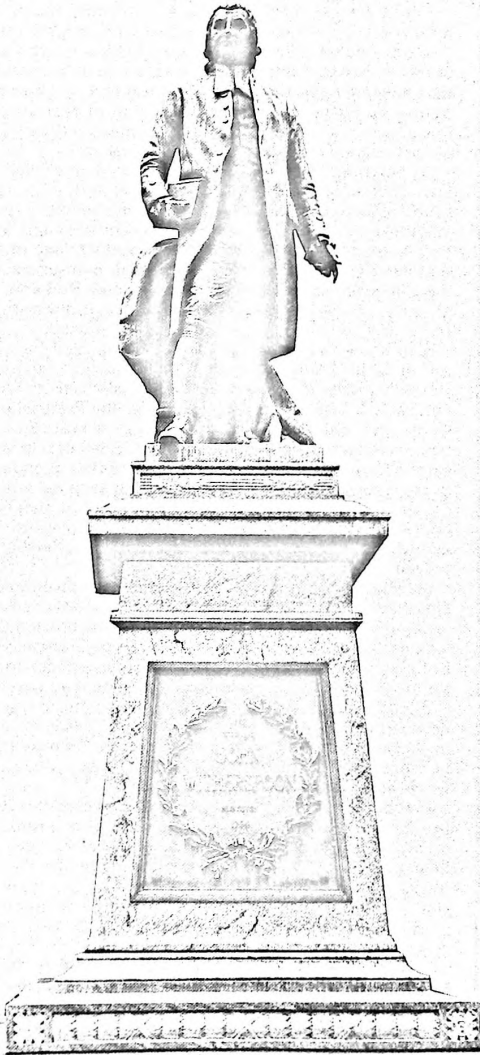


# REPORT from the CAPITAL



**The thirteen colonies  
were "not only  
ripe for the  
measure but  
in danger of  
rotting for  
want of it."**

**In a speech before  
Congress supporting the  
Declaration of Independence.  
July 2, 1776.**

**John Witherspoon**

# REPORT from the CAPITAL

"... a civil state 'with full liberty in religious concerns.'"

Vol. 43, No. 10 November-December 1988

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**Cover:** The only active clergyman among the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, John Witherspoon worked aggressively to help create a viable nation. A Presbyterian minister, he served as one of the early presidents of Princeton University (then the College of New Jersey). The bronze Witherspoon sculpture by William Couper stands at Connecticut Avenue and N Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C. It will take an act of Congress to move the patriot. Design by Sarah Helen Shira, photo by Marc Mullinax.

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Editor: Victor Tupitza

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**REPORT from the CAPITAL** is published ten times each year by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a denominational agency maintained in the nation's capital by its nine member bodies: American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.; Baptist Federation of Canada; Baptist General Conference; National Baptist Convention of America; National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.; North American Baptist Conference; Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; Seventh Day Baptist General Conference; and Southern Baptist Convention.

Subscriptions: Single rate, \$8.00 one year, \$15.00 two years; club rate (ten or more), \$7.00 each per year; student rate, \$3.50 one year, \$5.00 two years; foreign, add \$2.00 postage.

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002

# Yes, Just the Creche

Whatever happened to old fashioned materialism? The kind pastors inveighed against during Christmas seasons past when the encroachment of the marketplace into the "holy day" was of genuine concern. Then, more than one Sunday-full of sermons reminded us of the danger of "taking Christ out of Christmas." These were not sermons over ideologies *per se*, but over the pernicious diluting of Christmas faith. Now in a book, *Jesus and Marx*, Jacques Ellul explains ideology as "popularized, sentimental degeneration." It's a forewarning of what can befall Christian doctrine and even Christianity itself when it ignores the Bible as the corrective.

Hardly a topic in itself for raising Christmas spirits, it is important nonetheless. We reprint this chapter out of Ellul's timely book because *ideology* is among today's ubiquitous words, and Ellul offers a measure of understanding that may assist in discerning and interpreting complex trends: from the current reconstruction of Marxist-Leninism under Gorbachev's reform movement to the dangers of civil religion to Christian faith and practice.

As a nation, for example, we witnessed an example of intrusion on a Christian observance when the Supreme Court rendered its decision in a case involving the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. It was the city's custom each year to sponsor a nativity scene. The court's ruling implied that what formerly had been peripheral to observance of the Christmas season — Santa, the reindeer Rudolph, jingle bells, etc. — could now be considered at one with the rest of the artifacts integral to the nativity theme.

Stan Hasteley's analysis of the 1984 ruling cited the opinion of Chief Justice Warren Burger that to "focus exclusively on the religious component of any activity would inevitably lead to its invalidation under the Establishment Clause...." Despite the purely religious nature of the nativity scene, Burger had concluded, it is but a 'passive symbol' which as part of a larger display 'engenders a friendly community spirit of good will in keeping with the season' and 'serves the commercial interests' of merchants and their employees." Justice Blackman in dissent commented, "The City has its victory — but it is a Pyrrhic one indeed."

Staying with that theme, the back cover is given over to a piece by editor Paul Greenberg, who muses over a rather civic-minded remark of an Arkansas public official: "The Arkansas display incorporates the theme of Christmas and not just the *Nativity of Christ*." It led Greenberg to this astute observation: "... although the state may covet the symbols of religion, it certainly doesn't want to identify itself with any explicit confession of faith." Sacred symbols in a secular setting? In Greenberg's words, "A naked public square cries out for decoration the way a restaurant needs ambience."

Finally on this issue, Oliver Thomas agrees that recognition of religious holidays in the public schools provides excellent teaching opportunities. It is not the occasion, however, for advancing or inhibiting religion. Thomas' **VIEWS** column warns against the improper use of the season to promote religion and lists helpful guidelines based on the experience of the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, school board.

The final word here belongs to the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee: "A Blessed Christmas to You. May God's Presence Bless Your New Year." □

Victor Tupitza

● **IN A MAJOR** church-state separation decision, the California Supreme Court has ruled that a religious organization may be sued for fraud for allegedly "brainwashing" unknowing recruits into joining the church.

The justices held in a 6-1 decision that two former members of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church can proceed to trial with assertions that they were tricked by recruiters who denied they were church members and then used subtle "mind-control" techniques.

The majority said that any impediment to the constitutionally protected free exercise of religion was outweighed by the state's interest in protecting unknowing recruits from fraud and the possible risks of brainwashing.

The court also ruled that one of the two former church members could sue to recover a \$6,000 donation he allegedly was deceived into making to the church.

"The challenge here is not to the church's teaching or to the validity of a religious conversion," Justice Stanley Mosk wrote for the majority. "The challenge is to the church's practice of misrepresenting or concealing its identity in order to bring unsuspecting outsiders into its highly structured environment. That practice is not itself belief -- it is conduct subject to regulation for the protection of society."

But in a sharp dissent, Judge Carl W. Anderson, a state appellate judge sitting by special appointment, said the ruling "unnecessarily projects the court into the arena of divining the truth or falsity of religious beliefs."

An attorney for the Unification Church said the ruling will be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. (Los Angeles Times)

● **A PROCEDURAL VOTE** by the U.S. Senate has killed a controversial child-care bill that at one time seemed destined for passage by the 100th Congress.

Following a failed attempt to close debate on a legislative package that included the Act for Better Child Care Services, Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., declined to schedule another vote on cloture -- a Senate procedure to close debate -- thus putting an end to the bill for this year. The cloture effort fell

ten votes short of the sixty required to end debate.

The ABC bill would have authorized distribution of \$2.5 billion to states for child-care services during fiscal year 1989.

One of the bill's provisions that drew the most criticism from opponents -- which ranged from national education organizations to women's groups to religious organizations -- related to child-care centers operated by religious institutions.

Under the bill, child-care centers sponsored by religious institutions would have been able to qualify for federal funds if they avoided religious instruction, worship, or other sectarian activities. Church-related facilities could not have used federal funds to build new facilities or to discriminate on the basis of religion against children whose care was subsidized by federal funds.

But the bill would have allowed church-related providers to exercise religious preference in hiring employees and, in some cases, to use federal funds to repair or renovate facilities.

● **THE OREGON SUPREME** Court has ruled that the religious use of the drug peyote by Native Americans is constitutionally protected.

The decision involves two Indian men who were fired from their jobs as drug counselors and denied unemployment benefits for using small amounts of peyote during rites of the Native American Church.

Two years ago, the state court ruled that denying unemployment benefits to the men violated their constitutional right to practice their religion. The state appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, which last term said it could not decide on the matter until the Oregon court determined if the religious use of peyote violated Oregon law.

In its latest ruling, the state court noted that Oregon laws against the possession of controlled substances "make no exception for the sacramental use of peyote." But it added that the "outright prohibition of good faith religious use of peyote by adult members of the Native American Church would violate the First Amendment directly and as interpreted by Congress." (RNS)

Jacques Ellul has written extensively in the area of sociology and religion. He retired recently as professor of law and the sociology and history of institutions at the University of Bordeaux. This article is excerpted from his most recent book, *Jesus and Marx*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (\$12.95).

# Christianity and Ideologies

## JESUS AND MARX

**"I**deology" has become a hackneyed topic for discussion, but it can mean just about anything. In common usage, it means "any opinion different from mine," always with an unfavorable connotation. If we look to specialists, we discover as many definitions as there are sociologists!

Let us begin with my definition, a kind of common denominator often used in specialized studies. This one has the advantage of relating concretely to the facts: an ideology is the popularized sentimental degeneration of a political doctrine or worldview; it involves a mixture of passions and rather incoherent intellectual elements, always related to present realities.

Today's political universe is littered with ideologies that make the practice of politics both easier and more difficult. They make it easier to manipulate the masses through propaganda, but they complicate decision making, since the ideological effect must always be taken into account. Anything can be labeled an ideology, just as anything can become one: Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy, Marxism, Anti-Racism, Feminism, etc.

Often an ideology springs up to parry an ideology-free practice. Male domination, for example, has no explicitly formulated ideology; feminist ideology arises to oppose it. Capitalism is a practice with no explicitly formulated ideology; socialist ideology arises to oppose it. Afterward, capitalism will produce an ideology of "defense." Often an ideology strives with an outdated ideology: racism is still practiced but no longer has a genuinely ideological expression. But opposite it anti-racism comes to life — and it is thoroughly ideological.

Within this expanding ideological movement so peculiar to our time, Christianity can clearly also become an

ideology. In fact, it has become one. As faith, as God's revelation in Jesus Christ, as theology (searching to make faith and revelation explicit), as a practice that is *faithful* to God's will, Christianity is not an ideology. But it has become one, and relentlessly continues to become one, whenever it is a means for distinguishing those who are right from those who are wrong (the saved and the damned), a principle for life conduct and for directing the world, a Christian political construct, a will to convert at any cost in order to swell the ranks of a given church, a system for organizing society, or a moralistic system (teaching that behavior is objectively good or bad, according to a clear and timeless definition of good and evil). In any of these cases, Christianity is truly an ideology.

Each of these errors involves a degeneration: of theological doctrine into simplification, of faith into beliefs and

feelings, and of the practice of freedom into mere religion. The blending of these three errors produces an ideology. This is a serious matter! Christianity was originally an anti-ideology! The very concept of revelation opposes ideology and Christianity (an "ism" [in French] — but it should not be!).

Two timeless principles oppose ideology and Christianity: (1) God's biblical revelation necessarily entails iconoclasm, that is, the destruction of all religions, beliefs, idolatrous images, and fads. We must bring this up to date and apply it to our current idols — Money, the State, Science, etc. — but also religions like Communism and Maoism. Iconoclasm aims at everything ideological that tends to take the place of the revealed God. (2) On the practical level, the Bible reveals that all Christian conduct is founded on God's liberation. God does away with our alienation so that we can live as free people. Thus we must attack all ideologies, since they force us to conform, join us to an orthodox group, and sweep away our capacity for choice and individual reflection.

**The Bible reveals that all Christian conduct is founded on God's liberation. God does away with our alienation so that we can live as free people. Thus we must attack all ideologies, since they force us to conform, join us to an orthodox group, and sweep away our capacity for choice and individual reflection.**

The agonizing difficulty in all this involves detecting ideology. If the Christian faith prepares us to ascertain ideology, where do we find it? Clearly the first step is to question Christian ideology itself: Christianity as power and as ideology. In this connection we see that Karl Marx's and Friedrich Nietzsche's criticisms, for example, are clearly on target. They question the ideological aspect of Christianity.

But it would be much better for Christians themselves to do this work. All we must do is get on with criticizing our own ideas, convictions, churches, and movements on the basis of a demanding rather than a rationalizing reading of the Bible. This means we must

renounce reading the Bible to find arguments to justify our behavior or that of our group. Any time we read the Bible to find arguments or justifications, we wallow in Christian ideology.

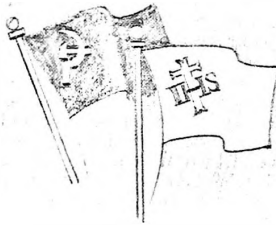
If I read the Bible in order to listen to the questions God asks me about my thoughts, my behavior, my church, then I am well on the way to destroying ideology. This is because the first step toward criticizing ideologies as a group is to question Christian ideology. On that basis we can develop the possibility of an overall and radical challenge, which involves nonconformity to the world. The second step is understanding and applying Paul's teaching: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your minds" (Romans 12:2). This is typical of anti-ideological action. It involves discerning the sociological trends in our society. Precisely because they are sociological, they tempt us to join in with everyone else and, of course, to justify our actions ideologically. This rationalization appears to be a new understanding of the world, a belief in Progress, the Good, Justice, or Truth.

The touchstone in this case is to detect the sociological nature of the trend. "A given way of doing things appealed to no one twenty years ago; I would not have thought twice about it. Now it becomes fascinating, and I find it attractive. Why am I attracted? Because this thing is true, just, or good? No, since in that case I would have been interested twenty years ago. I find it tempting because the media give it attention and because so many millions follow and believe it."

Nudist behavior, for example, was not really "forbidden or suppressed" half a century ago; it simply did not exist, and nobody thought about it or *felt the need for it*. Today thousands of people find they have a frantic need to practice nudism. They feel scandalized when nudity is "suppressed," and consider nudism a conquest for freedom. But, of course, nudism exists as a need *only* because hundreds of thousands of people practice it and because we are given a rationalizing ideology of nudism. This means that there is no conquest for freedom involved, just obedience to a sociological trend. This is only one example.

Thus we detect purely ideological talk as the product of a trend involving many people who justify their behavior by such talk. Their behavior expresses

only a major societal tendency. In other words, conforming to the "world" is evil compared with freedom in Christ, and we must fight such conformity's translation into ideology. I must detect how each ideology expresses conformity to society and attracts me. This process is doubly important since ideology involves me inevitably in false problems without importance.



We can look at this falsity in two ways. (1) As we have said, ideology is the degeneration of a doctrine. Such a doctrine was generally conceived as related to the reality its author lived in and the problems posed by that reality. But when, after a time, this doctrine was slowly popularized, made commonplace, and mixed with beliefs and passions, it ceased to refer to a genuine reality. Reality was left behind. For example, Marx's thought was worked out in relation to the problems of his time, with which he was admirably well acquainted. He offered precise solutions for these problems. But a century later, Marxist ideology continues to repeat a whole batch of formulas that no longer have any connection with the real problems of our time.

(2) In order to have an ideology large numbers of people must identify with it. I will not go into the problem of the amount of time lapsed: to succeed in having a large number of adherents, one must have time, so that when they have been gathered, they are mes-

merized by problems that were *formerly true*, but *presently nonexistent*. Quite apart from this problem of time, large numbers of people will support an ideology only if it signifies conformity. They will follow an ideology that expresses what everybody believes and not something that raises questions. Heroes and saints can accept being called into question, but no one else can. Ideology spreads precisely to the degree that it changes nothing. Nazi ideology formulated and crystallized what millions of Germans already believed and wanted; it changed nothing essential.

Christianity attracts millions of followers (and becomes an ideology) when it begins to fill the religious void every person has within himself. This means that ideology concerns me with false problems, not really burning issues or dramatic, demanding matters. Ideology makes me think the moon is made of green cheese; that is, it impassions, dramatizing false problems, making me think they are important. The main significance of Christians' presence and of visible faith, then, is that they can denounce ideology and the false and outdated questions it raises.

Christians must discern the genuine issues of our time. This way we perform a genuine service to politics and to the society in which we live. We can do this by means of the discernment of spirits, but such understanding must be applied by means of a solid, rigorous, independent analysis of the political, economic, and sociological spheres. This sort of analysis is a practical matter, whereas the discernment of spirits make it possible, safeguards it, and oversees it. Such analysis must be achieved on a "point of view" different from that of all ideologies.

Even when they claim to be utopian, ideologies refer to a past reality, whereas our discernment is based on the certainty that Christ is coming, the certainty of the Kingdom as both already present and still to come. In other words the discernment of the true, concrete, political, and social problems of our present world is possible only starting from a vision of the Kingdom of God that is coming. This is true prophecy: the simple understanding of the present as it relates to the permanent truth of God. Certainly the Christian must be a prophet in our time; and prophecy is the exact opposite of all ideology. □

## VIEWS OF THE WALL

Oliver S. Thomas  
General Counsel



"Daddy, why wouldn't my teacher let me sing 'Silent Night'?"

I still remember the hurt and confusion in my five year old's voice as she recounted what had happened at school that day. The kindergartners were discussing the upcoming Christmas holiday when the teacher decided to let the children sing their favorite carols to one another. Everything was going smoothly until Rachel asked to sing "Silent Night." "I'm sorry," responded the teacher, "but that's a religious song, and we can't sing it here."

Ten years earlier and 2,000 miles away, a similar kindergarten class had memorized and performed a Christmas program that included the following "Christmas Quiz":

*Teacher:* Of whom did heav'nly angels sing and news about his birthday bring?

*Class:* Jesus.

*Teacher:* Now, can you name the little town where they the baby Jesus found?

*Class:* Bethlehem.

*Teacher:* Where had they made a little bed for Christ the blessed Savior's head?

*Class:* In a manger and a cattle stall.

*Teacher:* What is the day we celebrate as birthday of the One so great?

*Class:* Christmas.

How should religious holidays be treated in the public schools?

"Carefully," said fourteen prominent religious and educational organizations recently. "Religious holidays offer excellent opportunities to teach about religions in the elementary and secondary classroom.... If the approach is objective, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, it can foster among students understanding and mutual respect within and beyond the local community."

While religious holidays no doubt offer excellent opportunities for teaching about religion, they also offer opportunities for improperly promoting religion in violation of the First Amendment. Scores of Jewish and other non-Christian school children could attest to the trauma of being forced to choose between participating in explicitly Christian holiday observances or risking ostracism by their peers.

Because the Supreme Court has not ruled on the holiday issue, there are no final or definitive answers. A federal

appeals court, however, addressed the issue in 1980 in the highly publicized case of *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District 49-5*. The decision, which upheld the school board's policy for religious holidays, was allowed to stand by the Supreme Court and is frequently cited as the controlling case on this controversial issue. The relevant portions of the board's policy read as follows:

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees and none should be disparaged. Instead, the school district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. ... In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff members should be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

The Sioux Falls School District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization....

The practice of the Sioux Falls School District shall be as follows:

1. The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the public schools.
2. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
3. Music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.
4. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions, or other symbols that

A common misconception about the holiday issue is that it is permissible to promote Christianity at Christmas provided that other religions receive similar treatment at other times.... This approach is wrong.

are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature. Among these holidays are included Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween.

5. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

Any teacher or administrator should ask himself or herself the following questions as the holiday season approaches: As I plan holiday activities, do I have a distinct educational goal in mind? If I teach about Christmas and Thanksgiving, do I also teach about other religious or cultural events? Does the purpose or effect of my planned activities have the primary effect of advancing or inhibiting religion? Does it, for example, advance the Christian faith or would it, on the other hand, inhibit the beliefs of Jews or other non-Christians? Will the activities be offensive to a child who has been taught by his or her parents that there is no God?

A common misconception about the holiday issue is that it is permissible to promote Christianity at Christmas provided that other religions receive similar treatment at other times. For example, some teachers may try to justify promoting Christianity at Christmas by promoting Judaism during Hanukkah.

# Quoting

Leonard Levy  
The Establishment Clause

This approach is wrong. First, Hanukkah is not a major Jewish holiday and should not be equated with Christmas, one of the two most important holidays of the Christian year. Second, one violation of the First Amendment does not justify another. If it's wrong to promote religion in the public schools at Christmas, it's wrong on every other day of the year. Instead of "balancing" Christmas with Hanukkah, teachers should work to insure that all holiday celebrations focus on objective study and education, not indoctrination.

One of the most difficult, but also the most beneficial, places to teach about religion is in the elementary schools. Students of tender years are often incapable of distinguishing between teaching about religion and the teaching of religion. For that reason, elementary teachers must be particularly careful. On the other hand, there is no better time to begin educating children about the religious pluralism in our society than during the elementary years.

Malcolm Price Laboratory School has developed a three-week unit entitled "Celebrations" for use in the second and third grade social studies curriculum. The unit focuses on the five winter celebrations of Christmas, Kwanzaa (a Black American celebration in which families learn about their African religious and cultural heritage), Epiphany/Three Kings Day/Twelfth Night, Hanukkah, and Chinese New Year and is designed to expose children to the rich and diverse religious fabric of our society.

The unit has been printed in the spring 1988 journal of the National Council on Religion and Public Education and is available through the Baptist Joint Committee. Additional curricular materials for primary and secondary schools are available through Dr. Charles Haynes, Americans United Research Foundation, 900 Silver Spring Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. □

As a secular institution the public school has no religious purpose or function. It is not antagonistic to religion or to its role in history or in society. Because those who framed the First Amendment understood the overriding importance of religion, they meant to create a state without a religion, although they did not believe that reference to God established religion; they wanted to be sure that religion flourished because it would not be an engine of the state. Indeed they sought to create a system in which neither religion nor government was sovereign, or slave, to the other.

That is one reason why the state has an obligation not to teach religion and why religion has achieved an exalted place in our nation: it is the product of voluntary, private choice, not public sponsorship or coercion. The public school is a mirror of society. "Designed," as Justice Felix Frankfurter once wrote, "to serve as perhaps the most powerful agency for promoting cohesion among a heterogeneous democratic people, the public school must keep scrupulously free from entanglement in the strife of sects." He added that the preservation of society from divisive sectarian conflict and of government from irreconcilable pressures demands "strict confinement of the State to instruction other than religious, leaving to the individual's church and home, indoctrination in the faith of his choice." □

Glenn Hinson  
Religious Liberty

"Religious liberty" means more than freedom of conscience. Religious liberty entails not only freedom to believe what conscience dictates, but freedom to speak in behalf of those beliefs, to organize in support of them, and to win adherents to them.

Coercion may force responses of some kind, but it cannot generate authentic faith. Faith is too personal, too profound, too much a matter of the heart. It must arise spontaneously, from awe and thanksgiving before a loving God, or else it is not faith.

"The King is a mortal man, and not God," Thomas Helwys, the first British Baptist, reminded King James I in 1612. Thomas Helwys died in a London prison. So, too, did his successor John Murton. John Bunyan spent twelve-and-a-half years in prison because he refused to stop unlicensed preaching. To obey God rather than human beings, he left his wife with the care of four small children, one a blind daughter dearer to him, he said, "than all

else I had beside." He spoke of this decision as leaping from a ladder blindfolded into eternity at God's command. John Leland continued to preach from a jail cell in Culpepper County, Virginia.

Did the Inquisition and the Crusades of the Middle Ages, or the persecutions and religious wars of the modern era, or prisons and gallows of Puritan America achieve their intended aim — the increase of faithfulness and the reconciliation of dissidents? Far from it; they killed religion! Coercion begot indifference and hatred of religion. In Europe today only five or ten percent of the people participate actively in the churches. In America only five or six percent of third-generation Puritans attended church.

Religious liberty has brought a life and vitality in the American churches unequaled anywhere in the world. From the Great Awakening on, religious revivals have depended on and demanded and fostered freedom in the Spirit. Liberty is essential for a healthy church. □

Jim Wallis  
Sojourner Magazine

In spiritual and biblical terms, racism is a perverse sin that cuts to the core of the gospel message. Put simply, racism negates the reason for which Christ died — the reconciling work of the cross. It denies the purpose of the church: to bring together, in Christ, those who have been divided from one another, particularly in the early church's case, Jew and Gentile — a division based on race.

There is only one remedy for such a sin and that is repentance, which, if genuine, will always bear fruit in concrete forms of conversion, changed behavior, and reparation. While the United States may have changed in regard to some of its racial attitudes and allowed some of its black citizens into the middle class, white America has yet to recognize the extent of its racism — that we are and have always been a racist society — much less to repent of its sins.

The church still has the capacity to be the much-needed prophetic interrogator of a system that has always depended upon racial suppression. The gospel remains clear. The church still should and can be a spiritual and social community where the ugly barriers of race are finally torn down to reveal the possibilities of a different American future. □

Excerpted from *America's Original Sin: "A Study Guide on White Racism,"* published by the Sojourners Resource Center (\$4.95)

# News in Brief

## BJC annual meeting focuses on religious freedom in USSR, budget

The Baptist Joint Committee ratified a resolution on religious freedom in the Soviet Union, adopted a proposed 1989-90 budget, and approved a staff evaluation report during its annual meeting October 3-4.

In the resolution, the BJC commended the Soviet Union and its leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, for making "progress toward religious freedom." (See page ten for related story.)

The statement was adopted unanimously after board members heard an assessment of recent Soviet activities by U.S. Ambassador Richard Schifter, undersecretary of state for humanitarian affairs.

During consideration of the proposed budget, tensions between the BJC and its Southern Baptist Convention delegation resurfaced.

Members of the Public Affairs Committee — the SBC's eighteen-member delegation — focused on several concerns with the \$729,772 proposed budget for 1989-90. That budget calls for an increase in the SBC contribution from \$400,000 in the current 1988-89 budget to \$460,000.

"It is very clear that this asking budget expects the Southern Baptist Convention to increase its contribution by \$60,000, when total contributions of the other bodies are less than \$60,000," said Tom Pratt, Southern Baptist pastor from Brighton, Colorado. Anticipated contributions of the other member denominations total \$59,010.

PAC members also disputed the BJC's request for \$60,000 more from the SBC, when that convention's proposed operating budget is expected to show zero growth. "This is the asking budget; this is the goal," said James M. Dunn, the BJC's executive director.

PAC members criticized the BJC budget's line item for contributions from other sources, noting it has grown from \$34,000 in 1987-88 to \$110,000 in 1989-90.

Dunn declined to list these contributions from other sources. He described the status of budget proceedings from SBC state conventions that have indicated intent to support the BJC directly. But he said he has not secured disclosure

permission from churches contributing directly to the BJC and added he did not feel at liberty to disclose anonymous donors.

PAC Chairman Samuel T. Currin, a state judge from Raleigh, North Carolina, said the BJC should know about anonymous donors, "even if this body has to go into executive session."

"We have a responsibility for accountability to the Southern Baptist Convention," added Norris Sydnor, a Southern Baptist pastor from Mitchellville, Maryland.

C. J. Malloy, Jr., general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., in Washington, defended the BJC: "We get accurate reports, fine audits; the monies are being transferred in the way they should be. We have confidence in the staff."

The BJC approved the budget proposal on an uncounted show-of-hands vote, with only some of the Southern Baptist delegation dissenting.

The BJC also approved a motion offered by Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tennessee, that Dunn "disclose, so far as is possible," the details of projected contributions.

Another BJC/PAC dispute — this one concerning BJC staff — re-emerged even before the annual meeting officially began. The PAC's staff evaluation committee attended the BJC's staff evaluation committee meeting October 2. But only PAC Chairman Currin, a member of the BJC evaluation committee, was allowed to remain for the evaluation of professional staff.

When the full BJC received its staff evaluation report — which noted, "The executive director works hard, acquired competent staff, has good supervision, and significantly affects church/state matters as the BJC has directed" — Currin spoke against the report.

He noted the evaluation was done a full year after the PAC first sought to examine staff members and the evaluation process only took a little more than two hours, instead of a more thorough examination, which "should have been two days."

WASHINGTON

"It did not begin to scratch the surface of some of our concerns," he said. "This is certainly not the kind of evaluation the PAC had in mind when we requested a separate evaluation."

But William Cober, associate general secretary for national ministries of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., countered, "This was as thorough an evaluation as a board can expect unless it is considering removing someone from office."

Elder added: "I can assure you this staff is evaluated on a twelve-month basis. (The evaluation) is just formulated once a year."

The BJC approved the evaluation report 24-8, with only Southern Baptists dissenting.

The specific nature of PAC criticisms of staff activities also surfaced. Particularly noted were staff responses to two civil rights bills.

PAC members criticized the BJC staff for publication of a "fact sheet" and charged the staff helped supporters of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 override President Reagan's veto.

The BJC staff has contended it remained neutral on the override and only provided unbiased information about the legislation.

A PAC-approved resolution calling for corrective amendments in the act and including criticism of the BJC staff was introduced at the BJC meeting, but the BJC adopted instead a resolution similar to one adopted by messengers at the 1988 annual meeting of the SBC.

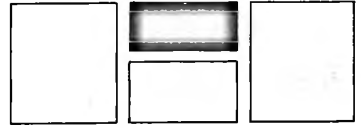
In that resolution, the BJC asked Congress to amend the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 "to ensure that the constitutional guarantees of the free exercise of religion are not infringed."

The resolution criticizes the act for failing to distinguish between direct and indirect federal funding; for making religious exemptions "available only to those institutions 'controlled by' a religious organization"; and for raising "potential church-state problems, particularly for Baptist colleges and universities."

The resolution urges "all Baptist agencies and institutions to monitor closely the implementation of this act." It also asks those organizations "to refuse direct federal assistance" and encourages Baptist organizations that receive indirect assistance "to seek legal counsel about seeking exemptions ... where necessary to protect their free exercise of religion."

It encourages "all Baptists to contact





members of Congress to urge them to support" the proposed amendment and asks government officials "to continue interpreting the exemption broadly so as to include those institutions indirectly controlled by religious organizations."

Another PAC concern involved the Armstrong Amendment to the 1988 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill. The amendment forced the District of Columbia to exempt religious schools and colleges from a district law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

PAC members criticized the BJC staff for remaining neutral on the amendment and for failing to join other conservative Christians in a press conference supporting it. BJC staffers countered they previously had denounced the original District of Columbia legislation as "bad law." They said they declined to become involved officially with the amendment because it was a local matter and involved a religious institution that accepts direct government funding.

A resolution — introduced by PAC member Albert Lee Smith, an insurance executive from Birmingham, Alabama — that expressed dismay at the staff's neutrality and voiced support for the amendment was tabled on an 18-11 vote.

In other action, the BJC re-elected its officers for another one-year term. They are Marvin C. Griffin, National Baptist Convention of America, chairman; Margaret Prine, ABC, first vice chairman; J. I. Ginnings, SBC, second vice chairman; and Warren Magnuson, Baptist General Conference, secretary.

(This story is based on reporting by Marv Knox, Baptist Press feature editor.) □

## Curriculum on religious liberty to be developed

WASHINGTON

In an effort to help the nation's schools feel their way through a "minefield of controversies" surrounding the question of religion and education, a diverse coalition of educators, scholars, and religious leaders has formed to develop curriculum on religious liberty and its role in a pluralistic society.

The group — working in cooperation with the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-profit project concerned with the place of religion in public life — is working to

develop a five-lesson curricular unit titled "Living with Our Deepest Differences."

During a news conference announcing the curriculum project, Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and chairman of the project's editorial review board, said: "For far too long, we've had a remarkable silence on teaching about religion in the nation's public schools. This silence is not because of a conspiracy, but because of confusion about what such a curriculum should include and a genuine concern that to discuss religion in the classroom might be viewed as indoctrination or a violation of the conscience of students, as well as a violation of the fundamental principles of the Constitution."

"The problem is that this silence has led many to conclude that public schools are, at the very least, indifferent to religion or, at the very most, actively opposed. Most importantly, perhaps, the failure to include systematically the study of religion in the school curriculum has reduced the quality of the education we are providing to our children."

Project leaders said the curriculum will be developed around three goals:

— To explain the history and significance of the First Amendment religious liberty clauses and their decisive contribution to individual and communal liberty and to American democracy.

— To examine the advantages and responsibilities of living in a modern pluralistic society and to demonstrate how practical dilemmas can be answered in terms of tolerance and mutual respect rather than bigotry and violence.

— To deepen each student's appreciation of the principles of religious liberty for peoples of all faiths or none and to establish a strong civic commitment to the ground rules by which all citizens can contend robustly but civilly over religious differences in public life. □

## Court agrees to hear two new church-state cases

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court has added to its 1988-89 calendar a pair of church-state disputes that are to be argued and decided by next summer.

In the first case, the high court will decide whether Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) and the city of Pittsburgh may permit the display of a Jewish me-

norah and a Christmas nativity scene on public property.

In Pittsburgh, Allegheny County officials for the past twenty years have sponsored a nativity scene erected inside the county courthouse. The creche is owned by a Catholic men's organization. Besides the courthouse creche, the city of Pittsburgh annually erects an eighteen-foot menorah next to a large Christmas tree on the steps of the city-county building. The menorah is owned by Chabad, a private Orthodox Jewish group.

Two years ago the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union requested county and city officials to discontinue the practices but were advised the displays were not intended to endorse a particular religion. The ACLU chapter then took the cases to court.

Although a federal district judge denied the ACLU's motion to enjoin the county and city from continuing to erect the displays, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals held last March that the displays violate the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion. County and city officials then appealed to the Supreme Court. (87-2050, *Allegheny County, City of Pittsburgh, and Chabad v. ACLU*; 88-90, *Chabad v. ACLU*; 88-96, *Allegheny County and City of Pittsburgh v. ACLU*)

In the second case, the Supreme Court will decide if a Peoria, Illinois, man who objects for religious reasons to working on Sundays is entitled to unemployment compensation for refusing to take a job that would have required Sunday work.

William A. Frazee, who worked as a temporary for Kelly Services, refused to take a job as a clothing store salesman when the employer would not give him Sunday off. Frazee then applied for unemployment benefits but was denied on grounds his refusal to work was "without cause."

Frazee went through a series of administrative appeals but lost at every step. He then filed suit against the state. After losing in a trial court, he appealed to a state appellate panel, which ruled "the injunction against Sunday labor must be found in a tenet or dogma of an established religious sect."

Frazee's attorneys asked the Supreme Court to review that finding, arguing the lower panel's decision was flawed because "it never bothered to define what it meant by 'established religious body.'" (87-1945, *Frazee v. Department of Employment Security*) □

## BJC Hears Ambassador, Adopts Liberty Statement

The Baptist Joint Committee since its founding in 1936 has maintained a keen interest in and commitment to religious liberty around the world.

Its constitution includes within the agency's scope and purpose the mandate to engage in "conference or negotiation with the Government of the United States or with any other Governments ... whenever Baptist principles are involved in, or are jeopardized through, governmental action."

On the basis of this mandate and the opportunity to support religious liberty in the USSR, representatives of the BJC's eight U.S. cooperating Baptist bodies in annual session on October 5, adopted a statement expressing satisfaction with "progress [made] toward religious freedom" in the Soviet Union.

They listened to an address by U.S. Ambassador Richard Schifter, undersecretary of state for humanitarian affairs, on the nature of the reform movement under Mikhail Gorbachev and of his need for broad support.

Speaking of recent developments in the USSR, Schifter admitted that as early as a year ago he had had doubts about how open it would be to religious freedom. He said in the last six to eight months there has been "significant movement" in that direction.

The ambassador said he believes change has occurred because Gorbachev saw the Soviet system "crumbling" and as a consequence of the state's failure to produce the better way of life promised for the people.

Ambassador Schifter encouraged the BJC to minister to their fellow believers in the Soviet Union and to continue sending religious literature. He also urged Christians to use their representatives in the U.S. Congress as channels through which to express concern.

If Gorbachev remains in power despite some bureaucratic opposition, according to Schifter, "there is a chance of further opening" of religious freedom.

The BJC's statement was drafted by a committee comprised of Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission; R. Keith Parks, president of the SBC's Foreign Mission Board; and Robert Tiller, director of the Office of Governmental Relations for the American Baptist Churches' National Ministries.

Cited in the BJC statement and integral to its concerns were areas in which the abridgement of religious belief exists



U.S. Ambassador Richard Schifter (second from left) addressed the Baptist Joint Committee at its October meeting on Gorbachev's reform movement and its implications for religious liberty in the Soviet Union. Participating in a panel discussion which followed the ambassador's presentation were (l-r) Victor Tupitz, Stanley Grenz, and Keith Parks.

in conflict with the USSR's constitutional guarantee of church-state separation.

Michael Bourdeaux, who founded and heads Keston College in suburban London, England, for the purpose of research on religious liberty in eastern Europe, places no great weight on the guarantee of church-state separation in the constitution of the USSR.

He told REPORT, "There is not now nor has there ever been separation; the church has always been under state control." He has joined his voice to other staunch advocates of the new law on

religion, believing that control of the church by the state "is actually written into the law — notably in the provision that every church must be registered with the state in order to be legal."

That in itself negates the principle of separation, he said, adding, however, that "if there were free and open registration, there would be perhaps 100,000-200,000 churches rather than merely 15,000 registered congregations (government figures) of all denominations" in the Soviet Union. □

### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE SOVIET UNION

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs commends and encourages the government of the USSR and the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev for progress toward religious freedom, such as:

- easing of restrictions on importing the Holy Bible and religious literature;
- recognition that believers are patriotic citizens, thus leading to a diminution in arrests and incarceration of believers, and an increase in the number of prisoners granted amnesty or prison term reductions; and
- permission for Christian citizens, particularly Baptists, to engage in social programs such as hospital service, where they attend to routine patient care and bring human comfort to those who are physically or mentally ill.

In furtherance of these developments, we call upon the government of the USSR to:

- undergird by legislative action the exercise of these new freedoms to assure their legal and orderly continuance;
- enact quickly legislation to make available alternative forms of national service to loyal citizens forbidden by conscience to participate in military service;
- register promptly all bonafide congregations whose applications meet the legal requirements of the state;
- permit the organization of necessary institutions of theological learning for clergy, and the granting of opportunity to every citizen who wishes to enter the service of the church; and
- end restrictions on religious education and freedom of worship for children.

Finally, we call upon the world Christian community, particularly our fellow Baptists, to create and fund adequate structure for receiving and assisting those persons — especially believers — who emigrate from the Soviet Union and find themselves with scant resources in a new nation.

Statement adopted October 3, 1988

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# INTERNATIONAL DATELINE



## Southern Baptists vote to deed seminary in Zurich

RUSCHLIKON

**T**he Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted to grant ownership of the Baptist Seminary of Ruschlikon to European Baptists, following a FMB team's visit to the site to "listen and gather information."

In deliberations on October 12, trustees of the FMB approved the property transfer. They also suggested a number of recommendations on the operation of the seminary.

As part of the transfer, the European Baptist Federation will create a legal foundation in Switzerland. The foundation will deal with the financial crisis that has come about primarily as a result of the drop in value of the American dollar.

European Baptists plan to ease the projected 1989 deficit of \$100,000 by mortgaging seminary property at Swiss interest rates, lower than that to be earned by immediate investment of those funds outside that country.

The Southern Baptist Convention at present contributes 34.5 percent of the seminary's one-million-dollar annual budget. Mission board trustees acted to continue to fund the seminary over a period "as long as fifteen years."

"Ruschlikon" — the international seminary is known by its location — was established in 1949 largely on the initiative of the Southern Baptist Convention following World War II for the purpose of theological education of Baptist ministers and to bring together fellow-believers from previously combatant nations.

An article in the *London Baptist Times* earlier had noted the determination of European Baptists to keep the seminary viable despite its current financial dilemma, and the then-possible loss of SBC participation. Old Testament tutor Hans Mallau had said, "If it ceased to exist, it would immediately need to be replaced."

The Europeans had also voiced their refusal to allow the SBC's "no-holds-barred" struggles over the Bible and theology to be transplanted to European Baptist life.

Dr. Mallau explained, "It is plain that an attempt to enforce a fundamentalist atmosphere on a European teaching institution simply would not work," the *Times* reported.

As part of their deliberations, concerns were expressed by FMB trustees over the seminary's theology. Half the faculty are Southern Baptist missionaries who teach there on a part-time or full-time basis. Trustees requested that the seminary board consider the possibility of a written statement that would express the seminary's biblical commitment.

The trustees also called for a seminary charter "with policies and procedures" for its operation; broader European representation concerned with giving counsel to the seminary, demanding accountability, and reporting to the national unions on the seminary's work and needs; and efforts to expand the financial commitment of Baptist unions and "other international Baptist constituencies which benefit from the ministry of the seminary." □

## Reformed Church protests destruction of villages

Protests against the planned demolition of villages in Romania were voiced in September by pastors of the Arad Deanery of the Reformed Church of Romania, according to the Hungarian Press of Transylvania.

Janos Molnar of Borossebes called on the national leadership of his church to invite the non-Reformed religious leaders of the country to plan a coordinated "dialogue" with the state officials responsible for executing the government's so-called "systemisation" of agriculture.

Pastor Molnar stated that the "destruction of villages means the destruction of the past. Any people would become rootless if its past were wiped off the face of the earth." □

## Bishops chastize media over 'alien' ideology

In a pastoral letter for "mass media day" celebrated in Poland in September, the Polish bishops strongly condemned the country's mass media for promoting only the Socialist state's vision of the world and promoting its own ideology, alien to the overwhelming majority of the Polish society.

"One of the basic criteria of freedom," states the letter, "is allowing access to the mass media for everyone regardless

of their religious convictions, world outlook, and political views."

One of the few concessions, given by the government at the time of Solidarity's dramatic move into prominence in 1980, was permission for broadcasting the Mass and other religious services. It was not withdrawn after the imposition of martial law in 1981.

"The argument put forward for the past decades by the state authorities — of paper shortages or the inefficiency of printing — does not explain the present situation at all," said the letter.

"Added to these so-called difficulties are censorship impediments, stemming most often from the discretionary interpretation both of the law on the control of publications and visual shows and the law on the press."

The letter concluded, "We are waiting for the state authorities ... to recognize in a concrete manner the public nature of the media and public freedom to express opinions and convictions in the mass media." □

## Church-state tensions ease in Mozambique

NEW YORK

A Quaker from the Netherlands recalls one of the first images of church life she encountered when in 1980 she and her husband arrived in Mozambique to work as teachers.

Marlies Tjallingii spoke of a Christian worship service she had witnessed not far from the waves of the Indian Ocean. It was very different from what she was used to in the Netherlands — it was "very much emotional" and filled with a "lot of African elements," she said.

Perhaps the visual element was the taking of "spiritual baths" in which worshippers were repeatedly thrown into the water.

The public nature of that worship service is illustrative of what Tjallingii sees as a clear easing of tensions between Mozambique's Marxist government and the thirteen-year-old country's Christian minority population. Estimates variously put the Christian population at nine percent or more than twenty percent of the country's fourteen million inhabitants.

Tensions between the church and government began when Mozambique broke from colonial Portuguese rule in 1975 and the new Marxist government seized



## NEWS-SCAN

all church properties. Earlier this year it decided to return much of this property, with the exception of school buildings which remain nationalized.

Tjallingii said relief of tensions began in 1982, when representatives of the ruling party, the National Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), met with church leaders.

One major point of divergence, according to Tjallingii, remains the unwillingness of the country's Catholic hierarchy to support FRELIMO against RENAMO, the rebel organization that is waging a guerrilla campaign in the countryside.

She said negotiations with RENAMO are complicated because of the rebels' backing from South Africa.

She accused South Africa of using RENAMO to destabilize Mozambique in an effort to prevent the nation from becoming a symbol of how African countries under black majority rule can prosper. □

### Chinese proposed laws guarantee religion, safety

Representatives of the various religious communities in China are cooperating with the Religious Affairs Bureau in working out a group of laws which would give legal guarantees to the freedom of religion already existing in the country.

The body charged with responsibility for this work is a commission consisting of ten persons, some of whom have since visited East European countries to study the laws in force there and to gain experience of the prevailing situation.

New laws to be proposed will protect believers from being disturbed or attacked by non-believers, as well as to guarantee freedom of religion.

The principal function of the laws will be to establish the separation of church and state and the definition of the tasks of the Religious Affairs Bureau and of the various religious associations. □

### Spanish Baptists look to building future with hope

VALENCIA, SPAIN

"The Christian message and spirit teach us to not only look behind us to see what we have done, but to look at the future with hope," declared Manuel

Serrias, secretary of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Spain during the opening ceremony of its thirty-sixth convention.

Serrias' statement brought together the two important elements of the convention: the celebration of the centenary of Baptist work in Valencia and the convention theme, "Building the Future."

In his sermon, "Service to Society," pastor Emmanuel Buch encouraged local churches to engage in social ministry. He commended the union for its work and for providing material support for the Baptist Union in Nicaragua. He concluded with the thought that "the social and spiritual dimension of a Christian depends on his relationship with God."

The convention was an historic one. The opening ceremony marked the exact anniversary of the day in which Swedish Baptists along with Spanish believers held the first Lord's Supper in Valencia. □

### Wave of 'raw violence' hits Catholic Church in Haiti

WASHINGTON

A wave of "raw violence" has been directed at the Roman Catholic Church since the June military coup in Haiti, according to a new human-rights study conducted by the Washington-based Puebla Institute.

Burning of churches and repression of church-sponsored humanitarian projects have been accompanied by the military government's intense propaganda campaign to discredit the nation's Catholic bishops. At the same time, voodoo is being promoted as an alternative to Christianity.

The sixty-three-page report is among the most comprehensive assessments of religious and human rights in Haiti since Gen. Henri Namphy seized power from a military-installed civilian government in June. Namphy has since been replaced by another military officer, Gen. Prosper Avril.

Both governments have exhibited a degree of repression and violence "reminiscent of the bloodiest years of Papa Doc rule," said the study, referring to Haiti's late iron-hand ruler Francois Duvalier. □

REPORT news pages are based on Baptist Press, Keston News Service, Religious News Service, and European Baptist Press.

Pentecostal emigration activist Vasilii Barats, who was forcibly removed from Moscow in May 1988 and prevented from returning to the city from the Western Ukrainian Transcarpathian region, has now rejoined his wife, Galina, in Moscow. While he did not have permission to return to the city, no action has been taken against him. He welcomed news that the Soviet authorities are planning to ease emigration formalities by dropping the requirement that would-be emigrants must have an invitation from close relatives abroad and by setting a maximum time limit on blocking emigration on security grounds. Recently, some 150 representatives of Pentecostal churches opposed to state registration under present conditions held a conference in Zagorsk. It was reported there are 20,000 members in the Western Ukraine and about 5,000 in the Moscow region.... A public event marked the recent restoration of the tomb of John Rippon, hymnist and compiler of the first widely used hymn book among Baptists. He is known for having first published the hymn of anonymous authorship, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord".... Reacting positively to requests for greater freedom for the Church, Hungarian Prime Minister and party General Secretary Karoly Grosz promised concessions which will ease the heavy hand of the state. Restrictions on the time, place, and size of religious instruction classes in the parish will be lifted; members of religious orders will be able to work outside the Church's eight grammar schools and teachers there will no longer wait upon the state's annual approval; and unarmed military service will be introduced in 1989 for Catholic conscientious objectors.... Leaders and young members of the Leningrad Baptist Church have held three meetings with staff and students of the Herzen Pedagogical Institute, dialoguing over differences of beliefs. Baptists were asked about their faith, attitudes toward perestroika and the social composition of their congregation. Atheists presented papers in sessions marked by good-natured exchanges.... Amnesty International reported the release of Eduardo Crespo Govea from prison in April or May of this year as part of a series of releases of political prisoners. Govea, still in Cuba, is a former pastor of the World United Mission Church. He has been given an emigration visa. □

# CORRESPONDENCE

Reader response extends dialogue and thereby helps to focus and clarify the issues. Letters must carry both signature and address of the writer and should not exceed 200 words. We reserve the right to edit for length.

## To the Editors:

I want to express my deep appreciation for your sponsorship of the recent Religious Liberty '88 Conference at Green Lake, Wisconsin (American Baptist Assembly). It was challenging, mind-stretching, thought-provoking, and most importantly mind-changing.

I approached the conference with mixed feelings. I was afraid it would either be too general to be helpful to me... or so specific that I could not comprehend the finer points of the issues. We managed to cover both the underlying background on separation of church and state and the specific issues before you at the BJCPA today.

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How did it change me? Well, it helped me see that any entanglement is dangerous. I was willing to accept government funds for religious organizations such as the Salvation Army and our local Good Samaritan Mission as long as they did not hinder the religious purposes of those organizations. Now, I am not so sure. I am at a healthy dilemma — does the church accept government funds, but refuse to do any teaching about Christ or do we surrender some very effective programs knowing that without government funds they could not exist? Or even a third option — realize we are in dangerous territory but keep going as is because people are being ministered to?

God bless you all. May your work continue strong and secure.

John Eby  
 Selma, California

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If my husband were still living, he would have turned eighty years old in September. Believing that Davis [he was head of the SBC's Historical Commission] would be enthusiastic about the work of the BJCP, I'm sending a gift as a birthday remembrance of Davis and his concern for our Baptist heritage. With personal greetings,

Kate Woolley  
 Nashville, Tennessee

I wholeheartedly agree with you. *Register Citizen Opinion* is one of the finest directories available anywhere. It seems we average Christians are too often content with being ill-informed about public policies concerning religious liberties. For whatever reason, the mass media are not concerned over the significant force that religion represents toward social change and, especially, religious liberty.

W. H. McGonagle  
 Van Vleck, Texas

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Whatever one may believe about the need for a common creed, the usefulness of a public faith, or the necessity of shared values, it is clear that one must maintain a sharp watch for patriotism pretending to be religion.

## REFLECTIONS

As I write in October it is not clear who will be the next president of the United States so I'm sending both Messrs. Bush and Dukakis copies of *Civil Religion and the Presidency*. Oh, I know, the odds are slim that either of them will ever read it. Yet, they would do themselves and the country a favor if they would. No book that I know of could be so much help for a president when he talks religion or talks about religion. If you will, urge it on them for December reading.

The book is, as Bill Moyers says, "a rich contribution to an important subject" and it does, in the words of Mark Hatfield, "shed new light on the First Amendment's delicate relationship between religious freedom and the separation of church and state." *Civil Religion and the Presidency* is a happy mix of abstract argument and concrete illustration, a good blend of history and analysis, and a nice treatment of precise religious exposition and sophisticated political discussion. In fact, the politician could profit from theological insights and the religionist could learn some politics from these scholars.

After an introductory chapter defining civil religion and a survey of civil religions from "Rome to the Reagan Era," Richard Pierard and Robert Linder examine the strain of civil religion present in several presidencies. They evaluate with careful documentation the civil religion of presidents Washington, Lincoln, McKinley, Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Nixon, Carter, and Reagan. A grid of Martin Marty's helps sort out different types of civil religion in which the president tends to be "pastor, prophet, preacher," and/or "priest."

Both positive and negative uses for civil religion are exposed. The practice of civil religion, however, "involves the mixing of traditional religion with national life until it is impossible to distinguish between the two." With appropriate appreciation for the work of Robert N. Bellah, Pierard and Linder offer a reasonably dispassionate description of several samples and permit the reader to decide whether the strain of public faith is good or bad. One's personal perspective will have a good deal to do with that as it always has. The authors quote Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* in words that sound strangely modern: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosophers as equally false; and by the magistrates as equally useful."

The specific shape of American civil religion is described with Washington the Moses-liberator figure, Jefferson the prophet, and Lincoln the theologian of the national faith. Civil religion has its holidays, tenets, rituals, and heresies, as well as its leaders. Pierard and Linder identify the "God talk" common to various manifestations of civil religion and probe the reasons that so many presidents confused their private and public faiths.

The writers offer many of the best known quotations of the presidents in their struggles to distinguish between civil and authentic religion. Among these is the famous response of Lincoln to the preacher who expressed hope that "the Lord is on our side." President Lincoln responded, "I don't agree with you. I'm not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is *always* on the side of the *right*. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and the *nation*

should be on the Lord's side."

None of the presidents of the United States has avowed infidelity or scoffed at the faith of the masses. Each of them has spoken of God's guidance, acknowledged his blessings, pledged before God to do his best, called on the people to pray, pled for God's preservation of peace or granting of victory, and admitted his need of divine assistance. Some, like McKinley and Wilson, have gone far beyond that and have seen God's hand at work in specific national policies and invoked God's benediction on their own agendas.

Eisenhower could get by with saying, "Our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith and I don't care what it is." In the Reagan era, however, there has been constant criticism of a civil religion, as Pierard and Linder say, "so polished and rapacious that for the first time it was in direct competition with genuine religion."

Indeed, it does appear that recent years have brought a more pervasive endorsement of God-in-general and a more popular acceptance of generic religion. Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of the conforming religion in Nixon's White House church services rings true of all presidentially sanctioned spirituality. Niebuhr observed, "It is wonderful what a simple White House invitation will do to dull the critical faculties." (p. 124) Sen. Mark Hatfield's prophetic warning against watered-down religion took the battle for revealed religion to the gates. At the National Prayer Breakfast on February 1, 1973, he took on the idolatry that worships a "god of civil religion" and he called for "repentance from the sin that has scarred our national soul."

Whatever one may believe about the need for a common creed, the usefulness of a public faith, or the necessity of shared values, it is clear that one must maintain a sharp watch for patriotism pretending to be religion. Martin Marty says look out for the "harmless little divinity who has almost nothing in common with the God of Christianity." Is he so harmless after all?

The next president, Mike or George, should surely be honest enough to recognize the role of religion in American life and to acknowledge the importance of the spiritual dimension of our life together. He should also be truthful about the place of faith in his own personal life. Either man should also be faithful to his own highest goals and aspirations rooted as they may be in his deepest religious presuppositions.

Yet, he should also bear the awesome burden of public scrutiny unlike any other spotlight in history. In that fish-bowl of constant exposure to the world, he must exercise special care not even unwittingly and unintentionally to appropriate the language of faith for secular purposes. He must be cautious of using "God talk" to manipulate the people. He must guard against using religion as no more than a tool or a weapon in geopolitical struggles. He dare not draft God for his own crusades or nominate the United States as God's covenant people as those who lay special claim to II Chronicles 7:14 are wont to do. Whoever you are, November 8, 1988, victor please, please do not name God the national mascot. Dietz deserves better than that. □

Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency*, Academic (Zondervan Publishing House), Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, 359 pp., paper, \$14.95.



James M. Dunn  
Executive Director



# It's the Spirit of the Age

**N**ow and then a passing comment in the news will define the spirit of the age, or rather the absence of spirit.

But who would have picked Bill McCuen as the source of such illumination? He's the secretary of state of Arkansas, and that job is seldom a source of controversy. Let alone illumination.

His general political philosophy has been to follow the path of least resistance, and that has been enough to keep him out of trouble until called upon to exercise independent judgment. Yet from just such an innocent may come the one comment that defines an age.

What is it that he said of such import? It was a brief comment tacked on to the annual story about what the secretary of state planned to do, if anything, about the Nativity scene he has presided over at the state Capitol. Across the country, such interviews with uneasy public officials who are caught between following their constituents or the law have become the first harbingers of the season to be jolly, beating out even department store Santas and pre-pre-Christmas sales.

Here's the statement from Secretary McCuen that may sum up the *Zeitgeist* — and also the next direction of Supreme Court decisions on church-state issues. It was the last paragraph of an interview, added as if only an afterthought: "The Arkansas display incorporates the theme of Christmas and not just the Nativity of Christ," he said.

Here's a way to leave Christ in Christmas but add so much more. It puts the religious thing in perspective. What's being celebrated is not just the Nativity (God made man and come to redeem the sins of the world) but the theme of Christmas.

What other theme is there? Well, the same one the Japanese celebrate so elaborately: the holiday itself. The Japanese may not share or even know the religious significance of the day, but they clearly think it's a neat occasion and have smoothly incorporated it into their social calendar and marketing plans — like so many Americans.

In his own unconscious way, Bill McCuen may have summed up the new, constitutionally approved way to celebrate Christmas: not as some particularistic religious celebration limited to believers, but as a cultural artifact that belongs to all.

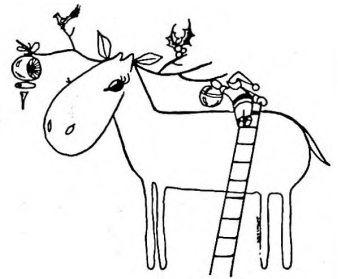
It's not "just" the Nativity but the theme of Christmas that counts! And what is that theme? No need to go into detail and dredge up awkward constitutional questions about an establishment of religion.

Let's be content to mention Peace on Earth and Good Will toward Man — without emphasizing who first delivered that message, or on what occasion. Instead, let's have a grand birthday party without overemphasizing Whose birthday it is. Why complicate matters?

## **CHRISTMAS: NOT SOME PARTICULARISTIC RELIGIOUS CELEBRATION LIMITED TO BELIEVERS, BUT A CULTURAL ARTIFACT THAT BELONGS TO ALL.**

The desacralization of religious symbols proceeds almost as rapidly as the sacralization of secular rituals. The presumptuous words "under God" were slipped into the Pledge of Allegiance only recently and now the pledge can be recited at a national political convention with the devotion of the Apostles' Creed. Just who or what is being worshipped may remain vague, but that's what happens when a political party grows dissatisfied with the usual political rites and reaches out for religious symbolism. Only later may someone wonder why the old religious symbols don't seem to have the same power and meaning any more now that the state has expropriated them.

The Supreme Court of the United States already has agreed to take another look at the question of whether a local government can put up a Nativity scene or a menorah. One can almost foresee Whizzer White's majority opinion now, in which he explains that Christmas and Hanukkah are not just religious holidays but cultural institutions in American society, and so may be duly celebrated by government. ("The display incorporates the theme of Christmas/Hanukkah and not just the Nativity-of-Christ/miracle-of-the-lights.")



Arkansas' secretary of state may not have ignored the law of the land but only anticipated it.

It seems to be the nature of expanding government: a secular state cannot remain content within its own limited sphere; it must reach out for the power and the glory. But although the state may covet the symbols of religion, it certainly doesn't want to identify itself with any explicit confession of faith. That would be religion — and all the state seeks is religiosity. In their own way, those who argue that the display of these symbols on public property has nothing to do with religion make a valid point.

Well, what's wrong with using sacred symbols in a secular setting? A naked public square does seem to bother some folks; it cries out for decoration the way a restaurant needs ambiance. Fair is fair. Look at all the mod theologians who use secular success as a religious proof. Is it any wonder that secular society would like to acquire a few religious talismans, suitably non-sectarian, maybe one for each of The Major Religions? You don't have to be Catholic to wear a St. Christopher medal — or to admire Nativity scenes.

Good ol' Bill McCuen said it, doubtless in all innocence: These displays incorporate a theme, not "just" religion.

He has summed up the highly adulterated spirit of the age. □

**Paul Greenberg**

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