



**(BP)**

**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

April 25, 1989

N- BJC

89-65

High Court to review  
Swaggart tax dispute

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a dispute over whether the state of California violated television evangelist Jimmy Swaggart's free exercise of religion by taxing materials his organization sold there during an eight-year period.

Attorneys for the Louisiana-based Jimmy Swaggart Ministries claim the state sales tax is contrary to a 1943 Supreme Court decision that held Pennsylvania could not require an itinerant minister to pay a license tax in order to distribute religious tracts.

From 1974 through 1981, Swaggart's organization held 23 religious crusades in California at which it sold religious and non-religious merchandise. In addition, the organization sold almost \$2 million worth of mail-order merchandise to Californians during those years.

California's Board of Equalization assessed the organization owed \$183,000 in state sales tax. Swaggart Ministries paid the taxes under protest and applied for a refund, which the board rejected. The organization then filed suit.

A California appeals court rejected the argument that the state's sales tax scheme contradicted the high court's 1943 decision. The appeals court said that decision was "limited to the constitutionality of a particular type of tax, a flat license tax which was unrelated to receipts, income or the administrative costs of a regulatory scheme and which acted as a prior restraint on the exercise of a constitutional right. The Supreme Court did not equate a financial burden in and of itself with an unconstitutional burden on the exercise of religion."

The California Supreme Court refused to review the case.

Attorneys on both sides of the dispute pointed to the high court's recent decision that a Texas statute that exempted only religious books and periodicals from state sales tax violated the U.S. Constitution's establishment clause.

"If a state cannot constitutionally give such preferential exemption to religious literature by statute, certainly the First Amendment does not require it," attorneys for the state of California contended.

But Swaggart's attorneys argued questions remain on taxing the distribution of a religious message and asked the justices to use this case as an instrument to provide a definitive answer.

"There is a great need for a clear-cut opinion of a majority of the court as to whether the distribution or receipt of religious material by an evangelist to religious adherents for the purpose of propagating the faith is subject to tax," attorneys for Swaggart Ministries said.

The case is expected to be argued during the court's 1989-90 term. (88-1374, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries v. Board of Equalization of California)

Hymns may help Baptists  
during Las Vegas meeting

By Marv Knox

F- CO -

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--As every poet knows, "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast."

Southern Baptists one-up the poets; for them, singing soothes the sagging soul. Hymns have fortified their faith through the decades. Lyrics and melodies have lifted and moved them beyond barriers that might have tripped them, had they remained tongue-tied.

Every summer, however, thousands of them test their fortitude. They pack their best suits and dresses, trek to a distant city and endure the mammoth marathon, otherwise known as the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

This year, they will convene in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15. Close observers say Las Vegas may be a better-than-average convention host. But just in case, messengers to the meeting might want to tote their "Baptist Hymnals" and be prepared to sing along:

-- "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life." Nobody really knows how many people will attend the meeting. The record is 45,519 in Dallas in 1985, but prognosticators say that number is secure for another year.

"We probably will have between 15,000 and 23,000 messengers," predicts Convention Manager Tim A. Hedquist. "But to be honest, we don't know. We never know." Or, as a hymn says, "I Know Not What the Future Hath."

-- "A Pilgrim was I, and A-wandring." Travel to Las Vegas and traffic in the city really shouldn't be too bad.

"The airport is designed to handle a large influx of people, and taxi service is good," Hedquist says. "Also, two good highways come in and out of the city. Folks who drive can find the Las Vegas Convention Center by looking for the Hilton -- the center is right in the shade of the hotel."

Local traffic will be very congested on the first day of the meeting, he adds, "but the city is used to traffic, since it hosts such a high percentage of tourists."

Nevertheless, participants who get lost or frustrated in traffic need only tune their radios to the ever-popular "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," followed by "He is Able to Deliver Thee."

-- "God of Earth and Outer Space." Actually, the convention center is indoors, and the seating is on one level -- no "nosebleed sections."

"We expect to meet in one huge room. We can put 25,000 people in there," Hedquist notes. "We will be prepared to offer overflow halls if registration goes beyond 25,000."

The seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis, which might encourage the early birds to warble, "My Faith has Found a Resting Place." But that's a song all participants eventually could sing, since the SBC Committee on Order of Business has determined that the facility can be open to messengers and non-messengers alike.

-- "Room at the Cross." Convention planners have made room for everyone, the handicapped included.

"This is a very good facility for the mobile-handicapped. It's flat," says Hedquist. "We're getting ready to mail a brochure for these people."

Hearing-impaired participants will have a section, where proceedings will be signed, he adds.

Information about services for the handicapped is available from Hedquist's office: SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce, Nashville, Tenn. 37203. Help also will be available at the information booth in the convention center.

-- "Rescue the Perishing." Of course, first aid will be available. The medical staff doesn't plan to do a barbershop quartet rendition of "Are You Washed in the Blood?"

--more--

"Four emergency medical technicians and a nurse and ambulance will be on site at all times," Hedquist reports. "The first aid room will be accessible to the main hall."

-- "All My Life Long I had Panted." Heat may be the biggest health hazard for Southern Baptists in Las Vegas.

"The temperature will be in the 100s," Hedquist warns. "People might want to dress more casually than usual."

So, messengers who fret about dressing down while attending a big-time Baptist meeting might want to prepare by singing "Years I Spent in Vanity and Pride."

-- "Have no Fear, Little Flock." Children need not worry that they must pay the penance of their parents. No long meetings for them.

Preschoolers may attend a child-care facility located in the convention center, which will be open for all seven sessions of the annual meeting. For information and registration, write to Marie Moore, College Park Baptist Church, 2101 E. Owens, Las Vegas, Nev. 89030.

Children who have completed grades 1-6 may participate in the SBC Missions Day Camp, sponsored by the SBC Brotherhood Commission. It will be open during the daytime sessions of the meeting and costs \$7 per day or \$20 for all three days. Registration will be conducted at the Missions Day Camp Booth near the messenger registration area of the convention center.

-- "By and By." As in "nearby." That describes parking at the convention center.

"Las Vegas law mandates that facilities must have almost one free parking place per person," Hedquist says. "Parking is extensive around the convention center. Some people might have to walk the equivalent of a couple of blocks, but they will be close. And all parking is free."

To top it off, shuttle buses will run from hotels in the convention's housing block to the center and back every day. They're free, too.

-- "Away in a Manger." This old Christmas carol will remind messengers of how good they have it. None of them will be stuck in a stable.

"We've been sold out of our convention block of rooms since October," notes Hedquist, "but there are plenty of rooms in the city. If they contact us, we'll be glad to put messengers in contact with the city's housing services."

The SBC block is 6,500 rooms, but Las Vegas boasts 53,000 rooms. That's more than one each for messengers who made it to the monstrous '85 meeting in Dallas.

Messengers who stay in hotels on the city's fabled "Strip" may want to hum "Just a Closer Walk" to remind themselves that the convention center is nearby.

-- "Let Us Break Bread Together." A song of thanksgiving will be appropriate in Las Vegas -- both for the food and for the ease of obtaining it.

"This is one of the better cities, as far as food goes," Hedquist reports. "We will set up two large food-service centers on either end of the convention center. That will be 150,000 square feet, with both fast-food and restaurant facilities. Both quantity and variety of food will be better than usual. Nearby hotels also will set up to provide plenty of fast food."

Messengers who start to sing "Thy supper, Lord, before us spread" better hold themselves in check. Local vendors have an exclusive contract on food service in the convention center, Hedquist says. No coolers or picnic baskets will be allowed inside.

-- "The Time is Now." That's the closest hymnody comes to "when ya gotta go, ya gotta go."

"There are not as many restrooms as we need," Hedquist confesses. "We'll probably be in about the same shape as the last couple of years. But hopefully, they won't stop up this time."

--more--

Messengers who find themselves particularly plagued might form a chorus. "O Zion, Haste" is sure to be a hit. So, too, will be "Come, ye disconsolate." But eventually, they'll stand as one to sing "I've Got Peace Like a River."

--30--

Boyce Bible School to offer  
classes for deaf ministers

N - CO  
(SBTS)Baptist Press  
4/25/89

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Boyce Bible School will become one of the first schools in the United States to teach theological courses in sign language when it initiates the program next fall.

Four classes will be offered with instructors presenting all lectures in sign, said David Q. Byrd, dean of the school, a division of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that provides ministerial training for people who have not earned college degrees.

While the Louisville, Ky., school has sought to attract deaf students for about a decade, the relocation of Deaf Opportunity Out Reach from Houston to Louisville has given Boyce a renewed vision for educating deaf people for ministry, Byrd said.

Deaf Opportunity Out Reach is composed of Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps volunteers working under the the auspices of the denomination's Home Mission Board. Members travel across the country, doing evangelistic work among the deaf, helping to start deaf congregations and supporting existing deaf work. Director Vesta Bice said a "good number" of the 25 team members will enroll at Boyce.

Only one other school, an Assemblies of God-sponsored college in Michigan, teaches ministry training courses in sign language, Bice said.

The relocation of Deaf Opportunity Out Reach to Louisville poses a "ripe opportunity" for Boyce to pioneer in ministerial training for deaf people, Byrd said. Initially classes will be taught by hearing people proficient in sign language. However, he said he hopes qualified deaf instructors eventually can be secured to teach the classes.

Deaf teachers are better equipped to teach deaf students, because they are more familiar with the deaf culture and the nuances of sign language, Bice said. Deaf students will benefit from the role models of deaf instructors, she added, noting, "When deaf persons teach, they are not just communicating, but they are saying to the students 'you can do this.'"

-30-

WFU OKs divinity school;  
seeks \$15 million endowment

N - CO  
(N.C.)Baptist Press  
4/25/89

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--Trustees of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., approved the concept of a divinity school, but instructed administrators to make certain adequate financial support is available before taking additional steps.

Resources must be secured equivalent to the income from a \$15 million endowment, according to the April 14 trustee action.

The divinity school will not be launched until trustees are confident that academic quality can be established for the new school without compromising the resource requirements of other university programs, Wake Forest officials said.

In a prepared statement, WFU President Thomas K. Hearn Jr. said: "The mission of the divinity school would be to train ministers.

"While the orientation and heritage of the divinity school would be Baptist, it would be open to students and faculty members of all faiths."

The possibility of a divinity school at Wake Forest University has been under consideration, school officials said. A feasibility study was made and the results indicated a need and desire for the school, they added.

--more--

The study projected the possibility of starting with about 35 students and ing classes each year until 135 students would be enrolled.

Start-up costs of the new divinity school were estimated to be \$600,000, with an annual operating budget of \$1 million.

Leaders at the university said no specific launching date could be set until the financial resources are in place.

In other business, trustees:

-- Removed restrictions based on geographic residence and church membership from trustee-election procedures. This amendment to trustee bylaws will be considered formally during trustees' Oct. 5 meeting.

-- Reaffirmed their commitment to the university's Baptist heritage. The reaffirmation was pledged during the discussion of trustee-election policies.

--30--

Motives manner measure  
ministry, Gregory says

N- (0  
(GG BT)

Baptist Press  
4/25/89

MILLVALLEY, CALIF. (BP)--Ministers can measure their ministry by evaluating their motives and manner, Joel Gregory told an audience at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

The people you serve are not so interested in the stuff you lay on them, but the life you share with them," said Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Speaking during a worship service which concluded the seminary's annual Hester Lectureship on Preaching, Gregory used the example of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Paul disdained error, greed, manipulation and praise in measuring ministerial motives, he said.

"This generation of preachers must become something like theological Rambos to overcome the motives of greed," Gregory noted.

"We should not handle the word of God craftily," he said, adding that people can tell when ministers are susing their positions for manipulation.

When the motive of ministry is to be praised by humankind, it fails, Gregory added. He told seminary students, "you have no business studying for the ministry here unless at sometime in the past God has entrusted you with the upward call of the gospel."

Gentleness and confirmation are characteristics which should stamp one's ministry, he said, noting, "As ministers, we need gentleness when called for, and sternness when needed."

Gregory's lectures focused on "seeking, structuring and saying the word."

"Real preaching happens when 'then' and 'now' connect," he said. "We need to relate the 'wasness' of the biblical story to the 'isness' of contemporary society."

--30--