

Associated Baptist Press

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June 29, 1995

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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SBC racism resolution a ploy for proselytizing, some blacks say

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Convention's resolution apologizing for racism -- hailed by many as an instrument of healing -- has created friction with some African American Baptists not affiliated with the SBC.

The resolution is seen as a signal that it is "open season" for recruiting the best black church members into Southern Baptist congregations and for enlisting predominantly black churches into the SBC, according to Caesar A.W. Clark, president of the Baptist Missionary and Education Convention of Texas.

That perception is both "widespread and well-founded," Clark said.

"Southern Baptists have been working overtime to win black National Baptists," said Clark, pastor of Good Street Baptist Church in Dallas, which is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., a predominantly African American convention.

In Port Arthur, Texas, an inner-city sports camp scheduled to begin June 26 was abruptly cancelled when the pastor of a leading black Baptist church in the neighborhood -- who said he has "serious questions" about motives behind the SBC resolution -- opposed the associational missions project.

"After all these years when Southern Baptists have suffered from the sin of silence, they finally have made this statement," said Randy Vaughn, pastor of Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in Port Arthur and executive vice president of the Texas State Missionary Baptist Convention.

"My curiosity is aroused. I have to wonder what they are trying to get to by making this statement. Is it part of an attempt to recruit black churches into the Southern Baptist Convention? Who will be strengthened and benefited? It raises serious questions. I don't know the answers."

"Our desire," said Gary Frost, SBC second vice president and a black pastor, "is to evangelize the black community, not to proselytize black church members."

The resolution on racism may have been "the last straw" for some black religious leaders in racially divided Port Arthur, where feelings already were running high after the city council fired a black city manager, according to Dion Ainsworth, associate director of missions for Golden Triangle Baptist Association.

"Some black churches seem to be perceiving the resolution as a threat to their existence rather than as a goodwill gesture," Ainsworth said.

"It appears to be the perception of some that Southern Baptists will be coming after their church members, taking away members of their flocks."

The sports camp was slated to be held in the predominantly black neighborhood near Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church until the church's pastor voiced objections.

Vaughn said he resisted the missions project not because of the SBC resolution on racism but because organizers failed to include him enough in the planning process. But he cites the camp incident as an example of how Southern Baptists sometime see blacks as recruitment prospects rather than as equal partners in missions.

"If I'm going to be seen as the mission field, at least recognize the fact that I'm the one who is going to be left with the residue and the follow-up when the week is over," he said.

While he applauds Southern Baptists for having the courage to make the belated apology in their resolution on racism, Vaughn wonders if personal and political agendas might have overtaken good intentions.

Vaughn said he knows of some black churches that have been attracted to the SBC by the organizational resources available and by the financial benefits to pastors. For some, affiliation with Southern Baptists has worked well, but others have felt "entrapped," he said.

Vaughn also wondered aloud if the convention resolution might also have been motivated in part by a desire to keep the convention from being labeled "racist" when it opposed Henry Foster's nomination for U.S. Surgeon General. The National Baptist Convention U.S.A., with which Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church is affiliated, had publicly endorsed Foster's ill-fated nomination.

Joe Saffle, pastor of First Baptist Church, Port Arthur, said he supported the resolution apologizing for racism, but he understands how black Baptists could perceive it differently than it was intended.

"Some feel it is a ploy to steal members. That may have been valid in the past. And perception sometimes becomes reality," said Saffle, who lives "by choice" in a racially mixed neighborhood and counts Vaughn as a friend and neighbor.

"There will have to be genuine acts of repentance, not just resolutions or words, if we ever are going to overcome the fear that exists on both sides and the genuine mistrust."

Clark echoed that sentiment. "I dare not second-guess the motivation behind the resolution," the National Baptist pastor said. "I welcome the statement and hope that the words spoken in the resolution will become flesh and dwell among us. If that is done, then we can see the real objectives in coming forth with such a statement as this at this time."

Frost, who was re-elected SBC second vice president at the recent convention, said the only intent of the convention's resolution on racism was "to be honest before God in regard to our past and to repent."

"I can only speak to what is in my heart, but my heart's desire is not to enlarge the Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "It is to enlarge the Kingdom of God."

White Southern Baptists need to create one-on-one relationships with black church leaders outside the SBC in order to break down barriers of ignorance and mistrust, said Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church in Youngstown, Ohio.

"One of the major stumbling blocks is a lack of trust on the part of black Christians and a lack of knowledge on the part of white Christians," he said. "The white Christians just don't understand. The black Christians have been deceived so many times, had so many false promises made to them, that they don't trust anymore."

"I would say to the black brethren in the National Baptist Convention churches and other bodies, 'Let's see if we can work together. Give it a chance.'"

Supreme Court sides with students seeking funds for religious newspaper

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The University of Virginia's refusal to pay the printing bill of a student-run Christian newspaper violated the free-speech rights of the student publishers, a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 29.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the majority in a 5-4 decision, said the state university's policy of barring the use of student activity funds for religious activities while supporting a range of other student activities amounted to viewpoint discrimination.

The court majority reversed a lower court's ruling that the policy was justified by the constitutional requirement of church-state separation.

To comply with the First Amendment's ban on governmental establishment of religion, Kennedy wrote, it was not necessary for the state-supported university "to deny eligibility to student publications because of their viewpoint."

Kennedy was joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

The university's policy was challenged by Ronald Rosenberger and Wide Awake Productions, a student organization that published Wide Awake, a Christian publication.

The students sued the university after the student council turned down their request to pay \$5,862 for the printing of Wide Awake. During the 1990-91 academic year, student activity fees supported 118 campus organizations, including 15 student newspapers.

Kennedy distinguished the use of student activity fees to support a student journal from the use of general tax dollars to support a church.

"Our decision ... cannot be read as addressing an expenditure from a general tax fund," he wrote.

Kennedy wrote that the appeals court correctly recognized constitutional dangers "where the government makes direct money payments to sectarian institutions." But in this case, no public funds would have flowed directly to Wide Awake since the outside printers of student publications are paid directly.

There is no difference, Kennedy wrote "between a school using its funds to operate a facility to which students have access and a school paying a third-party contractor (such as a printer) to operate the facility on its behalf."

In a concurring opinion, O'Connor wrote that the case represented the intersection two of "bedrock" constitutional principles -- one requiring governmental neutrality and the other prohibiting state funding of religious activities.

When two bedrock principles collide, she wrote, resolving a case requires "the hard task of judging."

In this case, O'Connor concluded that by paying the printing bill of Wide Awake, the university would not be endorsing the publication's religious perspective.

Four justices, in a dissent written by Justice David Souter, lamented that the court for the first time approved "direct funding of core religious activities by an arm of the state."

Souter rejected the majority's view that the funding was permissible because it was paid directly to the printer and not to Wide Awake.

"This reasoning would commit the court to approving direct religious aid beyond anything justifiable for

the sake of 'access to speaking forums," Souter wrote in a 40-page dissent. He was joined by Justices John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer.

Despite the court majority's "purported adherence to the no-direct-funding principle, the state could simply hand out credit cards to religious institutions and honor the monthly statements," Souter wrote.

Souter said Wide Awake's content was not "merely the expression of editorial opinion that incidentally coincides with Christian ethics." The court majority, he wrote, lost sight of the "frankly evangelistic character" of Wide Awake.

"Using public funds for the direct subsidization of preaching the word is categorically forbidden under the establishment clause, and if the clause was meant to accomplish nothing else, it was meant to bar this use of money," Souter wrote.

The court, Souter said, "has never before upheld direct state funding of the sort of proselytizing published in Wide Awake."

Souter also disagreed with the majority's reliance on past Supreme Court rulings that affirmed the access of religious groups to public forums.

Those cases, Souter wrote, "rest on the recognition that all speakers are entitled to use the street corner." But there "is no traditional street-corner printing provided by the government on equal terms to all comers," Souter wrote.

"The court is ordering an instrumentality of the state to support religious evangelism with direct funding," Souter wrote. "This is a flat violation of the establishment clause."

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Supreme Court says KKK may erect cross at courthouse

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Government must afford private religious speech as much access as secular speech, the Supreme Court ruled June 29.

In *Capitol Square vs. Pinette*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the private religious speech in an Ohio public forum does not violate the First Amendment's requirement of church-state separation.

The issue arose when Ohio officials opened a public forum in front of the statehouse and then denied the Ku Klux Klan access to it. State officials permitted a holiday display with a 20-foot Christmas tree and 14-foot menorah in front of the statehouse but barred a 10-foot KKK cross on establishment clause grounds. Klan officials filed suit after their application was denied.

Lower courts sided with the Klan, distinguishing between private religious speech and a government-sponsored display.

On a 7-2 vote, the Supreme Court upheld the lower court rulings but was divided over the rationale behind its decision.

Justice Antonin Scalia, writing the plurality opinion, said, "Our precedent establishes that private religious speech, far from being a First Amendment orphan, is as fully protected under the free-speech clause as secular private expression.

"Capitol Square is a genuinely public forum, is known to be a public forum, and has been widely used as a public forum for many, many years. Private religious speech cannot be subject to veto by those who see favoritism where there is none."

Scalia said that Ohio's concern that citizens might perceive the display as government-sponsored cannot be used "to ban all private religious speech from the public square."

Religious expression cannot violate the establishment clause when it is private and occurs in a designated public forum, he added.

Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, David Souter and Stephen Breyer issued a concurring opinion. They agreed with the decision but disagreed with the plurality's rationale.

"On the contrary, when the reasonable observer would view a government practice as endorsing religion, I believe that it is our duty to hold the practice invalid," O'Connor wrote for the three justices. "The plurality today takes an exceedingly narrow view of the establishment clause that is out of step both with the court's prior cases and with well-established notions of what the Constitution requires."

But on the facts of the case, they concluded that the reasonable observer would not interpret the KKK cross as state endorsement of religion.

Justice Clarence Thomas, the only African American on the high court, also wrote a concurring opinion to take issue with the fact that this was an establishment-clause case.

"The erection of such a cross is a political act, not a Christian one ...," Thomas wrote. "In Klan ceremony, the cross is a symbol of white supremacy and a tool for the intimidation and harassment of racial minorities, Catholics, Jews, Communists, and any other groups hated by the Klan.

"In my mind, this suggests that this case may not have truly involved the establishment clause, although I agree with the court's disposition because of the manner in which the case has come before us. In the end, there may be much less here than meets the eye."

Justices John Paul Stevens and Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote separate dissenting opinions.

Stevens said that "the establishment clause should be construed to create a strong presumption against the installation of unattended religious symbols on public property.

"The 'reasonable observer' of any symbol placed unattended in front of any capitol in the world will normally assume that the sovereign -- which is not only the owner of that parcel of real estate but also the lawgiver for the surrounding territory -- has sponsored and facilitated its message."

Ginsburg said that the proximity of the cross to the government's flags and statues unconstitutionally associates the state with the church.

A Baptist religious-liberty organization in Washington applauded the court's upholding the equal-access principle.

"Where you have private speech in a traditional public forum, it's a real stretch to think anybody is going to mistake it for state speech or presume state endorsement," said Brent Walker, general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee. "The ruling confirms that religion has not been kicked out of the public square."

A comment from the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission was not available.

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Supreme Court sidesteps graduation-prayer dispute

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Supreme Court side-stepped June 26 a dispute over graduation prayers at an Idaho public school.

The high court's action does little to settle the controversy or further define the constitutional boundaries of prayer at graduation ceremonies.

In a two-sentence order, justices instructed a federal appeals court to dismiss as moot a student's challenge to Grangeville (Idaho) High School's policy of allowing senior-class members to vote on whether to have a prayer and to select the person to say it. While the high court did not spell out a reason for its order, court observers noted that the dispute may have become moot when Samuel Harris -- the only plaintiff still a student at the Grangeville school -- graduated June 2.

The Supreme Court's order vacated conflicting rulings by lower courts. A federal district court upheld the Grangeville district policy, holding that the school district had distanced itself from the decision to have prayer by allowing the students to make it without interference from school officials.

But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that ruling, holding that the practice violated the First Amendment's requirement of church-state separation. The public school "ultimately controls" and "underwrites" the event, the appeals court said. The court also noted that the school cannot absolve itself of constitutional duty by delegating responsibility for decisions to students.

"The school purportedly gave seniors this chance to plan graduation in order to teach them leadership," the appeals court said. "If so, then it can teach them the responsibilities that go with such leadership, one of which is to respect the constitutional rights of others."

A series of court cases and a long-running battle involving religious and civil-liberties groups have left many school officials confused over the issue. The National School Boards Association had asked the high court to accept the Idaho case to further resolve the matter.

In 1992 the Supreme Court struck down a Rhode Island school district's practice of providing non-sectarian, clergy-led prayers at middle- and high-school commencement programs.

A year later, the high court refused to disturb a federal appeals court's ruling that upheld a Texas school district's policy that permitted student-led prayers at graduation ceremonies. While refusal to review the Texas dispute did not place the Supreme Court's blessing on the practice of letting students vote to have graduation prayers, organizations such as Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice have cited the case as a pattern for school districts to follow.

In addition to the Texas and Rhode Island cases, conflicting rulings by other federal courts also have added to the graduation prayer confusion.

Given the conflict among federal courts, Baptist church-state specialist Brent Walker expressed a measure of surprise that the Supreme Court declined the Idaho dispute.

"The Supreme Court will generally accept cases when there is a direct conflict among federal appeals courts," said Walker, general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee. He noted that the appeals-court rulings in the Texas and Idaho cases presented the court such a conflict.

Walker said the high court's action "should not be interpreted as disapproving of the 9th Circuit Court ruling, only that there was no longer a controversy to be decided."

"Since the case did not become moot until June 2, the decision of the lower court should have been allowed to stand."

Several church-state specialists lamented the Supreme Court's decision not to accept the case.

"The Supreme Court continues to give mixed signals at the busy intersection of church and state, where prayer and public schools often collide," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"This leaves educators in the West and in most states in the fog," agreed Steve McFarland of the Christian Legal Society. "The Harris case seemed like a good candidate for resolving the continuing controversy."

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, called the court's act "irresponsible and short-sighted."

"Instead of giving guidance, the court today shamefully abandoned its role and dodged the issue," Lynn said.

House endorses flag-burning ban

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. House of Representatives approved June 28 a constitutional amendment that would empower Congress and the states to outlaw the physical desecration of the American flag.

The measure, approved 312 to 120, has yet to be voted on in the Senate, where observers say that lawmakers may not have the needed two-thirds majority to approve an amendment to the Constitution. If the measure does receive Senate approval, three-fourths of the state legislatures also must ratify it before the nation's governing document can be changed.

The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., is designed to counter two U.S. Supreme Court cases that ruled state-level flag desecration laws are unconstitutional because they violate individual free-speech rights. Furor over the 1989 and 1990 rulings has continued despite the small number of flag-desecration incidents in recent years.

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--By Pam Parry

Eloise Cauthen, 85, dies in Richmond

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Eloise Glass Cauthen, 85-year-old wife of late Southern Baptist missions leader Baker James Cauthen, died June 29 in Richmond, Va.

Her husband, who died in 1985, led the Foreign Mission Board during a period of dramatic growth. After a career as a missionary to China, he served as FMB executive director from 1952 until his retirement in 1979.

Eloise Cauthen was born in China to Southern Baptist missionary parents and later returned as a missionary with her husband in 1939. After her husband's death, she returned to China again, this time to teach English for a year in Yantai, the port city where she spent her early years in boarding school.

At her death, Cauthen was living in Lakewood Manor Baptist Retirement Community in Richmond, where she moved in 1989. On June 26 she fell and slightly fractured her pelvis in the front yard of the retirement center while plucking dead lily blooms. But medical personnel said her death appeared unrelated and apparently was the result of a heart attack or aneurysm.

"She had a smile that showed Christ," said Dorothy Utleve, a live-in hostess at the center. "You could just see the spiritual in her smile. It was one only a Christian could have."

"I know of no one here at the manor who has showed more love and interest in other people," said Catherine Walker, another retired missionary and resident who visited Cauthen just a few hours before her death.

While Cauthen's health had been fading in recent years, her death was a surprise, said her brother Bryan Glass of Stillwater, Okla. "She was just as spunky a gal as you could imagine," said Glass, who last saw his sister in March.

Eloise Cauthen spent her childhood in China amid war and revolution, famine and starvation, religious revival and heroic Christian sacrifice. She attended English-speaking schools in China from kindergarten through university entrance exams. Her parents, Wiley and Eunice Glass, knew legendary missionary Lottie Moon well.

In 1978 Broadman Press published "Higher Ground," Cauthen's biography about her father, who worked in China for 42 years.

The Cauthens married in 1934. In their first assignment as missionaries in 1939 -- with two young children -- they did evangelistic work in Kweilin, China. In 1945, her husband was elected the Foreign Mission Board's secretary for the Orient. After that the family lived in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo before moving to Richmond in 1952.

During her husband's 27-year tenure as FMB head, the number of Southern Baptist missionaries increased from 908 to nearly 3,000 and the number of countries where they worked from 32 to 95. Missions funding grew from \$6.7 million in 1954 to \$76.7 million in 1979.

Eloise Cauthen was a member of First Baptist Church in Richmond for some 40 years, where she was very active in Woman's Missionary Union and taught Sunday school. In 1989 she left to help organize Gayton Baptist Church in Richmond, where she was a member until her death.

Surviving her are her son, Ralph Cauthen in Greensboro, N.C.; two brothers, Bentley Glass of Boulder, Colo., and Bryan Glass; two sisters, Trudy Chang of San Ramon, Calif., and Lois Glass, an emeritus Southern Baptist missionary, of Fort Worth, Texas; and two grandsons, Steve Cauthen of Atlanta, Ga., and John Cauthen of Manassas, Va. Her daughter, Carolyn Cauthen Mathews of Santa Fe, N.M., died in 1991 after a long bout with cancer.

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-- By FMB staff and ABP

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