



Nashville, Tennessee

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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March 9, 1999

NewsMakers

◆ **Dilawar Edwards**, a tenured professor at California University of Pennsylvania, lost his bid to get the U.S. Supreme Court to review court rulings against his injection of religion into classroom curriculum. The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said Edwards "does not have a First Amendment right to choose classroom materials and subjects in contravention of the university's dictates."

◆ **Phil Strickland**, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, lauded the passage of a religious freedom bill in the Texas Senate State Affairs Committee. He expects the measure, modeled after the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, to pass the state Senate "without any major amendments." He said, "Texas is a state where a large part of the population feels that faith is fundamental to their lives."

◆ **Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick** of Newark, N.J., and **Rabbi David Saperstein**, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, were named by Democratic congressional leaders to the new U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Republican leaders earlier named four members of the panel, and three additional members are yet to be named by the White House. Δ

BJC creates new foundation to be headed by Dunn

The Baptist Joint Committee approved the creation of a new fundraising and development arm to be headed by James M. Dunn after he steps aside as executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based religious liberty agency.

In September, Dunn will assume part-time teaching responsibilities at Wake Forest Divinity School and will also remain with the BJC in the part-time role approved by the agency's directors March 1.

The directors unanimously agreed to establish the Baptist Joint Committee Foundation with the assignment of increasing endowment and annual gifts. As part of the BJC, the foundation will be governed by the agency's executive committee.

The foundation will not manage endowment funds but will place them in existing foundations, including those affiliated with American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the North Carolina Baptist Convention.

Dunn's new role will include attending meetings staff is unable to cover and filling speaking and writing assignments on religious liberty.

BJC directors also unanimously approved a recommendation from Dunn that the agency set a goal of increasing its

total endowment to \$1 million by the end of 1999. Dunn said existing endowment now totals more than \$815,000. That figure, along with monies already pledged, leaves the agency less than \$160,000 short of the \$1 million mark.

The recommendation to create the BJC

foundation came from a five-member transition committee headed by Kevin Butler, editor of *The Sabbath Recorder*, monthly publication of the General Conference of Sev-

enth Day Baptists. Other members of the transition panel are Lynn Bergfalk, senior minister of Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.; Reginald McDonough, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia; Suzii Paynter, an educational development consultant from Austin, Texas; and Elaine Smith, an attorney at the U.S. Treasury Department and past president of American Baptist Churches.

BJC directors also approved transition committee recommendations to sponsor a Capitol Hill reception Oct. 3 and a banquet Oct. 4 honoring Dunn for his service as executive director. They also agreed to pay Dunn full salary and benefits for the remainder of 1999 as compensation for unclaimed 1999 annual leave, sabbatical time and other leave not taken.

After the board meeting, the search committee assigned to recommend a new executive director held its first meeting.



"We are determined to identify and call the best available candidate to assume the executive leadership of the Baptist Joint Committee."

— Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III

Events

March 1999

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

March 20, 1999

Religion and the Public Schools

A conference for school leaders, teachers and parents

Baylor University
Waco, Texas

Registration: \$55

March 22-23, 1999

Pitfalls to Avoid as Seen from the Pulpit: Church-State Issues and the Ministry

A practical workshop on church-state issues for church leaders

Baylor University
Waco, Texas

Registration: \$40

July 1999

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

July 8-10, 1999

Beyond Mere Toleration: Religious Liberty as a Basic Human Right

A symposium on religious freedom and human rights

Bloomsbury Central
Baptist Church
London, England

Contact Karen McGuire
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about these events:

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News & Comment

1998 human rights report
cites religious persecution

Too many countries that claim to acknowledge the principle of religious freedom refuse to respect this fundamental right, says the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998 released Feb. 26.

The 5,000-page report, written annually by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, detailed threats to democracy and human rights around the globe, including an unprecedented amount of attention to religious freedom.

"Nearly all states claim to respect the principle of religious freedom," the report states. "But in too many, governments refuse to respect this fundamental right, discriminating against, restricting, persecuting, or even killing those whose faith differs from that of the majority population."

Harold Koh, assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said the goal of the report is "to tell the truth about human rights conditions around the world."

In recent years, some lawmakers have criticized the State Department for "pulling punches" on gross violators of human rights, but they generally hailed the accuracy of the 1998 reports.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., chairman of the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, said, "I am happy to say that on a preliminary first reading, this year's country reports seems to state more hard facts and to pull many fewer punches than last year's reports." Smith added that "on the whole, [the State Department] has done an excellent job on this year's reports."

But Smith said that in some cases, State Department officials made bad conduct "look less bad." He said the report uses the fact that the "unofficial" Catholic and Protestant churches in China attract more and more adherents every year — as evidence that the policies themselves are not as bad as they might be.

The report detailed religious persecution in China, saying that unapproved religious groups experienced degrees of official interference and repression that varied from region to region.

"In some areas, authorities ... made strong efforts to control the activities of unapproved churches; religious services were broken up and church leaders or adherents were detained and, at times, reportedly beaten," the report states.

Among other violations of religious lib-

erty cited in the report:

◆ In Sudan, a bloody civil war fueled by the regime's intolerance of animists, Christians and some Muslims continued unabated. The report said the regime adopted a strict interpretation of Islamic law and subjected animists and Christians in the south to kidnapping and sale into slavery and forced conversion to Islam.

◆ In Egypt, approximately 6 million Coptic Christians face both occasional violent assaults by extremists and legal and societal discrimination. Christians also face job discrimination in universities and throughout Egypt's police, armed forces and government agencies.

◆ In India, controversy between Hindus and Muslims continued with regard to three mosques built centuries ago on sites where temples are believed to have stood previously. Also violence against Christians increased significantly, linked to extremist groups with ties to the governing Bharatiya Janata Party.

◆ In Vietnam, religious activities by groups not officially sanctioned are "severely restricted," the report states.

◆ In Russia, a 1997 restrictive law on religion was blamed for limiting citizens' religious freedom. The report says the law makes it difficult for less well-established religions to practice their beliefs through organized religious institutions. Δ

High court sidesteps
Hare Krishna requests

The Supreme Court refused to review an appeals court ruling that bars Hare Krishnas from soliciting funds or selling literature at Miami International Airport.

The high court's Feb. 22 refusal left intact an 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that upheld the airport's restrictions on the Florida arm of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). The ban does not prohibit the distribution of free literature. The ruling applies to airports in states within the appeals court jurisdiction, including Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

The decision relied on 1992 Supreme Court rulings that airports may bar solicitation of donations in terminals but must allow the distribution of free literature.

The Hare Krishna organization asked the high court to review the 1992 rulings in light of the increased commercialization of airport terminals. The appeal said Miami's airport has been turned "into a prominent shopping center" where half of all visitors stay at least two hours. Δ

Creedless baptists make tempting targets for legalists



James M. Dunn
Executive Director

*Baptists are a
funny breed,
A churchly crowd
without a creed.
It is so.*

A creed prescribes while a confession of faith describes one's approach to religion.

A creed is the necessary requirement to squeeze in and to squeak by some theological gate.

We baptists (the little "b" allows for kindred spirits among other churches) have no catechistic tests for believers. No acceptance of four or four hundred spiritual laws gets one right with God. Repentance and faith, a personal experience of God's grace — not intellectual assent to arguments — saves.

We have no moral creed. Other, that is, than wonderful little maxims like:

*I don't drink, and I don't chew,
And I don't go with girls that do.*

Even believing and behaving according to code is not in itself redemptive. We "do right" because we have been "saved" not in order to be saved.

We certainly have no political creed. That is in large measure what produced the first baptists by that name, a dogged dedication to religious freedom.

Non-creedalism drives some folks mad.

Always has. The apostle Paul had that problem with early Christians in Galatia. He called them stupid, senseless, foolish, idiots (various translations of Gal. 3:1). He reminded them that "it is precisely for freedom that Christ has set you free," Gal. 5:1.

Then in Gal. 5:12 he suggested radical surgery for the legalist who could not live without a rule-book religion. Then and now rationalism reduces religion to rules. The clingers to the past saw Paul as a no-law man, an antinomian. Their 20th century successors still libel with labels, striking out at those whom they do not understand.

A living faith is hard to take. It just lit-

erally drives some people crazy.

There are true believers whom creedlessness makes sad.

He said, "I just cannot believe a thing I cannot understand." Poor little fellow. One's bucket of religion is mighty little if it holds only what one "knows." In the mix of faith and reason, reason has a useful role. It explains, or tries to, interprets, sells and sometimes satisfies. But if one's capacity for the divine dimension is limited by rational bounds his/her pail is too small. There are tons of spiritual stuff none of us can get our minds around.

Whether limited by scientism like some liberals or by rational fundamentalism like some conservatives, the creed-chained character is pitiable.

A binding creed can turn pious people bad.

The philosopher Pascal said, "Men never do evil so fully, so happily, as when they do it for conscience's sake."

One need look at any day's lead stories to see how hatred, hostility and violence feed on religious fundamentalisms. Other factors — economic, political and cultural — are involved, but rigid religion makes meanies out of otherwise decent disciples. Look at Israel, the Balkans, India, Northern Ireland and on and on.

Who wants to fight and kill over propositions in the light of the Amazing Grace God offers?

A living faith not bound by creed makes Baptists glad.

It's love not law, faith not fact, persons not propositions, experience with God not expectations of persons at the heart of free and faithful baptists and all believers of whatever brand.

In the blessed absence of a creed the confession of faith common to baptists looms larger.

Jesus Christ is Lord.

That confession is older, historically potent, theologically eclectic, spiritually significant, religiously accessible, biblically sound, humanly available.

It is enough. Δ



Brooks Hays

I wish he hadn't done that

Brooks Hays, Baptist hero, tells the story of an Arkansas Sunday school teacher.

Sister Smith always managed to get in a word against demon rum no matter what the subject or scripture.

When it came to the lesson about Jesus turning the water into wine at Cana, she was strangely silent about the evils of alcohol. One impish 15-year-old put her on the spot.

"Sister Smith," he said, "did Jesus make real wine?"

"Yes," she answered, "and it was good wine. Jesus never did anything poorly. But I would have respected him a lot more if he hadn't done it."

We baptists sometimes have trouble with our moral creeds.

— JMD

Brooks Hays, a former member of Congress from Arkansas and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, died in October 1981.

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

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Book Reviews

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"We are determined to identify and call the best available candidate to assume the executive leadership of the Baptist Joint Committee," said Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, chair of the Baptist Joint Committee and executive director of National Ministries, American Baptist Churches, in a statement issued after the search committee meeting. "Our process is an open and fair one, enabling us to find, far or near, that special woman or man who will be our chief advocate for religious liberty as we move into the next millennium."

In addition to Wright-Riggins, who chairs the panel, search committee members are Patricia Ayres, tri-chair, Religious Liberty Council, Austin, Texas; John Binder, past executive director, North American Baptist Conference; Marian Grant, member of Religious Liberty Council, Raleigh, N.C.; Marvin Griffin, pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; Robert Ricker, president, Baptist General Conference; Phil Strickland, director, Christian Life Commission, Baptist General Convention of Texas; Daniel Vestal, coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; Daniel Weiss, general secretary, American Baptist Churches; Smith; and McDonough.

In other actions, the BJC directors:

◆ voted to present the first Barbara Jordan-Mark Hatfield Courage Award to U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, for his leading role last summer in defeating a proposed constitutional amendment sponsored by Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla. The Istook measure would have allowed government-sponsored prayer in schools and government-funded religious activities.

The award, named after the late Democratic congresswoman from Texas and the former Republican senator from Oregon, will be presented March 22 at a

BJC/Truett Theological Seminary-sponsored workshop in Waco, Texas.

◆ named a committee to address how churches and religious organizations can meet community needs without violating church-state separation or compromising their religious mission by accepting government funds. The committee is expected to consider a conference and/or video to promote "the right way to do right" in meeting community needs.

In staff reports:

◆ Associate General Counsel Melissa Rogers noted that membership in the Religious Liberty Council, the individual membership arm of the BJC, has increased to 693.

◆ Dunn reported that former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere has been added to the list of speakers for a conference on religious liberty scheduled July 8-10 in London. The conference, titled "Beyond Mere Toleration: Religious Liberty as a Basic Human Right," is jointly sponsored by the BJC, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in cooperation with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Historical Society and the Baptist Missionary Society.

◆ Dunn told directors the BJC will print 100,000 church bulletin inserts dealing with the issue of vouchers used to attend parochial schools. Dunn said the inserts will be distributed free of charge to churches that request them.

◆ General Counsel J. Brent Walker reported that Smith & Helwys Publishing of Macon, Ga., plans to release a book in tribute to Dunn by October. Walker is general editor of the book to be written by friends and colleagues of Dunn.

◆ Administrator Karen McGuire reported that 1998 receipts, including gifts to the endowment, totaled \$947,129.87. Δ



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