

June 1993

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REPORT from the CAPITAL

Graduation headlines

Dear Grads: Thank God For the Bill of Rights

The Washington Post

Greenville school board passes non-sectarian prayer at graduation

The Greenville News

Taking religion out of school puts it in people's hands

The Virginian-Pilot
and the Ledger-Star

Graduation prayer lawsuit is dismissed

The Indianapolis Star

School allows prayer; 'God' unmentionable

The Courier-Journal

Knox graduates say a prayer, wear crosses to cries of amen

The Knoxville News-Sentinel

REPORT from the CAPITAL

Vol. 48, No. 6

June 1993

Articles

Graduation prayer 4
by Larry Chesser

Parting challenge 10
by Rosemary Brevard

Don't shackle religious liberty 11
by Charles Levendosky

Features

Washington Observations 3

Views of the Wall 7
by J. Brent Walker

News in Brief 8
compiled by Pam Parry

International Dateline 12
compiled by Pam Parry

Reflections 15
by James M. Dunn

Reviews 16
by Quentin Lockwood III

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Working at the BJC

"What did you have to do to get a job at the BJC?" asked the eager young female seminarian. "Teach Liz Sapp in Sunday school," I replied.

That frustrated her, but it's true. My 25-year career began when Liz's father, Jim, asked me after church, "Are you interested in a job?" I'd never even heard of the BJC!

My reflections as I retire? So many labor at jobs they hate. I've loved mine, even in the tough times. What a blessing!

To work at the BJC is to be across the street from the Hart Senate Office Building, catty-cornered from the U.S. Supreme Court, one block from the Capitol.

To work at the BJC is to work for principles, not products or profit.

To work at the BJC is to be helpful. Local churches get tax bills, face liability or discrimination suits, are designated landmarks, have opportunities to participate in government programs; reporters and students need information. We get the calls for help; we advise, support, refer, supply resources. So, to work at the BJC is to have friends you never see all over the country — the people on the other end of the phone.

To work at the BJC is to make a long-term difference. We have helped defeat pending bills and have influenced current legislative, administrative and judicially made law on tax reform, education policy, lobby disclosure and religious exercise.

To work at the BJC was to be part of the witch in the long SBC witch-hunt. All the heartbreak of our staff in those years is embodied for me in the last question of an initially hostile young man who talked about issues with me a long time at our booth at one Southern Baptist Convention: "Do you people who work at the Baptist Joint Committee go to church?" Think about that awhile. I've never forgotten it.

To work at the BJC has been to experience the power of coalitions. We learned long ago that Baptists alone can't impact legislation or catch the ear of a court the way Baptists plus others can. But political effectiveness is only one benefit of lobbying cooperatively or writing a brief or guidelines all can support. People get acquainted, experience each other as persons of integrity. Respect and friendship grow, enriching our lives despite our differences. I am immeasurably blessed to have been at the BJC. Δ

— Rosemary Brevard





THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT is nearing floor action in the U.S. Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee cleared the bill last month by a 15-1 vote. The main threat to RFRA's passage is being engineered by Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo. Simpson is concerned RFRA could create pandemonium in prisons by forcing administrators to accommodate prisoners' religious practice to the neglect of security and order. His threatened amendment apparently was prompted by a letter signed by some state attorneys general expressing the same concern. But, Attorney General Janet Reno repeatedly has affirmed her support for RFRA and, most recently, stated unequivocally that she did not feel that an exemption for prisons was warranted. We will be working hard to diffuse this effort to create a double standard of review for prisoners' religious liberty claims. Here are some reasons why:

1. Religion plays an important role in the rehabilitation process. It should be encouraged, not discouraged.
2. Congress should not be permitted to protect some religious claims and not others. Governmental institutions should accommodate all religious exercise unless there are compelling reasons not to.
3. The legislative history to RFRA (i.e. committee reports, floor statements, etc.) makes clear that the courts always have been more deferential to the unique institutional concerns of prisons. There is nothing in RFRA that will change this. The need to preserve discipline and order ordinarily will be a "compelling" interest.
4. An exemption for prisons could lead to other exemptions and jeopardize the bill's passage. Similar exemptions already have been offered on abortion, public schools, landmark commissions and the like.

Call your senators and urge them to vote for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (S. 578) and resist any weakening amendments, including those regarding prisons. (JBW) •

Graduation prayer

Battle continues despite court ruling

School boards across the country learned this spring that the U.S. Supreme Court's 1992 ruling against prayer at public school graduation exercises was not the last word on the subject.

That's partly because some individuals and interest groups have refused to give up their campaign to include invocations and benedictions in the annual ceremonies. And, it's partly because a federal appeals court agreed with their view that the high court's commencement prayer ban does not apply across the board.

School boards were pressured by proponents and opponents of commencement prayer as graduation day approached for more than 2.2 million seniors in the nation's 16,925 public high schools.

A year ago, the Supreme Court held that commencement prayers directed and sponsored by public school districts violate the Constitution's ban on governmental established religion. That 5-4 decision came in a Rhode Island case called *Lee v. Weisman*.

Shortly after that ruling, the high court returned a Texas graduation prayer dispute to a federal appeals court with instructions to decide the case in a manner consistent with the *Weisman* decision.

The appeals court said the Texas district's prayer policy was different and upheld it. Unlike the Rhode Island policy in which the school principal invited clergy to deliver prayers, the court noted that the Texas policy provided for student-initiated, student-led prayers. The policy further required the prayers to be non-sectarian and non-proselytizing.

That case, *Jones v. Clear Creek Independent School District*, again was appealed to the Supreme Court, which declined June 7 to review the dispute.

In the meantime, school districts have been caught in a cross-fire of competing claims about whether graduation prayer is permissible.

First, the American Center for Law and Justice, Pat Robertson's answer to the American Civil

Liberties Union, notified every school district in the country that student-initiated, student-led commencement prayers are permissible. The ACLJ offered to send "SWAT" teams to meet with local officials.

In *Weisman*, the ACLJ statement asserts, "the Supreme Court held only that it violates the Establishment Clause for school officials to invite clergy to give prayers at commencement."

In response, the ACLU warned superintendents that the ACLJ's bulletin misrepresented the *Weisman* and *Jones* decisions.

In *Weisman*, the ACLU contends, the high court "ruled that the practice of prayers at public school graduations violates the Constitution when there is

any indication that such religious exercises are sponsored by or through school authorities."

Even student-initiated prayers incorporated into official school ceremonies "amount to state-sponsored religious activities that violate the First Amend-



"The Jones approach of running in a student to pray doesn't cure the constitutional problem as long as the ceremony remains school-sponsored."

— J. Brent Walker

ment," the ACLU said.

Predictably, the episode has produced confusion. A large South Dakota district, for example, adopted a policy based on the ACLJ recommendations after receiving the Robertson organization's mailings. Then, after hearing from the ACLU, the district reversed itself.

It is too early to gauge the full impact the ACLJ bulletin.

Spokesman Gene Kapp said the ACLJ has received requests for assistance from about 5,000 districts, but the organization does not know how many of those districts will decide to have graduation prayers.

"There are a number of locations where this is a very hot issue," said Lynn Decker, an ACLU spokeswoman. "But I don't have a sense of whether this is a few dozen communities, a few hundred communities or a few thousand communities."

Based on feedback from ACLU affiliates, Decker said at least one school district in most states is opting to have a *Jones*-style invocation at graduation ceremonies.

Regardless of what they decide, school districts in some communities can count on stiff opposition and possible legal challenges.

Gwendolyn Gregory, who in her role as deputy general counsel for the National School Boards Association has discussed the issue with a number of school attorneys, said most lawyers think its questionable whether the *Jones* ruling will stick and are advising districts to avoid graduation prayers.

"We don't know whether it's legal or not," she said. "But to be conservative, we take the position that it's safer to avoid graduation prayers."

J. Brent Walker, associate general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee, said, "The *Jones* approach of running in a student to pray doesn't cure the constitutional problem as long as the ceremony remains school-sponsored. And when the principal 'blue lines' the prayer to make sure it is non-sectarian, you create horrendous entanglement problems."

Some districts, though, such as Greenville County (S.C.) School District, have adopted policies mirroring the *Jones* scheme. The Greenville board voted 7-4 in early May to allow graduating seniors to vote on whether to include non-sectarian prayers offered by a student.

Board member Margaret Burch criticized the proposal, saying it makes a mockery of prayer.

"Prayer is far too personal and sacred to be desecrated and reduced to what amounts to political prayer," she said. "It becomes no prayer at all."

Burch said American Christians "have offered public prayer to God, in Jesus' name, at public-sponsored assemblies for over 200 years ... never thinking that we do it in the face of those who are not of the same religious persuasion."

Burch said she could not believe Robertson would urge school district to use the *Jones* graduation prayer model, with its requirement that the prayers be non-sectarian.

"I cannot believe he would urge prayers not prayed in Jesus' name," she said. "For a Christian, that's not prayer."

The ACLJ bulletin cites the *Jones* case to bolster its

argument for student-initiated, student-led prayers, but does not specifically encourage nor discourage the use of the Texas district's policy as a model for other districts.

Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow said the organization tries to steer clear of the non-sectarian question. To accomplish this, Sekulow said ACLJ recommends that districts adopt a policy that allows students to control all the decisions regarding graduations, not just the decision about whether to include prayer.

Under the ACLJ-recommended policy, graduating students would decide whether to have a graduation ceremony, who would participate and whether or not diplomas are passed out. Students selected to

participate could "choose to deliver an address, poem, reading, song musical presentation or any other pronouncement of their choosing," under the policy.

The ACLJ-recommended policy would also require any printed program to contain a statement asserting that the student presentations are private expressions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the school district, its trustees, administration and employees, or the views of other graduates.

Sekulow noted that the free speech forum created by such a policy would permit sectarian expression, but would also allow all sorts of other expression. A student could advocate that the United States become a

communist nation, he said.

While the ACLJ prefers a forum that would permit sectarian prayers at graduation ceremonies, the *Jones* model, even with its non-sectarian requirement, is better than the total ban on graduation prayer espoused by groups such as the ACLU, said James M. Henderson, an ACLJ attorney.

Henderson emphasized that the ACLJ's primary concern is student rights.

School districts across the country are taking various approaches to graduation prayer, according to newspaper reports:

- In Baltic, S.D., northeast of Sioux Falls, a Baltic High School senior opened graduation ceremonies with prayer, according to the Sioux Falls *Argus Leader*.

- The Sheldon and Marcus (Iowa) school districts opted to permit student-led prayer and have been sued by the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, according to

"We were able to provide Amarillo seniors a baccalaureate service that was in keeping with tradition and also in keeping with the laws of the land."

— Ben Loring
Pastor
First Baptist Church
Amarillo, Texas

the *Argus Leader*.

• In Kentucky, where state Education Department advised school districts not to include commencement prayers, officials at Central Hardin High School in Elizabethtown approved a student's request to open the graduation program with prayer but instructed the student not to mention Jesus or God, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported.

• In Frankfort, Ind., five Frankfort High School seniors filed suit against the Frankfort Community Schools after school officials decided not to have school-sanctioned prayers in the graduation ceremonies. The lawsuit was dismissed after lawyers for both sides agreed to a settlement in which no prayers could be scheduled and school officials would not censor the remarks of students speaking at the event, according to the *Indianapolis Star*.

• The *Star* also reported that a Huntington (Ind.) High School senior filed suit against the school board's decision to ban an invocation.

• Louden County (Va.) school officials cited the *Jones* case in its decision to approve student-led prayer at graduation ceremonies, according to the *Washington Post*. An injunction to stop the planned prayers is being sought in federal district court by a Park View High School senior and two faculty members represented by lawyers from Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the ACLU.

Some communities are avoiding disputes over graduation prayer through non-school-sponsored

baccalaureate services.

In Amarillo, Texas, eight churches joined together to sponsor a baccalaureate for seniors at the city's four high schools on May 23. About 1,000 of the school system's 1,500 seniors were among the 3,500 participants in the voluntary event.

"We were able to provide Amarillo seniors a baccalaureate service that was in keeping with tradition and also in keeping with the laws of the land," said Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, and an organizer of the event.

Loring said one advantage to a privately sponsored event is that participants are more free to convey religious messages than in a school-sponsored event.

In Franklin, Va., Beaver Dam Baptist Church hosted a baccalaureate service for seniors at Windsor High School on June 13. Beaver Dam pastor Richard Peerey said 32 of the school's 60-plus seniors were among the 310 people attending the voluntary service.

"It was strictly a worship service," Peerey said, adding that the event was well received by the community. "I did not get a superficial 'thank you,'" he said.

"Privately sponsored baccalaureate services are the solution to the problem," Walker said. "They are theologically well-grounded. Those who come are there for private religious worship. Δ

Shall we pray at graduation?

Yes, but at a church-sponsored, voluntarily attended baccalaureate service. It can even be held on campus in most cases as long as the school does not plan or promote the service.

Corporate prayer at a school-sponsored graduation ceremony, however, is improper. The Supreme Court recently declared unconstitutional the prayers offered by a Jewish rabbi at a middle school graduation ceremony in which the principal gave the rabbi guidelines to follow in fashioning the prayers. Justice Anthony Kennedy reasoned that "the Constitution forbids the state to exact religious conformity from a student as the price of attending her own high school graduation." *Lee v. Weisman* (1992).

Such prayers are not made constitutional

by allowing students to vote on whether to pray or by selecting a student to pray. This is particularly true when school officials review the prayer ahead of time to make sure it is "non-sectarian." As long as the ceremony is school-sponsored, the constitutional problem remains no matter who prays.

Jesus warned us about practicing our piety before others and told us not to pray on the street corner where we can be seen, but to go into our closet and shut the door and pray in secret. (Matthew 6:1-6) Baccalaureate services — where students and parents assemble for the purpose of prayer — are in keeping with this teaching. And, of course, so are private, silent prayers, anytime. Δ

— J. Brent Walker

VIEWS OF THE WALL

J. Brent Walker
Associate General Counsel



In 1952 Congress passed a joint resolution declaring the "first Thursday in May of each year" to be set aside for prayer. Presidents over the last 40 years have entered such proclamations, as had many going back to George Washington. Shortly after taking office President Bill Clinton executed a proclamation declaring May 6 to be a National Day of Prayer.

And so the nation prayed. Churches, religious organizations and other groups came together to pray in their own way.

This year's Day of Prayer, as it does most every year, again spawned the debate about whether it is proper for the government to designate a special time for prayer and to urge its citizens to pray. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Well, there's nothing wrong with people getting together to pray on a designated day. Indeed, most who read this column will agree that every day should be a day of national prayer. The rub comes when the government declares it to be such and exhorts its citizens to engage in a religious exercise.

Though most presidents have issued prayer proclamations, not all did. Significantly, Thomas Jefferson, author of Virginia's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, refused to issue a thanksgiving proclamation because he believed that it was both unconstitutional and unwise. In a letter to a Presbyterian minister in 1808, Jefferson voiced some of his concerns:

"I consider the government of the United States as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercise. ... Certainly, no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the General Government. ... Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determining for itself the times for these exer-

"Most ... will agree that every day should be a day of national prayer. The rub comes when the government declares it to be such and exhorts its citizens to engage in a religious exercise."

cises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and this right can never be safer than in their own hands, where the Constitution has deposited it" (Stokes and Pfeffer, *Church and State in the United States*, p. 88).

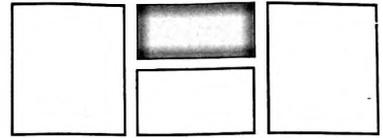
James Madison, Thomas Jefferson's successor and cohort in liberty, was no less opposed to such proclamations. But he issued several prayer proclamations during his administration, apparently bowing to political pressures. Edwin S. Gaustad, in his wonderful book, *Faith of Our Fathers*, tells Madison's story. According to Gaustad, Madison wanted to follow Jefferson's lead, but the American public cried out for a strong dose of civil religion. After the War of 1812 began, Congress passed a resolution asking the president to issue a proclamation for prayer. Madison was torn. Given the war's unpopularity, he felt that he could not ignore Congress but, on the other hand, Madison believed that it was improper for the civil government to set aside days for religious observance. He proceeded to compromise by issuing a proclamation that was utterly non-sectarian (in Madison's words "absolutely indiscriminate"), and by making clear that it carried not the least inkling of a penalty for failure to comply (again, what he called "merely recommendatory"). (Gaustad, p. 55)

Years later, however, Madison would render a more disinterested and philosophical opinion. Madison

gave five reasons why a religious pronouncement should not be handed down from civil magistrates — even presidents. First, a declaration of a religious holiday can never be enforced by the sword of civil government. "An advisory Govt. is a contradiction in terms," Madison wrote. Second, the government is not in any sense entitled to act as an ecclesiastical council or synod with the moral authority to "speak to the faith or the Consciences of the people." Third, such proclamations tended "to imply and certainly nourish the erroneous idea of a national religion," an idea that Madison condemned as anathema. Fourth, such declarations inevitably use the terminology and theology of the dominant religious groups and are, to that extent, majoritarian in their flavor. And, fifth, such proclamations carry the grave risk of using religion to serve the political ambitions of the moment (Gaustad, pp. 55-56).

As church-state rubs go, a congressional resolution and a presidential proclamation establishing a National Day of Prayer is not that significant a breach. After all, there is little (if any) actual coercion of anyone's conscience. Certainly it does not compare with attempts on the part of states to sponsor prayer in schools or schemes to funnel tax dollars to teach religion. But actual coercion has never been the standard for judging whether government has overstepped its bound in endorsing religion. And it is helpful to understand that two of our Founders who had as much to do as anyone with ensuring the protection of religious liberty in this country — Jefferson and Madison — either opposed religious pronouncements in principle or refuse to issue them in practice.

Exhorting our country to repentance and prayer on designated days is altogether proper. Who would argue we don't need it? But it's more appropriately called for by the preachers, priests and prophets among us — not civil magistrates, the Congress or a Baptist president. Δ



RLC elects six members to terms on BJC board

The Religious Liberty Council elected six new board members to serve on the Baptist Joint Committee during its annual meeting May 14.

The RLC was formed as an advisory/support organization for the BJC. In recent years, the RLC served as an organizational vehicle to provide representation on the BJC for Baptists who channeled direct financial support to the BJC after the Southern Baptist Convention severed ties with the Washington, D.C.-based religious liberty agency.

Elected to three-year terms on the BJC board were Cecil Sherman of Atlanta, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; and John Gilbert, pastor of First Baptist Church, Poplar Bluff, Mo.

Elected to two-year terms were Bill Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Waynesboro, Va.; and Marian Grant of Raleigh, N.C., recording secretary of the North Carolina Baptist Convention.

Elected to one-year terms were Bill Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, Erlanger, Ky.; and Ann Quattlebaum, a Greenville, S.C., counselor and social worker and president of the Alliance of Baptists.

The more than 80 RLC members attending the luncheon meeting were told by BJC General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas that the RLC's role is in transition. Thomas said a BJC subcommittee will recommend a bylaws change in October that would provide direct representation on the BJC for state conventions and other associations of Baptists.

In a financial report, Development and Denominational Relations Associate Patrick N. Horn told the RLC the agency has met its budget to date this year, primarily because growth in CBF funding and an increase in foundation gifts have compensated for a shortfall in individual contributions.

RLC co-chairman Grady Cothen

appealed to members to accept responsibility for increasing individual gifts.

"The best voice for religious liberty in America is hanging on by its fingernails," Cothen said.

Re-elected as co-chairmen of the RLC were Cothen, retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; Abner McCall of Waco, Texas, president emeritus of Baylor University; and Gardner Taylor, pastor emeritus of Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N.Y. Jerry Martin, pastor of Kensington Baptist Church, Kensington, Md., was re-elected secretary-treasurer. Δ

Both religion clauses essential, Dunn asserts

Fidelity to both separation of church and state and the free exercise of religion will encounter opposition in today's pluralistic society, according to a Baptist church-state specialist.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, told participants at a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship breakout session that the First Amendment's guarantees of church-state separation and free religious practice are not in competition with each other.

But supporting both, he said, will rub some people the wrong way.

Highlighting ways the BJC has worked to protect both principles, Dunn cited the agency's 1983 opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment to permit public school-sponsored religious exercises and its leading role the next year in the enactment of legislation protecting students' rights to meet before and after school for religious purposes.

Dunn said Baptists have always welcomed diversity and shunned conformity and creeds.

"We don't have a written creed," he

said. "But there is an unwritten one, and you hear it prayed. You hear it taught in Sunday school classes. The wording varies but very little (among Baptist groups). ... It goes: 'Ain't nobody going to tell me what to believe.'"

In a report on church-state relations, BJC General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas told participants that the U.S. Supreme Court is moving away from protecting the constitutional rights of individuals.

Thomas cited a 1990 decision in which the high court abandoned its precedent of requiring government to show a compelling reason to restrict religious practice. In that case, Thomas said, the court in effect said Americans' religious freedom will be accommodated if the legislature chooses.

"But if they don't, the federal courts are no longer going to enforce free exercise rights," Thomas said. "I call it the Pontius Pilate approach to decision making."

Thomas also pointed to a 1992 commencement prayer decision in which justices came within one vote of abandoning the requirement of governmental neutrality toward religion. In a Rhode Island case, four justices wanted to permit government to sponsor religious exercises as long as no one is forced to participate.

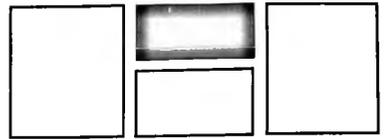
"They do these things in the kinds of cases that would make you not notice them," Thomas said, noting that the court's decision to drop strong enforcement of religion rights came in a case involving the use of peyote in worship by Native Americans.

"It didn't pass the Bubba test because most Americans didn't care about Native Americans using peyote," he said.

The commencement prayer decision has drawn strong reactions in some communities.

"Instead of having a fight over school prayer in your community, why not have a baccalaureate service?" Thomas suggested. "Baccalaureate services, if they are church-sponsored, rather than school-sponsored, are perfectly permissible."

Thomas told participants the BJC is involved a controversial case involving animal sacrifice by practitioners of the



Santeria religion.

The BJC has no position on animal sacrifice, he said, but is concerned about the authority of Hialeah, Fla., to single out only the killing of animals for religious purposes.

"If they can do that, they can tell Christian kids in public schools who want to distribute announcements for the youth revival, 'We're sorry, that's religious,'" he said. "And while other students can hand out their materials on the football game or the soccer club or the YMCA party on Saturday, you cannot hand yours out." Δ

Senate approves lobbying measure

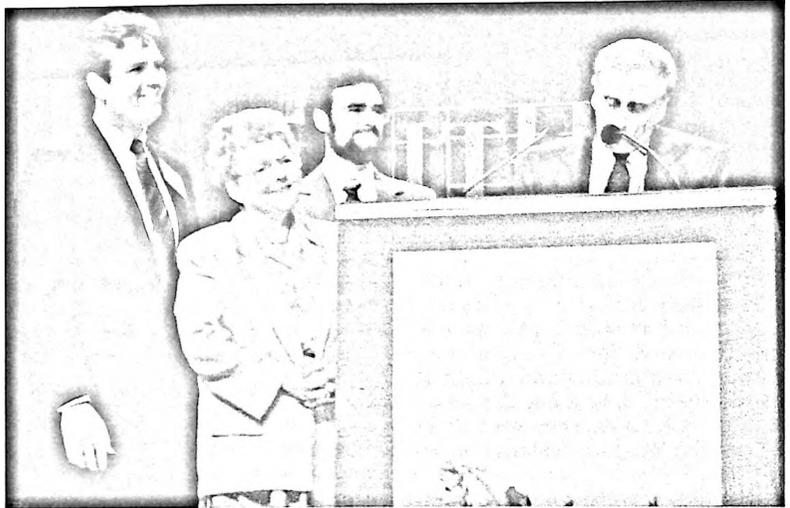
The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly approved May 6 a bill that could affect the prophetic and pastoral ministries of local churches and religious organizations.

The bill, approved 95-2, would revamp lobbying laws to increase disclosure requirements and tighten loopholes on activities designed to influence government. A major provision of the bill (S. 349) would establish an office of lobbying registration and public disclosure, requiring anyone who lobbies to register and file reports with that office.

The bill's language defining a lobbyist is overbroad and presents a risk that churches might have to report activities simply because they speak on public issues, said J. Brent Walker, Baptist Joint Committee associate general counsel.

"Requiring churches and religious organizations to register and report is no less objectionable than requiring a state license to preach," Walker said. "The requirements of the Lobby Disclosure Act, as applied to churches and religious organizations, represent a significant impediment to our moral advocacy."

The BJC does not oppose a significant overhauling of lobbying laws, Walker said, but it has worked to get an express exemption for religious organizations added to the bill since it was first introduced in the last session



James M. Dunn (right) presents the J. M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award posthumously to G. Hugh Wamble, former professor of church history at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo. Accepting the award was Beverly Wamble, joined by Kansas City pastor Leslie Hollon (left) and her son-in-law, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Dan Stiver. (Photo by Patrick N. Horn)

of Congress. Other fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of the press, have exemptions in this bill, but not religion, he said.

Walker added that while the bill language does not contain a religious exemption all is not lost.

The committee report that accompanies the legislation specifies that the measure is not intended to include religion. The report of the Governmental Affairs Committee says, "the courts have generally interpreted existing lobbying disclosure laws, in light of the free exercise clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution, to except churches and synagogues, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches and synagogues from their coverage."

"The Committee has no intention of changing established First Amendment law in this respect."

The BJC will continue to seek an exemption in the House bill, Walker added.

In the aftermath of the 1992 election in which public distrust of government

officials was pervasive, senators said they are concerned about restoring the American people's faith in them.

Sen. William S. Cohen, R-Maine, and a chief co-sponsor, said the most important thing the Senate could do for the country is to "recover confidence" in government.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., and a chief co-sponsor, said the right to petition government is constitutionally protected but the current laws have been characterized by the U.S. Department of Justice as "ineffective and unenforceable."

"What we are bringing to the floor is an effort, about 40 years overdue, to reform the lobbying registration laws of this country," Levin said.

"Our existing lobbying registration laws breed disrespect for law because they are so widely ignored," he continued. "They have been a shame and a shambles since they were introduced almost 50 years ago. ... At a time when

See LOBBY, Page 14

Parting challenge

Impart Baptist identity to next generation

Baptists are failing to impart their identity and basic tenets to the next generation, warned a laywoman who has spent more than 25 years trying to do just that.

Rosemary Brevard, a longtime employee of the Baptist Joint Committee and youth Sunday school teacher, said that overall, Baptists "are not doing a good job with our young people.

"I think there are a lot of people who carry the name Baptist and truly don't have a gut understanding of what it means to be a free Baptist on church-state issues. They truly don't understand what it is to be a minority."

She sees her BJC role as a "ministry in the sense of needing to educate the next generation of Baptists in who they are and the fact they need to try to impact policy."

The decline of Training Union within the Southern Baptist Convention is a major reason for this failure, she said. As a youth she learned those values in Training Union in her home church, First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas.

In May, Brevard ended her tenure with the religious liberty agency, retiring and planning to return to San Antonio with her husband, John.

She joined the staff in November 1967 working in the communications department — a job for which she was not really qualified, she said. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Texas with a major in government, Brevard did not know how to type in those days so she took a course and acquired the skill.

After a year, she was given the opportunity to use her education by transferring to the research/legal department, where she stayed for the rest of her tenure.

Spanning nearly half the life of the agency, her ministry has been as diverse as it has been rich. Brevard, assistant to the general counsel/director of research services, has performed tasks from the very mun-

"I think there are a lot of people who carry the name Baptist and truly don't have a gut understanding of what it means to be a free Baptist on church-state issues."

— Rosemary Brevard



dane to the extraordinary. In addition to typing correspondence and maintaining the agency's library, she's testified before a congressional committee and has been responsible for filing a Supreme Court brief.

She's worked with three of the agency's four executive directors. As a constant through the years, she has seen the agency and church-state law go through major changes:

- The BJC has always had a scholarly approach to its program assignment, but in recent years, it has greatly increased its activist dimension. Former executives Emanuel Carlson and James E. Wood Jr. and the late general counsel John Baker were academicians, while BJC's current executive James M. Dunn and its general counsel Oliver S. Thomas are also activists, she said.

- In recent years, the federal courts have become the primary arena for church-state disputes. Brevard remembered in her earlier years that BJC staff members primarily testified before Congress about church-state issues. Now the agency spends more time filing Supreme Court briefs, she said, noting that is reflective of what has happened within the country as a whole.

- The agency always has maintained a strong emphasis on the no establishment clause of the First Amendment, but in recent years, it has focused increasingly on the free exercise clause as well.

- The BJC has become the neutral meeting ground for people on both ends of the political and theological spectrums to come together and work in coalition, she said. Beginning with its coalition work on the Equal Access Act of 1984, the agency has built a reputation for helping adversaries find common ground.

Working for the BJC has touched her life in many ways, she said. "I have worked in the middle of the national news. I am down there where it is made. It's exciting. ... The work itself has been a blessing. What must it be like to come to the end of your career and think I didn't accomplish anything? It's been a blessing that I have had work to do that makes a difference, that impacts history and people.

"I don't perceive much of what we do as futile; it's worthwhile."

Brevard did not come to the agency because of a call, she said, but she has experienced it as one.

"Somehow it (her job and church) interweaves for me," she continued. "It's my job plus my church together that make it ministry."

An active member of First Baptist Church in Silver Spring, Md., Brevard has taught youth Sunday school for 25 years and has been deacon chairwoman and chairwoman of

See BREVARD, Page 14

Don't shackle religious liberty, senator

COMMENTARY

Sen. Alan Simpson said he supports the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Said it twice in interviews with me. Once, right after he killed the act procedurally in the last session of Congress, and once again right after it was introduced in this session of Congress.

Apparently, what the senator says doesn't mean much.

He was the only one to vote against the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in the Senate Judiciary Committee on May 6.

Wyoming's senator is the first and, to date, the only congressman to vote against RFRA in this session.

Quite a distinction.

Last year he killed the act without having heard committee discussion about it. This year he voted against it with vague warnings that "something is wrong with this bill," but he didn't know what — just a feeling.

The language of RFRA would return us to a traditional understanding of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment — an interpretation that had stood for nearly four decades. Legal experts on church-state law, like University of Texas law professor Douglas Laycock, agree that this is all the act will do.

RFRA would restore the compelling interest test. When the government passes a law that subsequently interferes with a religious practice, the government must prove a "compelling interest" to prevail over one's religious activity. And if government does prove a compelling interest, it still must achieve that interest in a manner which least burdens religion.

This traditional interpretation of the free exercise clause is the heart of religious liberty. The U.S. Supreme Court butchered the meaning of the clause three years ago. Consequently, many members of minority and mainstream religious have suffered indignities and violations of their basic beliefs and practices.

In an interview with me in March, Sen. Simpson said he liked the compelling interest test and thought we ought to go back to it. But apparently

This commentary by Charles Levendosky of the Caspar, Wyo., *Star-Tribune* is reprinted with permission.

the senator's words bend with any new breeze.

Last year, after the senator killed the earlier version of this bill, he told me in an interview that he did support the bill, and "why don't you watch my actions and see what we do with this next time." Yeah. We see. A man of his word.

Perhaps I ought to be kinder — its possible the senator doesn't know what he thinks.

According to a few people who were present including the *Star-Tribune* D.C. reporter, Simpson stood up in the Senate Judiciary Committee to object to the language of the religious freedom act. However, he quoted from and castigated NOT the language of the act, but a proposal in a letter from 22 state attorneys general who want prisons exempted from RFRA. Quoting the letter, the senator said the provision was vague and confusing and should be taken out of the bill.

The tittering and outright laughter in the committee room finally alerted the senator to his error.

He apologized. And then, remarkably, reversed himself. Actually, he said, he does support attaching the letters provision to the religious freedom act.

At best, this suggests that Sen. Simpson was ill prepared for discussion of an extremely important matter. Or it indicates his muddled thinking on this issue.

It is true that 22 state attorneys general signed a letter asking that the prison system be exempted from RFRA. They don't want to have to adopt the compelling interest test. But it is also true that U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno strongly urged the passage of RFRA without an amendment to exempt prisons.

Prison administrators will not lose their authority, Reno points out in her May 5 letter to Sen. Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee: "Activities that are presumptively dangerous or carry a demonstrable likelihood of jeopardizing discipline within a prison will

continue to be subject to regulation after enactment of S. 578 (RFRA)."

More to the point, religion must be viewed as a significant force for the rehabilitation of prisoners. To allow prison officials to deny important religious activities without adhering to the compelling interest test diminishes the role of religion.

Under a standard less strict than compelling interest, strange restrictions have been fostered in some prisons. Catholic prisoners have been denied the right to have rosaries and scapulars. Muslim prisoners have had their religious dietary needs and even their holy days ignored. Sadly, meaninglessly, the list grows longer.

The lack of religious liberty was an issue in the two most recent prison uprisings.

Religion is not an enemy to the smooth running of prisons. Religion is not the enemy of prison administration. Religion can only be viewed that way when prison officials are inflexible and don't see its potential as a rehabilitative force.

Two months ago, I interviewed Duane Shillinger, warden of the Wyoming State Penitentiary, regarding rules regulating religious practices of Native Americans in the state pen. In his 26 years at the penitentiary, he has made room for the religious beliefs and practices of Native Americans, including building two sweat lodges within the prison walls. He acknowledged the importance of the religious process in rehabilitation — and in helping inmate do prison time well.

Whatever inconvenience a state attorney general might feel at having to accommodate a prisoner's religious requests, the larger issue is rehabilitation. Religious liberty must be given high priority, even in prison.

There is broad bipartisan support for this legislation — the way it is currently written. But Sen. Simpson has this vague feeling ...

There are few bills debated in Congress that are more significant to the lives of most Americans. Yet we have a senator who voted against it because he has a feeling "something is wrong" with RFRA.

We deserve more, the state deserves better. Δ



Is there an 'Islamic threat'?

In the four months since the World Trade Center bombing, considerable media attention has focused on militant Islam as an international phenomenon with domestic manifestations. The blind Egyptian religious leader, Sheikh Umar abd al-Rahman, has become the new, sinister symbol for "Islamic fundamentalism." Various political leaders, pundits and Op-Ed writers now warn of the "Islamic threat."

The image of a rising tide of militant Islam was reinforced this spring during the official Washington visits of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin. Both leaders publicly underscored the dangers posed by Muslim extremists. Not surprisingly, Mubarak and Rabin presented their respective governments as the bulwark against fanaticism.

The concerns are real for the governments in both countries. In Egypt, Muslims associated with the Gamaa Islamiyya (Islamic group) have lashed out against Coptic Orthodox churches, individual Christians and several European tour groups this year in an effort to destabilize the Mubarak regime.

Israeli officials blame HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) for multiple attacks on soldiers and civilians in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Unlike the PLO, HAMAS leaders openly oppose the ongoing Middle East peace talks and any form of political compromise with Israel. The growing strength of HAMAS can be traced directly to rising frustrations among Palestinians living under military occupation for more than 25 years.

Last December, the Rabin government raised the stakes when it abruptly deported more than 400 Gazans for alleged ties to HAMAS. The forced expulsion of these people into a barren area in Southern Lebanon created an international controversy. It also

"The popular perception of Islam in the West differs dramatically from its reality as a dynamic tradition, inspiring and nurturing hundreds of millions of adherents for centuries."

— Charles Kimball



posed a major obstacle blocking the resumption of Middle East peace talks prior to May.

Numerous other developments point to increased political activity by Islamist groups: the rapid growth of the Islamic Salvation Front and the brutal government suppression of that group during Algerian elections in 1992 (More than 12,000 have been jailed during this past year); the imposition of Islamic law (*sharia*) in Sudan; the growing strength of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan where parliamentary elections are slated for 1993; ongoing revolutionary rhetoric by the Hizbollah (Party of God) in Lebanon and groups in Iran.

Clearly, Islam is an increasingly powerful political force in many lands. But can we speak of the "Islamic threat" as some kind of monolithic entity? No. To do so is highly misleading. This simplistic image of an "Islamic threat" fits into an all too familiar pattern. In the wake of the Cold War, there is a "threat" vacuum that apparently must be filled. For some months the ominous danger was couched in economic terms: first it was the European economic community; next it was Japan. Now, Islam has moved into the prime position.

The popular perception of Islam in the West differs dramatically from its reality as a dynamic tradition, inspiring and nurturing hundreds of mil-

lions of adherents for centuries. Without question, the actions of violent extremists serve to reinforce the stereotypical image of Islam as somehow inherently violent and menacing. In fact, the vast majority of Muslims around the world are as offended by a violent act carried out in the name of Islam as most Christians are horrified by the atrocities perpetrated by Serbian Christians in the current war in Bosnia or the recent Branch Davidian tragedy near Waco, Texas.

History is filled with chilling examples of violence, even slaughter in the name of God. But, these acts should not be equated casually with their religious traditions, even if their perpetrators claim to take inspiration from their faith. Such individuals and groups comprise part of the mosaic, but they are not representative of the moral and ethical teachings of the religious communities that have stood the test of time. Surely, both Christianity and Islam — intimately linked by history and theology — call their adherents to a much higher standard of behavior than violent extremists exemplify.

The facile association of Islam with fanaticism and violence confuses rather than clarifies issues. To speak of — or worse, to develop policies in response to — a generic Islamic threat minimizes the particular dynamics operative in each setting. Algeria is not Lebanon; Egypt is not Iran;



NEWS SCAN

Malaysia is not the Sudan. When we endeavor to work through the dense thicket of the particulars in each country, we can begin to make sense of the various Islamist groups and movements.

Many countries with predominantly Muslim populations are in the midst of political change. Islamist movements are active in this process. Some Muslims seeking change are Sunnis while others are Shi'ites; some are working within the framework of established political parties; some are operating underground in an effort to disrupt the status quo; some political leaders are cynically using religion to gain support for their policies.

To understand better the particular groups in specific settings, ask questions: What has been the recent political history? Are there enduring legacies from colonial rule and/or superpower domination? To what degree are citizens allowed to participate in political processes? Are there real economic opportunities for people? Are there serious human rights abuses?

Answers to these and related questions often are highly revealing. The strong discontent evident in many Middle Eastern states, for instance, can be tied directly to domestic problems. Few of the governmental leaders are in power by virtue of popular choice. Many regimes have despicable human rights records. Corruption, nepotism and economic disparity also are often part of the mix.

People in the Middle East look to Eastern Europe, parts of Africa and Latin America and they see that change is possible. Understandably, they ask, "Why not change here in my land?" In the context of colonial history and the failures of socialism and Arab nationalism, Islam provides an alternative social/religious/political framework for many people seeking change. The conviction that "Islam is the way" is widespread. What this might mean in any particular situation, however, is not often clear.

Without condoning the violence of extremists, we must understand that Islamist groups are demanding partic-

ipation in the political processes affecting their lives. Some Western analysts point to the Islamist call for democratization as a trap. They suggest that once in power Islamist groups might abolish the vehicle of democracy. In the now famous Meridian House speech on Islam (June 1992), Edward Djerejian, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, underscored the concern: "While we believe in the principle of 'one person, one vote,' we do not support 'one person, one vote, one time.'"

The concern is legitimate. On reflection, however, major problems surface. When applied as a rationale for U.S. silence in the face of Algerian actions to halt democratic elections in 1992, the policy appears to be "one person, no vote, no time."

Pressing for democratization in Eastern Europe while appearing to thwart it in the Middle East undermines U.S. credibility. The inconsistency is interpreted by most Muslims as self-serving hypocrisy, particularly when short-term U.S. interests appear to be enhanced by maintaining the status quo.

The challenge facing the United States, the world's one remaining superpower, is one of consistency. Either the United States stands for increased political participation and democratization or it does not. Either the United States stands for human rights or it does not. Credible U.S. leadership in the future requires principled positions consistently applied.

Political Islam is here to stay. The dynamics associated with Islamist movements are quite diverse and require thoughtful contextual analysis. Rather than resort to simplistic images rooted in stereotypes, policy makers and concerned citizens should seek to learn more about the Islamic religious tradition and its role in our rapidly changing, interdependent world. Δ

— Charles Kimball
Associate Professor of Religion
Furman University
Greenville, S.C.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a church-linked organization that espouses non-violent alternatives to conflict, says the first step the United States should take to strengthen the peacemaking potential of U.N. forces in Bosnia is to pay the \$530 million the country owes the United Nations in back assessments. In a May 18 statement, the peace group said military intervention "would only compound the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, increasing the possibility of an even wider war and of decreasing the possibility of any long-term solution." Other recommendations of the group include: establishing "safe havens" for endangered civilians; giving time for economic sanctions against Serbia to work; publicizing "heroic" efforts taking place in the former Yugoslavia aimed at bringing a peaceful resolution; and expanding and supporting relief and refugee efforts. ... **Christians worldwide** will number about 1.87 billion — slightly over one-third of all people on the earth — by mid-1993, according to mission researcher David Barrett. That figure represents a gain of 36.7 million over 1992. Muslims, who represent 18.5 percent of the total population, are nearing the 1 billion mark. ... **An interfaith group of Christians, Muslims and Jews**, many of them from Jerusalem, has issued a joint statement expressing hope that the city "might yet be a city of peace and reconciliation. We are prepared to confront the responsibility for the past and future life of the city but without overlooking the alarming prevailing conditions in Jerusalem," the interfaith group of 32 religious leaders said. "We wish to move beyond dialogue and move towards a just and enduring peace in the city, a peace which recognizes the Palestinian and Israeli dimensions of the issue," the joint statement said. Δ

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

BREVARD

Continued from Page 10

the congregation's most recent pulpit search committee.

Dunn lauded Brevard's dedication and service.

"Rosemary Brevard is irreplaceable. Her personality has made her the BJC social director. Her Christianity has made her the minister of pastoral care. Her continuity has made her the institutional memory. I shall miss my fellow Texan immensely."

Thomas echoed Dunn: "No one knows more about, understands better or believes in religious liberty more than Rosemary Brevard. She is the embodiment of the Baptist citizen. Words are a shabby vehicle for communicating our appreciation and respect for this great woman."

J. Brent Walker, BJC associate general counsel, added, "It has been a singular pleasure to work with Rosemary. Not only did she help me learn a new area of the law, she constantly ministers to me — to all of us at the BJC. She's always thinking about and doing for others." Δ

REVIEW

Continued from Page 16

fraternity. Although the detached objectivity of the professional historian is lacking and the book is a decidedly pro-Mason polemic, the overall work is sound, informative and refreshing. With Robinson's explanation it is clear that the Masonic fraternity is not an evil counter-culture or satanic cult. Although, the fraternities silence appears to be costing it friends and supporters.

At the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention, Masons have the chance to prove to the largest Protestant denomination in the United States the importance of their work and the essence and innocence of their fraternity. As champions of freedom of conscience, religious toleration and the separation of church and state, the Masons must follow in the footsteps of Jacques De Molay and stand up to their detractors. Robinson has aptly led the way with this book. Δ

LOBBY

Continued from Page 9

public confidence in elected officials has reached an all-time low, our lobbying registration laws remain an inside-the-beltway joke."

The House of Representatives soon is expected to consider a companion bill (H.R. 823). Δ

High court won't review Bible distribution ruling

Distribution of Bibles by Gideons to elementary school students during instructional time is not permissible under a federal appeals court ruling allowed to stand May 17 by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Without comment, the nation's high court refused to disturb a ruling by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that struck down a Rensselaer, Ind., school district's policy that had permitted the Bible distribution by Gideons for years.

The appeals court's ruling reversed a federal district court's finding that the practice was no more offensive than allowing representatives of Little League baseball to discuss the sport in the classroom.

The school district argued that it had created a designated public forum by giving school officials the authority to allow distribution of literature by community members and that it could not discriminate against religion in such a forum.

In rejecting the school district's argument, the appeals court noted that the superintendent had excluded one publication and intended to exclude others found to be objectionable. The school district cannot exercise control over content while claiming to be tied to the requirements of content neutrality, the court said.

Two Baptist church-state attorneys warned that school officials and others should not read too much into the court's action.

"The decision should not be interpreted as prohibiting the distribution of religious literature by students," said Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee. "Such distribution, as long as it is not disruptive, is generally permissible, subject only to reasonable restrictions on the time and place of distribution."

J. Brent Walker, BJC associate gen-

eral counsel, said the decision does not mean that Gideons cannot distribute Bibles on the sidewalks adjacent to schools.

"The ruling only prohibits outside groups from having access to a captive audience of impressionable students," Walker said.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the high court's action protects religious neutrality.

"I don't think the Religious Right attorneys who defended the school's policy would be as enthusiastic if the Unification Church tried to distribute the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Divine Principle to impressionable students," Lynn said. Δ

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In hope we are allowed freely to dream, to shape, to change our lives.

REFLECTIONS

James M. Dunn
Executive Director



Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Galatians 5:1, 5-6

Had you ever noticed freedom's connection with the Big Three (faith, hope and love)? The cardinal virtues of the Christian life are entangled with "soul liberty" in the writings of the Apostle Paul, Christian history and, it seems, in commonsense theology.

It's dangerous business to attempt to attribute motives to any other mortal. One of the most disgusting features of modern writing is post-mortem psychoanalysis, a full-employment fact-of-life for best-seller biographers. We regularly read such stuff: "What Senator Psychobabble really had in mind was ... , he meant to ... , his only desire was to" Hogwash! Poor Senator Psychobabble, long since gone to his eternal reward, would be astonished if he should hear his intentions autopsied. He didn't even understand why he made his decisions at the time. Yet, without a hint of humility, journalists, pundits and other authors churn it out.

Further, it seems that the more complex, creative or simply confused the character retrospectively analyzed as to motives, the greater writers' temptation to put the corpse on the couch.

Even more absurd and akin to science fiction would be attempts to dissect the Divine.

So, what ultimate arrogance? Impudence? What leap of faith? What urging of the Spirit prompted Paul the Apostle to announce boldly, "It is precisely for freedom that Christ has set you free," (a fair translation of Galatians 5:1).

Without plunging into deep-water theories of biblical inspiration I have come to believe with Paul, the first wordy writer of the Church, that God intended to set folks free.

Being made in the image of God, able to respond to the Divine and responsible for our responses, all mortals were meant by God to be free.

I know it is only one way of looking at the theological bundle, but it makes sense to me that we are set free so that faith may have substance, so that hope is not hollow, so that love can take on meaning.

• On faith we accept the burden of freedom. It's God's way of restoring the "imago Dei" that has been marred, blurred and badly damaged by sin. It's God's way of making us into something heaven can work with, this faith approach. And it's faith all the way from beginning to end. (Romans 1:17).

We do not know God's will with rational certainty, we exercise faith. That keeps us humble, believing and free. If we move only on facts there is no room for faith.

We don't nail God down. I heard one well-known fundamentalist say, "I learned at Princeton that I cannot believe what I cannot understand." Poor fellow. C.S. Lewis had it right: "If we can only believe what we understand we can write our creed on a postage stamp."

Without faith one is locked into the limits of his own little intellect. One all wrapped up in himself makes a mighty small package.

• In hope we are allowed freely to dream, to shape, to change our lives. Deadly dullness prevails without hope. We are free to hope.

A few years ago I whimpered aloud and lamented to my friend Martin Marty the departure of Southern Baptists from our own essential core. I see Baptists collectively denying the only distinctives we have to contribute to the larger family of faith. Marty chided me with words I have remembered. "Now, Dunn," he said, "you don't know enough to be totally pessimistic." He was right. None of us knows enough to give up.

Hope is rooted in memory. All persons of faith when reminded of God's hand in history are set free to hope again.

Over and over in sacred scripture one finds the children of Israel told to remember that God had brought them up from the land of Egypt. Repeatedly the message of the early church consisted of reminders of the resurrection.

In this experiential faith it is essential to remember that God has brought us this far. He'll not forsake us now.

Without hope, freedom is time bound, locked into the demands of the day, controlled by clock and calendar.

• Through love we have the freedom to know the Divine, to be in harmony with God. God is love. We, made in God's image, in some way understand the connection between love — even flawed, lusty, limited love — and the Divine.

Listen to popular music, read the literature of human love, inventory the rhetoric of romance and see at once how religious words, theological concepts, divine descriptions are brought to play. Nowhere else in shared experience is there much more evidence of the universal hunger to fill the "God-shaped empty place" in every life. So we use God talk to speak of love.

Yet, the language of love also reveals how incomplete and inconsistent are our images of love.

Have you heard of one "falling in love" as if it were a pit cleverly concealed in the jungle? Sounds as if one could be trapped in love.

Have you heard the sweet, innocent youth asking mother or father "how will I know if it's really love," only to be told, "you'll know when it hits you"? Sounds like a bolt of lightning, "ZOT," from the B.C. comic strip. One is zapped in love.

Have you heard the notion that these matters are the domain of forces beyond our control? The song goes "Que sera, sera, whatever will be will be." That's consistent with Kismet, the Islamic doctrine, or the hyper-predestinarianism of hard-shell, primitive Baptists, but it doesn't describe Christian love.

No, there is no such thing as "forced love." Neither scripture nor science supports that understanding. Despite the bad spin put on the phrase in earlier days, all love worthy of the word is free love.

Without love we are not free to reach beyond our own narrow self-interests. The power of love transforms both individuals and society. Martin Luther King Jr. was the first public figure in American life to make love the central theme of his message. He refused to return hate for hate. How urgently we need his message today!

With obedient faith, shared hope and unconditional love individuals can cope and a society can survive.

It is, after all, precisely for freedom that we have been set free. Δ

REVIEWS



A Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Temple

Robinson, John J., M. Evans and Company, Inc., New York, 1993, 178 pages.

"Just what is a Mason?" This very common question consumes John J. Robinson in his most recent explanation and defense of Masonry, *A Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Temple*. Written in the upbeat and positive style of Norman Vincent Peale, a Mason himself, Robinson presents the Mason and non-Mason alike with an informative and lively defense of what some have labelled a satanic religion, others have called an evil counter-culture, and most have no understanding of whatsoever. In his modest, easy-to-read style Robinson asserts the innocence and importance of these historically tireless defender's of religious liberty, the Masons.

Employing Napoleon's divide and conquer technique, Robinson divides *A Pilgrim's Path* into two distinct parts. The first addressing the most common criticisms and misconceptions concerning Freemasonry and the second detailing the origins and essence of Masonic belief.

Relying heavily on anecdotes and writings from past and present Masons, Robinson entertains as he succinctly deals with nearly every aspect of Masonry. Although brief, the explanations are thorough and provide the non-Mason with information not normally available to him or her. At times however Robinson steps beyond the understanding of the non-Mason with technical distinctions and other references. Given Mr. Robinson's closeness to the sub-

ject, these are understandable, if not forgivable errors that do not significantly detract from the overall work.

The self-imposed unawareness of the general public and the Mason's lack of self-promotion have combined to create a shadowy if not somewhat sinister legend. Within the first chapter however Robinson uses some choice statistics and a simple explanation of Masonry to help quickly educate the non-Mason. With his brief explanation of Masonic structure and organization, as well as the description and rationale behind some of their rites, Robinson helps to dispel some of the many unknowns surrounding Freemasonry.

A significant portion of part one is targeted specifically at the allegations and attacks of the Religious Right. Robinson carefully explains the patterns and mistruths used by individuals such as Pat Robertson and James L. Holley to discredit Masonry. Answering each allegation one by one Robinson gives a brief, cogent refutation of each of the fundamentalist allegations.

Robinson's documentation, especially that of Leo Taxil's personal refutation of anti-Masonic pamphleteering, is cursory at best and could use a good dose of academic support. Moreover, the defense of Albert Pike's writings as period and audience specific is not nearly as strong as letting the critics state their own case and sink with the facts of their interpretation. Unfortunately Robinson attempts to glean too much analysis from too little information and this tends to overstate his case. Given however, the propensity of the fundamentalist opposition to consistently overstate and misrepresent

their position, Robinson's bias can be forgiven as the zealous defense of a well-loved fraternity. Nearly everyone can sympathize with Robinson's frustration and anger of having important tenets of personal belief attacked.

Particularly amusing is the chapter on Holley. Decrying Freemasonry in front of the Southern Baptist Convention and citing his personal biblical interpretation, the doctor from Beaumont, Texas, becomes a wonderful illustration of misguided intentions and serves as comic relief. Robinson does an excellent job of allowing Holley and his anti-Masonic quest mire down in dubious scriptural exegesis and expose himself.

Part two of *A Pilgrim's Path* is more introspective and focuses on ways in which the Masons may take a more pro-active stance in facing their attackers. For the non-Mason, part two is more difficult to understand and somewhat less interesting because it deals with problems such as declining lodge attendance. On the other hand, the Mason will gain a great deal from these final chapters because they provide one prescription for dealing with not only the external but the internal problems facing the Masonic fraternity. Listing the many charities and positive aspects of Masonry, Robinson builds a substantial case for giving the fraternity a higher profile. If not to promote the fraternity and increase attendance and participation, then to dispel the dangerous and harmful anti-Mason rumors.

As a whole, *A Pilgrim's Path* is an easy to read upbeat work that provides valuable insight to the Masonic

See REVIEW, Page 14

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