

REPORT from the CAPITAL

Tax tyranny?



"Vouchers provide encouragement and a publicly funded mechanism to abandon neighborhood schools and leave them with even less support."

— Rep. William Jefferson

Will your
tax dollars
soon be
supporting
parochial
schools?

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REPORT from the CAPITAL

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

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Executive Director: James M. Dunn

Editor: Larry G. Chesser

Associate Editor: Pam Parry

Book Reviews: J. Brent Walker

Contributing Editors: Rosemary Brevard, Susan Hill, Patrick N. Horn, W. Allen Sanders, Oliver S. Thomas, Victor Tupitza (Washington, D.C.); Glenn Saul (Mill Valley, Calif.) and Bobby E. Adams (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

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Tutoring freedom

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Contributing editor Victor Tupitza, who retired a year ago as editor of this publication and as director of denominational services at the Baptist Joint Committee, offered the following comments while attending the Oct. 7-8 meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee.)

As is so appropriate in response to a timely worshipful discourse, John Binder's meditation this afternoon set me to thinking about an experience I have had over the past three months.

You may recall that in my retirement remarks to the Baptist Joint Committee I referred to the sponsorship of my cousin and his son who were granted refugee status by the U.S. government. The young man, in particular, as a Believer had known nothing but persecution—by playmates, teachers and in employment. And his desire to enter Christian ministry was beyond possibility in his native republic (Ukraine) in the Soviet Union.



Upon their arrival, the first words at the airport after the exchange of greetings reflected the heart and mind of the son: He turned to his father as if in unbelief and said, "We are free."

Yet over the next several months it was apparent he had yet to learn the meaning of religious political freedom. Constantly, he would turn to me and say, "Must we ... must we carry our passports ... must we tell Immigration Service ... must we, must we, must we ... may I study in the seminary ... must I ask?" His concerns remind me that freedom arrives but not full-bodied, that we all come from less than truly free roots until we come to Christ.

The son and father were fearful of the power and influence of the Soviets. As we celebrated the Fourth of July at the Mall, someone left a package near the father's feet. Troubled, in all seriousness he asked me, "Maybe that's a bomb?" His apprehension was genuine.

My point simply is that freedom demands an understanding that evolves through experience and tutoring. The Baptist Joint Committee serves that function on behalf of Baptists and all Americans. And those who for immediate advantage trade the infinitely broad spectrum of freedom in Christ for the visibly narrow band of political self-interest commit the sin against which Paul warns: "You were running well—who prevented you from obeying the truth?"

As an American Baptist, I am prayerfully distressed over the withdrawing of the Southern Baptist Convention from this body (BJC); they helped give it breath. While finances are always troubling, the greater concern is the coming generations whose understanding of religious liberty will be impoverished and therefore whose understanding of historic Baptist witness will be diminished in the relating of their spiritual testimony. □

Victor Tupitza

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT heard what is certainly the most important church-state case of this term, *Lee v. Weisman*, on Nov. 6. The case involves a challenge to an invocation and benediction given at a Rhode Island middle school graduation ceremony, but a lot more is under consideration than commencement prayer. The court is being asked to compromise the historic principle of governmental neutrality toward religion (*Lemon*/endorsement test) and to replace it with a standard that would allow government to sponsor religion in non-coercive ways (coercion test).

Church-state separationists have feared that the court would use this case as a vehicle to make that change in the law. Four justices (Rehnquist, Scalia, Kennedy and White) have lambasted the *Lemon*/endorsement test and have stated their preference for the coercion test. On the other hand, Justices O'Connor, Blackmun and Stevens continue to support some form of *Lemon*/endorsement. Thus, the question becomes how the two new justices, Souter and Thomas, will vote on this critical issue. Justice Souter gave strong signals in his questions and comments from the bench that he was leaning toward affirming the lower court's ruling and maintaining the *Lemon*/endorsement test. He observed that commencement prayers are more similar to classroom prayer than to prayer at an inauguration, which so far has not been challenged. Countering the argument that ceremonial prayer is simply a part of the dialogue of a free society, Souter declared that prayer is not a conversation between people but an element of a divine dialogue, which belies any analogy to public debate.

If Souter joins O'Connor, Blackmun and Stevens in resisting the coercion test, then the decisive vote will be cast by Justice Thomas. Although Thomas took a fairly separationist stance at his confirmation hearings, his vote is still hard to predict. Indeed, he was the only justice not to make any comments during oral argument.

Another interesting twist to the case is the possibility of a mismatch between the result and the reasoning in this case. For example, Justice Kennedy, who first proposed the coercion test in a 1989 dissenting opinion, expressed concern at the argument that these commencement prayers did amount to coercion. Thus, Kennedy could conceivably join O'Connor, Blackmun, Stevens and Souter in affirming the ruling of the lower court but do so on the basis of the coercion test instead of *Lemon*-endorsement. And, then, if Thomas were to vote with Scalia, Rehnquist and White, we would have the anomalous situation of five justices following the coercion test without a majority opinion of the court supporting it.

Although such a result would indicate that the coercion test will likely be adopted by a majority opinion in the proper case in the future, it would, nevertheless, permit the neutrality principle in *Lemon*/endorsement to survive a little while longer. In short, it is hard to predict how the court will rule and whether it will dismantle the time-honored wall of separation.

However the court rules it is indeed ironic that we are commemorating the bicentennial of the ratification of the Bill of Rights by fending off attempts to weaken one of its most precious liberties. (JBW) ●

New future

Restructured BJC charts steady course

The meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee Oct. 7-8 ushered in a new future for the agency—a future that doesn't include the Southern Baptist Convention.

For the first time in 55 years, the annual BJC meeting was conducted without official representation from the Southern Baptist Convention, which has cut all funding for the religious liberty agency and is in the process of severing all remaining ties with the group.

The 31 members present were told BJC fund-raising efforts have more than made up for the loss of \$400,000 in annual funding from the Southern Baptist Convention, which represents half the budget for the Washington-based agency.

Meanwhile, BJC members from the eight other participating denominations laid plans to counter a new threat to the agency's funding—an attempt by the SBC Christian Life Commission to gain control of an unused \$380,000 capital needs fund assigned to the BJC in 1964.

Also during its two-day meeting, the Baptist Joint Committee adopted an \$800,000 budget for 1991-92 and two position statements, one favoring charitable deductions for all taxpayers and

one opposing President George Bush's plan to use government funds for private and parochial education.

A statement endorsing religious freedom in emerging democracies was tabled by the group, which earlier had been briefed on the state of religious liberty in the Soviet republics, Eastern Europe, Africa and Central America.

The BJC took no action on the disputed capital-needs funds, which are held by the Southern Baptist Foundation in Nashville, Tenn. Both sides concede the dispute may be resolved only in court.

The BJC's legal staff outlined the agency's position and some of the legal ramifications in a confidential memo made available to board members only.

"This issue does have the potential of resulting in legal action down the road," BJC General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas warned board members.

Thomas later told Associated Baptist Press he would consider any attempt to divert the money to the Christian Life Commission "illegal." But he said the BJC is not threatening to sue. "Our board is not going to initiate any kind of legal action at this point," he said.

A study committee formed by the SBC

Executive Committee in September will weigh the competing claims on the fund and recommend action, probably by February. The money was authorized by the SBC in 1964 for the BJC to purchase its own building in Washington. Instead the BJC has continued to rent office space, using interest on the fund to pay rent.

The Christian Life Commission, which has been instructed by the SBC to deal with religious liberty issues, says it is now the logical recipient of the funds—and all the interest earned since 1964. But the Baptist Joint Committee insists the money was intended for its use and has been in an account in its name and under its control for 27 years.

Last month the BJC asked for the money to purchase a building, but the foundation froze the funds until the SBC Executive Committee acts on the dispute.

Because the foundation won't release the money, Thomas said, the BJC had to cancel the contract to buy a building in Washington. Since purchase of a building was the only restriction placed on the fund, he said, "clearly the foundation has an obligation" to release the money.

Thomas said he has sent a letter to the SBC Executive Committee and the foundation to "put them on notice that the delay has made it impossible for us to perform under the contract."

"There are potential damages that we could sustain as a result of the additional delay," Thomas added. "We will look to the executive committee and the foundation to compensate us for any additional loss."

"The confidential memo explains all the implications of the SBC Executive Committee's recent action and the foundation's refusal to release the funds," he said.

"One possibility is legal action," Thomas acknowledged, but he added, "We do not intend to take any legal action until the study committee has gone through its work."

The Baptist Joint Committee meeting was void of the rancor that has typified BJC meetings in recent years. Members attributed the difference to the absence of the SBC delegation. Although 11 trustees of the Christian Life Commission still are eligible for BJC membership, the CLC voted in September not to send any representatives to the meeting unless the BJC paid their expenses.



BJC board members (from left) "Ace" Wright-Riggins, Don Anderson and Bob Tiller participate in small group sessions during the BJC meeting.

The BJC has refused, citing the elimination of SBC funds and a BJC policy that allows paying expenses only for delegations that make "some reasonable pledge" to the agency's budget.

In recent years, board members identified with the fundamentalist leadership of the SBC have made up the majority of the denomination's representatives to the BJC. As a result, the Southern Baptist delegation has found itself at odds with other BJC members over the agency's positions and leadership.

At this year's meeting, however, most actions were approved unanimously and the meeting closed with members holding hands in a circle of prayer. Both BJC members and staff remarked about the change in tone. "It's nice to be able to deal with substance," Thomas said.

Southern Baptists were present, however, as observers and participants.

Three members of the Christian Life Commission's Washington staff monitored the meeting at the request of CLC trustees.

In part because of their presence, four 20-minute workshops for BJC members were closed to reporters and visitors. A BJC staff member said the sessions also were closed to encourage members to express their opinions more freely on issues.

In the workshops, BJC staffers briefed members on the agency's involvement on four fronts: legislation to require the government to prove a "compelling state interest" before limiting religious freedom, the Supreme Court's upcoming decision on prayers at graduation ceremonies, the president's plan to use government funds for parochial education and infringements on religious liberty posed by government regulations.

Participating in their first meeting as BJC members were five people selected by the new Religious Liberty Council, a group composed mostly of Southern Baptists. A change in BJC bylaws last year allows the RLC up to nine members, representing Southern Baptist groups that contribute to the BJC through non-SBC channels.

Two of those groups are the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which contributed \$40,000 in the past year, and the Southern Baptist Alliance, which gave \$12,000, according to BJC documents.

Churches and individuals reportedly contributed \$309,000, including at least \$68,000 identified as from other RLC sources.

Baptist state conventions, including those in Texas, Virginia and Maryland-Delaware, also made direct contributions to the BJC totaling \$117,000, with the largest portion (\$56,700) coming from Texas Baptists.

Such outside contributions added almost \$477,000 to the BJC's 1990-91



Al Sanders, Baptist Joint Committee attorney, leads a seminar on federal regulations during the Oct. 7-8 BJC board meeting.

budget, compensating for the loss of SBC funding, members were told. Another \$125,000 was received from the coalition's member denominations, including the final \$50,000 from the SBC. Approximately \$147,000 in sales, interest and other sources brought the agency's 1990-91 income to slightly more than \$749,000.

"The fact that we are making up for the loss from the Southern Baptist Convention, and even exceeding it, is extraordinary," said Robert Tiller of Washington, director of the Office of Governmental Relations of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. "Not many of us would have anticipated that a couple of years ago."

James M. Dunn, BJC executive director, said the transition has not been easy. "We have been floundering in terms of structure and finance," he said.

In addition to focusing on fundraising, Dunn said, the BJC is considering restructuring its membership rules to allow representation from new Baptist groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Southern Baptist Alliance.

Dunn said it is still too early to know what kind of denominational realignment will occur among Southern Baptists or what effect that will have on the BJC. "We don't know the future.... We're coping the best we can."

Earlier, in his director's report, Dunn called for "new levels" of participation from board members and other supporters. "It is a new day for the Baptist Joint Committee," he said. "Active involvement of everyone who believes in its reason for existence is essential to survival."

In other business:

- The position statement on charitable deductions noted three-fourths of all taxpayers—those who do not itemize deductions—have not been allowed to deduct charitable contributions since 1986. Such a restriction by the government "discriminates against religious practice" (tithing) and "is fundamentally unfair," the statement said. The BJC endorsed two bills (H.R. 1556 and S. 63) that would restore charitable deductions for non-itemizers.

- Another statement "deplore(s) any attempt to funnel public funds to parochial education" through vouchers and tuition tax credits. Such an approach, which is part of President Bush's "America 2000" education reform package, is "constitutionally suspect, bad public policy and a disingenuous political tactic," the BJC said.

- Although members were in agreement about the need to safeguard religious liberty in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, they could not reach consensus on wording of a position statement. After several attempts to amend the statement, the board voted to table it until later.

- The BJC also voted to change its fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year to simplify budgeting. Most member denominations except the SBC operate on a calendar year, members were told.

- The BJC scheduled its biennial Religious Liberty Conference for Oct. 5-6, 1992, in Washington. □

This article was written by Greg Warner, executive editor of Associated Baptist Press.

New challenges

Eastern Europeans, Soviets grapple with freedom

Attempts to revive official state churches in some East European countries have little chance of succeeding and pose little threat if they do, according to Erika Schlager of the Helsinki Commission.

Although some religions are clamoring for official recognition by the new democratic governments of Eastern Europe, Schlager said the traditional idea of a privileged state church is a "historical remnant" with little power.

"Many of these privileges have been whittled away" by legal reforms, she said. "In most cases they are left with something very nominal, very much a figurehead."

Schlager, a staff member of the Helsinki Commission in Washington, gave her assessment in an Oct. 8 briefing for the Baptist Joint Committee. The Helsinki Commission, otherwise known as the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is an agency created by Congress to monitor international compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords on human rights.

Schlager said Poland is the only country in Eastern Europe where a dominant religion is strong enough to achieve official status with the government. "This is what the Catholic church in Poland is jockeying for," she said. "I don't think politically it's going to fly anywhere but in Poland."

In the former Soviet republic of Latvia, where an official church exists, "there is a lot of religious liberty," said John Finerty, another Helsinki Commission staffer.

Finerty, who monitors violations of religious liberty in the Soviet Union, said "things have improved dramatically" for people of faith there. "If picking up my paycheck depended on religious violations, I wouldn't have that much to do," joked Finerty, a Baptist who recently returned from an official trip to Russia.

But there still are some dangers, he added. In some cases, the threat comes from "a rise of nationalism" or conflict between faith groups. Sources in the former Soviet republic of Georgia report evangelicals are "feeling some pressure from the Orthodox Church" there, Finerty said.

Often such conflicts are "not so much a question of religious belief and theology" as conflicts of culture and language, he said, adding, "We'll have a problem where nationalism will repress



Helsinki Commission staff members John Finerty and Erika Schlager (both standing) gave BJC board members an overview of religious liberty in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

the church a little bit."

Although religious freedom is now more freely practiced in Europe's post-communist countries, Schlager said, the process of translating those newfound freedoms into law has been slow.

"Many laws have been removed from the books or are not being enforced," she said, but crowded legislative agendas in the emerging democracies have delayed codifying many religious reforms.

"We try to read a little good faith into the process," said Schlager, a Harvard graduate and specialist in international law. "As long as we see a good-faith effort ... we tend to go along with the process."

Faith groups in Eastern Europe usually are willing to trust democratic reform to resolve problems rather than turning to Western governments and organizations like the Helsinki Commission for intervention, Schlager said. "There is a strong effort to work, first and foremost, within their system," she reported.

In Poland the Roman Catholic Church reached agreement with the government to institute prayer in public schools, Schlager said, but the action "was met with tremendous dismay by Protestant groups who were shut out of the process."

"It will take some time before these governments come to understand there is a great diversity that needs to be taken into consideration," she said.

Francis Dennis, former Liberian

ambassador to the United States and a deacon of First Baptist Church of Washington, said religious liberty in Africa has not reached the dimensions that it has in the Western World, but Africa's record on the religious front is relatively impressive.

Dennis said Africa has avoided most of the potential conflicts between Islam and Christianity that are "progressive and acceptable religions in Africa." Africans have avoided serious conflicts over the co-existence of Christianity and Islam largely because traditional African religions are less competitive, he said.

"Christianity has no monopoly on social idealism, but it takes a strong brand of idealism to flourish in the African climate. I believe Christianity is such a breed."

Robert Tiller, director of governmental relations for the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., provided a human rights update on Central America.

Giving an overview, Tiller said, "One critical, critical matter is that intolerance of dissent and divergent views in many of these countries is at the root of harassment and repression. There is the belief, indeed even the expectancy on the part of many, that dissent leads to chaos, dissent leads to shifts of power and control. Therefore, dissent must be stifled." □

This article was written by Greg Warner of ABP and Pam Parry of Baptist News Service.

VIEWS OF THE WALL

Oliver S. Thomas
General Counsel



Your church is at risk. You may even be at risk if your church is not incorporated. The risk stems from the alarming number of personal injury lawsuits filed against churches. Churches and other charitable institutions once were immune from suit. No more. Churches and religious organizations are now beginning to feel the crunch of the liability crisis.

Most of the claims allege negligent supervision on the part of employees and volunteers. Negligent supervision may occur most any time and anywhere, such as when children are allowed to play on trampolines and monkey bars or when the youth choir is left unattended at an amusement park.

The Preferred Risk Insurance Co., 1111 Ashworth Road, West, Des Moines, Iowa 50265-3538, has prepared a useful brochure for helping churches reduce the possibility of personal injury and its attendant lawsuits. The key, says Preferred Risk, is careful supervision of all church events by responsible adults. Particular attention should be given to activities that are hazardous. These include:

- basketball
- volleyball
- touch football
- softball
- roller skating
- ice skating
- water skiing
- water rafting
- swimming
- water slides
- canoeing
- paddle boating
- horseback riding
- rope jumping.

Some activities are so hazardous that Preferred Risk suggests they never be sponsored by a church:

- hayrides
- haunted houses
- snow tubing
- tackle football
- mud olympics
- dune buggies
- motorbikes
- obstacle courses
- rock climbing
- monkey bars
- rope swings
- trampolines
- fireworks
- snow mobiles
- rodeo.

Says Preferred Risk, "Our files are full of tragedies. Young lives have been

altered through serious injury. Children have been blinded; children have died."

The Baptist Joint Committee's Office of General Counsel suggests the following steps be taken not just to protect the church from suit, but, more importantly, to reduce the risk of personal injury:

1) Require signed and dated consent forms from all parents or guardians whose children will be participating in church-sponsored activities and events. The form should provide a description of the proposed activities. We also recommend inclusion of a liability waiver that states that, in exchange for the right to go on this retreat or visit this museum, for example, the parents agree to waive any and all liability claims against the church for injuries arising out of these activities. Such waivers may be unenforceable in many states, and in no state can parents waive the claims of their minor children. But, at the very least, waivers cause the parents to consider whether the activity is suitable for their child and to reflect on responsibility before suing the church.

2) Use qualified, capable and mature volunteers for all church-sponsored activities. We recommend obtaining references on those volunteers whose track records as supervisors are unknown and caution against using any volunteer that has not been affiliated with the church

for more than several months.

3) Conduct at least one training session for volunteers to discuss all planned games and activities and how they should be monitored.

4) Make sure the activity matches the age and maturity level of the participants. What might be appropriate and safe for high school seniors might be dangerous and inappropriate for a seventh grader.

5) Make sure your church is insured for all activities that occur on or off church premises. This should include the maximum coverage on all church vehicles as well as liability insurance for both professional staff and volunteers. An umbrella policy of at least \$1 million also should be considered.

Churches must not be paralyzed by the fear of liability. Our mission includes providing healthy, meaningful recreation for persons young and old. So, don't padlock your playground or sell the church van, but do be careful.

Editor's Note: This article is designed to provide accurate information concerning the subject of liability. It is provided with the understanding that the author is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services. If the reader has specific legal questions, the services of a qualified attorney should be sought. □



"The sufficient statement of the historical significance of the Baptists is this: The competency of the soul in religion."

E.Y. Mullins

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House panel OKs voucher scheme

After striking a deal with the White House, a House committee has voted 26-12 to approve a bill that would allow private and parochial schools access to federal tax dollars.

The House Committee on Education and Labor completed its work on the Comprehensive Neighborhood Schools Revitalization Act (H.R. 3320) on Oct. 17. The bill awaits consideration by the full House.

The House bill would provide \$700 million for a range of educational reform options. Among other provisions, the bill would allow states to spend a portion of this money on so-called "choice" programs that provide federal vouchers for parents to send their children to public, private and parochial schools.

The bill is an alternative to President George Bush's America 2000 plan that includes more aggressive voucher provisions. The president's plan would allocate funds that could only be used for voucher programs.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time in history that the House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee has voted in favor of parochial aid," said James M. Dunn, Baptist Joint Committee executive director. "At this juncture in American history, we cannot turn away from quality public education for every child in favor of a scheme that would divert tax dollars to religious institutions."

During the BJC annual meeting Oct. 8, the agency adopted a position statement deploring any attempts to funnel public funds to parochial education. The BJC position statement points to H.R. 3320 and the president's America 2000 Excellence in Education Act (S. 1141) as old propositions marching under new banners such as "parental choice" and "state's rights."

"This attempt to do indirectly (through vouchers) what cannot be done directly (by direct grants) is constitutionally suspect, bad public policy and a disingenuous political tactic," the BJC statement says. "Parental choice through vouchers is no substitute for our responsibility to make all schools 'schools of choice' in a constitutionally permissible way."

The BJC statement notes that the bills leave to the states the decision about their participation in the program, but insists if spending public funds on paro-



"(The committee) should not even in the slightest way endorse or encourage directly or indirectly the use of federal funds to support educational choice plans."

— Rep. William Jefferson

chial aid is wrong for the federal government, it is also wrong for the states.

J. Brent Walker, BJC associate general counsel, said, "Spending tax dollars to fund religious education is wrong. The committee's decision to pass the buck to the states doesn't clear up the problem. Although touted as a compromise, the bill really is no better than the president's proposal."

Rep. William Jefferson, D-La., offered an amendment to the bill that would provide choice programs only for public schools, deleting reference to private and parochial institutions. His amendment was defeated 23-17 after White House chief of staff John H. Sununu struck a deal with Democratic leadership.

The committee was scheduled to vote on the bill Oct. 16, and Jefferson was prepared to offer an amendment to strike all voucher language. Instead the committee caucused for more than two hours before deciding to postpone the voucher issue for one day.

Sununu sent a letter to Rep. William Goodling, R-Penn., saying that the White House would support the current language of the bill if the voucher provisions were not weakened.

"While we continue to support the choice provisions contained in America 2000, it is our understanding that H.R. 3320 will provide, at state and local discretion, the opportunity for the full range of choice options," Sununu wrote Goodling. "This current framework, if not weakened, is acceptable."

Sununu's letter said the administration would work to preserve the language in the House bill and oppose efforts to amend it on the floor.

In an attempt to reach a compromise, Jefferson offered a modified amendment that would strike language referring to private and parochial schools.

Jefferson said the committee "should not even in the slightest way endorse or encourage directly or indirectly the use of federal funds to support educational choice plans."

He said some misconstrued his amendment as prohibiting states and local school districts from adopting choice plans.

"My amendment does no such thing," he said. "In fact it leaves state and local districts as free as they are now to fashion education programs in their discretion, including choice plans."

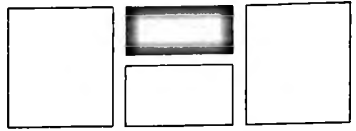
"My amendment simply takes away the carrot of the federal dollar."

He said his amendment was supported by a wide range of national education organizations, including the National Coalition for Public Education. The BJC joined other members of the coalition in expressing its support for the Jefferson amendment.

Rep. William Ford, D-Mich., chairman of the committee, said he preferred Jefferson's original amendment that would delete all choice options, but voted against the amendment. Ford quoted from Sununu's letter and said "a deal's a deal."

Ford said he was willing to take a political gamble that "they will keep their word" and stand with Democratic leaders against more ambitious choice proposals.

"We commend Mr. Jefferson, a fellow Baptist, for his fidelity to historic Baptist principles," Walker said. "For a first-



term congressman to buck the committee leadership and the administration demonstrates a lot of political courage.

"If this bill becomes law, I hope the states will show similar dedication to principle and courage, and say no to this sleight-of-hand funding scheme." □

Senate confirms Thomas for Supreme Court post

WASHINGTON

Despite sexual harassment charges by an Oklahoma Baptist woman, the U.S. Senate narrowly confirmed Clarence Thomas on Oct. 15 as the 106th justice of the Supreme Court.

Thomas won Senate approval 52-48 after a second round of confirmation hearings to explore sexual harassment charges brought by University of Oklahoma law professor Anita Hill, a member of Antioch Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla. Since 1983, Hill has been a member of that congregation, which is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

She said Thomas repeatedly asked her out on dates and initiated conversations about sex, including his own sexual prowess, when she worked for him in two federal jobs. In the early 1980s, Hill worked for Thomas at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Thomas categorically denied all of the charges.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held the second round of hearings Oct. 11-13 after Hill's allegations became public. Hill said she talked to the Judiciary Committee only after she was contacted by Senate staff members. She asked that the information be kept confidential.

The FBI investigated the charges and forwarded its report to Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del. Biden and ranking minority member Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., discussed the report with the full committee prior to its Sept. 27 vote, which deadlocked 7-7 on a favorable recommendation of Thomas.

The nomination went to the full Senate without a recommendation.

The Senate was scheduled to vote on the confirmation Oct. 8, but when the charges were leaked to the news media, the Senate postponed the vote. The Judiciary Committee came under fire from fellow senators, because many of them heard about the allegations from news reports.

Biden defended the committee's

actions. Senate rules require that such FBI reports remain confidential. Committee members said they also wanted to honor Hill's request for anonymity, but an unknown source leaked the report to the press the weekend before the scheduled vote.

The Senate has called for an investigation of the leak.

Thomas began the first day of hearings with a rousing speech denying the charges and defending his character.

"I have never in all my life felt such hurt, such pain, such agony," Thomas said. "My family and I have been done a grave and irreparable injustice."

In her opening statement, Hill told the committee, "It is only after a great deal of agonizing consideration that I am able to talk of these unpleasant matters to anyone but my closest friends. Telling the world is the most difficult experience of my life."

She said she does not have a "personal vendetta" against Thomas. She fended off suggestions that she was delusional, a civil rights zealot who was being used by special interest groups or that she wanted to write a book or make a movie.

She said she simply wanted to tell the truth.

Thomas leveled strong accusations of racism, calling the hearings a "high-tech lynching" that "have gone far beyond McCarthyism."

He told the committee that he was incapable of "proving the negative" and that he would never be able to restore his good name.

Thomas is the second black man to sit on the nation's high court, succeeding Justice Thurgood Marshall, who was the first. □

Supreme Court refuses 3 church-state cases

WASHINGTON

Returning to the bench to begin its 1991-92 term, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review lower court decisions in more than 1,300 cases, including three that involved First Amendment religion clause disputes.

The high court let stand a ruling by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the Stafford County (Va.) School Board's refusal to provide a cued speech interpreter for a hearing-impaired student at a sectarian school did not violate the free exercise clause and that providing a publicly paid interpreter at Freder-

icksburg Christian School would violate the no establishment clause.

Attorneys for the school district argued that the school board has offered to provide a cued speech interpreter at a public school and that federal regulations and Virginia laws prohibit the use of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds at a religious school. Additionally, school attorneys argued that the free exercise clause does not require the school district to assist the students in religious studies and that providing a full-time cued interpreter would violate the establishment clause by impermissibly promoting religion and creating excessive entanglement between church and state. The case is *Goodall v. Stafford County School Board* (91-163).

The Supreme Court also let stand a ruling from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld the dismissal of a wrongful death claim in the death of a Mississippi woman. The victim, a Jehovah's Witness, died after refusing blood transfusions following an automobile accident. The appeals court held that application of the "avoidable consequences doctrine," which prevents injured plaintiffs from recovering damages that they did not take reasonable efforts to avoid, did not violate the free exercise clause.

The appeals court declined the surviving spouse's request to recognize a special exemption for religiously motivated failures to avoid damages. The court noted potential establishment clause problems in asking juries to assess damages based on the reasonableness of religious beliefs but held that no violation occurred in this case because the religious reasons for refusing the blood transfusions were raised by the plaintiff. The case is *Munn v. Algee* (90-1844).

The high court also declined to review a ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts that overturned a \$610,000 verdict against the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of New England Inc. A Massachusetts jury had awarded the judgment to Susan Murphy, a former ISKCON adherent, and her mother, Mary Murphy. They had alleged intentional infliction of emotional distress, interference with parental rights and breach of duty to provide care, among other claims.

The Massachusetts high court ruled that the emotional distress claims would violate the defendants' First Amendment right to practice their religion. The plaintiffs' other claims were remanded for retrial. The case is *Murphy v. I.S.K. Con. of New England* (91-191). □

Hugh Wamble

'Show-me-stater'
shows the way
as advocate
for freedom

Religious liberty champion G. Hugh Wamble left a legacy of freedom that will extend decades beyond his life, which ended Sept. 22 in an automobile accident.

Wamble, 68, had been battling the effects of a malignant brain tumor since January. Professor of church history at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., Wamble had endured surgery, and radiation and chemotherapy, but doctors were unable to eradicate the malignancy.



Hugh Wamble

A self-taught lawyer, Wamble was perhaps best known among Southern Baptists for his contributions to a U.S. Supreme Court religious liberty decision made in 1985. In *Wamble v. Bell*, he argued against the federal government providing a form of parochial aid before the U.S. District Court. The district judge ruled the parochial aid practice in Missouri did violate the separation of church and state, but stayed the injunction pending a Supreme Court ruling in a similar case. In 1985, the high court ruled such parochial aid a clear violation of church-state separation.

Wamble was a lobbyist on church-state matters for the Missouri Baptist Convention for eight years and was the MBC president in 1973-75. He also was a member of the Missouri Baptist Christian Life Commission for several years, serving as chairman in 1971-74.

Midwestern trustees recognized his contribution as an unrelenting guardian of religious freedom when they voted to establish the "G. Hugh Wamble Fund for Religious Liberty Studies" in 1987. The fund is designed to help provide a continuing emphasis toward the Baptist understanding of separation of church and state. □

Tributes

'Baptists' best voice for freedom'

From James M. Dunn, BJC executive director:

Hugh Wamble has through the years been the single most knowledgeable, articulate and activist supporter of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. His grasp of the historical, legal and political roots of religious liberty has marked him as an absolutely irreplaceable resource.

John Leland with a word processor ... Isaac Backus with a telephone ... Roger Williams on a jet plane ... John Clarke with a seminary library ... roll them all into one, and you have G. Hugh Wamble. Baptists' best voice for freedom.

From John Swomley, professor emeritus of Christian ethics at St. Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Mo.:

Hugh Wamble was a giant intellect and able to produce effective challenges to all of the efforts by both religious fundamentalists and Roman Catholic bishops who wanted to get the state of Missouri and the federal government operating in Missouri to subsidize or sponsor religious activity. When he died it was a great loss not only for those of us defending religious liberty in Missouri but for all citizens of the United States. Single-handedly, he fought a number of issues and in many instances we worked together as a team.

He was true to Baptist principles with respect to separation of church and state even when some Baptist colleagues wanted government support for prayer in schools or other religious activity.

From Robert L. Maddox, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State:

Americans United has always counted on staunch church-state separationists around the country to help us in the fight for First Amendment freedoms. Most of them have been citizen activists who had an unyielding devotion to the principle of religious liberty but depended on us to supply the legal expertise. With Dr. Wamble, we got the best of both worlds.

I regard Hugh Wamble with all the great Baptist statesmen on church-state issues, putting him in the hall of fame with persons such as J.M. Dawson and Isaac Backus.

From a resolution of appreciation adopted by Midwestern Seminary trustees at their April 1991 board meeting:

He has championed bedrock Baptist principles, such as believer's baptism, priesthood of every believer, congregational church authority, liberty of conscience, religious liberty, and separation of church and state with conviction, clarity, and consistency, He has been a courageous and successful advocate for the principles of religious liberty and separation of church and state, principles which are to him dearer than life itself

He has contributed immeasurably to the recognition of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as a school which provides theological education with integrity.

From an editorial in the *Kansas City Star* in Kansas City, Mo.:

Hugh Wamble was a rare individual. His legacy includes, but is by no means limited to, the careful teaching of generations of pastors who help guide the spiritual lives of others. □

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INTERNATIONAL DATELINE



By European Baptists— Seminary cut called 'breach of trust'

European Baptist leaders say the decision by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to cut all funding for the Europeans' only seminary is "a breach of trust" that jeopardizes future cooperation between Southern Baptists and their European counterparts.

FMB trustees voted Oct. 9 to delete \$365,000 from the FMB's 1992 budget earmarked for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, when they found out a Southern Baptist seminary professor frequently criticized by SBC fundamentalist leaders would be teaching temporarily at the international school.

Leaders of the European Baptist Federation said the FMB, which owned the Ruschlikon seminary until 1988, had agreed to continue the 42-year partnership with Ruschlikon until at least 1992.

"This is not a breach of trust primarily with the seminary in Ruschlikon but with the EBF and the 32 Baptist unions affiliated with it," wrote EBF General Secretary Karl-Heinz Walter in a letter to FMB President Keith Parks.

"We do not find the loss of the money to be the major issue," Walter wrote. "Rather, the decision destroys confidence in future partnerships with Southern Baptists."

Several leaders of Europe's national Baptist conventions joined in denouncing the FMB decision. Other criticism came from the trustee chairman at Ruschlikon and the faculty at the Southern Baptist seminary where the professor teaches full-time.

Glenn Hinson, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., is teaching at Ruschlikon while on sabbatical leave. Hinson often has been a target of SBC fundamentalist leaders for what they consider to be his liberal views.

The \$365,000 cut represents a major portion of next year's budget for the European Baptist seminary, which has struggled financially in recent years.

"To have 40 percent of your income cut off at less than two months' notice is a cruel blow, whatever the reason," said Peter Barber of Scotland, outgoing EBF president. "It makes it all the harder to

know it is the result of a decision by the leaders of a mission board whose support has been guaranteed in a carefully framed agreement."

Wiard Popkes, trustee chairman at the Ruschlikon seminary, called the FMB decision "a veritable shock" to the school, which he said was not consulted and had no warning.

"The decision does not reveal the responsibility for people, institutions and programmes which should be beyond question, not only among Christians," Popkes said in a statement.

"We do not really know the underlying motives of the FMB's decision," he continued. "It seems, though, that they were not aware of the repercussions of such a step for the credibility of future activities of the FMB in Europe."

For example, in Great Britain, negotiations had laid the groundwork for a large-scale partnership between British Baptists and the FMB. David Coffey, general secretary for British Baptists, said those plans had not yet changed, but they are now being questioned as a result of the trustee action.

Birgit Karlsson, general secretary for Swedish Baptists and EBF vice president, said the Ruschlikon decision will hurt Southern Baptist relationships throughout the Baptist World Alliance, the international organization of national Baptist bodies.

Top Baptist leaders in Germany and Norway also joined the chorus of criticism.

The controversy comes at a time when the FMB is planning to step up its activities in Europe after the fall of communism.

Because of the timing related to missions opportunities and the school's financial situation, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship moderator John Hewett urged Southern Baptists to continue to fund the seminary by sending money through the Fellowship.

"At a time when Eastern Europe is opening to the gospel," Hewett said, "why in the world would any thinking Christian choose to shut down a school already equipping European pastors and missionaries? What kind of mission strategy is that?"

Hewett suggested some individuals

and churches could designate part of their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for the seminary.

Parks, who opposed the defunding action, asked Southern Baptists not to lose sight of other needs funded through the Lottie offering. Parks asked if Southern Baptists choose to send money to the seminary, that they do so in addition to what they would give to the annual Christmas offering for foreign missions. □

First prison baptisms reported in Russia

MOSCOW

Eighteen prison inmates were baptized this summer in Russia, according to a Baptist newspaper there. It is apparently the first time prisoners have been allowed baptism in the Soviet Union.

The prisoners were brought in from various labor camps to the settlement of Puka in northwestern Russia, reported *Khristianskoe Slavo*, a publication of the Union of Christian Baptists.

Some of the new Christians came from labor camps hundreds of miles away, the newspaper reported in July. A portable baptism was brought in from Moscow. □

ABC missionaries leave Haiti following unrest

Most American Baptist missionaries serving in Haiti have returned to the United States following the political unrest that has marked the Caribbean country since the Sept. 30 military coup there. Several missionaries, family members and volunteers recently flew out of Haiti. ABC International Ministries Crisis Team members met them at the West Palm Beach (Fla.) Airport, helping them in relocation procedures and other concerns.

The remaining missionaries and volunteers, along with a number of family members, are housed at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Limbe and are continuing normal routines. In cooperation with a largely Haitian staff, they are treating approximately 350 patients daily at that institution as social calm continues.



NEWS-SCAN

News sources estimate that several hundred people have been killed during episodes of violence in the capital of Port-au-Prince and elsewhere.

A mob also burned the headquarters of the Baptist Convention of Haiti in Cap-Haitien.

The incident apparently was unrelated to the coup that occurred the same day.

The burning was linked to a disagreement between some Haitians over control of a Baptist secondary school in Cap-Haitien, said Reidar Lindland, area secretary for the Caribbean for Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. □

Council restructures, hears Orthodox concerns

The financially beleaguered World Council of Churches has given final approval to a new organizational structure but continues to struggle on the theological level with the discontent of its Orthodox member churches.

Meeting recently in Geneva, the World Council's Central Committee put the finishing touches on a restructuring plan that will lead to a reduction in the council's staff from about 300 to 270 by the end of 1992.

Meanwhile, members of the committee spent three hours discussing the World Council's "common understanding and vision," focusing in part on the

much-publicized concerns raised by the Orthodox at the council's Seventh Assembly held in Canberra, Australia, last February.

The restructuring eliminates all of the council's current 14 sub-units, each of which is configured with one of the council's three major program units and has a commission that oversees its program.

Instead, the council will operate with four major program units, each with a commission of 25-40 persons that will help translate Central Committee priorities into programs for the units.

Discussion of the Orthodox concerns centered on a paper titled "The Orthodox churches and the WCC" presented by Albert Laham of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East.

The paper points to four general areas of concern: World Council actions in society, the meaning of communion, the council's involvement with non-Christian religions and the relationship of churches to the world.

The paper emphasizes that doctrinal issues are not subject to a vote of the council, pointing as examples to several issues that divide the Orthodox and many of the council's more liberal member churches—the ordination of women, the sharing of communion with persons of different denominational affiliations and the use of gender-free God language. □

United Methodists recently established their first congregation in Russia. A 10-acre site in the center of the Russian city of Ekaterinburg was renamed "Methodist Park" and is the site of the new church, which has about 600 members. ... The Rev. Canon Michael Bourdeaux, the Anglican priest who founded Keston College, the world's most prominent resource center on religious oppression in totalitarian countries, was presented with the Institute on Religion and Democracy's 1991 Religious Freedom Award. ... The World Council of Churches and the Vatican are beginning efforts to establish an interfaith dialogue team focused on Middle East issues. The dialogue team would include representatives of the three major faith groups in the Middle East—Christians, Muslims and Jews. Hans Ucko, the World Council staffer responsible for relations with Jews, reported in a recent interview that initial responses from the Muslim and Jewish communities have been restrained. ... The American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. World Relief Office has released grants totaling \$25,000 for emergency relief in China in the aftermath of widespread flooding there in recent months. The floods, the result of unseasonably heavy monsoon rains, have caused catastrophic damage in the country's eastern provinces. More than 1,200 people have died, and an estimated 5 million—6 million have lost their homes or sustained substantial property damage. ... The Baptist World Alliance has established a fund to aid Baptist work in the Soviet Union and has challenged each of its 142,000 related worldwide churches to contribute \$100 or more to the effort. The Baptist Freedom Fund for the U.S.S.R. will be utilized to train pastors, to supply Scriptures and Christian literature, and to build seminaries and charitable institutions, BWA officials said. ... Alderson-Broadus College, an American Baptist school in Philippi, W.Va., has inaugurated the nation's first master's degree program for physician assistants with bachelor of science degrees. □



Alex Awad (center, with sign) joins in protest at the Israeli government's refusal to allow him entry into his native homeland, where he would become pastor of East Jerusalem Baptist Church. The protest took place outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C.

Compiled from staff and news service reports, including Religious News Service, American Baptist News Service, Associated Baptist Press and European Baptist Press.

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Baptists hold to the separation of church and state as the best guarantee for religious freedom.

REFLECTIONS

Where in the Bible is the separation of church and state taught? The question is asked. Sometimes the questioner is earnest and urgent. For those of us who take the Bible seriously, it is not a bad question.

Brooks Hays, with his gentle humor, would commence, "As Jesus said, and he was right. . . ." Well, as Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21). That's a start. Jesus plainly spoke of a difference between what is God's and what is government's.

Then there is no one proof text in the Bible on which to hang the Jeffersonian metaphor "a wall of separation between church and state." There are, however, biblical principles, theological presuppositions, historical examples and pointed stories that form a firm foundation for keeping these two institutions distinct.

The biblical record leaves no doubt that all people are moral creatures. All human beings are responsible, responsible and free. All three great religions of The Book (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) affirm the doctrine of *imago Dei*, the idea that humankind somehow replicates God. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Whatever else that means, it requires that moral nature. Persons decide. Our "chooser" is close to our essential core.

Adam and Eve could want, wish and will. Every wonderful "whosoever will" in scripture—from the capacity to choose at creation (Genesis 1) to the invitation in Revelation 22:17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"—cries out for soul freedom.

That soul freedom marks the mystery of humanity: "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5) yet, "there is none good, but one, God" (Mark 10:18). We are able to soar but apt to sink; capable of freedom but inclined to oppress.

Scripture also portrays us all as social beings. Our decisions and deeds have social consequences. That condition, individuals entangled in the lives of others, demands religious liberty. Joshua put it straightly to the children of Israel, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15). Jesus loved the rich young ruler but let him go away (Mark 10:17-22). The master did not zap, tackle or trip him.

The appeal of Jesus requires decision. "Whosoever *will* come after me, let him *deny* himself, and *take up* his cross, and follow me." (Mark 8:34). That personal commitment cannot be made by anyone else. This is no proxy religion. Nor are there any filters, emanations or intermediaries. There is one mediator between God and all humankind, that one is Jesus (I Timothy 2:5). Christians from the earliest church subscribed to the simple affirmation "Jesus is Lord." That puts followers of Jesus on an equal footing. The "law of liberty" further binds all believers in love for one another, extends unto the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

The spiritual estimate of humankind shared by Jews and Christians sees us all as political animals. The Bible tells the stories of kings and generals, prophets and priests, good and bad government. The early church saw government *per se* as good, ordained by God (Romans 13) but potentially as an instrument of evil (Revelation 13).

When one examines the record of civil disobedience, heroic martyrdom, faithful witness, it is clear that churches closest to Jesus' day were not followers of a watered-down civil religion. No muddle-headed merger of God and country confused the church at first. They said with Peter, "We

ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). They understood that the ways of government were not the ways of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6). Those first century Christians were too busy running *from* the Roman Senate to consider running *for* it, but they did know the difference between church and state.

Baptists hold to the separation of church and state as the best guarantee for religious freedom.

Our *theology* demands it. Faith is appropriated personally; God's grace is experienced individually; one comes to Jesus Christ freely or not really; everyone must be free from the state's coercive powers in matters of religion.

Our *ethics* require it. If we do unto others as we want them to do unto us, if we believe that God loves the whole world, if we accept the image of God in every fellow human being, if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, all people are entitled to real religious liberty.

Our *experience* commends it. The American experiment in church-state separation was in significant measure initiated by Baptists. Roger Williams, John Clarke, Isaac Backus, Samuel Stillman, John Leland and others advanced this innovative relationship.

State religions are bad in principle. One can see the dangers and corruptions of ties between church and state in Latin America, Ireland and Iran. One can see the chaos and violence that attends state supported religion in Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Nepal. One can see the debilitating absence of conviction and vitality that accompanies an established church in England, Spain and Sweden.

Yet, in 1991, different dominant religions are actually pressing for recognition as the official national "church" in India, Poland and Romania. We warn against the tyrannies inherent in such an arrangement. We affirm the spiritual value of the separation of church and state.

Believing in the separation of church and state doesn't make one a Baptist. But it is hard to believe that one could be a Baptist and not cling tenaciously to that baptistic doctrine. How else do we protect and defend those seminal beliefs in freedom of conscience, the priesthood of all believers, the right of private interpretation of Scripture, real religious liberty for all believers, as well as those who refuse to believe, a free church in a free state?

Without those protections, how else can we insure the integrity of authentic evangelism, a prophetic witness and an unhindered mission to share the whole gospel with whole people in the whole world?

A church in such a close partnership with government that one cannot tell when worship leaves off and patriotism begins has slipped into idolatry. Without a healthy distance, the prophetic vision is blurred, the witness muffled and the gospel compromised.

Finally, when the church's mission is tinted, tainted or tailored by the state, she has ceased to be the bride of Christ and fallen into an incestuous bed of cultural captivity.

Why is a sin-sick society so deaf to the good news? One reason is clear. Too many Christians have been willing to let public institutions do too much of the church's job. The church has the marvelous assignment: O Zion, haste thy mission high fulfilling; To tell to all the world that God is light; That he who made all nations is not willing; One soul should perish, lost in shades of night. Publish glad tidings; Tidings of peace; Tidings of Jesus; Redemption and release. □

James M. Dunn
Executive Director





Religious Liberty: The Christian Roots of Our Fundamental Freedoms

By E. Glenn Hinson, Louisville, Ky.,
 Glad River Publications, 1991, 144 pages.

Religious Liberty is Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Professor E. Glenn Hinson's revision of *Soul Liberty*, published in 1974. This slim volume of description and prescription is directed toward lay readers rather than scholars. The author originally addressed it directly to his fellow Southern Baptists under the auspices of the denomination's Convention Press.

While it contains little new material on the origins and development of the doctrine of religious liberty, this revision is welcome for several reasons. First, it coincides with the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights, surely an appropriate time for reflecting on, indeed celebrating, this key component. Second it appears at a time when two of religious liberty's most influential American advocates, the Supreme Court and the Southern Baptist Convention, have demonstrated an inclination to redefine religious liberty in a fashion that retreats from their previous endorsements. Third, with the abandonment of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it speaks to a wider world today receptive as perhaps never before to the prospect of religious liberty.

Hinson defines religious liberty as "the freedom of every human being, whether as an individual or in a group, from social coercion in religious matters" (p.13). He notes that it differs from religious toleration and encompasses such additional freedoms as conscience, religious expression, association and cor-

porate and institutional activities.

He distinguishes between humanistically and theologically based approaches to the doctrine of religious liberty, surveying the strengths and weaknesses of each, and finds the greater value in the theological approaches. While rooting religious liberty in biblical perspectives, he acknowledges that the message of the Holy Scriptures is decidedly mixed in this regard. Eschewing proof texting, he identifies the scriptural foundations of religious liberty more generally in universal monotheism and agape love.

Hinson repeatedly utilizes the motif of birth in detailing the nurturing of these scriptural seeds of religious liberty through the ensuing centuries. Christians led the way. Arguments developed by church fathers amidst Roman persecution ultimately found expression in the Edict of Milan, issued in 313 C.E., officially proclaiming religious liberty throughout the empire. However, this advent proved short-lived, leading Hinson to refer to it as "stillbirth." The forthcoming establishment of the church by the state effectively transformed the persecuted into the persecutor, with the church emerging as the foremost foe of religious liberty in the centuries to come, a time characterized by Hinson as "the long travail."

The Reformation that split the church in the 16th century initiated the "final birth pangs" of religious liberty, paving the way for its long-awaited birth in Great Britain's American colonies. Roger Williams merits the label, "attending physician." His unqualified commitment first found institutional expression in the Providence colony he founded in 1644. His model inspired disestablishment campaigns throughout the colonies over the next 150 years. These campaigns carried over into the independence era, culminating in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the new national government, prohibiting the establishment of religion and protecting its free exercise.

Having traced the arduous birth of religious liberty, Hinson immediately moves forward to modern America. In considering church-state relations, he reformulates Thomas Jefferson's famous "wall of separation" metaphor into a

"taut line." The controversial relationship between religion and public education receives special consideration. Then, he proceeds to address the free exercise issue. Acknowledging that it is not absolute, he outlines the broad parameters protected by judicial interpretation.

Hinson briefly leaves the modern American scene to note appreciatively the precedent-shattering 1965 "Declaration on Religious Freedom" of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. He contends that this "shot in the arm" from Roman Catholicism left religious liberty with "the strongest support from Christians it has ever had" (p.128).

Nevertheless, the concluding chapter calls attention to abiding and new threats to this "fragile child," religious liberty. He is dismayed by the inclinations of contemporary Christians, especially his fellow Southern Baptists, to be either inattentive or, alternatively, to redefine religious liberty as the freedom to establish their particular religious perspectives as authoritative for the larger society.

Hinson briefly recounts recent actions of the Southern Baptist Convention that depart from the traditional denominational stance on religious liberty. He perceptively ponders the critical question: Why have so many contemporary Southern Baptists seen fit to abandon the singular doctrine that has distinguished their historical identity? While enumerating many contributing factors, the author considers most critical the Southern Baptists' growth into the nation's largest single Protestant denomination, leading them to lose sight of the minority perspectives that informed their stalwart advocacy of religious liberty.

Religious Liberty provides the general reader with a useful summary of the origins, development and value of this doctrine from the vantage points of Christian theology and church history. For those inspired to further study, chapter bibliographies point the way. In addition, it directs our attention to the current crisis that makes our era one future historians will surely note when updating the saga of religious liberty. □

Harold F. Bass Jr. is a professor in the political science department at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

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