



BAPTIST PRESS

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87-91

Jews For Jesus Wins Supreme Court Test

WASHINGTON (BP)--A unanimous Supreme Court ruled June 15 that airport officials may not issue blanket bans on First Amendment activities inside airport terminals without violating citizens' constitutional rights.

The high court, in Board of Airport Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles v. Jews for Jesus, held that a representative of the controversial messianic Jewish group was unlawfully arrested three years ago for handing out literature urging Jews to convert to Christianity

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, writing for all nine high court justices, ruled a 1983 resolution of the Board of Airport Commissioners banning First Amendment activities was unconstitutionally vague and overbroad. "We think it obvious that such a ban cannot be justified...because no conceivable governmental interest would justify such an absolute prohibition of speech," O'Connor wrote.

She noted further, "Under such a sweeping ban, virtually every individual who enters (the airport) may be found to violate the resolution by engaging in some First Amendment activity."

Airport officials had contended the resolution was necessary because of congestion and possible disruptions in the busy terminal. Taking notice of such concern, O'Connor nevertheless ruled airport officials went too far in banning all First Amendment activities.

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Forum Speakers Urge
Peace, Reconciliation

By Anita Bowden and Kathy Palen

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ST. LOUIS (BP)--Following a theme of disenfranchisement and hope, speakers at the Southern Baptist Forum alternately encouraged participants to hold to their beliefs and admonished them to work for peace and reconciliation.

Attendance at the fourth annual meeting of Southern Baptist moderates fluctuated between crowds of 600 and 2,000 June 14-15 in St. Louis.

Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and James Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., sounded themes of exile and faint hope.

Honeycutt said Southern Baptist moderates were "totally bankrupt. We have no voice, no participation, little representation and no power." He urged Southern Baptist "exiles" to search for the hope which can dawn through one's commitment to God.

Slatton, a leader in the moderate camp, told Forum participants they have been disenfranchised. He encouraged moderates to continue to be themselves and to remain faithful to their beliefs even though they do not have the safety of a crowd. He also challenged them to work with him to save this great Christian community from passing into the long night of sterile conformity."

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Nancy Sehested, associate pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga., and Dan Yeary, pastor of University Baptist Church, Coral Gables, Fla., suggested an emphasis on the biblical priorities of ministry as a way to handle their current exile from convention power.

Sounding perhaps the strongest note for peace was John H. Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C., who proposed compromise with room for diversity.

He urged Southern Baptists to acknowledge the diversity of Christian experience, emphasizing that all members are necessary. Commenting on those who have called for a "divorce" within the denomination or advocated a fight to the finish, he said, "If anyone 'wins' this family fight, we all lose."

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WMU Launches
Celebration

By Joe Westbury and Robert O'Brien

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ST. LOUIS (BP)--Building its annual meeting around a celebration theme, the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union launched its 99th annual meeting with a salute to its upcoming 100th birthday.

Nearly 2,500 participants packed the two-day meeting at the Clarion Hotel as speakers issued a call for greater prayer and sacrificial giving among Southern Baptists.

Carolyn Weatherford, WMU executive director, gave an annual report that featured increases in overall WMU enrollment; noted a 3 percent decline in Acteens, the WMU organization for teenage girls; and highlighted testimonies of six girls named to Acteen National Advisory Panel.

The celebration theme was dampened by Weatherford's report of the declining number of women being named to the boards of Southern Baptist Convention agencies. Her calls for greater representation of women on future committee appointments -- particularly those of the home and foreign mission boards whose budgets they help provide -- was greeted by applause.

Participants heard a battery of speakers.

June Scobee, wife of astronaut Dick Scobee, who died in the Challenger disaster last year, described how her grief brought her to the point of praying for death so she could be with her husband.

But, she said, she was surrounded by "a magnificent soft light" and overwhelmed by a "feeling of pure love." God's voice seemed to say, she said, "It's not your turn... you have work left to do. "That's when I found out what 'have thine own way, Lord,' really means," said Scobee.

Speakers explored how prayer empowers the world missions endeavors of Southern Baptists.

"Through prayer, our hands reach around the world," said Dorothy Sample of Flint, Mich., former WMU national president. "Our missionaries are counting on us to envelop them in the arms of intercessory prayer, which calls God's presence into their lives."

Not only will they be celebrating their 100th birthday next year, but WMU members will also be observing the centennial of the annual offering for foreign missions. Weatherford announced a series of missions tours to China next year in commemoration of the event. Known now as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the annual emphasis has provided almost one billion dollars for foreign missions endeavors.

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Baptist Musicians
Sound Optimistic

By Bob Stanley and Eddy Oliver

ST. LOUIS (BP) -- Southern Baptist musicians sounded notes of optimism about the continued importance of music in worship at a three-day conference preceding the 130th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

But they also lamented that fewer than a fourth of the denomination's 5,000 full-time church musicians are members of their group, the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference. About 370 attended sessions at First Baptist Church, Ellisville, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis, June 13-15.

President Harry L. Cowan, minister of music at First Baptist Church, New Orleans, challenged members never to underestimate the power of music to move people and motivate them to Christian service.

"The child who has heard Christian hymns carries all his life a built-in repository of faith," he said. It's one of the toughest and most indestructible parts of his Christian armor, he added.

In Martin Luther's day, Rome scoffed at his theology but trembled at his hymns, Cowan recalled.

The musicians chose Mark Edwards, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Nashville, as their president-elect. Hugh T. McElrath, professor of church music at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., became conference president after two years as president-elect.

The musicians heard panelists share how styles of music in worship have changed in the past 10 or 15 years, got advice on ways to reduce the level of stress in their work and heard two sermons by Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

Music ministers, like others in christian vocations, cannot completely escape stress but they can take steps to keep it within reasonable bounds and to protect the integrity of their own family life, advised G. Wade Rowatt, associate dean of the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

He urged them to set aside specific times for themselves, their spouses and their children and, above all, to make Jesus Christ the stackpole around which they build their lives.

Interspersed throughout the seven sessions of the meeting were four miniconcerts by individual artists and a dozen concerts by some of the convention's best-known musical groups.

In separate sessions Monday afternoon the three divisions of the conference elected four new members of the executive council. They are Dean Gray, minister of music, First Baptist Church, Hartford, Ky., and Ken Ragsdale, minister of music, First Baptist Church, Ellisville, Mo., local church division; Ervin Keathley, state music director for Arkansas Baptists, Little Rock, denominational division; and Clark Measels, on the music faculty of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson city, Tenn., educational division.

Mission Directors Asked
To 'Keep The Courses'

By Sherri Brown

ST. LOUIS (BP) -- The right attitude and a persistent spirit will help associational directors of missions set and keep the courses for their association.

That was the advice William Pinson of Dallas gave at the 26th annual meeting of associational directors of missions June 14-15 in St. Louis.

"Setting the course for a Baptist association (local group of churches) starts with the right attitude...not seeing one's place as a position, but as a mission. You don't do it for a paycheck, but you do it for the one who dies on Calvary," said Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

There must also be one assumption in "course-setting: our intent is not to determine a reasonable, rational goal, but to determine God's intent. The primary objective is to know and follow God's will," Pinson stressed.

Following Pinson, Carl Duck, president of the conference and executive director of Nashville Baptist Association, listed "encouraging signs for the future of the association."

Among those signs are the growing number of dedicated people entering associational work, the healthier self-image of the association and their inclusion as a vital member of the denominational missions team.

In a session sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Larry Lewis, newly-elected president of the board, reminisced about his own conversion under the leadership of a childhood Sunday school teacher. He challenged the missions directors to "tell people about Jesus eyeball to eyeball. It's really quite simple."

Lewis also urged them to help fulfill the Home Mission Board goal of 50,000 churches by the year 2000.

During a recognition ceremony, the Memphis-based Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission awarded the first Lewis W. Martin Award for associational support in world mission conferences to Elmer Fowler, director of missions for Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, Muscle Shoals, Ala.

The award, presented by Carlos Cobos, director of world mission conferences at the Commission, honored Martin, first director of the Home Mission Board department of schools of missions, later renamed world mission conferences.

In a business session Duck was re-elected president and Mack Smoke, director of missions in Gibson County Baptist Association, Baytown, Texas, first vice president.

Dewey Mayfield of Columbia Baptist Association, Dothan, Ala., was chosen second vice president; Robert Wainwright, Flat River Baptist Association, Oxford, N.C., treasurer; Paul Camp, Macon Baptist Association, Macon, Ga., newsletter editor, and Maurice Flowers, Jones Baptist Association, Laurel, Miss., secretary.

Elected host for the 1988 conference in San Antonio was Bob Schmeltekopf, director of missions at San Antonio Baptist Association.

Pastors' Conference Focuses

On 'Emmanuel Factor'

By Jim Lowry and Terry Barone

ST. LOUIS (BP)--More than 13,000 preachers at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference were challenged to demonstrate integrity, personal evangelism and forgiveness and maintain allegiance to an infallible, inerrant interpretation of Scripture.

Two former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention urged pastors to stand firm in the view of Scripture supported by the fundamental-conservative faction of the denomination during an eight-year debate.

Calling the Bible the inerrant Word of God, James T. Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and 1983-84 SBC president, said, "The Bible must be inerrant or it is not the Word of God."

He also said: "We (Southern Baptists) can't deal with the problems of the Christian world and the SBC in particular, until we get honest where we are. We all ought to be for peace, but not at any price. We must stand for integrity before God."

Evangelist Bailey Smith of Del City, Okla., and 1981-82 SBC president, said he could end the whole debate over whether the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God with just two words: "It is."

He added: "If the whole world would vote that the Bible is not the infallible, inerrant Word of God, it still would be the infallible Word of God. We better quit apologizing for God's Word. We've got a power that the world needs to know about. The Great Commission says go, and you can't go by praying, attending or giving."

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Landrum Leavell II, told the pastors, "The worst and most dangerous brand of humanism is not that espoused by the agnostic or atheistic humanist, but by professing Christians who claim to have resurrection power, yet rely on human actions to achieve spiritual goals."

In the first of 13 sermons in the pastors' conference, Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., called the pastors to practice forgiveness daily in their lives: "When you choose to forgive someone, it removes you as a factor in their behavior, because you are trusting God to deal with that person. Forgiveness is an act of faith, because it casts you totally on the resources of God and restores you to usefulness."

Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., challenged the pastors to "boldly contend for the faith."

"We need to quit making excuses for not reaching people," Sutton said. "To say the denominational controversy is the reason for not reaching people is only an excuse. There are lost people in our community and you have no excuse."

Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, was elected president of the 1988 Pastors' Conference following his nomination by former SBC President Charles Stanley of Atlanta. Gerald Davidson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Arnold, Mo., was elected vice president, and Don Deel, pastor of Eastlake Baptist Church, Merrillville, Ind., secretary-treasurer.

Religious Educators
Study Partnership

By Mark Wingfield and Pam Parry

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Southern Baptist religious educators were told how to become partners in ministry during the 32nd annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association in St. Louis June 14-15.

In a session titled "Partners in Future Building," pollster George Gallup Jr. said America is suffering a "deep spiritual malaise" which educators can help stop.

"America is facing a moral crisis of great dimension," Gallup said. He cited epidemics of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, illiteracy, divorce and religious scandal, adding his research shows that "church attendance and involvement makes little difference in a person's ethical view" in these areas. He urged listeners to "stem the tide of immorality."

Wayne Oates, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Louisville, Ky., encouraged the educators to evangelize eight types of people with character disorders.

"Much that we call evangelism is really recruitment," Oates said. Rather than just bringing in those whose needs are easy to meet, the church should reach out to people who have hit spiritual bottom, he said. Many people need "character transformation and re-education" which the church can give.

In a later session on "Partners in Helping My Hurting World," Oates said a "mutual covenant of love in Jesus Christ could subdue the antagonism" among Southern Baptists. He pointed out the "remarkable degree of mutuality and high level of trust" that Jesus and his disciples enjoyed.

Calvin Miller, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Omaha, Neb., told the group they should also have a partnership with Christ, an educator who imparted simple pragmatic and abstract truths. "Jesus didn't come to make us smarter, but came to give us purpose in life," he said.

Officers elected for the next year are president, Irene Bennett, Evans, Ga.; president-elect, Jerry Stubblefield, Mill Valley Calif.; regional vice presidents, David Sparrow, Memphis, Tenn., Dale Shook, Hobbs, N. M., Lloyd Welsh, Jr., Raleigh, N. C.; secretary-treasurer, Joe Haynes, Nashville, Tenn.; and associate secretary-treasurer, Bill King, San Antonio, Texas.