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Report from the Capital

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A NATION IN CRISIS

By James E. Wood, Jr.

(Editors note: The following article was prepared before President Nixon's resignation. However, the principles discussed are of continuing significance.)

"Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; and truth has fallen in the public squares, and integrity cannot enter."

The lament of Isaiah 59:14 is a dramatic reminder of a godly man's concern for justice, righteousness, truth, and integrity in the life of a nation.

At this moment, from any perspective, the United States must be acknowledged to be a nation in crisis. Perhaps at no time in our history has there been such erosion of confidence in the justice, truth, and integrity of the executive branch of the federal government of the United States. The state of public affairs of the nation has reached a low at a time when the public enterprise is needed most urgently at home and abroad.

In the tradition of the writer of Isaiah 59, we need the moral discernment to recognize clearly certain realities during this time of national crisis. To fail to recognize these realities in the present situation

is perilous to the future of this nation; it is also a denial of the prophetic role of religion which refuses to make political authority or the nation state absolute. Indeed, this prophetic role is the highest service religion can render the nation state, since it places all human authority and all nation states under judgment.

During this time of crisis there are three verities to which we need to give particular attention.

I

Disclosures in recent months have made known new dimensions of political corruption, unprecedented in this nation's history, within the highest citadels of political power and public trust.

Claims of America's moral superiority as a nation have been shattered. The traditional mythologizing of the American experience, past and present, has been seriously discredited. The heart of America is not "good," as the President has so fondly and frequently proclaimed it to be. While there is much good in this nation we now must see ourselves in the finite terms in which we see other nations. The present crisis should help us as Americans to lose the moral and political arrogance

we have so often portrayed before the world.

Perhaps the greatest legacy which may come out of Watergate and its accompanying ills will be the loss of our pietistic innocence as a nation and the discovery that as a nation we are as subject to corruption as any other. To be "under God" does not mean to be God's favorite, but to be *under God's judgment*. The pious and simplistic platitude of the President of the United States, "America is great because America is good," now appears—as it should have all along—as a dangerous political and theological heresy. Moral arrogance as a sanction for political arrogance is a serious threat both to the state and to religion.

We must develop a new dimension of national self-understanding. A demythologizing of the American experience is sorely needed in order that we may clearly understand the sacred and profane spheres of America as a nation. This is particularly necessary with the approaching Bicentennial observances throughout the nation in 1976.

The present crisis can be redemptive in helping us see the real face of America in the 1970s. For during this period there

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has been the attempted prostitution of government power to manipulate the electoral process and to justify repeated incidents of lying, illegal spying and surveillance into the private life of American citizens, and criminal acts of lawlessness on the part of high ranking members of the Administration and federal government agencies in the name of national security, executive privilege, and separation of powers. Dangerous assaults have been made on constitutional rights, often by those who at the same time they violated these rights mouthed "law and order" for the citizenry at large.

II

The fusion of religion and nationalism needs to be seen as a denial of the concept of the free society and a repudiation of the prophetic role of the church. It is a perversion of the legitimate role of government and a profanation of the apostolic mission of the church.

In recent years American nationalism has been increasingly sanctified by the fusion of religion with American national aspirations, interests, symbols, and power. Religion has, in effect, been made the basis of American power and prestige, both at home and abroad. No greater irony may be found in the present crisis than that it should have occurred during an administration that so frequently and readily espoused piety and law and order, while engaged in the flagrant abuse of political power.

American nationalism, like all nationalism, whether religious or irreligious, ultimately judges or tolerates all religion on the basis of whether or not it is useful to the state. So long as religion serves the national interests and programs of the nation state it is not only tolerated, but warmly embraced, even welcomed to the White House on a regular basis.

Christianity, for example, in recent years has all too often been readily embraced by American nationalism, and so blatantly identified with Americanism and the American way of life as to make the two virtually indistinguishable by American nationalists. Increasing evidence of this identification may be seen in the period since World War II.

American nationalism reflects both a way of thinking about the nation state and a way of thinking about religion. Increasingly, American nationalism has reflected

a way of thinking about the state in religious and theological terms. Throughout his presidency, Dwight D. Eisenhower affirmed that "America is the mightiest power which God has yet seen fit to put upon his footstool" and that "America is great because America is good." Both statements have come to be viewed in these ensuing years as part of the very essence of America's national faith.

The greatest danger of this wedding of religion to nationalism is that it actually negates the authentic and prophetic role of religion in society, by making religion a culture religion or tribal faith. When religion is made an adjunct to state policies and programs the true function of religion is perverted, no matter how well-intentioned the advocates of such a viewpoint may be.

The church, to fulfill its mission, simply cannot be made to serve political ends, without degrading itself and thereby denying its Lord. Indeed, it may well be that the most serious problem confronting religion in American public life today lies in the widespread use of the name of God and religion for political purposes. But God and religion are not something our nation can possess, like some national resource we can harness or use to serve our national interests.

III

The present crisis should underscore the need for a view of the state which sees allegiance to God always as prior to national interests and loyalty.

Nationalism, even more when fused with traditional religion, constitutes a form of idolatry for the simple reason that it makes the nation state, national interests, and national security the highest loyalty and the ultimate concern for the individual citizen. By so doing it contravenes the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The prophetic role of the church is one which gives witness to justice, righteousness, truth, and integrity and one which denies the moral autonomy of the state. It is a church which refuses to justify and sanctify whatever the nation wants or does in domestic and foreign policy.

To make national interests absolute is inevitably in conflict with human rights, both civil and religious, as well as with religious faith. American nationalism is rooted in the principle that one's highest and ultimate allegiance is to one's nation. It is the exaggerated and unrestrained tendency to emphasize national interests and

national security to the point of supreme allegiance and exclusive devotion.

American nationalism expresses itself whenever and wherever the right of the church to be the church is challenged on political or nationalistic grounds. The continued and accelerated assaults in recent years upon the right of the church to speak out on public issues, domestic and foreign, when in conflict with national interests or current government policy are ominous threats of the assumed superiority of national and political sovereignty over the church in contemporary life.

The present crisis was largely precipitated by persons who reasoned that their acts were motivated out of a supreme allegiance to the national interests and security of their country. The times now require a renewed commitment to the legitimate role of the political process, based upon moral means for the accomplishment of moral ends. The Christian witness needed is not one of cynicism toward politics or politicians, but rather is one that affirms the Christian's obligation actively to support justice, truth, and integrity in government. This visible evidence of concern for good government is a Christian necessity. Without justice, truth, and integrity no democratic government can endure.

PLEA FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.—A resolution offered by James Ralph Scales, president of Wake Forest University, urging equal rights and privileges for women in Southern Baptist schools, colleges and seminaries, has been adopted by the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

It calls for "encouraging the legitimate aspirations of women for full professional recognition in our institutions." It encourages members of the Association to:

"Work to develop greater sensitivity to both overt and covert discrimination against women in our governing boards, administrative staffs and teaching and research facilities;

"Reassure our alumnae and educated women of our fellowship that their talents are needed in educational leadership, and that we value the degrees we confer on women equally with those conferred on men; and

"Seek these objectives not in a resentful and minimal compliance with law, but in a positive Christian commitment to right." (RNS)

Church Bodies Plan Extensive Bicentennial Projects

Washington D.C.—“Just as religion has made a major contribution to the founding and growth of this nation, the religious community is making important contributions to the observance of the nation's Bicentennial,” says John W. Warner, Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.

Mr. Warner's comments refer to the deep involvement of religious organizations in projects and events relating to the commemoration of the nation's 200th anniversary.

The efforts range from special prayer days in local churches to two-year long national programs focusing on the role of religion in the future.

In New York, Project FORWARD '76 (Freedom of Religion Will Advance Real Democracy) is working to “facilitate planning for strong spiritual and religious emphasis in observances of the American Bicentennial, 1974-1976.”

Formed by the Interchurch Center which houses offices of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations, Project FORWARD '76 offers research and technical help to other groups around the country interested in religious observance of the Bicentennial.

Services available include: a national information bank with plans, programs and materials; a newsletter; planning assistance by national and regional staff personnel; and scholarly research.

“Liberty and Justice for All” is the Bicentennial theme of the Catholic Church in the United States. Announced by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Bicentennial, the program begins this September and will culminate in a national conference in the fall of '76, tentatively scheduled in Michigan. The central purpose of the program is to “elicit from the Catholic community an expression of the meaning of ‘liberty and justice for all’.”

The National Conference of Christians and Jews is putting special emphasis on “Human Relations in Century III.” Along with forums conducted throughout the country on that subject, the Conference plans to issue a Declaration of Interdependence in 1976.

An Ecumenical Task Force within the National Council of Churches is issuing a series of Bicentennial oriented publica-

tions, and plans to produce a film, “Right of the People,” for use in church and religious conferences.

The United Church of Christ hopes to sponsor a “caravan” of Afro-American Art to follow the route of the underground railroad. The UCC is also involved in a program called “Child Care '76.”

The Indiana Council of Churches, representing major Protestant denominations in the State, is producing a film on the religious historic sites in Indiana and will make it available to religious, school and service organizations.

An interfaith and interdisciplinary ad hoc committee of Philadelphia area historians and clergymen is working on a

Editor's note: Although this press release from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration makes no mention of Baptist activity during the nation's Bicentennial, many Baptist bodies plan for significant participation in this national event. An article in a future issue of *Report From The Capital* will report many of these plans.

Among these plans will be the Baptist National Bicentennial Convocation to be held at the Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C., January 12-15, 1976. Watch for full announcement of this Convocation in the near future.

Bicentennial conference on religious liberty for the spring of '76. Approximately 500 participants from around the nation will discuss religious liberty; civil, cultural and social rights; rights before the law; and economic rights.

The American Bible Society has announced a new theme—“Good News, America!”—a theme designed to relate the Scriptures to the nation's 200th anniversary. The “good news” the Society brings is that the entire Bible in the Today's English Version will be published in 1976.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America has been informed by its Bicentennial Committee which recommends: a meeting of the Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia

during the week of July 4, 1976; completion of the Shrine of St. Augustine, Florida, which commemorates the arrival of the first Greeks in America; and consecration in 1976 of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Washington, D.C.

Public concerts of Jewish liturgical music, sponsored by the American Conference of Cantors/Concerts, will be held in New York, Philadelphia and Boston in 1976.

In St. Francis, South Dakota, efforts are underway to commemorate the history of the mission by honoring Christian Sioux leaders, and the founding Jesuits and Franciscan Sisters. Projects include a published history, a pageant, a pow wow and an Indian feast.

These are just samples of the kind and variety of religious participation in Bicentennial programs. They reflect a tribute to one of the founding documents of the nation, The Bill of Rights, which provides: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . .”

As national Administrator for the Bicentennial, Mr. Warner urges as many organizations and individuals as possible to become involved in the “grass roots” commemoration of the nation's 200th anniversary. Pleased with efforts so far, he hopes to see every denomination take part, locally, regionally or nationally.

Though no official approval of any sort is required to take part in the Bicentennial, interested persons or groups can receive planning assistance and other help from Mr. Warner's staff by contacting the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, Citizens Participation Division, 736 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20076.

CANADIANS ARGUE CHURCH TAXES

TORONTO—A past moderator of the United Church of Canada has taken issue with the current moderator on the issue of church taxation. Dr. Angus MacQueen has written an article in the *United Church Observer* expressing opposition to the taxation of churches. He was replying to an article in an earlier issue by Dr. N. Bruce McLeod, the current UCC moderator. (RNS).

'Supreme Court Ruling Is Correct and Proper'

By Charles H. Percy, U.S. Senator from Illinois

(Editor's note: The following article by Senator Percy is reprinted from the Congressional Record of April 10, 1974.)

ABORTION

Mr. PERCY. Mr. President, the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on the issue of abortion has brought forth a momentous national response. I have listened to the points of view of people who support that ruling and of people who denounce that ruling. Recognizing and respecting strong arguments on both sides of this highly controversial issue, I believe that the Supreme Court ruling on abortion is correct and proper under existing circumstances.

The Supreme Court based its decision on the individual's right to privacy, which is founded primarily in the 14th Amendment's concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon State action. The Justices determined that:

The right of privacy is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.

Many with whom I have talked even recently still do not understand that the Court decision prohibits State regulation of abortions only during the first 3 months of pregnancy. Beyond the first trimester, the State may regulate abortion procedures to preserve and protect maternal health; and beyond the second trimester, the State may prohibit abortion in all cases except those where the life or health of the mother is endangered.

The question as I view it is not an absolute one of pro-Court decision versus anti-Court decision, or of concern for human life versus lack of concern. The fact that women do desire abortions and will seek them out even under illegal and dangerous circumstances cannot be ignored or denied. Whether individuals, groups, or governments approve or not, this is the nature of the real world we live in. Rather, the question is whether the Government will force those women who desire abortions, and whose personal moral and religious views do not prohibit them, to seek abortions under illegal and potentially abominable surgical conditions.

Furthermore, legalized abortion allows for a far greater amount of personal counseling than was possible before the Supreme Court ruling. We know that prior to that decision, about 1 million abortions were performed annually in the United States. We also know that an illegal abortionist will seldom counsel a woman against abortion. If an expectant mother feels free to consult her family physician, however, that doctor might well counsel against abortion although the abortion would be legal.



Sen. Charles H. Percy

The Court's ruling does not require any woman to undergo an abortion if she does not so choose; the ruling allows a woman a personal choice. The same cannot be said of laws prohibiting abortion; such laws deny freedom of choice. Although I view abortion as the least desirable means of birth or population control, and although I wish that no abortions were ever desired or performed, I cannot in good conscience work to overturn the Supreme Court ruling.

I am well aware that many people are in strong disagreement with me on this issue, and I believe that the individual rights of those people should be protected as well. Consequently, I have supported and will continue to support legislation to

protect the rights of those who because of religious belief or moral conviction oppose abortion. I do not believe that any medical personnel should be required to perform abortions if personal or religious beliefs are in conflict.

The decision to terminate a pregnancy, at least in its earliest stages, should remain between a woman and her physician, and the Government should interfere as little as possible. This has been my position consistently during my years of public office, and it remains my position now.

Although I personally view the central issue in the abortion controversy to be the right of each woman to control her own reproductive life, there are a number of peripheral issues which indicate that the Supreme Court ruling of January 1973 has resulted in other types of social benefits. Improvements to our society with respect to health, child welfare, equal rights, and economy are evidenced by available information.

Because abortion has been legal nationally for only 1 year and information on the national impact of the new law is not yet available, existing statistics are mainly from New York and California, where new abortion laws took effect in 1968 and 1970 respectively. Although we cannot assume that the experiences of two States will be duplicated nationally, changing trends are apparent.

The number of women admitted to hospitals for post-abortion treatment has declined. In one San Francisco hospital, such cases decreased by 68 percent in 2 years following abortion reform. Abortion complication cases in one Los Angeles facility declined by 88 percent in 1 year. And statistics from 10 New York City hospitals indicate a 52-percent drop in abortion complications in the first 3 years of legalized abortion.

In my home State, the Illinois General Assembly 1969 Family Study Commission Report showed that the Cook County Hospital alone admitted approximately 4,000 women annually from 1962 to 1968 for medical care following criminal abortions; in April and May of 1973, however, the Chicago Board of Health found

less than five such cases per month at the same facility.

Abortion-caused maternal deaths have declined as a result of legalized abortion. In California in 1967, there were 20 such deaths per 100,000 live births. In 1971, after liberalization of the law, there were only 2 abortion-caused maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. In New York City, only 4 maternal deaths from abortion were reported in 1972 to 1973, while 22 had been reported in 1970.

Although abortion has been a major cause of maternal mortality, many women, who in the past did not have the alternative of legal abortion, were actually endangered because of their pregnancies. Young teenage girls, women nearing menopause, women who have had many or problematic pregnancies, and women with medical handicaps all are at risk during pregnancy and childbirth. The number of women who die from all of these causes has also dropped since the liberalization of abortion laws. The New York City Department of Health reports a 51-percent decline in maternal deaths from 1969 to 1972, and in California, a 45 percent decline has been reported in the 4 years following abortion reform.

The rate of infant mortality has also decreased markedly. The New York City Department of Health reports a drop of

approximately 20 percent in this figure from 1969 to 1972.

The number of babies born out of wedlock has dropped. In the first year of new abortion laws in California and New York, the out-of-wedlock birthrate declined 16 percent and 12 percent respectively, completely reversing the trend of earlier years of ever-increasing numbers of illegitimate births.

Fewer babies have been abandoned or given up for adoption. In one New York institution, there was a 56-percent decline in such cases the year following abortion reform. And the number of New York City children placed in foster homes dropped 41 percent in 2 years after the law was changed.

The Supreme Court decision has increased equality of opportunity between the rich and the poor. It has long been an alternative of those women who can afford to travel to countries or States—or the Nation's Capital in Washington, D.C., for that matter—with less restrictive laws. Legal abortion was thus available to the wealthy although it was a financial impossibility for the poor. The Supreme Court ruling has to a great extent eliminated this discrimination based on economic status.

Millions of tax dollars have been saved by providing availability of abortion to

women on welfare. In 1971 in California, the State medical welfare program paid \$17.9 million for abortions for women on welfare. If none of those abortions had been performed, the cost to taxpayers would have been \$59 million for health care during pregnancy and immediately after birth alone, beyond which would have been the continuing payments for the additional children on welfare rolls that could have run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

From 1970 to 1972, the national fertility rate for welfare mothers declined by 2.1 percent. In New York City, however, where abortion reform had taken effect, the fertility rate for welfare mothers declined more than three times as much.

I bring these statistics to the attention of my colleagues because they are worthy of careful consideration. The abortion issue is a controversial and highly charged one: I believe it is imperative for us to be as fully aware of available data as possible and to keep our minds open to the moral, physiological, psychological and economic issues involved, in that order. Only in this manner will we be able to view the abortion issue rationally and responsibly. As we debate what is "right" and what is "wrong" we must also be understanding and respectful of opposing views earnestly held by others.

Wood Hits Plan for Federal Aid to Churches

WASHINGTON—A Baptist spokesman here scored a bill in Congress, which if enacted into law, would result in a multi-million dollar windfall from the federal government for churches, their agencies and other charitable institutions.

James E. Wood, Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, attacked a proposal by Rep. H. John Heinz III (R., Pa.), which would provide income tax credits to taxpayers for a portion of their gifts to churches and other charitable agencies. The plan would violate the principle of voluntarism in religion and also is of questionable constitutionality, Wood said.

Heinz, in a statement to the House of Representatives said that his bill (H.R. 15722), which he introduced earlier this year, would "provide a badly needed boost to American taxpayers and to American churches and charitable organizations in the continuing struggle against inflation."

The Heinz proposal is that a taxpayer could choose either the present deduction for charitable contributions or a tax credit for 50

per cent of his or her charitable contributions, whichever is most beneficial.

Under this new proposal the tax credit limit would be \$500 for the single taxpayer or \$1,000 on a joint return. The net effect of the plan would be to increase a middle income taxpayer's deduction from the current 15 or 20 percent to 50 per cent should the measure become law.

In his latest statement to the House of Representatives, Heinz explained why he is proposing this new federal aid. He said that churches and charities were "caught in a deadly crunch" brought on by a decline in contributions due to inflation.

Appealing for governmental aid to the churches, Heinz said, "I do not believe that we in Congress can stand by while religious, educational and charitable organizations wither and die because the average American must reduce his or her donations in order to pay for life's necessities for his or her family."

Wood said in his statement on the Heinz proposal, "While the desire to put more money into the treasuries of the churches is

highly commendable, and, indeed, attractive to many churchmen, the way it should be done is by voluntary stewardship rather than by governmental action."

"One of the strengths of religion in America," Wood continued, "has been that, in the absence of financial support by government, the churches and synagogues have relied on the dedication of their own members for the advancement of their particular views."

"Not only does the principal of voluntarism in religion militate against federal financial aid to the churches, it is highly questionable that such a proposal as tax credit for gifts to churches is acceptable to the Constitution that prohibits "an establishment of religion."

Wood further observed, "Already the Supreme Court has ruled that tax credit to parents for tuition paid for their children in church schools is a violation of constitutional separation of church and state. It is difficult to see how this proposed financial bonanza for the churches can meet the constitutional test when the lesser benefit to church schools has already failed the test."

Public Affairs . . . And the Churches

Congress Includes 'Bypass' in Education Bill

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON—In spite of protests by Baptists and others, the House of Representatives passed and sent to the White House a major education bill which includes a provision to bypass state regulations prohibiting aid to children in nonpublic schools.

The bypass enables the U.S. commissioner of education to fund directly schools which have been denied public aid due to state laws forbidding such funding. Before invoking the bypass, the commissioner will be required to give 60 days' notice of his intent to fund directly nonpublic schools.

At its annual session in Dallas in June, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution opposing "any federal aid-to-education program which attempts to bypass state constitutions and school laws in educational matters." The resolution further expressed concern "over continuing pressures to make taxpayers equally responsible for educational services in public and nonpublic schools or to their students."

At the request of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs communicated the convention's action to Congress.

The new measure extends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 for four more years, through fiscal 1978, and authorizes expenditures totaling \$29.1 billion. The historic 1965 bill was designed to provide public aid to educationally deprived school children.

Despite earlier predictions that the House vote would be close, the bill passed easily, 323-83. The Senate had already approved the measure 81-15.

By far, the most controversial portions of the bill deal with the busing of school children to achieve racial balance. As originally passed by the House, the bill would have prohibited busing children to any school beyond that next nearest their homes and would have allowed reopening any federal court order to desegregate which had required busing.

The full House instructed its conferees three separate times to insist on the House's anti-busing provisions in conference with Senate members. But in the end, the conference report included a compromise on the busing question.

The conferees adopted provisions in both the House and Senate bills forbidding federal courts to order children bused beyond the school next nearest to their homes. But they also adopted a Senate provision allowing the courts to ignore the ban on busing whenever they believe that children's constitutional rights would be violated unless busing were employed.

Nevertheless, Rep. Carl D. Perkins (D.-Ky.), chairman of the powerful House committee on education and labor, which drafted the House bill, said the new measure contains "more anti-busing provisions than we've ever had in the history of Congress."

CRACK DOWN ON CHURCH TAXES

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.—Tax assessors are cracking down on churches and religious organizations in Broward County, which encompasses such resort areas as Fort Lauderdale, Pompano Beach and Hollywood. More than \$11.1 million worth of property owned by religious groups will be added to county tax rolls this year. Ada Deaton of the assessor's office says, "We're now checking to make sure all property owned by religious organizations in Broward is being used for that purpose." (RNS)

USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

MADISON—The rules on the use of public school property by religious organizations have been made more explicit in a newly effective Wisconsin law. As amended by the legislature, the law permits such use during non-school hours upon payment of reasonable fees and upon such conditions as the governing board of the school district may determine. Such use cannot interfere with the prime use of school property, the legislature stipulated. (RNS)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE

GENEVA—"Gross violations" of human rights are continuing to take place in Chile, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) charged here. The executive committee of the World Council of Churches agency urged churches to do everything in their power to assure the "restoration of the rule of law" in the Latin American nation.

There are at least 6,000 political prisoners in Chile, according to the CCIA, which termed a new wave of arrests "alarming." Foreign intervention, especially by Brazil, was held to be a contributing factor to repression in Chile. (RNS)

PERSECUTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

ROME—Revival of a Stalinist-type anti-Catholic persecution policy in Czechoslovakia has been charged in an article published in a recent edition of the Jesuit fortnightly, *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The article, which reflects Vatican concern for Czech Catholics, appeared as reports from the Communist-controlled country told of the sentencing of a number of Catholic priests for their religious activities.

In one case, according to the reports, a 39-year old pastor in Slovakia was sentenced to three months in prison because he had given religious instruction to his nephews and had conducted religious services for nuns in a small hut of his own construction. (RNS)

TAX EXEMPTION FOR 'WITNESSES'

NEW YORK—The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, known as Jehovah's Witnesses, has regained tax exempt status on its international headquarters property in Brooklyn. In a unanimous decision, the Court of Appeals ruled that the organization "is organized and conducted exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of the statute."

In 1971, the New York legislature permitted cities to restore to tax rolls all property except that "used exclusively for religious, charitable, educational, moral, or mental improvement of men, women and children." (RNS)

PAROCHIAID IN PENNSYLVANIA

HARRISBURG, Pa.—Legislation authorizing \$32.5 million in state aid to parochial and other nonpublic schools in the current fiscal year has been signed by the governor. The proposals would increase the aid from the previous annual level of \$30 million. The aid is channeled through public school Intermediate units and is earmarked for textbooks, supplies and auxiliary services such as vocational counseling. (RNS)

BAPTISTS FOR HEALTH CARE

VALLEY FORGE, Pa.—An executive of the American Baptist Churches told the House Ways and Means Committee that his denomination views adequate health care as a "fundamental affirmation of the worth and dignity of persons."

Dr. Richard E. Ice, president of American Baptist Homes of the West Inc., and former executive of the American Baptist National Ministries agency, said that "in our modern society the right to health care is as basic as life itself."

Five years have elapsed since the President announced in 1969 that the nation faced a massive crisis in health care requiring both legislative and administrative action within two years, Dr. Ice noted.

He said that American Baptist Churches maintain some 70 denomination-affiliated retirement centers, 9 affiliated hospitals and 5 related schools and colleges which offer degrees or certification in health related fields.

Dr. Ice commented on the shortage of physicians and other medical personnel, noting that while there has been an increase in the number of graduating physicians in the past decade, an increasing number have gone into research. (RNS)

TAX CREDIT FOR CHURCH GIFTS

WASHINGTON—A tax credit bill for contributions to churches has been introduced in the Congress by Rep. J. John Heinz III (R., Pa.). The proposal (H.R. 15722) would allow taxpayers the option of taking a tax credit for 50 per cent of their charitable contributions in lieu of deductions currently allowed for such contributions.

While the tax credit limit, according to the proposal, would be \$500 for the single taxpayer or \$1,000 on a joint return, the net effect of the plan would be to increase a middle income taxpayer's tax deduction from the current 15 or 20 per cent to 50 per cent should the measure become law,

an aid to Heinz told Religious News Service.

The aim of the bill is to encourage people on lower income levels who can't afford to give more to their churches. At present people in this category can't give as much to their churches as formerly because of the rising costs of living.

The outlook for such a bill becoming law is dim unless it gets overwhelming support from the citizenry and unless it can pass the constitutionality test of public support for religion.

LATVIAN BAPTISTS JAILED

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—Two young Latvians were jailed in Riga, Latvia because they wanted to test their right to know, their older brother, Daniels Bruvers, told a press conference at the U.N. Church Center.

Bruvers said that his brothers, Olafs and Pavils, knew of the danger connected with their experiment to test public opinion in Riga on issues of general interest, but probably did not envisage the severity of the treatment they are now experiencing.

In July they had been in jail a month. Their parents, who also live in Riga, have been repeatedly interrogated by the police and have not been allowed to communicate with their imprisoned sons. Their trial was set for August, and their family feels that without international publicity about the plight of the brothers, their punishment would be "harsh."

The entire Bruvers family belongs to the Baptist church. During the school days of the six Bruvers' children their religious beliefs made it impossible for them to join the local Communist youth organization although they were repeatedly urged to do so. (RNS)

EASTER SPRING VACATIONS

MIAMI—A U.S. District Court judge here ruled that public schools in Miami must schedule their spring vacations on a fixed date every year, rather than follow Easter—a changeable Christian holiday—around the calendar.

Christmas always falls on the same day and it has a "secular, indeed universal image," said Judge C. Clyde Atkins, in upholding the right of schools to schedule their winter vacations to coincide with Christmas. On the other hand, the spring recess has not been held on any set date, he said. The fact that the spring recess shifted from year to year with Easter had a "direct and immediate effect of advancing religion." (RNS)

QUAKER VICTORY IN TAX SUIT

RICHMOND, Va.—A Quaker couple convicted of fraud for claiming the whole world's population as dependents on their income tax return won a reversal of the decision from the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Listing 3 billion dependents was "purely symbolic" speech and "could deceive no one," said the Court's opinion handed down here.

The case involved Lyle B. Snider, 24, and his wife Sue, who were convicted in June 1973 by the U.S. Middle District Court in Greensboro, N.C., on providing "false and fraudulent" information on their 1972 tax forms.

Mr. Snider was a member of the Society of Friends Meeting in Durham, N.C., and a teacher at the Friends school there. He later took a job with the Vietnamese Children's Fund in Durham. In a letter to the Internal Revenue Service he argued that as a Quaker and war resister he felt responsible for all the people of the world and could not willingly pay taxes that might be used to finance war. (RNS)

MARYLAND REFERENDUM ON PAROCHIAID

ANNAPOLIS, Md.—A statewide referendum in November will decide the fate of a bill, providing \$9.7 million in annual services to nonpublic schools in Maryland. In a 1972 referendum, another state aid to nonpublic schools proposal was defeated by Maryland voters. Under the current bill, state aid would be provided in areas of transportation and school supplies. It would permit local boards of education to purchase textbooks and loan them to students attending private and parochial schools. Up to \$25 per student would be used for textbook purchases. (RNS)

NATIVITY SCENE TO APPEAR AGAIN

GREENBELT, Md.—A permit to erect a Christmas Nativity Scene near the Ellipse between the White House and the Washington Monument has been granted to the American Christian Heritage Association, a private, nonprofit organization here.

The National Parks Service granted the permit to the association for the second consecutive year after the U.S. Court of Appeals decided in September 1973 that the Nativity scene, which has been a part of the annual Christmas Pageant for Peace, caused an "excessive government entanglement with religion."

New Pamphlet Available

'Religion in the Public School Classroom'

Here is something fresh on the problem of religion in the public school classroom—a new pamphlet by the research department of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

John W. Baker, director of research services, Rosemary Brevard, assistant to the director, and Jimmy Mims, 1973-'74 student intern, produced a 12-page pamphlet that answers many questions about the Supreme Court decisions on prayer and Bible reading in public schools.

In an attractive, readable and simple manner this pamphlet sets forth the decisions of the Supreme Court in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963).

In three brief statements the pamphlet sets forth what was prohibited by these two decisions of the Supreme Court.

1. "...it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by government." *Engel* at 425.

2. "...the State may not establish a 'religion of secularism' in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus 'preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.'" *Schempp* at 225.

3. Religious exercises—such as prayer or reading from the Bible—if they are sponsored or provided for by the state or its agents have no place in the public schools. *Engel* and *Schempp passim*.

Another section of the pamphlet sets forth several practices that the Court ruled as permissible under the first Amendment to the Constitution.

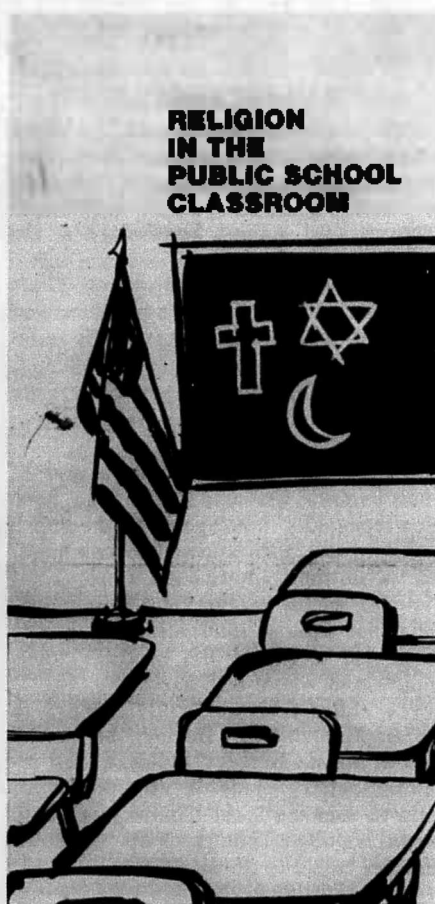
1. The Bible may be used as a reference for the teaching of secular subjects.

2. The Bible may be studied for its literary and historic qualities.

3. The study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relation-

ship to the advancement of civilization have a legitimate role in public education.

4. The recitation of historical documents which contain references to a Deity is permissible.



5. Officially approved anthems which include the composer's professions of faith in a Supreme Being may be sung.

6. "...the Court would recognize the propriety...of the teaching about religion,

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as distinguished from the teaching of religion, in the public schools."

The pamphlet then discusses positively what can be done about religion in the public school classroom and some of the problems to be overcome.

The pamphlet takes the position that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution providing for prayers or Bible reading is not the answer to the question of religion in the public schools. It points out the dangers inherent in such a proposed prayer amendment.

Single copies are available for \$.10; dozen copies \$.75; hundred copies \$5.00; thousand copies \$35.00 Postage is additional in each case.

Write to Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002

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