

# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

JANUARY 1967

# 90th Congress Faces Church-State Issues

As much as members of Congress resist getting involved in religious controversies there is no way for them to avoid many such issues during the 90th Congress that convened on January 10. Likewise it is impossible for church people to avoid responsibilities in these areas. (Suggestions for churchmen will be found in an article by Dr. Walfred H. Peterson on page four of this issue.)

Without attempting a complete run-down on church-state issues that will be dealt with by Congress we make some brief comments on a few.

## A Constitutional Amendment

Since the controversial decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court in 1962 (*Engel v. Vitale*) and in 1963 (*Abington School District v. Schempp*), there have been demands from certain sources for some sort of a constitutional prayer amendment.

The two strongest drives were in 1964 for what was known as the "Becker Amendment" and in 1966 for the so-called "Dirksen Amendment." Congressman Frank Becker (R., N.Y.) failed when his proposal died in the House Judiciary Committee after several weeks of hearings. Sen. Everett McKinley Dirksen (R., Ill.) lost his fight when the Senate rejected his amendment.

Becker did not run for re-election. That left the House of Representatives without a crusading champion for a prayer amendment. However, Dirksen vows that he will continue his fight in the 90th Congress.

(For a comparison of the 1966 and the 1967 versions of the Dirksen proposal see the analysis on page five of this issue.)

Since the new Dirksen amendment represents a shift from his effort of last year it is too early to predict how serious it will become. Here are some (but not all) of the possibilities.

1. It may represent a compromise arrived at by opposing Senate forces in the Senate. In this case it could pass the Senate with

the necessary two-thirds majority. It would then be passed on to the House of Representatives, where it could be bottled up in the Judiciary Committee or where it could be tacked on as a rider to some other bill.

2. Since it is so different from the 1966 version it may represent a recognition on the part of Sen. Dirksen that he is really fighting a hopeless battle. Those who know him best, however, understand that the Senator does not give up easily if he thinks he has a good political issue and if he thinks that the political winds are blowing in his favor.

3. Misinformed and misguided church people may think that his amendment is a good thing. They may either show little interest in it or they may develop a public opinion for it.

4. American church leadership may remain alert and head off any effort to alter the First Amendment.

5. Although Dirksen's 1967 amendment is full of objectionable features it may be harder to oppose, or it may be reworked by Senate or House committees so it could pass before the end of 1968.

One of the two ways for the Constitution to be amended is for a proposal to pass both houses of Congress by a two-thirds majority and then be passed by three-fourths of the legislatures of the several states.

## Judicial Review Bill

Sen. Sam J. Ervin, Jr. (D., N. C.) succeeded in the 89th Congress, second session, in getting a "judicial review" bill passed by the Senate. It died because of lack of action by the House of Representatives.

The Senator has revived his bill in the 90th Congress and he has two full years to work on it. Washington observers think it will go through the Senate again with little difficulty, but that it may bog down in the House.

The judicial review bill is an effort to provide a way for certain Acts of Congress

to be tested in the courts for constitutionality on the basis of the First Amendment.

Most church-state interest groups and civil liberties groups would welcome court tests of the constitutionality of legislation that provides government aid through church agencies. They are not all agreed, however, that the passage of a judicial review bill will achieve this objective.

The Ervin proposal will run into difficulty in the House of Representatives where Rep. Emanuel Celler (D., N. Y.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee is known to oppose it. Whether or not this hurdle can be surmounted remains to be seen.

Even if the judicial review bill passes Congress and is signed by the President, it still is a question whether or not the judiciary will consider it mandatory to consider cases they may not want to hear.

To this observer, who would like to see many church-state questions passed upon by the courts, it seems unreasonable that Congress will enact legislation and then pass on to the judiciary the responsibility of deciding whether or not it is constitutional. But Congress has done stranger things than this, and there is no way to predict the future of "judicial review."

## Legislative Review

It has already been widely talked that the 90th Congress will review much of the legislation passed by the 88th and 89th Congresses. These inquiries will take into account the effectiveness of the programs, the manner in which they are being administered, the needs they are meeting, the problems and issues that need to be ironed out, and the current status of public opinion.

Many of the church-state issues in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 (and other education Acts), in the Economic Opportunity Act (war on poverty) and in other programs can again be brought out in the open. If necessary Congress can make adjustments and many objectionable features could be removed.

The arena of legislative review is the place to look for many church-state battles the next two years. (WBG)

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# Washington Observations

*News — Views — Trends*

January 23, 1967



**A TOTAL OF 4,304 BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS** was introduced in the 90th Congress by Jan. 19 (632 in the Senate and 3,672 in the House). Last year at the close of the 89th Congress a grand total of 26,566 bills and resolutions had been introduced. Of these, 1,283 were enacted into law and 1,079 miscellaneous resolutions were passed.

**THIS INDICATES THE HEAVY BURDEN** on the nation's lawmakers. It also reveals the responsibility of news sources, observers and analysts in Washington. Many of these bills and resolutions are duplications, some are carry-overs from the last Congress, some are important, some are mere political gimmicks to curry favor with certain voter groups.

**MR. AVERAGE CITIZEN IS OVERWHELMED** by this vast conglomeration. It serves to point up the urgent importance of looking only to the most reliable sources of information and interpretation before conclusions are reached. (See article by W. H. Peterson on p. 4.)

**THE BIG DEBATES IN CONGRESS** this year will be on appropriations for existing programs, with new programs being held to a minimum. Moneys to implement the Economic Opportunity Act ("War on Poverty") and some federal aids to education will be harder to secure. The 90th Congress will be inclined to look harder and debate longer on programs launched during the 89th Congress. Two major factors enter this picture: the election results in 1966 and the war in Vietnam.

**DRAFT DEFERMENT FOR MINISTERS** and divinity students is potentially an issue if the 90th Congress alters the draft law. Also, continuing discussions in both governmental and private circles revolve around a National Service Corps. Advocates of the idea see it as a means of expanding society's welfare services at low cost. For some it is regarded as an alternative to military service. For others, it would be purely voluntary. Many say it would be used in part to help staff private welfare agencies.

**IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT** what will happen to the "new" Dirksen proposal for a constitutional amendment on prayers in public buildings. (See pages two and five for further discussion.) The amendment is open until Feb. 1 for signatures of co-sponsors. As of January 19 there were 32 Senators who had signed with Senator Dirksen.

**THE ROLES OF FAMILY, CHURCH AND STATE** have become confused in a Quebec dispute concerning the custody of some 50 children. A breakaway Roman Catholic sect which admits married couples with children separates men from women and children from parents. It then refuses to return the children to parents who have quit the group.

**ARMED WITH A COURT ORDER**, the parents have tried to reclaim their children. But the sect has hidden them in the scattered homes of sympathizers. The children have been moved from home to home in this adult game of hide and seek. Started in 1958, the sect now numbers some 200 persons in its community.

## On Becoming Informed On Church-State Issues

By **Walfred H. Peterson**

This session of Congress will raise many issues of church-state relations. A prayer amendment, a judicial review bill to give a person standing in court to challenge government expenditures that benefit church agencies, draft exemption for ministers and divinity students, elementary, secondary and higher education aid bills, birth control information policy, the poverty program, and many other matters directly involve how the churches and the government should interact in their common functions.

Church spokesmen will also be discussing the ethics of foreign policy, of civil rights administration and of conflict-of-interest laws. There should be no dearth of material for those who like to raise national issues in the pulpit or in convention resolutions.

### Responsible Talk

But having the occasion to speak and being able to speak wisely and constructively are different matters. The occasion to speak places responsible people under an obligation to be soundly informed. Unfortunately, this responsibility is commonly shirked.

For example, editors and writers from interest groups and the academic world were invited recently to a State Department briefing on Far East policy. The department spokesmen presented their policy in a positive light. Each speaker repeatedly invited criticism, challenges and questions.

In attendance were some loud critics of the administration's policy. But they, when given the opportunity to raise objections and to offer alternative policies, had nothing to say in spite of the challenging opportunity of a forum with wide influence. The neutral observer came away feeling that their loud criticism was irresponsible. When confronted by a person who had data in hand who pressed for suggestions of better alternatives to present policy, these people—some of whom are not even slightly shy—were speechless.

### Church-State Criticism

The point carries over into church-state relations. Those of us who want to speak

influentially on these questions are obligated to speak as informed persons with positive programs. Anyone can criticize a policy, for all policies have their problems, their prices, their limitations.

Good criticism, however, requires that the critic knows and can weigh the issues and the alternatives.

Sargent Shriver's poverty program, for instance, is easy to attack on church-state grounds at several points. A moderately able speaker can make an audience gasp by citing cases where the federal government has paid for the equipping of a pre-school classroom and a kitchen in a church for a head-start program. But when he is confronted with the facts that no other agency in the area than the church would run the program, that local operation of such program by the federal government produces cries of "socialism" and "federal usurpation" and that the poverty and deprivation in the area are enormous, can he describe a better program?

In short, is his criticism positive and responsible?

How does a person become a responsible critic? In part, by becoming a well informed. What does this require? He must have balanced information and practiced use of that information. This leads to some suggestions.

### Consider All Viewpoints

If possible, our civic affairs knowledge must be based on data from independent and divergent sources. One magazine, one newspaper, one commentator is not enough. Two are not enough. This is especially true if the source is known to be partisan or clearly parochial in outlook.

Also, it must be assumed normally that an opponent on an issue has a reasonably persuasive case and that he has good intentions. This means that "the other side" must be known and its values appreciated.

How often a debate is quieted by the expedient of hearing all sides! It is on the presumption that all sides have some part of the truth that our legal system is built. We expect justice to be best served by listening to adversaries.

This may be discouraging to some peo-

ple, for they say, "How can I ever get informed?" But the task, while not light, is not impossible by any means.

The person who wants to lead discussions or draft resolutions or serve as a sort of watchdog on issues of religious liberty and church-state relations can readily obtain much information from specialists free.

### Sources of Information

Here is a list of offices that anyone can write to on a matter of church-state relations in fair confidence that he can obtain some seriously written material.

1. Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs  
200 Maryland Ave., N. E.  
Washington, D. C. 20002
2. American Civil Liberties Union  
156 Fifth Ave.  
New York, New York 10010
3. American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th St.  
New York, New York 10022
4. American Jewish Congress  
15 East 84th St.  
New York, New York 10028
5. Americans United for Separation of Church and State  
1633 Massachusetts Ave., N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20036
6. Citizens for Educational Freedom  
(Promotes government aid for private schools.)  
844 Washington Building  
Washington, D. C. 20005
7. Friends Committee on National Legislation (Specializes in international affairs.)  
245 Second St., N. E.  
Washington, D. C. 20002
8. National Association of Evangelicals  
1405 "G" St., N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20005
9. National Catholic Welfare Conference  
1312 Massachusetts Ave., N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20005
10. National Council of Churches  
Department of Religious Liberty  
475 Riverside Dr.  
New York, New York 10027

## Spain Grants Measure Of Religious Liberty

A measure of religious freedom in Spain has been granted by the new constitution, but religious liberty issues there are far from resolved.

John D. Hughey, secretary for Europe and the Middle East for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, reports:

"One of the most encouraging developments of 1966 was the guarantee of religious liberty by a new constitution in Spain."

Greater religious freedom has already brought changes in Spain, Hughey reported. In December the first Baptist book store ever to operate in Spain was opened to the public in Barcelona. Previously the sale of evangelical literature was restricted mainly to church members and their friends.

Commenting on the change in Spain, *America Magazine*, published by the Jesuits of the United States and Canada, reports:

"The law's opening article decrees that the Spanish State recognizes religious freedom as a right based on the dignity of the human person, and insures the necessary protection so that nobody may be coerced or molested in the legitimate use of his right." Accordingly, it continues, "the public and private individual family and collective profession and practice of any religious belief shall be guaranteed, with no limits except those established by law."

A number of legal restraints have been written into the law, *America* reports. It says:

"These include, for non-Catholic groups, formal application for recognition as religious associations; the required keeping of financial account books and registries of names of their members; provision for examination of these books at any time by the government; annual submission of their budget, of income and expenditure and of their balance sheet.

"Non-Catholic teaching centers may be set up, but only when this is justified by the number of those who use them." In general, much care has been taken to block all possible avenues of active Protestant proselytism."

America then complained that some parts of the new law may even hurt the church's own life "by making it more difficult for Protestants to become Catholics, or for lapsed Catholics who have registered as Protestants to return to their faith."

## *Dirksen Prayer Amendment*

# New Proposal Backs Into New Problems

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON—Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen (R., Ill.) has offered a much revised constitutional "prayer amendment" to the 90th Congress in which he backs away from some of the basic concepts of his 1966 proposal.

Last year the Senator pushed for an amendment that would "provide for" and "permit" voluntary recitation of prayers by students and others in schools and other public buildings. It would have been a grant of a measure of religious powers to public authorities.

The new revised version of the Dirksen amendment says:

*"Nothing in this Constitution shall abridge the right of persons lawfully assembled, in any public building which is supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds, to participate in non-denominational prayer."*

Dirksen asked for and was granted the privilege of having his proposal called "Senate Joint Resolution No. 1." It will be held at the desk of the Senate Clerk until February 1 for the signature of any Senator who wishes to be a co-sponsor.

The 1966 version of the Dirksen amendment, which was rejected by the Senate, reads as follows:

*"Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the authority administering any school, school system, educational institution or other public building supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this article shall authorize any such authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer."*

The new language of the 1967 revised version seems to back away from some of the difficulties of last year's proposal. Has Sen. Dirksen now backed into a new set of troubles?

### New Questions Arise

Many questions are apparent on the surface of the new proposal.

1. Do persons have to be "lawfully assembled" in order to pray while in a public building? If so, what does "lawful assembly" mean? Does it mean an assemblage gathered by the law and therefore a "cap-

tive audience"? If a "captive audience" is to be a "prayer meeting" who is to lead it?

2. Does the new draft mean that "ecumenical prayer" is approved for lawful assemblies but denominational ways of praying are forbidden? How about personal prayers that express personal needs? Who is to decide which prayers are approved and which are disapproved?

3. If lawful assembly simply means using the rights now guaranteed by the First Amendment, is the new language an open door to "pray in" lobby sessions in Congress or in other public places? How long may such "prayer meeting" last?

The First Amendment, that has been so basic for the protection of the rights of the people, says:

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."*

Many constitutional authorities hold that the whole Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution) should be considered unamendable.

### Baptist Convention Actions

The Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Convention and the North American Baptist General Conference have repeatedly affirmed support for the adequacy of the present wording of the First Amendment.

The Southern Baptist Convention resolution, which is similar to the other two, says in part:

"We, the messengers of the Convention hereby affirm our support for the concepts and the vocabulary of the First Amendment, including both its prohibition upon government roles in religious programs and its protection of free exercise of religion for the people. . . .

"We appeal to the Congress of the United States to allow the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States to stand as our guarantee of religious liberty, and we oppose the adoption of any further amendment to that Constitution respecting establishment of religion or free exercise thereof."

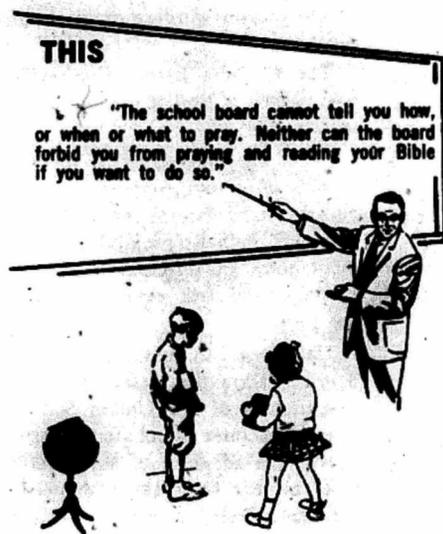
# NECESSARY

## The Value of the First Amendment

Americans have as much or more religious liberty, at law, than any people on earth. For religious purposes we can preach, publish and distribute literature, educate our people in all sorts of schools, travel and assemble, own and use property, raise and spend funds, and create associations of those like-minded. The list could be longer. These freedoms are available to individuals and to voluntary groups. *True religion does not languish in the United States for want of legal freedom.*

This wide freedom exists in part because of the religious clauses of the First Amendment. Of course, no constitution can guarantee freedom, if freedom does not live in the minds of the people. Freedom is ideas, not words on paper. But, the First Amendment has been a stout bulwark against the restriction of liberty, and its operation has encouraged the ideas of freedom. A reading of the numerous Jehovah's Witnesses cases will demonstrate how effective the Amendment has been in our generation.

Therefore, those devoted to religious liberty should be most cautious about any proposal that alters or affects the First Amendment. They should demand proof that the proposal is needed and assurance that it will do better the things the First Amendment has done so well. Short of such proof and assurance, they should oppose changing the First Amendment. Echoing Edmund Burke, "The onus of proof is on the proposer of change."



## The Nature of Words in the Constitution and its Amendments

Read the Constitution and its Amendments noticing the pivotal words. They are broad words, subject to varied interpretations. "Interstate commerce," "liberty," "respecting an establishment of religion," "due process of law." These words necessarily say somewhat different things to different people and different generations. Were they narrow words of rigidly limited meaning, we would have had to ignore the Constitution or rewrite it several times by now. Some of our states drew up rigidly phrased constitutions and now wink at their regular violation. In political history the enduring and honored constitutions have been flexible. They have slowly gained their meaning by usage.

Quite properly, the leading proposals for a new amendment to the Constitution on the issue of public sponsored religious exercises have been cast in broad terms. For example, one says that nothing in the Constitution shall prohibit "the public authority administering any school system . . . or other public building supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer."

Obviously, these are not rigidly limiting words. "The public authority administering" is a very broad phrase. What agencies are covered by it? "From providing for" is even broader. Could this not mean the erection of a chapel and the hiring of a chaplain? No one knows today, even the author; for he would not be the interpreter of its actual operation.

In the long course of years, such an amendment could be used to alter present law on religious freedom and church-state relations in, unpredictable ways. Were we in a bad situation respecting religious freedom, this might readily be hazarded. But the First Amendment alone has served us well. We have a backlog of case law that makes its meaning much more predictable than the meaning of a new amendment. Why experiment on this sensitive matter at this point in our history?

## What the Supreme Court Did in the Prayer Cases

But some will say, "The Supreme Court took away our right to pray in school. The situation is bad." This judgment is flatly incorrect. The Supreme Court denied power to organize and promote religious exercises to *state authorities*—i.e., public school officials, not to individuals or purely voluntary groups. No federal decisions say a purely voluntary group may not get together for prayers in schools or other public buildings. True, some local officials have said so, but a federal amendment is not the answer to faulty local educational decisions.

Further, the Supreme Court did not restrict the use of the Bible for educational purposes. It clearly and solely restricted its use for what most Baptists would call devotional purposes. There is a big difference between the two uses.

### The Novelty of the Prayer Amendments

To be sure, some argue that the amendments' intent is only to return us to practices of days before the Court restricted school religious exercises. But if that is so, the authors have erred badly and inexcusably. The proposal cited above involves a delegation of power in matters of religion to the federal government. Never before under the Constitution has there been such a power. The scope of delegated federal power, therefore, is moved into an area of authority previously reserved to the people or the states. Put differently, now the federal Constitution only has clauses relating to religion which restrict government. Most suggested prayer amendments involve clauses which empower government.

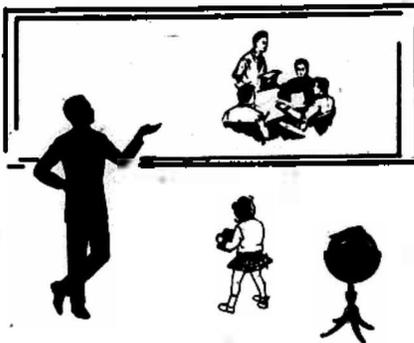
### One Dilemma of State Religious Exercises

Before Christians move to support changes affecting the First Amendment to give governments power to provide prayer, they should face squarely the dilemma that any government must meet if it tries to promote religion.

On the one hand, if by some miracle state religious exercises can attain the level of true religion, these exercises cause domestic religious conflict. Each religious group that disagrees with this religious expression will have to swallow its conscience or will have to agitate to end this expression or will have to try to substitute its own variety of "true religion." Partly because of this fact learned from the bitter past, Americans have given broad meaning to the phrase, "Congress (or the states) shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." They wanted it to limit government authority over religion so that religious controversy would not become political controversy.

On the other hand, if the state religious exercises are devised to satisfy everybody, they are not true religion. Indeed, they are a fraud. They encourage the participant to think he is religious or Christian because he goes through forms that seem religious or Christian. This kind of "comfortable" religion is cultural religion—a thing Christians who believe in a conversion experience have often insisted is an obstruction to faith.

**NOT THIS** "The school board has voted that since there is now a majority of Catholics in the class room, we will change from the 'Lord's Prayer' to the 'Hail Mary' for our morning devotion."



### Arguments Against State-Sponsored Religious Exercises

This dilemma alone makes the prospects of state-sponsored prayer or devotions under the proposed amendments of doubtful value to the individual or the society. And this dilemma includes only the beginning of a long list of arguments that can be mounted against state-sponsorship of religious exercise. A more complete list would include these considerations: The nature of true devotional exercises argues against their sponsorship by public authority. School prayers in classes for the younger child cannot be truly voluntary. Christians and the church, not the state, have the only Biblical authority in the area of religious exercises. Government should be strictly limited in its powers at the point of religious functions. Religious exercises are hard to handle in a pluralistic society. In actual practice, school religious exercises are commonly prostituted to such secular ends as classroom discipline and the promotion of school loyalty. Classroom religion has been shown to have little or no utility in the promotion of religious values. Nations which have had an abundance of classroom religion have not produced a vital religion in their citizens compared to America where classroom religion has been minimized or where it has not existed for generations. Classroom religion promotes the attitudes associated with cultural religion. An appeal for state-sponsored religious exercise is an argument that the family and church are inadequate for their religious tasks.

### A Final Paradox

Some people plead for government sponsorship of religious exercises, "because we are a religious people." Were we truly a religious people, we would scarcely need government action to show it! We would show it by the abundance of our private and voluntary practice. And then there would be no question about its reality.

The discussion on the above two pages is available in pamphlet form. This and others on religion in public schools make excellent bulletin inserts, resource material for church discussion groups, or as background information for sermons and other uses. Samples are free.

1. Is a Constitutional Amendment Necessary? (\$2.00 per 100)
2. What Did the Supreme Court Say? (Free in limited quantities)
3. Questions and Answers on the Supreme Court and Public School Religion.
4. Premises on the Supreme Court Restraining Government Regarding Devotions.  
(Pamphlets 3 and 4 are available at \$.75 per dozen, \$5.00 per 100, and \$35.00 per 1000.)
5. Staff Report—"Should There Be a Constitutional Amendment to Provide Governmental Promotion of Religion?"
6. Staff Report—"Religion in Public Schools"  
(Staff reports 5 and 6 are available at \$.15 each.)

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# Baptist Struggle for Religious Liberty

Baptists are unanimous in at least one conviction. They believe in religious liberty. They also believe in separation of church and state, but there is no consensus on what this means or how it is applied in church-state relations.

The problems are more sharply focused among Southern Baptists than any other large group of Baptists. The fact that Southern Baptist editors voted five church-state stories among the top ten for 1966, plus two others that involve religious liberty, is evidence of the ferment that is going on among this group.

Two major factors contribute to this problem among Southern Baptists: (1) the large number of institutions they have and the manner in which they are related to the conventions; and (2) traditional views about state-federal relations.

Although church-state issues are not as prominent among some other Baptist groups, this does not mean that their problems are settled or that they have no differences of opinion.

The general pattern among Southern Baptists is that the convention, either state or national, "owns and operates" the institutions. That is they elect the trustees, and the institutions are controlled by the policies of the conventions. There is variety, of course, in this pattern.

In an earlier day when government provided very little in the form of services to the people in the areas of education and general welfare, there was less problem in the area of church-state relations. Now that government services have expanded, and church agencies have grown to great

proportions, there are often overlaps and occasions for close cooperation.

This new situation has demanded that Baptists restudy their practice in church-state relations. An even knottier question they are having to consider is the problem of the institutional expression of their faith in a new age.

This simply means that Baptists are having to ask themselves if they can maintain the traditional type of institutional relationship and practice the traditional patterns of church-state relations.

There are no easy answers to this question. Baptists cannot be expected to "give up" their institutions. Neither can government be expected to finance church institutions.

One of the most difficult problems in this dilemma is to refuse to recognize that a real problem exists. This is illustrated by the fact that several state Baptist conventions have special study committees reporting to them on the new issues in church-state relations.

It is nothing unusual for these committees to spend months in hard work trying to iron out the problems only to have their reports rejected by a convention assembled for only a few hours.

This is not a comfortable position to be in. This does not mean that the end has come, that the battle for separation of church and state is over. Baptists have a virile faith and fellowship. They have faced religious liberty problems before that were every bit as hard as the problems they face today. They solved them in the past and they will do it again in the new day. (WBG)

## Catholics Struggle With Academic Freedom

Baptists are not the only ones having troubles with their institutional relationships. While Arkansas Baptists vote to sever relations with a hospital center, Roman Catholics decide to "secularize" Webster College at Webster Grove, Mo. But for different reasons.

Arkansas Baptists voted to release its hospital to a private corporation in order for it to get federal funds without violation of separation of church and state.

The president of Webster College, formerly Sister Jacqueline but now Miss Grennan, says that a church-related college cannot practice academic freedom.

Formal announcement of the request for

secularization of Webster College was made on January 11. Vatican approval is expected and negotiations are well under way to turn the administration over to a private board of incorporation.

The Webster move to become fully secular represents the extreme of a general trend toward more lay involvement in the administration of Catholic colleges.

Proposals are being studied at South Bend, Ind. to place two leading Roman Catholic universities under partial control of lay persons. They are the University of Notre Dame and the University of Portland.

Sister Mary Jacqueline of Webster Col-

lege has been dispensed from her vows as a nun by the Sisters of Loretto. She was born Miss Jean Marie Grennan, but is now seeking legally to change her name to Miss Jacqueline Grennan.

A prominent figure in American education circles Miss Grennan is reported to be as impatient with conservative educators as with conservative Catholics. She is reported in her liberalization of Webster College to have "thrown open every classroom window to new ideas, controversy and diversity of opinions."

Not all Catholic educators agree with Miss Grennan that academic freedom cannot exist in a church-related college. An illustration is Sister Margaret Clayton, president of Trinity College, Washington, D. C. In replying to the action of Webster College, Sister Margaret said:

"The route taken by one Catholic women's college in the midwest to attain academic freedom is one considered necessary by that particular institution. It might well be considered a necessity by others. It is not necessary at Trinity. Our faculty has never had to compromise its academic principles because of episcopal or religious pressure."