



REPORT

from the Capital

Florida appeals court rules against vouchers

By Robert Marus

A divided state appeals court has upheld a lower court's ruling that the state's school-voucher program violates the Florida Constitution.

In a 2-1 decision, a panel of the state's First District Court of Appeal ruled that the voucher program is unconstitutional because it allows government-funded scholarships to be spent at religious schools. The relevant section of the Florida Constitution states that no state money "shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid ... of any sectarian institution."

Attorneys for Gov. Jeb Bush and other Florida officials had argued that the program was constitutional because the provision in question did not impose any greater restriction on funding of religious schools than does the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution. In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court said that a similar Ohio voucher program did not violate the clause of the First Amendment that forbids government from making a law "respecting an establishment of religion."

Authoring the majority opinion, Judge William Van Nortwick said that argument was spurious. "For a court to interpret the no-aid provision of article I, section 3 as imposing no further restrictions on the state's involvement with religious institutions than the [federal Constitution's] Establishment Clause, it would have to ignore both the clear meaning and intent of the text and the unambiguous history of the no-aid provision," he wrote.

Van Nortwick also said that a more recent Supreme Court ruling — the *Locke vs. Davey* decision, handed down earlier this year — meant that provisions such as those in Florida's constitution did not violate the other half of the First Amendment's religion clauses — that government could not limit religious expression.

But Judge Ricky Polston dissented, saying the Florida provision should not be interpreted as being any more restrictive than the First Amendment. He also said the state government already provides indirect funding to religiously affiliated groups, and should not treat schools any differently.

"There is no distinction between this Opportunity Scholarship Program and the state Medicaid program that funds religiously affiliated or operated health care institutions providing free or subsidized medical care," Polston asserted in his dissent. "Other examples are legislative programs providing public funds to any public or private person or organization for preservation of historic structures, rent paid to churches for use of their facilities as polling places, and government subsidized pre-K or childcare programs operated by churches or faith-based organizations."

The case, *Bush v. Holmes*, began when a collection of civil rights and educational organizations sued the state on behalf of a group of Florida parents who believed it was unconstitutional. In 2002, a trial judge agreed with them, and ordered the program halted. Bush and other state officials appealed the ruling. In the current ruling, the appeals court asked the state Supreme Court to review the case.

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STATE OF FLORIDA - FIRST DISTRICT

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Bush has gone around Congress to implement plan, study shows

A new report by an independent group explains in depth what observers of President Bush's faith-based initiative have been noting for years now: Bush has used his presidential powers to bypass Congress and "aggressively implement the initiative."

The bipartisan Roundtable on Religion & Social Welfare Policy released the 63-page report Aug. 16. It analyzes the extent to which the Bush administration has gone to make it easier for pervasively religious groups — including churches, mosques and synagogues — to receive government funding.

"The common perception is that President Bush's Faith-

Based Initiative has been stalled by a reluctant Congress," says the report, authored by three officials of the Roundtable. "But as this report illustrates, the Bush administration has made concerted use of its executive powers and has moved aggressively through new regulation, funding, political appointees and active public outreach efforts to expand the federal government's partnerships with faith-based social service providers in ways that don't require Congressional approval."

The initiative — designed to increase the amount of social services funding the government can channel through religious groups — has been the centerpiece of President Bush's domestic agenda. However, disputes in Congress over church-state and civil rights issues related to the initiative

have stalled legislation that would authorize it.

Nonetheless, Bush has "aggressively" implemented the policy through "executive orders, rule changes, managerial realignment in federal agencies, and other prerogatives of his office," according to the report.

Historically, concerns over church-state issues have caused lawmakers and government agencies to require that any religiously affiliated group receiving government money to be essentially secular in the services it provides and the way it conducts its business.

That meant that churches or other strongly religious groups would set up separate non-profit organizations — such as Catholic Charities or Lutheran Social Services — with religious goals but secular methods to receive the funding.

Bush officials — and many among his base of support in the conservative Christian community — argued that such rules amounted to "discrimination" against deeply religious groups. They have repeatedly argued that deeply religious groups could be trusted to use government funds only for secular services — such as drug counseling — while avoiding using public money to

pay for "inherently religious" activities. That, Bush administration officials have conceded, would be plainly unconstitutional.

Therefore, the report says, the White House "has sought to remove barriers to participation by faith-based organizations. However, it continues, "in so doing, [the administration] may also have weakened longstanding walls preventing religious groups from inserting spiritual activities into secular services."

For example, the report noted, excluding only "inherently religious" activities from the list of acceptable objects of government funding was problematic because "the term defines only a set of activities that may never be paid for by direct government expenditure, and suggests a false conclusion that everything that is not 'inherently religious' may be paid for with public funds." As examples of activities that are not "inherently religious" but could still contain significant religious content, the report pointed to counseling services and education.

Since taking office in 2001, the report says, Bush and his administration have proposed or implemented 15 major rule changes enabling the faith-based plan "that together mark a major shift in the constitutional separation of church and state." Among those changes are deleting words in Veterans Administration regulations that require its grantees to certify they exert "no religious influence" in the services they provide. Among the report's other observations:

— Since becoming president, Bush has often used the presidential "bully pulpit" to promote the initiative, giving more than 40 speeches touting it and devoting sections of each of his State of the Union addresses to the issue;

— Although Bush officials have repeatedly pointed to the presumed superiority of faith-based social service providers as reason for funding them, "little research has yet been conducted that is able to show faith-based organizations are more effective than secular organizations in addressing social problems. While more elaborate scientific studies are underway, the White House has relied on largely anecdotal evidence to support the view that faith-based approaches produce better long-term results."

— There are some inaccuracies in a major study on which Bush officials have relied to prove that federal agencies have discriminated unfairly against religious providers. For example, the 2001 "Uneven Playing Field" report noted that the Department of Housing and Urban Development had not given grants to any religious provider under a \$20 million home-ownership program. But, in fact, the Christian group Habitat for Humanity had received more than half of the program's total funding in fiscal year 2000. "The misinterpretation arose because Habitat was not listed as 'a primary religious' organization because it offered 'essentially secular housing services,'" the Roundtable report said.

The Roundtable is operated by the Rockefeller Institute at the State University of New York at Albany and is funded by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. The full report is available on the group's website at www.religionandsocialpolicy.org. — ABP

"... the Bush administration has made concerted use of its executive powers and has moved aggressively through new regulation, funding, political appointees and active public outreach efforts to expand the federal government's partnerships with faith-based social service providers in ways that don't require Congressional approval."



J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

God is not a Republican or a Democrat

When I was cutting my political teeth in the late 1960s, it was an article of faith among many that one could not be a Republican and a Christian at the same time. And, if you planned to vote for George Wallace for president, God help you! Democrats were thought to be pursuing Godly values like civil rights and economic justice.

Even as a political neophyte, I knew that could not be right. God must be far greater than any one political stance and had to transcend party affiliation. As I matured, I began to understand that all political candidates, parties and ideologies are flawed and that God could not accurately be assigned the label Democrat or Republican or even American for that matter. It was nothing short of idolatry to equate any political movement with the Kingdom of God; it was pure fantasy to deny that people of faith populate nearly any political philosophy.

Thirty-five years later the claims remain, but the labels have switched. Many in the conservative evangelical community have associated Christianity with the GOP and concluded that God is going to pull the cosmic lever (or touch screen) for George W. Bush. For example, Jerry Falwell has been reported as saying: "It is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew ... to get serious about re-electing President Bush" (*New York Times*, July 16, 2004). In the same way, Pat Robertson has declared: "I think George Bush is going to win in a walk. I really believe I'm hearing from the Lord. It's going to be like a blowout election in 2004. The Lord has just blessed him ... It doesn't make any difference what he does, good or bad" (*AP/Fox News*, January 2, 2004).

In response to these foolish (indeed heretical) assertions, and others like them, 40 Christian leaders and 40,000 citizens signed a petition titled, "God Is Not a Republican Or a Democrat." Originally published in the *New York Times* on August 30, the petition is worth reproducing here.

"These leaders of the Religious Right mistakenly claim that God has taken a side in this election, and that Christians should only vote for George W. Bush.

We believe that claims of divine appointment for the President, uncritical affirmation of his policies, and assertions that all Christians must vote for his re-election constitute bad theology and dangerous religion.

We believe that sincere Christians and other people of faith can choose to vote for President Bush or Senator Kerry — for reasons deeply rooted in their faith.

We believe that all candidates should be examined by measuring their policies against the complete range of Christian ethics and values.

We will measure the candidates by whether they enhance human life, human dignity, and human rights; whether they strengthen family life and protect children; whether they promote racial reconciliation and support gender equality; whether they serve peace and social justice; and whether they advance the common good rather than only individual, national, and special interests.

We also admonish both parties and candidates to avoid the exploitation of religion or our congregations for partisan political purposes.

By signing this statement, we call Christians and other people of faith to a more thoughtful involvement in this election, rather than claiming God's endorsement of any candidate.

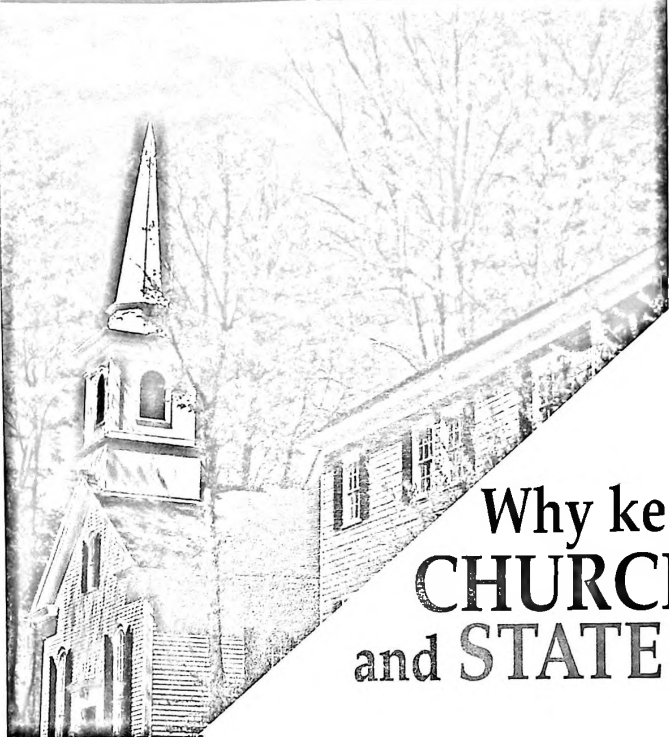
This is the meaning of responsible Christian citizenship."

People of faith — proceeding in good faith and for essentially religious reasons — can come to different conclusions about for whom to vote and what policies to support. As the great evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry once said, "There is no one direct line from the Bible to the ballot box."

Faithful discipleship and responsible citizenship require us to say "No" to those who would assert a divine imperative for any party or candidate and who claim to know with cock-sure certainty the mind of God.

Let our religious convictions influence how we vote. But in the final analysis, our vote should be based on which candidate would best serve the commonweal and most effectively improve the lives of all Americans.

It was nothing short of idolatry to equate any political movement with the Kingdom of God; it was pure fantasy to deny that people of faith populate nearly any political philosophy.



Why keep CHURCH and STATE separate?

By Derek H. Davis, Ph.D.

In 1902 religious historian Sanford Cobb called religious liberty "America's great gift to civilization and the world." Religious liberty stands as one of our nation's bedrock principles, yet seemingly it is always under siege — by those, mostly Christians, who fail to appreciate the complex thinking of the American founding fathers, thinking that caused them to write into the Constitution the principle that truly guarantees and enables religious liberty: the separation of church and state.

The separation of church and state is blamed today for many things: the "unprecedented moral decline," the shootings at Columbine High School and other schools around the country, "rampant secularism," the spread of "cults and false religions," greed and materialism, even "God's judgment" against the United States resulting in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

To remedy the so-called evils of the separation of church and state, many

today attempt to re-write history, to tell us that the principle has been widely misunderstood. They suggest that the separation idea was only a political philosophy popular among a few radical founding fathers, or that it was devised for expedience only — the inevitable result of religious pluralism in the new nation. Most often we hear that the principle originally prohibited only the establishment of one religion or church over others, not the advancement of religion by government if performed without discrimination against any particular religion. These critics suggest, for example, that there is no constitutional prohibition to prayer in public schools, provided we hear everyone's prayer; that we can help solve the moral decline with a program of nondiscriminatory government funding of churches and other religious groups to administer social programs and religious schools; and that we can post the Ten Commandments and other sacred texts that most Americans

agree with in public schools, courtrooms, and other government buildings.

Of course one rarely hears these suggestions from members of religious minorities. They know that a constitutional framework that allows government to actively support religion, even on a nondiscriminatory basis, will result in a virtual Christian establishment. This is because on the basis of virtually every poll, at least 80-85% of Americans still identify themselves as Christians; thus they believe that allowing government to actively support religion will only result in the public sector being bathed in Christian prayer, language, programs, activities, symbols and messages. They fear being crushed under the weight of Christian majoritarianism — in a country where they are supposed to be "equal" in the eyes of government. And they are right: this is precisely what would happen, to the delight of many Christians who want a privileged place for Christianity in the nation, but who

fail to understand the profound theological foundation of the separation of church and state.

The theological foundation for separation

The principle of church-state separation is ultimately founded on a theological basis. When the founders wrote in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," they had in mind that people are essentially equal in that they are created in the image of God and are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," including the freedom to believe and practice one's religion. They believed that the *imago Dei* stamped upon every human being is the basis of the dignity and worth of every person. They understood that one's choices in the realm of religion must be made freely; otherwise one's dignity and worth before God are not respected. In other words, they believed in voluntarism, the right of every person to believe and practice his or her faith without coercion or interference from government.

If government has the ability to support and advance religion, even on a nondiscriminatory basis, the inevitable result is a "through the back door" establishment of the majority religion, which treats those of minority faiths and those of no faith with disrespect about the most sacred of human choices. The founders considered the "nondiscriminatory" support principle in at least four drafts of the First Amendment's religion clauses when they wrote the Constitution. It was rejected in each case. In the end, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment was the founders' way of encouraging every person to find his or her own way in religion; the Establishment Clause was their way of ensuring that government would not interfere with that process, even by encouraging or promoting the very idea of faith. The founders agreed with what Roger Williams wrote in the 17th century, that it is wrong for the civil power

to encourage a person to "this or that judgment or opinion of faith" or to suggest to someone "this or that practice in religion." People must believe for themselves, otherwise the divine initiative is compromised and government has violated the sacredness of those whom it is called to serve. The great Baptist John Leland would agree: "Religion is a concern between God and the soul with which no human authority can intermeddle."

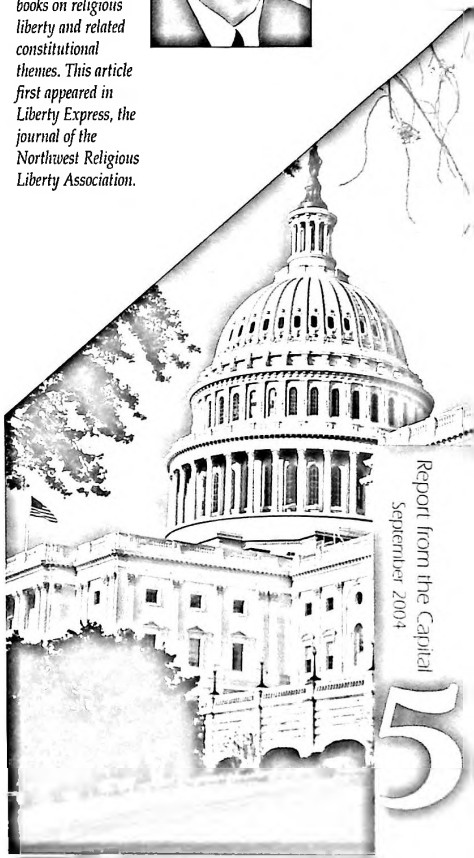
This does not mean that there is no public role for religion. America has a rich tradition of acknowledging the sovereignty of God over the nation by adopting generic language that attempts to respect as many Americans' faith as possible. For example, the national motto, "In God We Trust," is a broad term that most, though certainly not all, Americans can support. Such "civil religious" practices are assurances against carrying the separation principle too far, against government-sponsored secularism, but the basic commitment to separating church and state remains — as something that is good for both government and religion.

In addition, America has never silenced the religious voice in political discourse. At least 130 religious lobbies maintain offices in the nation's capital, their primary activity being to influence law and public policy along the lines of their religious commitments. This is hardly church-state "separation," but the principles of participatory democracy, in which all citizens, religious and nonreligious alike, are entitled to engage in political advocacy, prevail here.

The separation of church and state is one of America's most cherished traditions. If, in the name of "nondiscrimination," we compromise this great principle, we will witness the gradual erosion of religious liberty, for it is the separation of church and state that serves as the principal guarantor of religious liberty. Governmental assistance to religion is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and we are sure to witness the decline of religion once Americans sense that government has become the sponsor and benefactor of reli-

gion. Indeed, religion will become just another government program, and America will experience the same decline in religion that Europe has witnessed. The separation of church and state ensures that civil authorities will not, to use Leland's term, "intermeddle" in sacred concerns. Absent this guarantee, religious liberty is hollow, mere "politically correct" verbiage.

— Derek H. Davis is director of the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University, and the author, editor, and co-editor of fifteen books on religious liberty and related constitutional themes. This article first appeared in *Liberty Express*, the journal of the Northwest Religious Liberty Association.





Hollyn Hollman
General Council

Reporting on family and the future

It is good to be back writing in this space. For the past few months, I've been on maternity leave, adjusting to the addition of a second son. All is well on the homefront, albeit a bit busier, and I return ready to continue my representation of the BJC. I am thankful to have such important work to do outside, as well as inside, the home.

As my family grows, so does my appreciation for the BJC family, which includes the many people who give their

time, energy, and financial resources to ensure that the BJC's voice is strong. I appreciate, as I know all our longstanding readers do, hearing from those who filled this space in my absence. The continued contributions to the BJC of my general counsel predecessors, Oliver Thomas and Melissa Rogers, always humble and inspire me. The reflections of former assistant to the general counsel, Andrew Daugherty, who recently left the BJC for full-time church ministry in Texas, gently remind us to look at the example of Jesus as we shape and share our message. We are fortunate to have such thoughtful input far beyond our regular staff.

I am also appreciative of you, our readers. As I look ahead, it is obvious that the Baptist commitment to religious freedom is needed now as much as ever. Here are a few of the issues on the horizon and how you can help us address them.

1) Defend "no-aid" principles. Proposals to fund religious institutions with government funds abound, despite the myriad ways such measures threaten religious liberty and ultimately harm religious institutions. Proponents of tuition vouchers for private and parochial schools continue to seek ways to use public funds for private institutions. Likewise, court challenges will continue. As reported on page 1, the Florida Court of Appeal recently held that the statewide voucher program was unconstitutional under that state's "no-aid" provision in its state constitution. The decision, which prohibits the flow of public aid to private religious schools, highlights the meaning and effect of strong religious liberty provisions in state constitutions. These provisions, written in more explicit terms than the federal religion clauses, reflect an important aspect of what it means to have no establishment of religion. "No-aid" provisions help ensure that all religious groups operate freely and are treat-

ed fairly by the government. They should be vigorously defended. The Florida decision will be appealed to the Florida Supreme Court later this fall.

2) Monitor the money. A new report details the Bush administration's faith-based initiative, see story p. 2, as implemented through the executive branch. It identifies the federal funding streams now open to religious entities without regard to their religious character. While there have been several reports of significant increases in the availability of federal money for religious entities, much of it is administered through contracts and grants awarded by state and local governments. Thus, as the report notes, there is uncertainty about how much money is being awarded to faith-based organizations and how the money is being spent. The report also catalogues the public outreach campaign to promote the initiative. Such publicity by the administration must be met with information about the many risks taking government money has to religious organizations.

3) Protect important free exercise legislation. The BJC chaired the coalition of numerous religious and civil liberties groups that helped pass RLUIPA, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000. This law protects religious rights beyond what is required under the federal Free Exercise Clause in the particular contexts of land use and prisons. As a growing number of RLUIPA cases make their way through the federal courts, there have been some challenges to the law's constitutionality. While most of the claims have been unsuccessful, there is a split among the circuit courts that will likely eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court. The BJC will continue to defend the constitutionality of this important law.

4) Advocate responsible Christian citizenship. Religion has been and will continue to be a topic of great concern in the presidential campaign. While both parties seek to exploit religion for partisan ends, defenders of religious liberty should urge caution in the use of religion in campaigns. Specifically, churches must avoid getting involved in political campaigns and should look for ways to encourage activism without pushing partisanship.

Religion has been and will continue to be a topic of great concern in the presidential campaign. While both parties seek to exploit religion for partisan ends, defenders of religious liberty should urge caution in the use of religion in campaigns.

Group asks IRS to investigate churches for hosting Democratic leaders' speeches

A religious liberty group often accused of attacking conservative churches for political activity has criticized two progressive Baptist congregations for Democratic advocacy.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State is asking the Internal Revenue Service to investigate New Birth Baptist Church in Miami for hosting what the group called a "Democratic rally" during an Aug. 29 worship service.

At the service, which featured Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe and Democratic political activist Al Sharpton, speakers urged the congregation to defeat President Bush in his bid for re-election.

"Bush has misled us for four years and will not mislead us the next four years. Get out and vote, and we'll send Bush back to Texas," McAuliffe said, according to Americans United.

Churches and other nonprofit groups organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code are not allowed to endorse political parties or candidates without risking loss of their tax-exempt status. However, churches may host voter registration drives and educational activities as long as they are done in a non-partisan fashion.

In his complaint to the IRS, AU's executive director, Barry Lynn, said New Birth's actions went beyond that. "This event seems to have gone beyond legitimate voter education about issues," he wrote. "Rather, the event was partisan in its approach and included only Democrats. It promoted Democratic candidates while disparaging Republicans ... I urge you to take appropriate action to correct this abuse of the law."

Americans United also criticized — although it stopped short of asking for officials to investigate — an Aug. 29 speech by former President Bill Clinton at Riverside Church in New York City. Clinton's speech, which was timed for the beginning of the Republican National Convention in New York, was highly critical of Bush's policies. However, Clinton did not directly endorse Bush over his Democratic challenger, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry.

Riverside Church is dually affiliated with the American Baptist Churches and the United Church of Christ.

"The difference between the Florida and the Riverside cases is that you in Florida, you had the chairman of the Democratic National Committee basically telling people how to vote — not just criticizing the shortcomings of a candidate," Lynn told an Associated Baptist Press reporter. "Bill Clinton's speech ... came right to the edge of the cliff, but stopped short of a direct candidate endorsement."

—ABP

"The difference between the Florida and the Riverside cases is that you in Florida, you had the chairman of the Democratic National Committee basically telling people how to vote — not just criticizing the shortcomings of a candidate. Bill Clinton's speech ... came right to the edge of the cliff, but stopped short of a direct candidate endorsement."

— Barry Lynn, executive director of American's United for Separation of Church and State, on recent Democratic leaders' speeches

Appeals courts uphold right of clubs to distribute fliers

In two separate federal appeals court decisions, courts have upheld the right of religious clubs to distribute fliers in public schools.

The challenges follow the U.S. Supreme Court's 2001 decision in *Good News Club vs. Milford Central School*, which allowed an evangelical club to meet after school on public school grounds. The High Court ruled that the school violated the free speech rights of the Christian organization by barring the group from holding Bible and religion classes for children when the school's community-use policy permitted secular groups engaged in similar activities to use the space.

In late June, a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a judge's ruling that prohibited the Child Evangelism Fellowship from distributing fliers in the information packet that two Montgomery County, Md., schools sent home with children. The panel ruled that the Good News Club of Montgomery County was the victim of viewpoint discrimination and could distribute notices about its meetings on the same basis as other community groups serving children.

In its decision, the panel noted that "receipt of an invitation to a religious activity (with the hope that students would deliver the invitation to their parents) simply does not rise to the level of support or participat[ion] in religion or its exercise."

In August, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court ruling that found a rural Ohio school district's policy of distributing fliers from religious groups was unconstitutional. The appeals court ruled that there was no Establishment Clause violation based solely on the possibility that elementary school students might perceive the practice of distributing fliers advertising both religious and non-religious activities as an endorsement of religion.

Supporters honored, memorialized by donations to Baptist Joint Committee

The following list of donations has been received by the organization over the past few months.

In memory of James B. Gilbert
Joyce Blackburn

In memory of Hazel Pendley
Ron and Karen Rooks

In honor of Dr. Doran McCarty
Hal Lynch

In honor of Dr. and Mrs. Hardy Clemons
Robert W. Morris and Susan C. Brady

The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America

By Frank Lambert, Princeton University Press, 2003, 328 pp.

- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Baptist General Association of Virginia
- Baptist General Conference
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
- 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

Was the United States founded as a Christian nation or merely a nation full of Christians? Did the founders envision a government that sponsored one true religion free from errors?

Religion clearly played a crucial role in the formation of our government as many of the settlers to the New World came to escape the religious persecution of the state-sponsored Church of England. But as we still do today, the early colonists debated the specific role that religion should play in regards to government. The historic context of this hotly debated topic is tackled in Frank Lambert's *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*. In his text, Lambert provides a clear analysis of the history of the founding of this country as it relates to religious liberty.

Everywhere Lambert turns, America's history is replete with new freedoms as it relates to religion's place alongside government. In the very early colonial days, the Puritans came to the new world seeking to establish a "City on a Hill" and defined religious liberty as freedom to worship free of the flawed English rule. By the time the founders were drafting the U. S. Constitution they had come to adopt a view of a distinct separation of church and state. How these two views are reconciled is the question Lambert answers in his book.

The three-part text is organized chronologically. The three parts include part one, "Religious Regulation" that examines the religious regulations derived from the British and colonial heritage. This section delves into the establishment philosophy of New England in direct contrast to the "Holy

Experiment" of pluralistic Pennsylvania. Part two, titled, "Religious Competition" looks at how the colonists shifted their views of regulations and intro-

duced competition into the religious marketplace through the ideas spread about during the age of Enlightenment. Section three; "Religious Freedom," is about religion's role in forming the government via the state and federal constitutions. This section also includes an intriguing analysis of the debate regarding religion during the 1800 presidential election.

Logically ordered, the text's central themes and ideas are easy to grasp. The only detractor from Lambert's text is

his insistence on constantly inserting quotations to prove his points. The sheer number of quotations, while wholly relevant, and the complexity of the Old English with which they are spoken, make the book disjointed and sometimes hard to follow. Still, the important themes and histories are clearly discernible.

I was raised in a Baptist church and after many years found myself doubting whether a belief in the separation of church and state would enable me to remain true to my Baptist faith. This book showed me that not only did it allow me to remain true; it strengthened my faith in the Baptist doctrine, and provided clear evidence of my beliefs. Throughout the book, Lambert uses the early Baptists as examples of true champions of religious liberty in America.

— Brandon Robinson
BJC intern



REPORT from the Capital

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