



# BAPTIST PRESS

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May 11, 1990

90-66

Former state presidents  
decry 'historic new day' claim

N-CO  
(MISS)

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Eighteen past presidents of Baptist state conventions have issued a six-part statement decrying the claim of a "historic new day" being promoted by 'conservative' elements in the 11-year-old Southern Baptist Convention controversy.

"We feel a need to speak to the recent claims of several Baptist pastors that they will bring in a 'historic new day' in the Southern Baptist Convention that will 'put an end to these painful 11 years,'" the past presidents wrote. "We see no evidence of any new coalition or historic new day."

Their document, "A Statement on the Southern Baptist Convention Controversy and the Claim of a 'Historic New Day,'" says:

"As past state convention presidents who are aware of what the events of the last 11 years have done to our convention, we feel a need to speak to the recent claims of several Baptist pastors that they will bring in a 'historic new day' in the Southern Baptist Convention that will 'put an end to these painful 11 years.'

"We have no evidence of any new coalition or 'historic new day.' We only see more individuals publicly supporting the continued control of the takeover movement. Morris Chapman has been a vital part of this takeover group since its inception in 1979.

"We believe the division in our convention is the direct result of the infusion of secular political methodology into the Southern Baptist family. This 'historic new day' is simply more political slogan sloganeering.

"We believe Southern Baptists are united over the nature and truth of Scripture. Those who claim otherwise are, at best, mistaken.

"We believe Baptists are Bible-believing Christians, and our institutions are led by Bible-believing administrators, workers and teachers. We believe the harrassment and character assassination of our dominational leaders and employees by the takeover group are un-Christian acts.

"We believe missions and evangelism should be the priorities of Southern Baptists. We believe the Southern Baptist Convention has deserted these priorities during the last 11 years in the pursuit of political power.

"We believe the election of another member of the takeover coalition as convention president will only lead to more control, more exclusion and more division in our denominational family.

"We believe a 'historic new day' will come when Southern Baptists elect new leadership committed to inclusion, not exclusion; prayer, not politics; cooperation, not control."

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The statement is signed by Lavonn Brown, Oklahoma; Milton Cunningham, Texas; G. Nelson Duke, Missouri; B.G. Hickem, Florida; Raymond Langlois, Tennessee; W. Winfred Moore, Texas; James E. Pleitz, president in Florida, now in Texas; William E. Poe, North Carolina; Floyd Roebuck, Georgia; Ches Smith, Georgia; Leon Smith, North Carolina; Sherrill Stevens, president in Virginia, now of North Carolina; Jon Stubblefield, president in Arkansas, now in Louisiana; Scott Tatum, president in Louisiana, now in Texas; Clifton Tennison, Louisiana; Doug Watterson, Tennessee; Jean Woodward, Virginia; and James F. Yates, Mississippi.

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Southern seminary faculty  
asks Johnson to resign

By Marv Knox

N-CO  
Baptist Press  
5/11/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Faculty Club has called for the resignation of trustee Jerry Johnson, who wrote a 16-page article critical of President Roy Honeycutt and five professors.

Meanwhile, Johnson, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Aurora, Colo., has refused to resign. He challenged the professors to take their cause before the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans this summer.

Johnson's article, "The Cover-Up at Southern Seminary," was distributed to seminary trustees and published in the April issue of the Southern Baptist Advocate, an independent newspaper affiliated with SBC conservatives.

The faculty group's call for Johnson's resignation was made from the steps of the Louisville, Ky., school's Alumni Chapel, where professors were surrounded by cheering, applauding students.

"The Faculty Club, consisting of members and associates of the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, declares its moral outrage at the actions of trustee Jerry Johnson in attacking the integrity, fidelity to the Scriptures and character of the president and faculty of our seminary," it said in a statement unanimously adopted by the group and read by Bill J. Leonard, a church history professor and chair of the Faculty Club.

"The harm done by Mr. Johnson has in turn been magnified through publication of his article in the Southern Baptist Advocate. Neither Mr. Johnson nor the editor of the Southern Baptist Advocate contacted the president or other faculty members about the content of the article.

"The intentions of this article are clear: to drive President Honeycutt from office, to do harm to our community of faith, unjustly to accuse faculty of failure in their teaching responsibilities and to sow seeds of hate toward Southern Seminary throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"His methods employ innuendo, misstatement of fact, personal attack and distortion of views. Most of the material he uses refers to writings and events of as long as 20 years ago. Every substantive charge in the material was dealt with by the board of trustees in official actions in 1986, clearing those accused of charges similar to Mr. Johnson's."

The statement added: "We declare our support for every colleague named by Mr. Johnson and affirm their fidelity to Scripture, their responsible freedom in teaching and their moral integrity. We grieve deeply at the effect of this malicious attack upon their character and their families and pledge support to them in whatever ways possible.

"Furthermore, we respectfully call upon Mr. Johnson to resign his position of trust as a trustee of the seminary, given his declared intention to force the retirement of our president and his demonstrated actions to accomplish such an objective.

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"We also call upon every responsible Southern Baptist to attend the Southern Baptist Convention (June 12-14) to stand against the intimidation that is engulfing our denomination by voting for new leaders who will work for the improvement of all boards and agencies of the denomination. What was called a 'correction' in 1979 is now a movement of persecution."

Faculty request for a trustee's resignation is unprecedented in the 131-year-old school's history, Leonard told the crowd.

"Johnson, like all trustees, has every right to raise concerns," he noted. "However, Johnson has made himself prosecutor, judge and jury for the entire board of trustees. Without benefit of proper hearing or trial, Johnson tells the board of trustees and all Southern Baptists that 'one would have to be blind as a mole not to see that Dr. Honeycutt just does not believe the Bible.' In his methods and his mission, he has defined doctrine for the board and abrogated his trust as a trustee of the seminary."

The faculty did not eagerly enter the convention's political fray, Leonard added: "As a faculty, we want only to teach our classes and work with our students. But the denomination we serve is tearing itself apart, manifesting the symptoms of a dysfunctional family, and we must speak out. Institutional and personal abuse is the norm throughout the denomination."

"Jerry Johnson was a 14-year-old boy in 1979 when the agenda for gaining political control of this denomination began. After 11 years of destructive behavior, is it any wonder that new trustees begin their terms with malicious attacks on institutions and fellow Christians? What have we done to a generation of Southern Baptist young people? Where is the will to end this madness?"

"I am not going to resign," Johnson told Baptist Press.

"If they want me to resign, I invite them to bring it to the Southern Baptist Convention, because they have no authority in this area," he said, adding that authority in the denomination passes down from the SBC to trustees, through the president and administration and to faculty.

Johnson, a graduate of Criswell College in Dallas and Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, took issue with several of the Faculty Club's statements.

"The first is that I did not contact the president or faculty," he said, noting that he talked with Honeycutt for more than an hour in September 1989.

"We did not talk about the idea of a paper, but we talked about the substance" and specifically talked about problems with Honeycutt and four professors, Johnson said. "He indicated he would not take the lead, and when he did that, I felt it was my duty to take his response back to my constituency, which is the Southern Baptist Convention. That is why the article and why it was published in the Advocate. I felt like the people needed to know."

Honeycutt confirmed that he and Johnson talked last September, when Johnson came to campus for his orientation as a trustee. But the two of them did not discuss the specific points of Johnson's 16-page article, Honeycutt insisted.

"I have no recollection of his discussing persons," Honeycutt said. "He only discussed problems. We discussed his problem with Article I of the Abstract of Principles (the seminary's governing document) on Scripture, and specifically his interpretation of 'inspiration' to mean inerrancy. He did discuss the necessity of adding only inerrantists to the faculty."

"I don't think he discussed anything other than his general unhappiness. He may have mentioned a litany of names as a general expression of his unhappiness, but I would not consider those surface discussions adequate to say he discussed the 16-page document with me."

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Johnson did mail Honeycutt a copy of the document at the same time he mailed the document to the trustees and the Advocate, but that does not constitute "discussion" of the issues, Honeycutt said.

Of their initial meeting, Honeycutt added: "He also said if I would cooperate like another SBC official whom I will not name, I would receive a plaque and a car when I retired. Otherwise, he said, when they had a two-thirds majority, they would have to 'deal' with me."

Speaking to the faculty accusation that Johnson is trying to force Honeycutt's resignation, Johnson said: "I have not called for his resignation. It is unfortunate that while they are calling for my resignation I have not called for anyone's resignation, his or theirs."

Asked if he would support a trustee move to fire Honeycutt or the professors, Johnson noted: "We have agreed as a group of trustees to postpone my paper until next year, and that's a question only the trustees could answer. I don't think it would be appropriate to comment at this time."

The Faculty Club's action is inappropriate within the convention structure, he added: "The bad thing about that is that by posturing themselves against the trustees they are posturing themselves against the convention. The trustees were sent by the convention; we do not wish to posture ourselves against the faculty."

In an interview, Leonard insisted the issue stretches beyond Southern Seminary. "This just goes on and on. There is no end," he said. "Southern Baptists seem to have no will to stop it."

He cited attacks on faculty and/or administrators at four of the six SBC seminaries, a combined seminary enrollment drop of 14 percent in 10 years and increased involvement of SBC agencies in conservative political agendas. "I see this in the context of the whole," he said. "It's not just one issue."

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Editor's Note: The Southern Seminary Faculty Club has drafted a response to all of the points made by Johnson. People who are interested in the document may obtain a copy by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Faculty Club, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Rd., Louisville, Ky. 40280.

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Friends come to support  
of Southern Seminary

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
5/11/90

N-10

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Colleagues and former students of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty expressed support for the professors in early May.

The statements of support were sent from the national officers of the Louisville, Ky., seminary's Alumni Association and the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

The support came on the heels of a late-April trustee meeting in which trustees received a 16-page article critical of President Roy L. Honeycutt and five professors, set a policy to allow students to use tape recorders in classes and approved resolutions critical of two professors.

A letter from the Alumni Association officers is signed by Floyd F. Roebuck, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rome, Ga., and president of the association; Bob S. Terry, editor of Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention in Jefferson City, president-elect; and G. Todd Wilson, pastor of Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., past-president. Honeycutt read the letter in chapel May 8.

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"We ... want to thank you for investing your lives in the thousands of students whom you have taught across the years," the letter states. "You have lifted us so we can reach toward God with our whole hearts. You have lifted us so we can reach toward a lost world with the love of Jesus Christ. You have lifted us so we can minister to God's people as servant leaders. We will forever be grateful for the heights to which you have lifted us and for your investment in our lives."

The letter expresses pain over the recent developments at the seminary and understanding for the faculty's anxiety about the future.

"Be assured that those of us who are indebted to you and to Southern Seminary for lifting us to new heights of ministry will openly contend for the great truths of the Bible which we learned on the campus in Louisville," it says. "We will attempt to honor our God, our seminary and our teachers by ministering with integrity, by teaching and preaching the truth of the Bible even when it is not popular in secular or ecclesiastical circles. We will attempt to be true to the heritage which you taught us of fearing God but not man."

The letter also pledges prayer on behalf of the faculty, both individually and collectively: "We are praying that you will be sustained by God's love in the midst of doubts and suspicion; that you will be guided by God's wisdom at a time when it would be easy to give in to one's pain and anger; and that God's spirit will empower you to minister with integrity in the midst of anxiety and confusion.

"We are convinced that the hope and heritage embodied in Southern Seminary and for which you have invested your life ultimately will be victorious because that hope and heritage is of God and it is in God alone that we place our hope, both now and for eternity.

"In II Corinthians 5, (the Apostle) Paul wrote that in all things we are more than conquerors. May God give you such a spirit in these days."

The statement from the Southeastern Seminary faculty comes from a group which has had disagreements with its own trustee board for much of the past two and one-half years. It says the Southeastern faculty "is compelled by conscience to express its solidarity with the faculty of its sister institution."

"Our sense of solidarity is based on the fact that the Southeastern Seminary faculty was established by faculty from Southern Seminary, that many of our faculty are Southern Seminary graduates, that our fate as theological teachers in the Southern Baptist Convention is intertwined and that we share a common mission to prepare men and women for Christian ministry," it notes.

"We view with grave concern actions by the Southern Seminary board of trustees to threaten the tenure of faculty members on the basis of theological norms foreign to the Abstract of Principles, the school's historic doctrinal standard; to silence faculty members from making statements critical of leaders and programs of the Southern Baptist Convention; and to intrude into the domain of the classroom by giving students license to tape record, even when doing so is contrary to the best judgment of the professor."

The trustee actions are "contrary to our Baptist heritage of the liberty of conscience" as defined by Article XVIII of the Abstract, which says, "God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it," the statement notes.

"Moreover, these actions are specifically contrary to the standards of academic freedom to which accredited theological schools in this country subscribe. Finally, these actions threaten the faculty's proper role as a prophetic voice in the denomination and the larger church."

The statement concludes by addressing the Southern Seminary trustees, urging them to adopt "the exercise of self-restraint, attention to the liberty of conscience as a bulwark against idolatry, and a commitment to shared governance as a process for mediating differences."

Religion ban eased  
in atheist Albania

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Religious oppression reportedly has been eased in Albania, the only country in the world to ban all faiths.

Already, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials are preparing for new opportunities that may develop in the Eastern European country.

The Albanian Communist Party's official newspaper, Zeri i Popullit, has reported the country's parliament adopted a number of reforms May 8, including one related to religious activity in the nation of 3.2 million people.

Under the new law, engaging in "religious propaganda" reportedly no longer is listed in the penal code as a crime against the state.

However, the newspaper reported that one of the authors of the reforms, Alex Luarasi, emphasized that no plans exist to reopen the mosques and church buildings closed after the communist government launched a sweeping effort to create a pure atheistic state in 1967.

Southern Baptist workers in Europe are monitoring developments in the country, said Keith Parker, who directs the Foreign Mission Board's work in Europe, "in the hopes that we can implement additional strategy."

As soon as opportunity permits, "We would want to give assistance to strengthen the churches in Albania and to minister to the needs of the people," added Isam Ballenger, Foreign Mission Board vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. "We would want to honor their perseverance and to learn from their experiences."

The Foreign Mission Board currently provides \$30,000 a year to help fund Albanian-language broadcasts beamed toward an estimated 525,000 radio sets in Albania via a 1-million-watt Trans World Radio transmitter in France. The speaker is an Albanian Christian convert who formerly was jailed for his faith. His 15-minute broadcasts are aired seven days a week.

Just a few days ago, the broadcast received its first-ever letter from an evangelical believer in Albania, Parker noted.

"There definitely are evangelical Christian believers in Albania who have had a salvation experience," he added. "I have no idea of numbers. I have heard figures as low as 20 and as high as a few hundred."

Parker told of interviews with Albanians shown on German television May 10. One man was asked about belief in God. "Oh, I am a believing Christian," he replied, using a word denoting a true believer, not a token Christian.

"His eyes got soft and he said, 'I really believe in Christ,'" Parker recounted. "Then suddenly you could see him realize that the camera was upon him." The commentator then explained that the man still was fearful of being persecuted, Parker said.

In 1967, when communist leaders ordered the closing of all places of worship, 2,169 mosques, churches and convents were destroyed or converted to secular use. Some 70 percent of Albanians come from Muslim backgrounds. Another 20 percent were affiliated with the Albanian Orthodox Church, and 10 percent were Roman Catholics. Protestants were only a tiny minority.

Under the former penal code, religious propaganda was listed as a form of "anti-state agitation" punishable by a jail term of three to 10 years.

According to one 1984 estimate, underground believers represent about 26 percent of the population -- 21 percent are Muslim; 5 percent are Christian. The country is rich in religious tradition. It became predominantly Muslim during a series of mass conversions in the 17th and 18th centuries. Centuries earlier, however, the Apostle Paul had preached in Albania, then known as Illyricum, according to Chapter 15 in the New Testament book of Romans.

The reforms in Albania are a significant departure from Albanian leader Ramiz Alia's declaration last December that the onset of greater freedoms elsewhere in Eastern Europe "do not concern us."

In March, Albania inaugurated international telephone service to more than 20 countries -- including the United States, with which it severed diplomatic relations in 1946. Albanians have begun making telephone calls to family members and friends who have taken refuge in America.

Even earlier, however, Albania had begun loosening its grip on religion. Several ancient churches, dating from the fourth through 17th centuries, were being restored, according to Arthur Liolin, chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, in an interview with News Network International. Private practice of religion in homes and possession of Bibles and crosses "seem to be accepted now," he said.

Last August, Mother Teresa, the daughter of Albanian parents, visited Albania and was greeted by the foreign affairs minister.

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Send in advance resolutions,  
committee chairman requests

By Linda Lawson

*N-SSB*  
Baptist Press  
5/11/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Mark Corts, chairman of the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee, has asked messengers to send him advance copies of resolutions they plan to submit during the annual convention meeting June 12-14 in New Orleans.

Corts, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., said the committee will meet Friday, June 9, in New Orleans, for a get-acquainted and orientation session and Saturday, June 10, to review advance copies of resolutions.

"Having copies of resolutions in advance will enable the committee to give them more careful consideration," said Corts, who was appointed by SBC President Jerry Vines to chair the 10-member committee.

Corts said resolutions should be mailed to his attention at Calvary Baptist Church, 5000 Country Club Rd., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104.

He emphasized that messengers who send advance copies of resolutions to the committee also must submit them on the first day of the convention. Committee representatives will be at a table near the platform in the Louisiana Superdome to receive resolutions during business sessions on Tuesday, June 14. Titles of proposed resolutions then will be read into the convention record by a convention officer and forwarded to the committee for consideration.

According to SBC Bylaw 21, the committee has the "duty ... to prepare and submit to the convention resolutions which the committee deems appropriate for adoption and to report on all matters submitted to it by the convention, with or without recommendation or amendments."

Corts said: "I would rather see a few resolutions given thorough and careful consideration by the committee and the messengers. We're interested in giving proper and complete attention to issues that are the highest priority and, at the same time, to be prophetic."

In addition to Corts, Vines named the 1989 Resolutions Committee chairman, Mark Coppenger, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, to serve on the committee.

According to SBC bylaw, the Resolutions Committee must include three members of the SBC Executive Committee. They are Russell Bush, a retired dentist and pastor from Hattiesburg, Miss.; Paul House, assistant professor of religion at Taylor University in Upland, Ind.; and Miriam Kibelbeck, a homemaker from Port Charlotte, Fla.

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Other members are Andy Buckley, Baptist Student Union director at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and member of East Bayou Baptist Church in Lafayette; Bill Merrill, pastor of Country Estates Baptist Church of Midwest City, Okla.; Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Nashville; Robert Sloan, professor at Baylor University and member of First Baptist Church of Lorena, Texas; and Mrs. Bobby Vereen, a homemaker and member of Woodridge Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.

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Coalition urges court  
to rehear peyote case

By Kathy Palen

N- BJC  
Baptist Press  
5/11/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--A diverse coalition of religious and civil liberties organizations, joined by 55 constitutional law scholars, has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to reconsider its recent decision in a dispute over whether the First Amendment protects the religious use of the drug peyote.

"These individuals and organizations agree on very little," said Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. "They all agree, however, that (this) decision is disastrous for the free exercise of religion."

In Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith, the Supreme Court held a state not only can prohibit the religious use of peyote but also can deny unemployment compensation to individuals dismissed from their jobs for using the drug.

In addition, the decision limits the application of a "compelling state interest" test in free exercise of religion cases. A majority of the court held the test, which was set forth in a 1963 Supreme Court decision and requires that governmental actions that substantially burden a religious practice must be justified by a compelling governmental interest -- should be applied only in a narrow range of cases.

Acknowledging the petition for rehearing of Smith is a long shot, Thomas -- who moderated a news conference to announce the filing of the petition May 10 -- called it "our only shot."

Organizations supporting the petition for rehearing include the American Jewish Congress, American Civil Liberties Union, American Jewish Committee, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Baptist Joint Committee, Christian Legal Society, American Friends Service Committee, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Also General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, National Association of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches, People for the American Way, Rutherford Institute, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Unitarian Universalist Association and Worldwide Church of God.

The high court's decision in Smith "gutted" the First Amendment's free exercise clause, asserted Dean M. Kelley, director for religious liberty for the National Council of Churches. "There is a shell of the free exercise clause left, but the heart and guts are cut out," he said.

The court not only devastated the Native American Church but also struck a serious blow to all religious groups in America, Kelley said. He and other speakers pointed to a number of cases now before lower courts -- ranging from church landmarking disputes to church infiltration cases to church taxation disputes to a charitable solicitation case -- that most likely will be affected by the Smith decision.

"If this decision stands, all religions in this country will be poorer," he continued. "But it will not stand. Eventually the Supreme Court will realize that its sweeping damage to the free exercise clause was a mistake. Then people sometime in the 21st century will look back on the Smith decision as the regrettable, tragic Dred Scott decision of the free exercise clause.

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"In Dred Scott, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney announced in 1857 that blacks were 'so far inferior that they had no rights that the white man was bound to respect.' In Smith, Justice (Antonin) Scalia said in effect that religious minorities have no rights to religious practice that majorities are bound to respect."

In the petition for rehearing, counsel for Alfred Smith and Galen Black -- the two Native American Church members involved in the dispute -- argued the majority opinion in Smith was decided on "far-reaching grounds" without the benefit of briefing or oral argument on the specific concerns it raised. A rehearing would allow the new constitutional principle advanced by the court to be explored in an adversarial context, the attorneys wrote.

"The court has taken a major step away from settled law," the petition said. "Such a departure from precedent and unsettling of societal expectations should not be undertaken lightly. ... Surely such a step should not be taken without the question being forthrightly addressed by the parties."

Attorneys for the American Jewish Congress assisted counsel for the Native Americans in drafting the petition. That organization's executive director, Henry Siegman, said the court's decision can have far-reaching consequences for all religions, but primarily for religious minorities.

"The majority of the court seemed to ignore the fact that the free exercise clause, like the other protections of the Bill of Rights, such as speech and assembly, was enacted precisely to protect minorities from the hostility of majorities," Siegman said.

The Smith decision has placed religious liberty under a cloud, said James M. Dunn, Baptist Joint Committee executive director. Although for decades the courts have honored a "high threshold" against the intrusion of government into religion, in Smith the safeguards against such intrusion have been "dashed in a short-sighted stroke of judicial activism that leaves faith's freedom at risk," he said.

Religious liberty is no longer secured by the Constitution as interpreted by the court's majority, said Robert P. Dugan Jr., director of the National Association of Evangelicals' Office of Public Affairs. "It now is to be bestowed by a beneficent majority as a matter of legislative grace or denied by a majoritarian rule unpersuaded by the claims of a religious minority," he said.

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Case deletes 'free exercise'  
from Constitution: Thomas

By C. Lacy Thompson

F- (CO)  
(LO.)

Baptist Press  
5/11/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--In its biggest church-state decision in 20 years, the U.S. Supreme Court has cut back on the First Amendment protection for the free exercise of religion.

In fact, the recent ruling transforms the free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution into a "mere redundancy" that serves no practical purpose, asserted Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which is seeking a second hearing on the case.

"And that's not overstating it," Thomas insisted. "I'm not given to alarmist statements about cases, but this case essentially writes the free exercise clause right out of the Constitution."

The ruling opens the door for government regulation of religious practices and for the enforcement of laws even when they violate the religious views of individuals. The only protections left are in unemployment compensation cases, in the instance that a law specifically targets religious practice or when free exercise of religion is linked with another First Amendment freedom.

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As constitutional lawyer William Bentley Bell noted, the decision moves religious liberty "to the back of the constitutional bus -- maybe off the bus."

The unexpected ruling came in an Oregon drug case involving two Native Americans dismissed as state drug counselors after they admitted eating the hallucinogen peyote in a religious ceremony. Oregon attorneys argued the state could dismiss the men without benefits because it had a "compelling interest" to enforce its drug laws. The Supreme Court agreed with the state's action, but with more far-reaching reasoning set forth in the majority opinion written by Justice Antonin Scalia.

In essence, Scalia's opinion says the state is free to enforce generally applicable laws, even when they violate a person or group's religious practice.

He differentiates between religious belief and practice and says cases regarding the accommodation of religion are better left to the political process, even though that will place minority religious practices at a disadvantage. Scalia called that an "unavoidable consequence of democratic government."

The court did not have to take that direction, Thomas noted. Its decision could have been based on the "compelling interest" argument. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor makes that point in her written opinion. O'Connor sides with the 6-3 majority action but disagrees with the rationale used to reach it.

In fact, she says the ruling "is incompatible with our nation's fundamental commitment to individual religious liberty."

The First Amendment mandates "preserving religious liberty to the fullest extent possible in a pluralistic society," she writes. "For the court to deem this command a 'luxury' is to denigrate the very purpose of the Bill of Rights."

O'Connor notes general laws can burden religious practice as well as those targeting religion and decried the idea of moving the issue to the political arena, where minority practices could suffer.

Thomas agreed with O'Connor. The court "wrecked the law" to reach a shocking decision that changes the protection of religious practice in the nation, he said.

Since the 1960s, the Supreme Court has protected the exercise of religion through a "compelling interest" test. That means that before a state can burden a person's First Amendment rights, it must show it has a "compelling interest of the highest order," Thomas said. "And even then the state has had to show it has exhausted all other possible remedies before it can choose a remedy that burdens your free exercise of religion.

"What this case has done is take away those protections for religion except in the unlikely instance that a law targets a religion for some kind of discriminatory treatment. And the fact of the matter is that does not happen."

The court has replaced the "compelling interest" test with a low standard of scrutiny, Thomas said. Now a state need only show its laws is reasonable or rational, he said. "With a stroke of his pen, Justice Scalia has transformed the nation's first liberty into a constitutional stepchild."

In effect, the ruling makes the free exercise clause of "no practical use whatsoever," Thomas said. In fact, protection against laws targeting religion already exists in the equal protection clauses of the Constitution, he explained.

Thomas also decried the court's separation of religious belief and practice. "If all free exercise gives us is the right to believe what we want, we could have done that in the Soviet Union or any other country. You can believe what you want behind bars. But as the Supreme Court pointed out in the 1940s, the freedom to believe without the freedom to act on that belief is not worth a plug nickel. It's just a hollow freedom."

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In addition, Thomas questioned the court's contention that free exercise of religion will be protected when linked with another First Amendment right. "What this has done in effect is place free exercise in an inferior position," he said.

And moving the battle to the political process means churches and religious groups may have to lobby more to get exemptions from general laws, Thomas added: "The court is saying if you can convince the legislature that your constitutional rights should be protected, that's fine. We're not going to protect them for you here in the federal court."

The idea that a majority will control constitutional rights should trouble Baptists, who have been in the minority and still are in many states, Thomas said.

Baptists also should be troubled by the impact the ruling will have on a host of areas, such as income taxes, property taxes, hiring of church personnel and regulation of church schools and day-care centers. Thomas predicted an immediate impact on anti-discrimination laws for churches.

Currently, churches are free to discriminate on religious grounds in hiring, but the recent ruling could remove that protection. For instance, if a locale has a gay-rights ordinance, it could be applied to the church as it is to a secular business, he said. In other words, the ruling means government may choose to tell churches who to hire in non-ministerial positions.

Government also will be able to regulate church schools as they do public schools, as long as the law is generally applicable. "Church schools could become cookie-cutter counterparts of the secular schools if the state wants to regulate them," Thomas said. "This ruling means government can regulate them (their hiring, curriculum, etc.) to the same extent it regulates the public schools."

The full impact of the ruling will not be known until it is seen what state legislatures choose to do in such areas, Thomas said: "But it opens the door to all sorts of things. And there is no doubt that the effects are going to immediate and far-reaching."

The court already has shown it is serious about following the new standard, Thomas noted. In a decision a few days after the peyote ruling, the court vacated a Minnesota ruling concerning the use of slow-moving vehicle emblems on horse-drawn carriages of the Amish people. Amish protested the use of the "worldly symbols" on religious grounds, and the state court said they could be allowed to use less-objectionable reflective tape and lighted red lanterns instead. But the Supreme Court sent the case back for reconsideration in light of the peyote case.

At this point, the Baptist Joint Committee is working to head off such implications of the ruling. Thomas is leading an effort to form a diverse coalition that will petition the court for another hearing of the matter.

The petition must be filed by May 12, which gives the committee little time. And the odds are not favorable -- from 1976 to 1982, the court granted only six second hearings out of hundreds of petitions.

The court should decide by adjournment in July whether to hear the case again. Argument would be set for the fall. If the petition is rejected, Thomas said, the committee then will begin working to minimize the ruling and to help Baptists live with the decision.

For now, however, all attention is on the hope for another hearing. "It's an extraordinarily long shot," Thomas admitted. "But it's the only shot we have right now."

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'Do evangelist's work'  
to be conference theme

N-CO

Baptist Press  
5/11/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Do the Work of an Evangelist" will be the theme of the 32nd annual Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists June 13 at 1:15 p.m. in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

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The conference is among more than a dozen auxiliary meetings held in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans June 12-14.

"We are living in a time unparalleled in the history of the human race," said Jay Strack, conference president and an evangelist from Dallas. "It is a time of world revolution and change. In such a time as this, God has given us a window of opportunity to reach our world for Christ.

"However, I believe that all of us need a fresh vision. That vision is incorporated in this year's conference theme, 'Do the Work of an Evangelist.' Our conference speakers and musicians are individuals committed to revival and winning the lost to Christ. With this in mind, our conference promises to be practical, inspirational and motivational."

Conference speakers and their message topics will be Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker from Dallas, "Doing the Work of an Evangelist as a Layman"; Steve Hale, evangelist from Evansville, Ind., "Doing the Work of an Evangelist as an Evangelist"; Homer Lindsay Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., "Doing the Work of an Evangelist as a Pastor"; Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, "Doing the Work of an Evangelist as a Preacher"; and Darrell Gilyard, pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, "Just Do It."

In addition to the June 13 meeting, the conference will host two "Afterglow" music sessions at the New Orleans Hyatt Regency Ballroom, from 10 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 12, and Wednesday, June 13, Strack said.

The conference also has planned two evangelistic emphases in conjunction with the New Orleans meeting, he reported.

"First of all, (the conference) will circle New Orleans with key youth rallies ... prior to the convention," Strack said. "It is our desire that hundreds of youth will be saved this year."

Rallies Friday, June 8, at 7 p.m., will be held at Lanier Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La., and Woolmarket Baptist Church in Biloxi, Miss. Rallies Saturday, June 9, at 7 p.m. will be located at First Baptist Church of Kenner, La.; First Baptist Church of Ponchatoula, near Hammond, La.; First Baptist Church of Slidell, La.; and First Baptist Church of Houma, La.

"Secondly, at the conclusion of the Wednesday afternoon conference, there will be a mass witnessing opportunity in the French Quarter" of New Orleans, Strack added. A similar event last summer in Las Vegas, Nev., produced 44 professions of faith in Christ, he said.

"Paul admonishes do the work of an evangelist," he said. "The Greek language stresses the work, the toil and labor of doing evangelism. When Jesus lifted my sin burden, he replaced it with a burden for lost souls. Evangelism is not a course to be studied but rather an urgent work to be done."

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Clower to address  
missions directors

N-10

Baptist Press  
5/11/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Humorist Jerry Clower of Yazoo City, Miss., will be the keynote speaker during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Conference of Directors of Missions, scheduled June 10-11.

The Conference of Directors of Missions is one of the meetings held in advance of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled June 12-14 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

The Directors of Missions will meet from 1 p.m. Sunday, June 10, until noon Monday, June 11, in the Landmark Hotel, I-10 and Causeway Boulevard, Metairie, a suburb of New Orleans.

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Russell Bennett, director of missions of the Long Run Association in Louisville, Ky., is the president of the organization. Glenn Hickey, director of missions in the Pulaski association, Little Rock, Ark., is first vice president; Ken Chadwick, director of missions, Salt Lake association, Salt Lake City, is second vice president.

Theme of the annual meeting is "Walking Worthily," from Ephesians 4:1-3.

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Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions

June 10-11, 1990

Landmark Hotel, Metairie, La.

Theme: "Walking Worthily" ... Ephesians 4:1-3

Sunday, June 10

- 1:00 Hymn -- "He Keeps Me Singing"  
Prayer  
Welcome -- J.R. Blakeney, assistant director of missions, New Orleans Baptist Association, New Orleans  
Bible Study -- Bill Tolar, dean of School of Theology, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas  
Report on Ridgecrest Consultation -- Tim Logerquist, director of missions, Gold Coast Baptist Association, Oxnard, Calif.  
Director of Missions Sharing -- Jim Barrentine, director of missions, Bowie Baptist Association, New Boston, Texas  
Prayer
- 2:15 Break
- 2:30 Budget Committee Report  
Report of Committee on Retired Directors  
Hymn -- "Heavenly Sunlight"  
Introduction of Speaker  
Special Music -- "Shall I Crucify My Savior"  
Address: "Walking Worthily in Fellowship" -- Landrum Leavell, president, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
Prayer
- 3:45 Break
- 4:00 Hymn -- "Our World, Our Mission"  
Introduction of Speaker  
Address -- Jerry Clower, comedian, Yazoo City, Miss.  
Prayer
- 5:30 Break
- 6:30 Banquet sponsored by Brotherhood Commission

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Monday, June 11

8:15 Hymn -- "Saved, Saved"  
 Prayer  
 Bible Study -- Bill Tolar  
 Director of Missions Sharing -- Tom Bacon, director of missions, Northeast Baptist Association, Winnemucca, Nev.  
 Viewpoint from a Director of Missions's Wife -- Nancy Wilkerson, High Desert Baptist Association, Hesteria, Calif.  
 Prayer

9:30 Break

9:45 Business Session  
 Nominating Committee Report  
 Treasurer's Report  
 Report on Open Circuit  
 Recognition of Former Presidents  
 Hymn -- "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story"  
 Special Music -- "Child, Come Home"  
 Scripture Reading  
 President's Address: "Worthy is the Lamb" -- Russell Bennett -- director of missions, Long Run Baptist Association, Louisville, Ky.  
 Prayer

11:00 Break

11:15 Business Session  
 Secretary's Report  
 Constitutional Amendments  
 Anniversary Recognitions  
 Director of Missions Sharing -- Jim Myers, director of missions, Silver Lake/Whispering Pines Baptist Associations, Grangeville, Idaho  
 Hymn -- "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"  
 Introduction of Speaker  
 Special Music -- "Find Us Faithful"  
 Address -- Charles Carter, pastor, Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.  
 Benediction

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Religious educators  
 to focus on progress

NCO

Baptist Press  
 5/11/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Religious educators from across the Southern Baptist Convention will focus on progress when they convene for their annual meeting in New Orleans June 10-11.

"The '90s ... A Decade of Progress" will be the theme for the 35th meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, announced President Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education and administration at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

The meeting will be held in the Sheraton Hotel the two days prior to the SBC annual meeting, also in New Orleans.

The progress theme will be illustrated through the topics of four conference sessions, Shotwell said. The religious educators will examine progress in their profession, staff relationships, ministerial calling and family life.

The meeting's keynote address, "Religious Education in the '90s," will be presented by Bill Taylor, associate pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas. A panel discussion on building and maintaining staff relationships will feature Shotwell and two Hyde Park Church colleagues, Pastor Ralph Smith and Minister of Music Joe Carrell.

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Another panel presentation, "The Minister and Family Life," will feature two staff members from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry section, Douglas Anderson and Gary Hauk.

The conference is among more than a dozen auxiliary meetings scheduled in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting, June 12-14.

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Southern Baptist Religious Education Association

June 10-11, 1990

Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans

Theme: "The 90s ... A Decade of Progress"

Sunday, June 10

- 1:30 Registration
- 2:15 Prelude
- 2:30 Welcome  
Scripture and Prayer  
Program Overview
- 3:00 "Religious Education in the 90s" -- Bill Taylor, associate pastor, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas  
Response Panel
- 4:30 Adjourn
- 6:45 Prelude
- 7:00 Scripture and Prayer  
Nominating Committee Report
- 7:15 "Building and Maintaining Good Staff Relationships" -- Ralph Smith, pastor Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education, Hyde Park Baptist Church; president, Southern Baptist Religious Education Association; Joe Carrell, minister of music, Hyde Park Baptist Church
- 8:30 Adjourn to the "Steamboat Natchez" for a time of fellowship hosted by the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Louisiana Religious Education Association and Mississippi Religious Education Association

Monday, June 11

- 7:30 New Member Continental Breakfast and Orientation
- 8:25 Scripture and Prayer
- 8:30 "The Minister and Family Life" -- Gary Hauk, manager, and Douglas Anderson, family ministries program director, family ministry section, Baptist Sunday School Board
- 9:15 Business Session  
Board of Directors Report, Executive Director, Partners in Ministry Committee, Sabbatical Oversight Committee
- 9:45 Fellowship Break
- 10:45 Workshops  
Ministers of Education, Ministers to Adults, Ministers to Youth, Ministers to Preschool and Children, Southern Baptist Convention Staff, Association Staff, Professors, Spouses
- 11:45 Luncheon Meeting
- 12:00 Lunch  
Present 1990 Officers, Introduce 1991 Officers, Distinguished Leadership Award Entertainment -- Dennis Swanberg, pastor, Second Baptist Church, Hot Springs, Ark.
- 1:30 Adjourn

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1:45 Workshops (Continue from Morning)

3:15 Break

3:30 Business Session

Membership Committee, Findings/Resolution Committee, National Education Task Force  
1986-91, Special Committee on DLA/Seminary Scholarships, Secretary/Treasurer  
Report

4:00 "The Minister and Family Life" -- Gary Hauk and Douglas Anderson

5:00 Closing of the 35th Annual Meeting