

# Report from the IN Capital

MAY-JUNE 1970

## UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS TAX EXEMPTION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

**T**HE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT in a 7-1 decision upheld tax exemption for property used for religious purposes. The decision was handed down from the High Court on May 4.

The general principle enunciated by Mr. Chief Justice Burger, who delivered the opinion of the Court, is "that we will not tolerate either governmentally established religion or governmental interference with religion."

The Court asserted that there cannot be "absolute" separation of church and state and that there must always be some degree of contact or relationship between the two.

The problem, according to the Court, in church-state relations is to avoid excessive involvements of the state with the church or the church with the state.

Tax exemption, the Court Declared, "creates only a minimal and remote involvement between church and state and far less than taxation of churches."

**Chief Justice Burger . . .**  
writes majority opinion

Such exemption, the Court continued, "restricts the fiscal relationship between church and state, and tends to complement and reinforce the desired separation insulating each from the other."

The Court continued its historic stand that government should be neutral toward religion, even if that might be a benevolent neutrality. The purpose of a property tax exemption "is neither the advancement nor the inhibition of religion; it is neither sponsorship nor hostility," the Court declared.

Therefore, the Court concluded, religious entities "should not be inhibited in their activities by property taxation or the hazard of loss of those properties for nonpayment of taxes."

The case of taxation of churches arose in the challenge of Frederick Walz to the Tax Commission of the City of New York. He sought an injunction in New York courts to prevent property tax exemptions to religious organizations for properties used solely for religious worship.

Walz contended that such tax exemption to church property in-

directly required him to make a contribution to religious bodies, thereby violating the First Amendment which prohibits an establishment of religion. The Supreme Court denied this contention.

The Walz case attracted unusual attention throughout the nation when it was accepted for review by the Supreme Court. A total of 11 separate amicus curiae (friend of the court) briefs were filed in addition to the briefs by Walz and the Tax Commission of the City of New York.

Such widely separated views as that of the nationally known atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs were presented to the Court. Mrs. O'Hair wanted the churches to be taxed, while the Baptists contended that it would be a denial of the principle of religious liberty if their tax exemption were lifted. The Court in its decision agreed with the Baptists.

Mr. Justice Douglas was the lone dissenter in the Walz case. He said that "the question in the case therefore is whether believers—organized in church groups—can be made exempt from real estate taxes, merely because they are believers, while nonbelievers, whether organized or not, must pay the real estate taxes."

Douglas further based his dissent on the contention that tax exemption constitutes a subsidy for the churches, which he says is in violation of the First Amendment.

The Court rejected Douglas' view on the grounds that payment of taxes by churches would constitute financial support of the government by the churches. Chief Justice Burger stated that there are as many hazards involved when the church supports the states as when the state supports the church.

The Court made it clear that it did not uphold tax exemption for churches on the basis of "absolute" separation nor on the basis of "social welfare services or 'good works' that some churches perform." To set up a standard of good works to justify tax exemption for churches, the Court contended, would make the government a judge as to the amount of good a church should do to justify its exemption. This would produce undue interference with the churches by the state, the Court said.

In the dicta that accompanied its decision the Court virtually upheld its former decisions on bus rides and textbooks for pupils in parochial schools. It also defended the national assumption that tax exemption for churches does not violate the original intention of the Constitution makers.

(Continued on page 8)

## Establishes National Office in Washington



REV. S. S. HODGES, Executive Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, has established a national headquarters office in Washington.

Rev. Hodge is the first full-time Executive Secretary to be elected by the Progressive Baptists. The convention has grown to approximately 1,200 churches and 600,000 members since its organization in 1962.

The national office is located at 1239 Vermont Avenue, N. W.

## HIGH COURT ACTS ON CHURCH-STATE ISSUES

The U.S. Supreme Court continues to write judicial history on religious liberty and church-state relations. Although both the legislative and executive branches of the government have heavy responsibilities for the preservation of First Amendment freedoms, the Supreme Court is a major stabilizing force in this area.

In a recent study of "The Supreme Court and the First Amendment's Religion Clauses", Dr. Walfred H. Peterson came to a comprehensive conclusion. He compared the religious situation in the U.S.A. with that in other nations. He said:

"While interpretations of the Supreme Court's work on the First Amendment's religious clauses vary, scholars who view practices of foreign states generally agree that persons in the United States have a comparatively broad freedom of religion. They also agree that church and state are here comparatively widely separated by law."

Some of the most recent decisions by the Supreme Court follow through on this evaluation. It is hoped and expected that the Supreme Court will continue to uphold the First Amendment in such a way as to guarantee maximum religious liberty for all persons and groups.

Here are some samples of church-state matters either recently acted upon by the Court or presently under consideration.

**Church and Tax Exemption.** Should churches pay taxes on their properties used exclusively for religious purposes? Does it violate a taxpayer's religious liberty for government to grant tax exemption to church property used for religious purposes? (Please note that these questions do not cover church property or income unrelated to religious usage.)

The Supreme Court in a 7-1 decision ruled that tax exemption for property used exclusively for religious purposes does not violate the First Amendment to the Constitution. The case involved is *Walz v. Tax Commission*.

Frederick Walz, appealed from the Court of Appeals of the State of New York which

ruled that tax exemption for property used for religious purposes is not a violation of the Constitution, either the state or the federal. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in an amicus curiae brief in the case took the position that tax exemption for property used for religious purposes is valid on the grounds of religious liberty. (See the larger account of this decision on page one.)

**Public Aid to Church Schools.** It is reported that 39 of the states now have laws on the books or are struggling with the problem of giving public aid to private and church-related schools. One of these states is Pennsylvania that has a Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Education Act in force. By this Act Pennsylvania purchases "secular" educational services from non-public schools.

These services are defined as courses in mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical sciences, and physical education. The reimbursement from public funds is limited to the actual cost to a nonpublic school of the teachers' salaries, textbooks and instructional material used in the teaching of the courses.

A three-judge district court in Pennsylvania ruled that this practice violated neither the state nor the federal constitutions. The U. S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case. A decision is expected probably sometime in 1970 or early 1971.

**Religion in Space.** The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from Madalyn Murray O'Hair who was seeking to restrain certain religious activity of astronauts in space. She had charged that the broadcast of a prayer and of a Bible reading of the account of creation during the Apollo 8 flight around the moon violated the "no establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment. She also claimed that such broadcasts violated her constitutional right of freedom from religion.

**Religious Symbols on Public Property.** A Christian cross was erected in a public park in Eugene, Oregon. The Oregon Supreme Court ruled the cross unconstitutional and ordered its removal. The U.S. Supreme

Court refused to rule on the case stating that it appeared that the decision "rests on adequate state grounds." So the question about religious symbols on public property remains unanswered as far as the federal constitution is involved.

**Sabbath in Texas.** A state law in Texas provides that a store may open on Saturday or Sunday, but not on both days. The statute makes it unlawful to sell 46 named categories of department store items on both of the two consecutive days of Saturday and Sunday.

The U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the appeal "for lack of a federal question." The Texas Supreme Court ruled in 1969 that the statute in question serves the public purpose "by providing a one-day surcease from labor (to occur on the weekend) and still alleviates the objections of the Sabbatarians by permitting sales of the commodities on either Saturday or Sunday (but not on both days) at the option of the merchant."

**REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL**—a bulletin published 10 months during the year by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 206 Maryland Ave., N. E., Washington, D. C. 20002. The purpose of this bulletin is to report findings on the interrelations between churches and governments in the United States. It affords church leaders a chance to understand developments, policies and trends affecting public policies and it affords public officials a chance to understand church structures, dynamics and positions. It is dedicated to religious liberty, to free and effective democracy and to equitable rights and opportunities for all.

The views of writers of material for *Report From The Capital* are not necessarily those of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs or its staff. The bulletin also provides for the sharing of views between leaders of the cooperating conventions and between leaders of various religions and traditions.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is a denominational agency

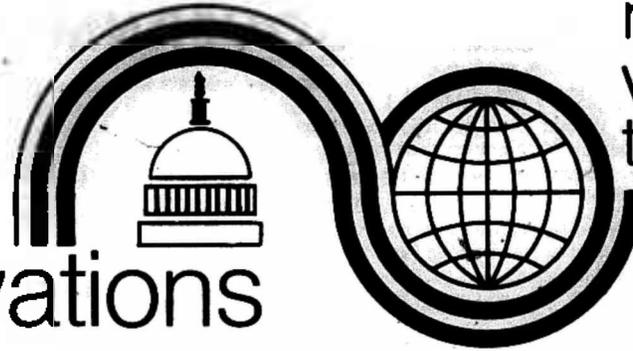
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# washington observations



May 6, 1970

**THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT**, which began to lay out a clearer rationale for church-state relations in the Walz case, will have at least two important church-state controversies on its agenda in the next term.

**THE FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT** here heard arguments last week on compulsory chapel attendance at the federal military academies. Regardless of its decision, the case will be appealed to the Supreme Court for final determination.

**THE PENNSYLVANIA CASE** questioning the constitutionality of state aid to parochial and other nonpublic schools will be heard by the Court some time this winter.

**TAX EXEMPTION** for property used for religious purposes achieved a firm position in constitutional law when the Supreme Court sustained the New York courts in Walz v. Tax Commission. This, however, does not settle all of the tax problems relating to churches.

**MANY OTHER QUESTIONS** remain in relation to businesses owned by religious agencies, church income from sources unrelated to religion, tax exempt pastors' homes, etc.

**FURTHER ACTIONS** from tax assessors, state and federal tax regulations and court decisions can be anticipated. The same rationale that applied to the Walz case may not apply in other litigations.

**THE IMPEACHMENT MOVEMENT** directed at Justice William O. Douglas will no doubt fail. As a strict constructionist of the First Amendment, if he remains consistent, he will probably vote against tax aid to nonpublic schools.

**PRESIDENT NIXON** is seriously seeking funds he pledged over the next two years for improving the quality of education in racially isolated schools and for helping school boards to achieve integration in situations where extensive busing would not be required to bring it about.

**ONE SOURCE** his aides are probing is the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The possibility of diverting funds from the Model Cities program in order to provide them for this critical pledge is undergoing high level review.

**MODEL CITIES** is a Johnson Administration program in which 150 towns and cities coordinate local, state and federal funds for services and construction to improve the quality of life in blighted neighborhoods. The idea would be that the needs to be met are similar.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING** and Urban Development and the 150 towns and cities may disagree markedly. Nevertheless, the President will need to find some funds already appropriated or general funds not previously earmarked in order to keep his pledge which retains a high priority.

Washington has been called the only place on earth where sound travels faster than light.

It's also the only place I know where .1 equals 200 million dollars. And for those who may be mystified by this equation, that's one-tenth of one percent of our federal budget of \$200 billion.

These two stand-out features of our nation's capital are cited because both are uniquely related to this exploration of government trends into the '70s and their impact on the nation.

In the first place, besides the normal hazards and uncertainties that beset the forecaster, Washington is a notoriously slippery subject to come to grips with. Talk is as much the capital's business as the action government takes—and it's frequently hard to tell which is the most important. Here, indeed, is a city of mirrors and lights and shadows, where it's become a matter of sheer art to differentiate between fact and fiction, between rhetoric and reality.

But differentiate we must . . . for as our



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Besides handling press and other public relations activities, his office develops authoritative information on government developments and counsels managements on Washington relationships.

In the accompanying article he analyzes government trends from a businessman's point of view, which makes exceptionally interesting reading for religious leaders of the nation.

# GOVERNMENT TRENDS IN THE SEVENTIES

## Their Impact on the Nation

By James N. Sites

citation of Washington arithmetic shows, we are concerned here with a mechanism whose size is almost beyond human comprehension and whose impact on our daily lives is overwhelming. No one understands this better than our President—certainly including the present occupant of the White House.

Even while fighting a two-front-war—the grim conflict in Vietnam and the domestic battle against inflation—the President has formed a broad strategy of bringing state and local governments, plus private interests, into a partnership with Washington in dealing with pressing problems of education, welfare, crime control, pollution abatement, urban redevelopment and rural poverty. According to his close advisors the President is after . . .

(1) Basic reform in such trouble-ridden government programs as welfare, medical aid and manpower development.

(2) Maximum administrative involvement of state and local governments in converting national decisions into workable grassroots and personal applications.

(3) New means of providing federal financial support to local units.

Revenue-sharing has been chosen by Mr. Nixon as the financial instrument for achieving this kind of decentralization. Aware of the financial crises besetting state and local units, the Administration is moving to replace many federal grants now tied to specific subject categories with no-strings-attached grants. It is also out to expand the over-all outflow of federal funds. Nixon's revenue-sharing proposal would start modestly in the next fiscal year at \$1 billion but would rise by 1975 to an annual \$5 billion.

One respected Washington analyst feels, however, that the Nixon decentralization attempt will prove a forlorn hope. While this observer considers it good politics to offer the country a plausible-sounding alternative to increased federal intervention, he feels it is hardly a practical proposition in an era of increased interdependence which demands horizontal or nationwide government decisions in almost every area.

In any event, whether public direction and controls are exerted by Washington or by state and local governments, or by all three in combination, the outlook is viewed by virtually all our contacts as one of steadily more government influence rather than less.

### The Environment Issue: Existing With Affluence

Controls over pollution of the living environment are repeatedly cited by capital experts as the biggest single area of government expansion in the years ahead. This includes auto exhaust and smoke discharged into the air, sewage and industrial wastes pumped into our waters, trash and the debris of affluence cluttering up the land, use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, even noise, heat and ugly appearances. Interior Secretary Michel believes \$10 billion must be spent soon just to clean up our essential water resources.

Most insiders see a genuine crisis approaching on the environment front. The feeling is that over the long term, existence itself could be jeopardized as a growing population requires a further revving up of our industrial machine to produce new mountains of goods and services—and piles of growing waste. The result could be an increasingly unpleasant and unwholesome environment—and, eventually, a downright dangerous one.

This is why tight controls will inevitably hit the auto. Since over 50 per cent of air pollutants are traceable to automobiles in dense smog areas, many feel it's only a matter of time before the internal combustion engine will be virtually banned, at least in these locations. At the same time, private auto use will probably come in for severe curbs in urban centers for quite another reason—ultimate traffic stagnation.

Mr. Nixon is suspected by one analyst of giving high priority to environment issues as a rallying point for youth and liberals—an alternative to Vietnam as an outlet for militant energies. In any event, a new White House council is now giving this top attention, and we can expect to hear much more on this subject from both Washington and America's multiplying "survivalists."

### Consumerism: Second Big Growth Area

By the beginning of 1970 some 407 bills had been introduced in this Congress on 121 consumer issues, indicating the continually rising pressure behind the consumerism movement. Indeed, scarcely a product or service intended for general consumption seems immune from government attention. Clearly, business will have to scramble even harder to meet increased public and government pressure to improve product quality

and safety, warranties and the truthfulness of performance claims.

Such increased attention to customer satisfaction is bound to raise business costs and put a crimp in profit margins, just as new curbs on industrial pollution will. Yet, as the by-no-means-radical U. S. Chamber of Commerce points out:

"If responsible businessmen fail to deal effectively with the problems of America's 203 million consumers, government officials of both parties will impose their own answers."

On the positive side, one can only wonder at the lack of political emphasis on what a truly excellent society Americans could create by really coming to grips with its remaining defects. The job of rebuilding our cities, for instance, is a mission of such scope and drama as to dwarf all previous construction projects. It will not only build new solidity and stability into the American system. The buying power unleashed by this activity at the lowest-income levels, in combination with hard-core employment and minority business formation programs, could likewise open up vast new markets and spur economic expansion for decades to come.

Our Washington talks have pointed up these other significant trends toward greater government involvement in business affairs:

**Housing:** The principal victim of tight money and rising interest rates, the nation's supply of housing is seen as heading into shortages that will have to be dealt with sooner or later. Yet the longer the backlog of unfilled demand builds up, the bigger will be the eventual boom in this area.

**Education:** The sky seems to be the limit for government spending for education. Alongside welfare costs, this is the biggest single burden for state-local governments, which are stepping up efforts to shift more of it onto Washington. Meanwhile, growing numbers of parochial schools are surrendering to high costs and unloading their students onto public systems.

**Merger Control:** While many of the old-style regulatory agency restrictions over utility prices, profits and operating rights seem to be loosening, government's attitude, even in the Nixon Administration, seems to be stiffening toward big mergers—those that allow dominant companies in an industry to become even more dominant. Meanwhile, the groping goes on to develop a public posture toward the rising number of "conglomerates" or widely diversified giants.

**Transport Problems:** Jam-ups in air traffic are bound to come in for rising government attention, along with those on the ground within urban complexes. More government money will go into mass transit. And safety hazards will be an area of rising government concern. One editor illustrates how government is virtually forced to take action in problem areas by citing the growing mess in auto insurance coverage.

## Vietnam and the Bugaboo of Inflation

Second only to President Nixon's worries over Vietnam is his concern with the ravages of inflation. After months of tight monetary controls, prices still rose in 1969 by nearly 6 per cent. The President recognizes Vietnam spending and inflation as being closely linked and that he must take effective action on both fronts without precipitating a recession if he is to be reelected in 1972—and, of more immediate concern, get a Republican majority in Congress in this fall's voting.

Military spending cutbacks are needed now more than ever to free funds for the critical domestic programs on which Nixon needs to prove he can make progress. Tax reform/reduction moves in Congress have put a lid on increases in federal revenues. This means that funds for other programs have to come mainly from military economies. Since postponed defense R&D programs and overall national security demands leave little room to maneuver in this respect, the federal government is heading into a tightening financial squeeze.

Outsized wage and fringe benefit increases demanded and won by unions pose another inflationary problem, even assuming the President is able to keep the federal budget in surplus. Labor Secretary Schultz stresses that this administration intends to stay out of bargaining disputes in hopes this will strengthen management in bringing increases more into line with labor productivity gains.

But it's doubtful whether this resolve can be maintained in case of a strike against a really essential industry. Also, as construction industry unions have demonstrated repeatedly, keeping labor gains related to productivity increases may be a forlorn hope. Indeed, some observers feel this can be achieved only through wage and price controls or the arbitration of labor disputes. And no such action is anywhere in sight at this time.

What are the main political trends today?

1. *Republicanization of the South* is seen by many as a continuing trend that could loosen Southern Democrats' grip on key Congressional committees. When the first Republican in a hundred years became governor of Virginia this past November, it brought unbridled elation at the White House, and for more reasons than that he's a close friend of Mr. Nixon. Observers feel that Mr. Nixon must win more of the South to achieve reelection in 1972 and that he will therefore continue doing his utmost to build support here without losing it elsewhere.

2. *Suburbanization of American politics* is another trend—perhaps the most meaningful of all. Indeed, Mr. Nixon seems to be riding this in seeking to build a new Republican/conservative coalition to last this entire decade and beyond. Reapportionment of

legislatures in line with the Supreme Court one-man-one-vote decree is shifting political power from rural America to urban areas; however, this is not shifting to urban centers with their constant or diminishing population but, instead, to our ever-expanding suburbs.

3. *Negro movement into inner cities*, at the same time, is bringing more black representatives to both national and state legislatures as well as into city halls. Since they are mostly Protestant, black voters are also diluting the power of those big city political machines that depended heavily on Catholic majorities.

4. *Labor union political power* is seen by some as diminishing in line with the leveling off of union membership relative to the total work force. Others, however, contend that union finances have never been in better shape and that unions are finding more subtle ways of making their influence felt. As one columnist says, "labor can still run rings around business when it comes to using political pressure."

5. *Union ability to deliver member votes*, however, does appear to be vanishing. Indeed, this is cited as a trend among all organizations. Political labels are coming to have less meaning, the government process is becoming more pragmatic, and the "independent" bloc is growing wider and more decisive than ever.

6. *Growing numbers of young voters* are entering the political mix despite one expert's analysis that today's electorate is "unyoung, unpoor, and unblack"—that is, the typical voter is in his early 40s and fairly affluent, and 9 out of 10 are white. Nevertheless, the coming of voting age of the flood of babies born in the post World War II years will have a gathering effect on government, expressing itself in more virulent politicking, anti-militarism and more vocal demands for action on social problems.

7. *Continued gains in Congressional power of the West and Southwest* are likely. The 1970 census may result in California's picking up as many as 6 more seats. This will bring its total to 44, or one-tenth of the entire House of Representatives. New York will place second with a drop to 40 seats.

8. *Republican capture of Congress*, or at least of the Senate, is viewed in Washington as a distinct possibility in this November's elections, with the outcome depending on the President's success in straightening out the economy and disengaging in Vietnam. Hanoi may hold the answer on both counts, but right now the omens are favorable despite the Democrats' plan to emphasize Republican failure in holding down the cost of living. Economists are predicting an economic upturn in the year's second half—and the stage seems to be getting set for the return home of masses of U.S. troops this summer and fall.

## RAGSDALE WRITES BOOK ON U.S. POLITICS

**U.S. POLITICS**—*Inside and Out* is the title of a new book published in April, 1970 by U.S. News and World Report. The author is Warner B. Ragsdale, Sr., a member of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and a free-lance political editor of U.S. News and World Report, retired.

The book lucidly highlights the current political scene in the nation, deals with the specifics of political campaigns and elections at all levels and tells what the voter can do about it.

Part I, entitled "Who Runs the Country," graphically spells out where the power is and how it is masked to the unsophisticated. The writer draws upon 44 years experience as a newspaper man who has covered every national election since 1928. He draws a rugged picture.

Ninety-seven percent of Americans might be rated as "customers." They give nothing to any political party—no money, no work at the polls, no attendance at precinct meetings, no service as a volunteer worker for any candidate. They sit back, allowing others to get the job done. This leaves the running of the government in the hands of 3 percent of the American people.

Like the board of directors of a corporation, the men at the top of this small group make the important decisions about candidates and pass the word down to the rank-and file. They represent the large sources of money required for political campaigns of one party or the other at all levels, from county courthouse to statehouse to the White House.

Few politicians can move very far without the word from the money men. This select group may be composed of as few as a dozen men in each of the 3,043 counties in the United States. As the major "stockholders" in government, they make the basic decisions. They may act in person or work through an agent. Their hand is not always visible. They are labor officials, bankers, industrialists, businessmen, wealthy individuals. Often they hold no political or party office.

Normal lethargy of the American people is deplored again and again as a major factor in the making of American politics. In Part II, which Ragsdale calls, "The System At Work," he skillfully describes this deadly ailment at the local level which has its awesome effect clear up the line to the White House.

Many refuse office in the government of the average rural county because of the small pay and minor authority. In one western state, county offices were regarded as so unattractive that no capable person in either party wanted to run. There was trouble finding candidates for county commissioner, state legislator, county clerk, or clerk of the court. At a party



W. B. Ragsdale, Sr.

meeting, it was necessary to draft candidates for these offices to round out the ticket, even though there was no doubt the men on the ticket would be elected.

Except in big counties or cities where the stakes are higher and the glory shines brighter, studies show that the average courthouse crowd stays in office year after year, election after election. County courthouse officials with their families and hangers-on comprise the heart of local political organizations. In many states, this is the party machine. These people control the choice of candidates for the state legislature, and this tends to put them in a privileged category. The officials do little favors for friends and carry on the small affairs of the county and stay in office. Only a scandal or the appearance of a man with driving political ambition can shake them loose. Even a presidential sweep by the opposition party often leaves county officials unscathed.

The entire book is alive with historical facts and data, yet written in a lively style which makes it interesting and exciting reading. Laced with graphs, diagrams and illustrations which orient the reader in terms of familiar faces, recent campaigns and interesting tabulations, the narrative flows logically.

While much of the information is not altogether strange to many readers, the wealth of material and the compilation of valuable data under the covers of a modern paperback makes the book especially desirable for any student of the political scene.

"What the Voter Can Do," carefully delineated in Part III, constitutes a primer for the average layman who is interested in making his vote more meaningful in the future.

It takes relatively few votes to change things, even in our complex, technical

## Pentagon Defends Compulsory Chapel in Service Academies

The Pentagon put two of its top men on the witness stand in the U. S. District Court in Washington to testify in support of compulsory chapel attendance at the nation's three military academies.

A case filed in the District Court charges that the military regulation is in conflict with First Amendment guarantees of freedom of religion. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed the suit in behalf of six midshipmen at the U. S. Naval Academy and one West Point cadet.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and the three secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force are named as defendants.

At the three academies Protestant, Catholic and Jewish services are provided on Sunday morning which the cadets and midshipmen must attend or risk punitive action.

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations and Chairman-designate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the three secretaries had reviewed the regulation recently with Sec. Laird and had concluded that the compulsory services should be maintained.

Moorer defended the regulation as a part of the whole package of the military's "leadership training" for future officers. The purpose of the requirement, he told the Court, is "to enhance the leadership and command ability" of the men. He explained that the requirement to attend chapel puts the future officer in a position where he will get "a feel of the impact of religion on various individuals."

Such an "understanding and feel of religion" (Continued on page 8)

world. A set of figures, revised to fit the 1970 elections, provides this picture:

- In every election district seventy-four of each hundred adults are registered voters.

- Of these seventy-four, only fifty-five will vote in the primaries when candidates are chosen. This is an average of fewer than eleven in each party.

- Of those eleven, a candidate needs only six to win a primary.

These figures indicate that a dedicated six percent at work in each congressional district can control the country, and they illustrate how few would be needed to change the entire tone of American government. They can represent a profound hope for those interested in good government, or an ever-present danger to the lethargic citizen who sleeps through elections.

The volume is currently available from U. S. News and World Report, 2300 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20037.

## How Do I Sound?

# COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

By Leonard L. Hill

No woman who works with small children in our church would blame wrinkles in her dress on a communication principle.

But it happens every Sunday!

Ask the worker how her clothes get mussed and she will tell you the obvious cause: "We spend a lot of time sitting on the floor with the children."

But ask her why she sits on the floor with the children and she will state a communication principle: "Because it's much easier to talk with a two-year-old when you're down on his level."

Now if this principle is good enough for the nursery section of a church, why isn't it applicable to the pulpit?

I'm not advocating that ministers begin delivering their sermons from a sitting position on the floor; nor implying that all congregations are children—spiritual or otherwise!

This is simply a plea for preachers and other church leaders to find out if they really are communicating—especially with non-Christians and the gospel illiterates—and if not, to do something about it. (Some gospel illiterates may have been church members for twenty-five years!)

Every Sunday theological-ministerial-other worldly-jargon pours from far too many pulpits to ears of laymen tuned to receive more familiar sounds.

The same preachers who expect foreign missionaries to learn another language in order to witness to nationals in a foreign land are content to speak a foreign language to the laymen in their congregations in this country.

It brings to mind the following letter:

Dear Mr. Gonzales:

Since learning that you are not a Christian, my heart has been constantly burdened because of concern for your soul.

I long to be the first to tell you how your sins can be washed away by the blood of the Lamb. Every day I pray that soon you will be saved so that you can publically make a profession of faith.

But there is one problem, Mr. Gonzales. You speak only Spanish.

Before I can tell you the good news of the gospel you will need to learn English. I am waiting impatiently till that moment when I, a born again believer, can witness to you.

Yours in Christian concern,  
A. Pastor

P.S. I hope you can find someone to translate this letter.

Don't bother worrying whether Mr. Gonzales found a translator. Worry about whether he could get the message even if it were in Spanish! And worry about whether the language you speak from the pulpit is foreign to your listeners.

It can be a painful experience for a preacher to discover that what he considers to be plain English is "not-so-plain English." It happened to me as a young minister in a rural Oklahoma community.

I had gone to "witness" to a middle-aged woman noted for her indifference to the church. In my mind I carefully went over what I was going to say. After some preliminary pleasantries, I began.

"Are you a Christian?"

"Why yes," she replied.

Her unexpected answer completely shattered my well planned approach. I had understood on good authority that she was a prize prospect to be saved—and certainly was not a Christian!

Stumbling along in conversation I gradually learned the problem. What the woman meant by "Christian" and what I meant by "Christian" were poles apart.

Her line of reasoning was:

I am a citizen of the United States. The United States is a civilized country. Therefore I am not a heathen. And if I am not a heathen, I surely must be a Christian.

A lot of other words and phrases ministers consider short and simple, simply aren't!

If you are daring, make a survey of a random sample of church goers and non-church goers. Ask them the meaning of "repent," "to be saved," "to make a profession of faith," "witness," "the gospel."

And if you get over the shock of blank stares, wild misconceptions, and blunt, "don't know's" move on to find out what the general public thinks is the meaning of "justification," "ecumenical," "sanctified," and "be saved."

Then you'll understand the minister's small daughter, who said to him on the way home from church: "Daddy, I heard you preach. Now tell me what you said."

Part of the problem is the misuse of words or using the wrong words at the wrong time. "Corner backs," "post patterns," and "Z outs," fit well in a knowledgeable discussion of football. But it would be out of place for a doctor to talk about cutting a "post pattern" in surgery.

Some of the language that fits in well at the seminary or in preacher-to-preacher dis-

cussions can be just as out of place when used in the pulpit.

Words are simply tools to be used in the process of communication. Words can be bridges to transport thoughts and feelings from the preacher to his congregation. The wrong words can also become barriers, cutting off the flow of communication between pulpit and pew.

The problem rests squarely on the shoulders of the preacher. He must find out what language his listeners understand. If you don't think there is a difference in the language of pulpit and pew, listen to a layman speak in a worship service.

A preacher trying to learn the language of his people faces some formidable problems.

One problem is that not all laymen speak the same language. There are lawyer dialects, hippie dialects, rural dialects, inner city dialects, youth dialects, and the dialects of the business world. All of these and more may be represented in a single congregation on Sunday morning.

Another problem is that today's language styles seem to change almost as fast as clothing fashions. Words continually flow in and out of the vocabulary scene. Every generation has its "in" language.

A few months ago few people had ever heard of "psychedelic," much less could spell it. Now such recent terms as "up tight" and "tell it like it is" are outdated. And how long has it been since you heard of a "crackerjack" idea? On the other hand, can you go a day without hearing or reading the "in" words "pollution" and "ecology"?

Words also change in meaning. When writing Sunday School lessons based on the King James text I spend much time explaining today's meaning of many of the terms used by the ancient translators. "Conversation" of King James day becomes "life style" today. "Perfect" may mean "complete."

Word meaning changes seem to be accelerating. "Grass" need no longer refer to the green stuff we mow in our yard. "Tough" and "heavy" have good connotations to young people but not to Al Capone conditioned adults. Today a mainliner is not a train, but a heroin addict in the advanced stages.

How to speak the language of your listeners and yet get over your message is aptly illustrated in former big league baseball player Jim Piersall's description of how to diaper a baby:

"Spread the diaper in the position of a baseball diamond, with you at bat. Then fold second base down to home, and set the baby on the pitcher's mound. Put first base and third together, bring up home plate and pin the three together. Of course, in case of rain you gotta start all over again."

It's up to the preacher to present deep spiritual truths just as clearly to his people.

(Continued on page 8)

## PENTAGON . . .

(Continued from page 6)

gion" will help an officer later in crisis situations in war, the 41-year Navy veteran said. He explained that it is important for military leaders to understand why men react in different ways and "why some find it necessary to resort to religion in times of crisis."

The top Navy man was asked if a moral and ethics course could achieve this instead of the forced attendance at chapel. "No, this is the best way to see how people live . . . and it is better to observe this in a real world than an artificial one," he answered.

When Moorer was told by the ACLU lawyer, Warren Kaplan, that many church groups had urged that the requirements be lifted, he said that their opinion would not change his mind. "They are thinking in terms of 'forced worship' and we are thinking in terms of leadership training," he asserted.

A cadet or midshipmen could be excused from chapel, Moorer continued, if he could prove that compulsory attendance "is counter productive to the goals of the academy." A man would not be excused solely because he did not believe, he said.

An earlier witness from the Defense Department, Roger T. Kelley, the assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said that an excuse would not be granted to the man who refused to attend chapel because he felt it violated his First Amendment rights.

Lawrence Speiser, arguing for the ACLU on the opening day, asked Kelley what understanding of others' spiritual beliefs the men gained from attending services of their own denominations.

"It's all part of the same spiritual ball game," Kelley replied. "To the extent that attendance is required, they will end up getting a better understanding"

Rebuttals to the Pentagon's position during the three-day trial came from two clergyman, one a Baptist, and from a graduate of West Point.

A. Ray Appelquist, Executive Secretary of the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel, told the Court that the mandatory chapel services has had an "adverse effect" on recruiting chaplains.

When asked to explain, Appelquist, an American Baptist and a former Army chaplain, said that "the pool of men interested in the chaplaincy has been reduced" because of the "climate" created by the compulsory attendance regulation.

During that hearing a Baptist from Carmi, Ill., Lt. David Vaught, told of his effort to get permission to attend Southern Baptist services within a 15 or 20 mile radius of West Point, N.Y. Permission was never granted.

## SUPREME COURT . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

In its conclusion the Court said: "It appears that at least up to 1885 this Court, reflecting more than a century of our history and uninterrupted practice, accepted without discussion the proposition that federal or state grants of tax exemption to churches were not a violation of the Religious Clauses of the First Amendment. As to the New York statute, we now confirm that view."

Justices Harlan and Brennan concurred in the finding of the majority of the Court, but filed separate opinions along with that of Justice Burger.

## GOSPEL . . .

(Continued from Page 7)

A minister I know did this in his explanation of "repentance." "It means," he said, "that God never takes anyone to heaven backward. You've got to turn around and face toward him."

A debate always arises over the thought of doing away with familiar King James terms rich in meaning to the seminarian; terms like "regeneration," "justification," "salvation." It is pointed out that these were not necessarily familiar terms in New Testament days. Paul had to explain what they mean. So did other church leaders.

This brings up another point. A preacher does not have to stay at his audience's level of vocabulary and understanding—but he certainly has to start there! And he had better be certain that his audience moves along with him when he begins to interject his theological terms.

It can be done. A speaker can use facts his listeners know and emotions they have experienced to teach them facts they do not know and to arouse emotions they have not experienced.

An administrator of a Baptist children's home did this quite well as he tried to explain to well-adjusted adults why some children who came to his home have a tough shell built around their emotions.

"Imagine what kind of person you would be," he said, "if you had watched your own little dog, which you loved dearly, being deliberately run over by a car. Not once, but every day! And you knew that each time the cruel driver was one of your own parents."

Yes, the pressure of good communication is on the preacher. He is the one with the important message. He is the one with the desire to tell others. And to know the words his listeners understand he is going to have to truly know the people to whom he preaches.

Giving up familiar preacher jargon and using the language of the layman may be like learning a foreign language for some preachers. But why have an efficient sound

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system in order to be heard if you are going to use words that cannot be understood?

The next time you pass your church nursery, see if you get the message. Even better, ask yourself whether the people are getting your message!

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