



REPORT from the CAPITAL

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NEWS MAKERS

Raymond L. Flynn, U.S. ambassador to the Vatican and former mayor of Boston, has announced he will not run for governor of Massachusetts, ending months of speculation, according to news reports. Gov. William F. Weld is seeking a second term.

Henry Cisneros, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, announced that he will set up an office to relate to the nation's churches on such issues as homelessness, fair housing and community rebuilding. More than 300 clergy and laity from one dozen denominations cheered the announcement at an April 20-23 conference sponsored by Harvard Divinity School and the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc., a member body of the Baptist Joint Committee.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson recently called on Israelis and Palestinians, as a step toward peace, to begin seeing each other as human beings rather than enemies. "Surely, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth will only leave all of us blind, disfigured or dead," he said after a recent visit to the region. Jackson called for the United States to be the bridge between the two.

Sean Rice, a Hennepin County, Minn., District Court judge, has reduced by more than two-thirds the \$5.2 million in compensatory damages awarded the father of a boy who died when his Christian Scientist mother and others spurned medical treatment in favor of spiritual healing. Left intact was a jury's \$9 million award against the Boston-based First Church of Christ, Scientist. Ian Lundman died in a diabetic coma about four days after the first symptoms appeared. Δ

Equal privileges: a hallmark of Baptists

Quintessential democracy. The starting gun for sustainable human rights. A laboratory for soul freedom. The baseline for church polity and politics. A consistent corollary for the competence of the individual before God. A Baptist distinctive or hang-up or cantankerousness.

One or all of those phrases fits the affirmation that "all believers have a right to equal privileges in the church." It is elemental: Religious liberty starts at home. It is a revolutionary doctrine. It's an idea to which most free church adherents pay lip service. Edgar Young Mullins spelled it out in a lecture before the American Baptist Publication Society in 1905.

The notion, like all ideals, is far from being realized. Some churches bearing the name "Baptist" withhold equal privileges on the basis of gender, age, race or some other external factor. More invidious and common perhaps is the *de facto* denial of full membership privileges because of some selective system of sin-sizing. A sin of certain assessed magnitude can cut off equal access.

Human fallibility skews the democratic ideal. Orthodoxy is my doxy. Heterodoxy is your doxy. Tradition, cultural norms and Sunday school theology weigh heavily in determining the dispensation of "equal privileges."

The Baptist biblical vision has not encompassed a doctrine of sinless per-

fection. Therefore whether one takes the Bible seriously, sees it as authoritative or deems it inerrant, there is an instant catalog of perversions, transgressions and fallings short.

The New Testament, for instance, has more to say about sinful misuse of wealth than about heaven and hell combined. One of every 10 verses in the

New Testament deals with greed or hunger or poverty and an appropriate response. Count 'em! The sins identified or implied in the biblical record offer a formidable challenge to



"We are full-fledged phonies if we talk freedom of religion and act less than freely at church."

— James M. Dunn

any advocate of church purity and evenhanded ecclesiastical discipline.

So, go back to the principle: All believers have a right to equal privileges in the church.

The same regard for Scripture protects one from believing that equality of privilege refers to an equality of spiritual and mental capacities. Nor does this rule of thumb diminish appreciation for diversity of gifts and differences of calling.

The right of direct access to God makes the church a family. Brothers and sisters with a common allegiance to Jesus Christ do not take equality before God lightly or as an excuse for self-centered individualism.

The tangible reality of a fellowship of believers in real time with actual

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flesh-and-blood concerns bound by love serves as a powerful deterrent to cowboy Christianity. The principle of equal privileges in the church tends to curtail, not create Lone Ranger religion. At least, that is the way it ought to work. Powerful paradox: the lordship of Christ and the autonomy of individual soul. "Jesus Christ is Lord" was the first confession of the church. As Mullins wrote, "The first and finest expression of Christ's lordship over the individual believer is the gift of autonomy." Paradox? Mystery? Yes.

Dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit serves as the supreme safeguard. Christ said that he must go away in order for the Holy Spirit to come. Thus, according to Christian doctrine, he exchanged his presence for his omnipresence.

As Baptists have practiced the rights of all believers, all papacies, episcopacies, diaconates or ruling pastors are like commissions to control the sunshine. Shocking are *ad hoc* power plays in which a few individuals conspire to act for the church. Creeds and church legislation are unbiblical barriers between the believer and one's Lord.

Nothing so violates the basic nature of a Baptist church as the assumption of power by a few. The prerogative of congregational control is rooted deep in the theology of individual access to God and the polity of every believer having equal privileges in the church.

Semi-baptists always have tried their hand at creeds. There is a human hunger for uniformity and a universal temptation to conformity. A need for comfort levels causes folk who know better to go along to get along. Confrontation and contention are avoided at all costs.

Creedmakers find full employment in 1994, pushing and enforcing their moral creed with just two test poles —

abortion and homosexuality. Others blatantly make a creed of secular politics. I was interviewed for the "700 Club" in January and asked, "Is it possible to be a Democrat and a Christian?"

Mullins commented on creeds: "Creeds are useful as interpretations of Scripture at any particular period but

local congregation. But in characteristic Martin Luther candor he said that the "wild Germans" were not ready for congregationalism.

We proceed to affirm freedom assuming that church members have been "tamed" by the Spirit of God. The working principle that all believers are directly answerable to Christ is dangerous, explosive, open to abuse. One can be certain that it will be misinterpreted and misused.

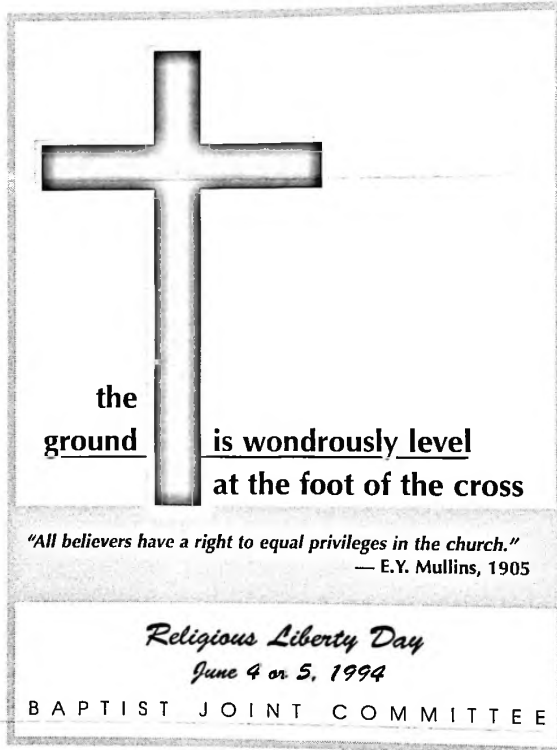
Yet, the introduction of indirect authority, creedal filters, mediators and intermediaries poses a greater danger. That danger is the failure to see Jesus Christ as sole authority.

For Baptists to be faithful to our own best insights, for Baptists to continue to champion religious liberty, for Baptists to be Baptists, we must practice freedom in our churches. We are guilty of high hypocrisy; we are full-fledged phonies if we talk freedom of religion and act less than freely at church. Democracy and vital religion share this ennobled view of individual freedom. All believers have a right to equal privileges in the church.

The late Brooks Hays liked to say, "Never dilute the oil of anecdote with the vinegar of fact." A story comes from the church that was his for many years, the Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Whether wonderful anecdote or factual report it bears repeating. When Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes walked the aisle of the church to present himself for membership, a Chinese washerwoman from the neighborhood, Chinatown, came seeking membership at the same time. It has long been said that the pastor commented, "The ground is wondrously level at the foot of the cross."

So it is. So all believers have a right to equal privileges in the church.

— James M. Dunn



so soon as they become binding they become divisive. Laws of any kind — those which affect the faith or the life — inevitably lead to mischief in the church."

Hence, a voluntary association of believers unites for the purposes of worship and watchcare, for witness and work, for mission and ministry, for education and edification. In that sort of gathering democracy alone accords with the nature of God's kingdom. No other polity than democracy leaves the soul free.

Martin Luther admitted that the real church and the real authority is in the

LIBERTY in HISTORY

Now that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to civil concerns, and that all civil power, right and dominion, is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls, these following considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

First, because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God, because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel anyone to his religion.

In the second place, the care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God.

In the third place, the care of the salvation of men's souls cannot belong to the magistrate; because, though the rigor of laws and the force of penalties were capable to convince and change men's minds, yet would not that help at all to the salvation of their souls.

[T]he power of civil government ... is confined to the care of the things of this world, and hath nothing to do with the world to come.

— John Locke
A Letter Concerning Toleration (1685)

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VIEWS OF THE WALL

Keep religion in EEOC guidelines



J. BRENT WALKER
General Counsel

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has proposed new guidelines to codify present law on harassment in the workplace. Some have called upon the EEOC to delete religion from the guidelines, fearing

that they would be used to stifle religion. Others, including the Baptist Joint Committee, think that harassment on the basis of religion should be kept in, but argue for some clarification to ensure that the guidelines will be used to protect religion. Following is a portion of comments the BJC filed with the EEOC.

The BJC has a keen interest in the extent to which the proposed guidelines affect the rights of individuals to practice their religion freely or cause the workplace to become a "religion free zone." In a word, we disagree with those who argue that religion should be removed entirely from the guidelines. However, we do feel that the risk of overbroad application is sufficiently palpable that additional guidance should be given to avoid the chilling of religious speech and practice.

The application of Title VII [of the Civil Rights Act of 1964] to religious discrimination in general and religious harassment in particular warrants the inclusion of religion in the guidelines. The prohibition on religious harassment laudably protects religious practice and expression in the workplace. Such harassment is no theoretical possibility, but a practical reality. See e.g., *Yudovich v. Stone*, 839 F. Supp. 382 (E.D. Va. 1993); *Turner v. Barr*, 811 F. Supp. 1 (D.D.C. 1993); *Weiss v. U.S.*, 595 F. Supp. 1050 (E.D. Va. 1984). Even if religion were deleted from the guidelines, Title VII itself would still prohibit religious harassment. But such an omission could send a wrong signal that the EEOC is less concerned about religious harassment than it is harassment in other

forms.

Nevertheless, even though religious harassment should not be omitted from the guidelines, we are concerned that they might be applied in ways that limit or at least chill religious speech and practice in the workplace. We urge you to hedge against this eventuality in your guidelines.

Religious speech and practice are entitled to at least as much, if not more protection than other forms of speech. Religious liberty has rightly been called our "first freedom." It is separately protected by the free exercise clause, as well as the recently passed Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. §2000bb). These constitutional and statutory imperatives call for more specific instruction with respect to guidelines on religious harassment.

We urge you to amend your guidelines to make absolutely clear that they are intended to protect, not denigrate, religion and expressly disavow any intent on the part of EEOC to create a "religion free zone" in the workplace as some have argued. More specifically, we urge you to include the following hypotheticals (or ones like them) as examples of what ordinarily would not amount to religious harassment in the workplace, absent exacerbating and aggravating circumstances and conduct.

- Telling another about one's religious affiliation or conviction or the use of religious jargon in casual conversation.

- Inviting another to attend church or Bible study.

- Discussing religious topics informally or in the context of voluntarily attended Bible studies during free time.

- Passive or symbolic religious speech on one's person or in one's private work space, including the wearing of a cross, yarmulke, turban or a forehead ash on Ash Wednesday, as well as displaying objects such as a Bible or a poster in one's private work space.

These examples will give guidance and provide comfort to those who are concerned that the guidelines will be used to inhibit religion, while preserving and advancing the guideline's positive aspects that prevent religious harassment and religious discrimination in the workplace. Δ

GUEST VIEWS

MARK DOUGLAS RAY

For three Sunday nights in a row, I have watched Jerry Falwell spend most of his telecast promoting a caustic "White-water" videotape as a fund-raising item. Needless to say,

President Clinton is not painted in a favorable light.

"Jerry's off on another tangent," was my first reaction. By Week 2, I was asking, "What does this have to do with proclaiming the gospel?" Week 3, my response: "This has gotten out of hand."

An isolated situation? Hardly.

Throughout evangelical circles, Clinton-bashing has become a more contagious pastime, reaching a level of venom unparalleled in my lifetime. A mere scan of current "Christian publications" attests to their being caught up in what might be called a spirit of divi-

siveness at best, hate-mongering at worst.

The religious right continues to seethe with frustration, but not just due to Clinton's unsolicited role as Antichrist. Their efforts to "usher in the kingdom" through legislated orthodoxy will always fail because it counters the non-coercive evangelism Jesus advocated. His desire for us as salt and light was that of authentic spiritual persuasion through relationship — not via force or the government.

Make no mistake about it: As a Republican, I have profound philosophical differences with Clinton on economic issues, particularly about the role and size of the federal government. These topics must remain a focus of spirited debated within the public arena.

I'll even go far enough to say I am uncomfortable with the president's tolerances on certain social and moral issues that run counter to my conservative upbringing. Clinton must share blame for some of the heat he is getting.

But again, to equate a politician's

necessary courting of special interest groups with the collapse of Christianity is to grant too much spiritual authority to a commander-in-chief.

And we fellow Baptists should applaud Clinton's refreshing adherence to church-state separation. At this point he is consistent with our best traditions of religious liberty, as championed by Roger Williams, George W. Truett and past heroes of Democratic and Republican parties.

Christians should and will continue to shape public policy, exercise citizenship and impact the moral and political climate of society. But "speaking the truth in love" will carry much more weight than secular methods of character destruction modeled by the world.

We can do better. Δ

Mark Douglas Ray of Decatur, Ala., current president of the Alabama Historical Society, is a licensed therapist and director of an adolescent psychiatric program. He has served on the Morgan County Republican Executive Committee.

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