11.8 million given in 1985, but nearly a \$2 million increase over the amount given in 1984. The 1986 total is more than \$8 million above 1977 contributions.

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For 1986, the Foreign Mission Board reported receipts of \$7,790,128, compared with \$10,625,897 in 1985 and \$6,548,901 in 1984. Thirty-four percent of the 1986 receipts came during the last two months of the year after the observance of the denomination's World Hunger Day in October.

Unlike the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board's hunger contributions climbed slightly to \$1,299,151 in 1986 from \$1,204,249 in 1985. The 1986 figure was more than twice the \$617,817 received in 1984.

"The increase in domestic hunger giving, beginning in 1985, reflects in large measure the implementation of the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention recommendation that undesignated contributions to world hunger be divided, with 80 percent going to the Foreign Mission Board and 20 percent going to the Home Mission Board," explained Robert Parham, director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Several state conventions, however, still send almost all their hunger receipts to the Foreign Mission Board," he said.

Texas, the largest of the state conventions, led all states in hunger contributions, with \$1,334,888 in 1986, down 31 percent from 1985.

Two other state conventions also topped the \$1 million mark in 1986: Georgia (\$1,175,952), up 10 percent from 1985; and Virginia (\$1,047,967), up 1 percent. In 1985, four state conventions surpassed the \$1 million mark.

The state conventions with the largest percentage increases in giving over the previous year were Hawaii, 30.99 percent; Wyoming, 15.44 percent; and Pennsylvania-South Jersey, 11.91 percent.

Conversely, state conventions with the largest decreases were New England, 66.69 percent; Tennessee, 60.46 percent; Colorado, 58.46 percent; New York, 58.13 percent; and D.C., 48.49 percent.

The 1986 hunger gifts represent a decline in per capita giving among Southern Baptists, from 82 cents in 1985 to 63 cents. Only Southern Baptists in Hawaii surpassed the \$2 per capita level by giving \$2.01 per person. The next-highest was Virginia, with \$1.76.

The 1986 figures do not reflect money given for hunger that was utilized in local churches, associations and state conventions. Such information on a convention-wide basis presently is unavailable.

The available information suggests a considerable amount of hunger money was either spent on the local level or used for special state mission projects related to hunger, Parham said.

Baptist state conventions in South Carolina and Virginia, for example, each keep 5 percent of the hunger gifts which pass through their state offices. Georgia retains 10 percent of its hunger gifts, while North Carolina keeps 25 percent.

"In spite of financial hardships in many of the oil- and farm-based economies, and in spite of a dearth of U.S. media coverage about overseas hunger, Southern Baptist support for world hunger programs administered by the Home and Foreign Mission Boards remains strong," Parham said. "Southern Baptists, however, still are giving less than \$1 per person each year to feed the hungry and to help them to feed themselves. We must continue to be generous with our energies and financial resources in support of Southern Baptist domestic and overseas hunger programs."

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(BP) chart mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Christian Life Commission

Stanton Tells Midwestern Students  
'How To Get The Most Out Of Life'

W-60  
(Mo.)  
By Pam Parry

Baptist Press  
3/23/87

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—"You ought to be sure about two things. First, be sure of your salvation, and secondly, your call to ministry," SBC First Vice President Jack Stanton told Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary students during a recent chapel service.

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"Nobody ought to be able to shake that," Stanton said. "Just because you doubt does not mean you're lost (a non-Christian). The devil does a lot of making folks doubt. It does mean you better find out for sure."

Speaking to the topic, "How to Get the Most Out of Life," Stanton reminded the seminary students: "Jesus said, 'I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.' He means that it might be full, meaningful and exciting. Some folks have just enough religion that they are miserable. They don't want to stay home because they are afraid of missing something. But they don't enjoy it when they come."

Using the text from II Timothy 1:3-14, Stanton said the Apostle Paul's concept of living a meaningful life involves commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. But he stressed there are all kinds of conversions: moral, emotional, intellectual and institutional.

"You have to have a time when you hate sin so much that you cry out to God for mercy," said Stanton, director of the institute of evangelism and special assistant to the chancellor at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. "You ask him to forgive you, and the best you know how, you take your hands off your life and turn it over to God."

He challenged students at the Kansas City, Mo., seminary to "discover your gift under God. With a dark world on its way to hell as fast as it can get there, God will use anyone who is usable. If you are not being used of God, take inventory and find out what you can offer.

"Somehow find out where God wants you to be, be there and be satisfied with it, rejoice in it," Stanton concluded. "Use it as a witnessing tool to tell people about Jesus Christ."

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(BP) photo available upon request from Midwestern Seminary

BTN Coverage Of SBC  
Slated For Third Year

N- BSSB

Baptist Press  
3/23/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, June 16-18, will be telecast live on the Baptist Telecommunication Network (BTN) for the third consecutive year.

Joe Denney, director of the telecommunications department at the Baptist Sunday School Board, said the convention will be carried gavel-to-gavel again this year.

Denney estimated that more people saw the Southern Baptist Convention on BTN last year than saw it in person in Atlanta.

This year likely will be considerably larger than last year, however, because more than 1,050 Southern Baptist churches and other organizations now subscribe to the denomination's teaching and training network.

Gomer Lesch, senior BTN consultant and anchor for SBC NewsScene, will work again with Richard McCartney, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, Texas, to help viewers understand the proceedings and keep abreast of developments.

Coverage will begin Tuesday, June 16, at 8:15 a.m. (CDT).

Lesch suggested that viewers participate fully in convention sessions by singing hymns, praying and even taking straw votes on issues messengers are considering.

Also, he said, churches planning to show convention sessions live should "contact your local television and radio stations to make them aware of the Southern Baptist Convention and its national, state and local significance. If they show interest in news feeds for their programming, suggest they call BTN at 615-251-3625 for more information.

BTN was established in 1984 by the Sunday School Board to serve as an educational, inspirational and informational source for Southern Baptist churches to have denomination-related materials through the most up-to-date technology.

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Decline In Legal Abortions  
Sign Of Progress, Baker Says

By Tim Fields

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A recent government analysis that shows a decline in the number of legal abortions in the United States for the first time since 1969 is a strong indication the efforts of Southern Baptists and other groups have not been in vain, said Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The analysis released by the Centers for Disease Control shows that in 1969 when the centers first began a program of abortion surveillance, 22,670 legal abortions were reported. The number steadily increased, reaching a high in 1982 of 1,303,980.

In 1983 — the most recent year for which statistics are available — the number decreased to 1,268,987, the fewest since 1979. The analysis also shows a continued decline in the ratio of legal abortions per 1,000 live births.

"This apparent reversal in the rapid escalation of legal abortions is encouraging news for those who are working hard to stem the tide of abortion on demand," Baker said. "These figures, however, are another indication that abortion on demand continues to be a profound moral crisis."

The Centers for Disease Control analysis shows that in 1983, women obtaining abortions tended to be under 25 years of age, white (67.6 percent) and unmarried (78.6 percent). The report shows the abortion ratio per 1,000 live births for teenagers in 1983 was 720, more than twice the national ratio of 349. The number of legal abortions obtained by teenagers was 280,602, representing 27 percent of all abortions.

Although statistical data on the number of teenage abortions according to age was incomplete in 1983, 19-year-olds obtained the largest number of abortions, at 70,693. Teenagers under 15 years of age obtained an estimated 9,171 abortions.

"Something is tragically wrong with the moral fabric of America when an astounding number of women are becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock and are ending their pregnancy in abortion," Baker said.

"The extremely high abortion ratio for teenagers shows the urgent need for diligent, effective sex education for children and youth in our homes and churches. It also indicates the need for better communication about Christian values and a continuous call to Christian moral living.

"As the Southern Baptist agency assigned to deal with abortion, the Christian Life Commission plans to make this extremely serious moral issue one of its highest priorities," Baker said. "The Christian Life Commission will be working aggressively on new programs and resources to help Southern Baptists deal with the abortion problem and to minister to persons affected by it."