



# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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## NewsMakers

◆ Vincent Rigdon, a Catholic priest and an Air Force Reserve chaplain, has filed suit against the military alleging his free speech and religious freedom rights were violated when his military superiors said he could not enlist parishioners in an abortion-related lobbying effort.

◆ Steve McFarland, director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom, said to expect "revenue-hungry states and cities to tax all but the smallest of charities" unless the Supreme Court strikes down a Maine law imposing property taxes on charities that "principally benefit" persons from other states. The high court heard arguments in the dispute Oct. 9.

◆ Margaret Moore, District of Columbia Corrections director, said the Lorton Correctional Complex will issue no new passes to visitors who say they represent religious groups after 38 people using the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act and claiming to be part of an African-American Muslim sect were arrested for allegedly providing drugs and sex to inmates.

◆ Carole Shields, president of People For the American Way, said her organization documented 475 attempts at censorship during the last public school year. She said they were largely prompted by groups tied to the religious right. Δ

## Churches should reject power, Campolo tells Baptist audience

Christians should seek to influence society not through the coercive power of the state but by authority earned through sacrificial love, evangelist and author Tony Campolo told a Baptist gathering Oct. 6.

"Love and power are diametrical opposites," Campolo, a professor at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., said during the opening session of the 60th anniversary celebration of the



Baptist Joint Committee. "There's a big difference between the magnetic attraction of love and the coercive nature of power."

"I'm worried because Christians have organized themselves and have become a power bloc and want to impose their will on America," Campolo said.

"Whenever the church operates from the position of power, it forfeits its genius and its calling," said Campolo, the author of 25 books.

Campolo said the defining characteristic of a democracy is not majority rule, but the fact that it is safe to belong to a minority. "We Christians are the majority in America, but we're not going to have a democracy unless it's safe to be a minority," he said.

Campolo lauded the BJC for its stalwart defense of separation of church and state.

"If we do not maintain the separation of church and state, we lose both democracy and Christianity," Campolo said.

While Baptists traditionally approached the church-state question out of concern for limiting the power of the state, Campolo said he is now more interested in limiting the power of churches.

"May we be cautious about those who would use political power to advance the interest of religion. I'm afraid for America. I'm afraid for its future. And what is ironic is I am afraid for America because I fear what my fel-

"If we do not maintain the separation of church and state, we lose both democracy and Christianity."

—TONY CAMPOLO

low Christians might do."

"What we are doing in today's world is we are creating a god in our own image," Campolo said. "There are those who have adopted a particular political ideology and they have said that their god is an incarnation of that ideology."

One concern mentioned by Campolo was the call for vouchers for Christian schools, which he said would force people to pay taxes to support schools that teach beliefs contrary to their own, turn public schools into "the dumping ground" for poorer students and disregard the contribution of teachers in public schools. "Private schools have the ability to reject students and you know who will be rejected and you know where they will go," he said.

Campolo who runs a private religious school said, "I have a vested interest in seeing that vouchers become a reality, and I am against them."

## Carter receives Dawson Award from BJC



**F**ormer President Jimmy Carter was presented the 1996 J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award from the Baptist

Joint Committee during the agency's 60th anniversary celebration Oct. 7. Carter was honored for his "Christian witness for human rights, peace, religious freedom and social justice."

Accepting the award for Carter was his pastor, Dan Ariail of Plains, Ga. In a video-taped response, Carter thanked the BJC for working to preserve the Constitution and the freedom to use the Bible to "shape our lives."

Carter praised the BJC for presenting "the principle of the separation between church and state, so that the people who want to worship freely will not be unnecessarily influenced by the government. And on the other hand, that the government should not be interfered with by the church."

"There are some religious leaders who believe they have the right to define what is a good American citizen and there are political leaders who believe they have the right to define what is a good religious person. And I feel very honored to be associated with a group like you who insist on the separation of these two principles." ▴

## BJC OKs membership unit for individuals, churches

Seeking to bolster support among individuals and local churches, the Baptist Joint Committee is expanding membership of its Religious Liberty Council, an auxiliary formed in 1989.

BJC directors, in their annual meeting Oct. 8, approved in principle a report by a study committee recommending institution of a dues-paying membership system and recruitment of more RLC members.

Founded as a support group for the BJC, the RLC has also provided a vehicle to allow representation on the BJC for Baptists who support the agency individually, through churches and through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

In 1994, the BJC amended its bylaws to allow supportive state and regional Baptist bodies to elect members to the board. Previously, only national Baptist entities were entitled to membership in the BJC. Currently 13 of the agency's 42 board members are RLC appointees.

Among considerations studied by an ad hoc RLC study committee was to change the BJC into a membership organization, allowing individuals and churches to join and pay dues. Instead, the committee decided to keep the BJC's current structure and to expand membership of the RLC, which has remained at about 300 since it was formed.

The ad hoc committee was appointed to respond to requests from individuals and churches for ways to be more actively involved in the 60-year-old BJC. The ad hoc panel is chaired by Patsy Ayres, one of three RLC co-chairs.

According to its statement of purpose, the RLC "is dedicated to preserving and extending the effectiveness of the Baptist Joint Committee" and will "develop and cultivate in Baptists and the larger public an understanding of religious freedom and its corollary, the separation of church and state."

The expanded RLC will provide its members opportunities for engagement in church-state issues, help link the BJC to its larger constituent base and work to ensure adequate funding for the BJC.

In other actions, the BJC directors approved a 1997 budget of \$870,000, a 4.8 percent increase over the 1996 budget.

A total of \$21,000 income from interest is budgeted in 1997, compared to \$5,000 in the current year's budget. The increase

will come from an endowment drive initiated in conjunction with the BJC's 60th anniversary, said James M. Dunn, BJC executive director. Currently, \$221,000 has been given or pledged toward the \$600,000 fund-raising goal, Dunn said.

In other business, BJC directors adopted resolutions decrying challenges to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and protesting a "charitable choice" provision in a recently approved welfare reform act.

The RFRA resolution noted that while many religious groups have benefited from the 1993 law, "some have threatened to seek legislative and judicial action that will water down RFRA's application." It calls on courts and Congress to "protect the integrity of this landmark law to ensure that it fulfills its promise as a fundamental shield for religious liberty."

The law increased protection for religious liberty by demanding that government show a compelling interest before restricting an individual's free exercise of religion. It was passed to remedy a 1990 Supreme Court ruling that made it easier for government to burden religion.

Melissa Rogers, BJC associate general counsel, said the staff is currently monitoring efforts to carve out an exemption that would deny rights under the law to prisoners, challenges to the law's constitutionality and interpretive issues related to its application.

Another resolution called for repeal of the "charitable choice" provision of welfare reform legislation recently enacted.

The act eliminates some federal programs, replacing them with block grants that would be administered by states. For the first time, it allows states to contract with or provide vouchers for charitable, religious or private institutions to provide services for the poor.

The provision "is a frontal assault on the First Amendment's Establishment Clause," the resolution states, that will "allow and perhaps compel state governments to provide taxpayer funded social services through pervasively sectarian institutions."

The resolution added, "There is a place for religious organizations in delivery of welfare services with public funds. But it should be done through separately incorporated affiliates that do not engage in religious education, proselytizing or discrimination."

BJC General Counsel Brent Walker said the charitable choice law "is the voucher proposal run amok"

# Church-State Intersection

**Melissa Rogers**

Associate General Counsel



**H**ow do we ensure that we pass the torch of religious freedom to the next generation? This question surfaced again and again at the

Baptist Joint Committee's 60th anniversary celebration.

An older generation of Baptists has carried the banner of religious liberty long and well. In contrast, the next generations of Baptists often know little about Baptist history and church-state issues.

How do we remedy this situation? The following are a few suggestions that grew out of the BJC conference:

**1) Commit again to teach Baptist history, religious liberty and church-state separation to youth and young adults in our churches.**

The BJC's curriculum, *Citizens of Two Kingdoms*, attempts to make these issues come alive for Baptist youth. The recently produced BJC video, *The Intersection: Where Religion and Power Meet*, and accompanying study guide are geared toward adults. Let us know of other educational resources we can produce.

**2) Hold a religious liberty conference targeted at young pastors.**

Of course, it is unlikely that a church will commit itself to teaching these issues unless the pastor is on board. At our conference, the Rev. Dr. Philip Wogaman, pastor at Foundry United Methodist in Washington, D.C., gave an excellent presentation on the need for and art of preaching religious liberty. Much can be accomplished by bringing young pastors together to discuss these issues.

**3) Re-establish annual or biennial religious liberty conferences and explore the possibility of designing a conference program for older youth.**

The BJC held such annual conferences in the past, but budget restrictions have precluded them recently. Conference par-

ticipants emphasized the need to bring people together more often to discuss these issues. Bringing older Baptist youths to Washington, D.C., to introduce them to current religious liberty debates in the Supreme Court and Congress could be a successful way to capture high school students' interest.

**4) Promote establishment of required courses on religious liberty and church-state separation at Baptist colleges and seminaries.**

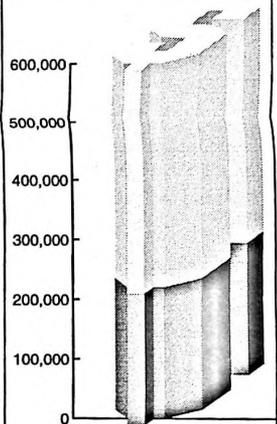
Students could be introduced to the study of history at the college level by considering the unique and vital role Baptists played in the formation of the First Amendment. Studying the intersection of church and state could provide a way for such students to explore the role of the three branches of government and the notion of federal and state power. Additionally, focusing on religious liberty matters in our seminaries would prepare pastors to deal with the church-state issues that will arise in their work.

**5) Provide a more substantive way for families, churches, students and other individuals to engage in church-state issues and participate in public policy.**

The BJC plans to do this by expanding and enhancing the currently existing Religious Liberty Council of the Baptist Joint Committee. Those who support the mission of the BJC are invited to become members of the Council. Members will receive periodic updates from the BJC, which will provide detailed information about legislative proposals and court cases and highlight some ways to act on church-state issues. If you would like to receive more information about the Religious Liberty Council, please contact the BJC.

We invite you to give us your ideas about reaching younger Baptists. Religious liberty is a precious legacy. Δ

## Endowing the Baptist Joint Committee



Through early October, gifts and pledges to the Baptist Joint Committee's 60th Anniversary

\$600,000

Endowment Drive totaled \$221,000.

**Help us ensure that one of the nation's most reliable and respected voices for religious freedom thrives in the next century.**

## Baptist Joint Committee

### Supporting Bodies

- ◆ Alliance of Baptists
- ◆ American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- ◆ Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- ◆ National Baptist Convention of America
- ◆ National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- ◆ National Missionary Baptist Convention
- ◆ North American Baptist Conference
- ◆ Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- ◆ Religious Liberty Council
- ◆ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Southern Baptist state conventions/churches

## REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

James M. Dunn

Executive Director

Larry Chesser

Editor

Kenny Byrd

Associate Editor

J. Brent Walker

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## Campolo: Reject power

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He said he worries "about the fact that the church, particularly the church that is manifesting itself on Christian radio and Christian television, has been dumping on the public school system far too much."

He refuted

claims that public schools are controlled by secular humanists. Campolo said more than 70 percent of teachers attend church. "I see teachers who live out the love of Jesus every day in the classroom without using words," he said.

While social stands have largely defined the evangelical movement, he said, it is "a strange thing" to see American Christians seeking to address concerns like abortion and homosexuality as a voting bloc through secular politics.

"The Christian Coalition cannot figure it out: why the gay community doesn't understand that they really love gay and lesbian people," Campolo said. "You can't say you love gay and lesbian people and mobilize political power to take away their basic rights and liberties."

"I can't understand why Christians across this land are mobilized to pass referendums to deny gays and lesbians rights every human being is entitled to," he added.

Campolo, a Baptist minister, said while he personally thinks the Bible prohibits homosexual marriages, "there's a big difference" between holding a private opin-



BJC Intern Allison Lee, Tony Campolo and BJC Executive Director James M. Dunn.

ion and seeking to impose that view on others through law.

Instead of forcing right behavior through power, Christians should seek to influence people with "authority" gained through sacrificial service, Campolo said.

"The church of Jesus Christ loves out the gospel in the world, and thus when we speak to those who hold positions of leadership ... we speak as people having authority," Campolo said. "Whenever we become coercive and say 'You better do what we tell you or else,' something has gone wrong with our whole way of life."

Campolo confessed he operates with "a guilty conscience" on the issue of homosexuality, relating a story of a gay classmate in high school who committed suicide after being abused in a locker-room while Campolo and others stood by.

Afterward, Campolo said, "I knew I was not a Christian. I believed all the orthodox doctrines, but I was not a Christian because Christians stand with the weak and the oppressed. Christians walk with those whom all others reject."

— Bob Allen

Associated Baptist Press

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Next Issue



200 Maryland Ave. N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002  
202-544-4226

Fax: 202-544-2094

CompuServe: 70420,54

Internet E-mail:

BJCPA@erols.com

World Wide Web site:

[http://www.erols.com/](http://www.erols.com/bjcpa/index.html)

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