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Ullman: BJCPA Tax Report Is Accurate

WASHINGTON—The Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means has confirmed an earlier report by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs that elimination of tax deductible contributions to churches is not on the agenda of the present Congress.

Contrary to reports otherwise that have been widely circulated through the nation, Rep. Al Ullman (D-Ore.) told John W. Baker, director of research services for the Baptist Joint Committee:

"While we will be considering the matter of nonprofit charities, the question of eliminating tax deductible contributions is not even on the agenda for this year or next year."

At the October semiannual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee, Rep. James C. Corman (D-Cal.), a prominent member of the Ways and Means Committee, said that any tax reform law in the present Congress will not include changes in the deductibility provisions for gifts to churches and other charities.

Corman also expressed the view that the tax reform measure will not alter current tax laws which allow gifts of appreciated property to charitable institutions to be deducted at their appreciated value.

Hearings were held by the Ways and Means Committee during the summer of 1975. Current legislation relating to charities was not affected by these hearings.

The second phase of hearings related to tax reform is scheduled for November. According to a press release from the Ways and Means Committee the hearings "will include, but not be limited to, the subjects of estate and gift taxation and the tax treatment of single persons and married couples."

Baker said that the hearings scheduled on estate and gift taxes could affect bequests to church-related institutions. However, he said, because the Committee is holding general hearings without a specific bill before it, the direction it will move is uncertain.

Commenting on the tax reform proposals that might be of concern to churches, church institutions and agencies, Baker further stated that the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee is determined to remain alert and will report to the Baptist constituencies immediately if dangers are involved and if action is required to clarify the positions of the churches. (BP)

Report from the Capital

October 1975

BJCPA DEFENDS INDEPENDENCE of CHURCHES from GOVERNMENT

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON—The Freedom and independence of religion from government controls and regulations dominated actions taken by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in semiannual session here.

In major actions the Baptist Joint Committee:

1. Opposed any effort of government to define the mission of a church;
2. Asserted the right of churches to engage in activity to influence legislation;
3. Defended freedom for people to assemble for religious purposes;
4. Protested Internal Revenue Service abuses relating to religious organizations and members of the clergy; and
5. Prohibited its staff members from registering as lobbyists.

The Baptist Joint Committee is a denominational agency, located in the nation's capital, and instructed to work in the areas of religious liberty, church-state relations and public policy which affects or is affected by church interest. It is sponsored by nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada. James E. Wood, Jr. is the executive director.

All five of the above actions arose out of government policy either now in effect or being considered.

The current practice of the government to define the mission of the church and to limit its activities is found in the federal Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3), and in the regulations of the Code. The Code states that a public charity, which includes churches, will lose its tax exemption if a substantial part of its activity is for the purpose of influencing legislation.

A sweeping coalition of religious bodies is active in opposing the Conable bill because it does not eliminate the "substantiality" test for their tax exemption. The Baptist Joint Committee is prominent in this coalition by the participation of John W. Baker, director of research services, who serves as its chairman.

The resolution passed by the Baptist Joint Committee on "Religion and Public Policy" declares that "churches have not and cannot accept the substantiality test without violating deep religious beliefs." The resolution pointed out that "many religious organizations hold that a part of their religious mission is to give witness to their religious beliefs as they affect or are affected by public policy."

(See INDEPENDENCE, p. 7)

Joint Committee to Expand Its Services

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON—An expanded program of denominational services will be provided by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, according to an announcement made at the semiannual meeting of the Committee here.

In addition, the Committee addressed itself to a number of church-state issues that are alive on the national scene. Among them were: public funds and parochial schools, pending legislation affecting lobbying activities in Congress, the right of privacy, and false rumors that periodically are spread through the nation.

(See COMMITTEE, p. 6)

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Civil Religion and the Bicentennial

By James E. Wood, Jr.

American civil religion is rooted in the religious dimension given to the American experience. It runs from the period of colonization and the founding of the republic on up through the present. Americans generally have not been willing to view their national history in purely secular terms, but rather have been prone to give their history a religious or sacred meaning. This mythologizing of the American experience has been integral to American nationalism and self-understanding. Civil religion is deeply imbedded in the American character.



Wood

America was conceived of as being not only a new world, a new England, but also a new Israel. During the colonial period the Puritans often spoke of their new land as the "American Israel." Throughout its history, America has been viewed as a nation with a divine mission and a divine destiny. It has been described as a nation of "manifest destiny," "millennial expectations," and with a "messianic consciousness." The very origin of the nation, July 4, 1776, has enjoyed a mythic significance. For all of the materialism and secularism so readily associated with the American character, a sense of the sacred has been interwoven into the history and life of the nation. Herman Melville, one of America's greatest writers, expressed a view shared by many Americans: "We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world."

During the course of the nineteenth century, American democratic faith developed into a romantic, secular religion, based not only upon the freedom of the individual, but also upon the messianic mission of America to the world. It became a dominating force in American international relations and by the end of the nineteenth century was probably the greatest single influence in the shaping of American foreign policy.

Civil religion in the United States, as in many other parts of the world, came to be identified with a glorified nationalism. As such, nationalism itself became a religion and a rival to the traditional religious faiths. Inextricably associated with the rise of American nationalism, civil religion was easily appropriated by those super-patriots who maintained that one's highest and ultimate allegiance belongs to one's nation. Matters affecting the state, such as national interests and national security, were made matters of ultimate concern. Even when not recognized as such, civil religion was most vigorously defended and piously espoused by those who regarded American nationalism as essential to the political strength and survival of the United States as a nation.

II

Through the fusion of religion and nationalism, civil religion seeks the elevation of national values and national interests to the level of religious faith. As a result, there is the tendency to sanctify all acts of nationalism and national interests, to give a religious basis to all ceremonies and rituals centered on "America." Springing from a common sentiment of socially recognized values, civil religion aims at fostering a common political faith for all citizens. Religious pluralism is tolerated only so long as it is not divisive. National allegiance, national solidarity, and national security are made supreme values.

All religion is ultimately judged or tolerated on the basis of whether or not it is useful to the state. So long as religion serves the national interests and programs of the nation state it is not only tolerated, but warmly embraced. The continued and accelerated assaults in recent years upon the right of the church to speak out on public issues are ominous threats of the assumed superiority of the state over the church. Since the state is exalted to a place of supreme value, opposition to the state is at best viewed with suspicion, and at its worst is regarded as the greatest moral and political crime one can commit.

In the place of a biblical patriotism which refuses to make an idol of the state, civil religion in the United States would make American Democracy the object of devotion in both schools and churches. With civil religion, American Democracy easily becomes the object of one's religious faith as well as one's political loyalty. As Reinhold Niebuhr observed some years ago, "If one must judge by the various commencement utterances . . . Americans have only one religion: devotion to democracy. They extol its virtues, are apprehensive about the perils to which it is exposed, pour maledictions upon its foes, rededicate themselves periodically to its purposes, claim unconditional validity for its ideals."

III

To the degree that civil religion fosters the notion that supreme allegiance belongs to the state rather than to God, to that degree civil religion is incompatible with biblical faith. It is a denial of the prophetic role of religion, which is the highest service religion can render the state since it places all human authority and institutions under divine judgment. By making religion a captive of the culture, a kind of tribal faith, civil religion negates the authentic role of religion in society.

The exaggerated and unjustified exaltation of national interests to a place of ultimate concern also poses a threat to America as a free society. Civil religion tends to keep one from seeing the state as it is, since it is portrayed in its ideal or mythological form. To sanctify national interests and to make American democracy the object of religious devotion is not only an inappropriate way to observe the Bicentennial of this nation, it is perilous to this nation's future. The credo voiced by recent American presidents, "America is great because America is good," for example, is a dangerous political as well as theological heresy.

When religion is made an adjunct to state policies and programs, the true function of religion is perverted no matter how well intentioned the advocates of such a position may be. The church, to fulfill its mission, simply cannot be made to serve political ends without degrading itself and thereby denying its

(See CIVIL RELIGION, p. 6)

Supreme Court Considers Human Rights, First Amendment Cases

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Supreme Court began its new term by disposing of 680 cases, including a number dealing with First Amendment and human rights questions.

The high court climaxed its first full week since the summer recess by announcing action in a number of cases which included abortion and other women's rights, religious liberty, free speech, and personal privacy.

Associate Justice William O. Douglas, still recovering from a stroke suffered last Dec. 31, was wheeled into the court room and listened as oral arguments were given in the new term's first cases. He remains partially paralyzed but appears alert. Of the 680 cases handled by the court in its first week of work, Douglas failed to participate in only two or three.

The court's initial actions included the following:

1. Abortion and women's rights: The justices agreed to hear a pair of Missouri cases which challenge head-on the tribunal's 1973 decisions permitting abortion during the first six months of pregnancy.

A new Missouri law, drafted in reaction to the court's historic decision, forbids abortion after "viability," that term being defined as "that stage of fetal development when the life of the unborn child may be continued outside the womb." The statute states also that written consent must be obtained from a woman's husband before an abortion can be performed, and in the case of underage women, consent must be granted by parents. In addition, the law prohibits the saline method of abortion after the first twelve weeks of pregnancy.

Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri is challenging those provisions in the face of a U.S. district court ruling that they do not violate the Constitution.

The state of Missouri is challenging the same district court in a companion case for holding that a provision in the state's abortion law calling for protection of the fetus at every stage of pregnancy is unconstitutionally overbroad.

In another case relating to women's rights, the high court agreed to hear a Mississippi case involving a local school board regulation that forbids the hiring of unwed mothers as teachers. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has already ruled that such a regulation is unconstitutional. The school board is appealing to the Supreme Court.

The court agreed to hear another sex discrimination case involving the General Electric Company's policy of excluding pregnant women from an employee disability income protection plan. A U.S. district court has ruled that the policy violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In yet another case involving alleged sex discrimination, however, the court refused to hear a Florida woman's appeal that the insurance agency for which she worked discriminated against her by paying her a lower salary than it did men in similar positions. A lower court ruled that although the woman, who headed the agency's accounting department, was in fact paid lower wages than the male heads of the company's fire insurance and claims departments, the latter were required to exercise greater skill in their jobs.

2. Religious liberty: The high court declined to hear two cases involving First Amendment religious liberty claims.

The justices refused a California man's appeal to reverse a local court's requirement that he disclose to the Los Angeles Board of Education the nature of his religious beliefs.

The plaintiff's action was brought after he protested the religious segments of a Christmas program in the school where his two children attend. The school board denied that the programs violated the First Amendment's prohibition of the establishment of religion and asked the petitioner to state how the programs offended his own religious beliefs.

The father declined, saying such requirements violated his First Amendment rights. His appeal asked the Supreme Court to deny the school board the right to de-

(See COURT'S, p. 7)

Corman: Church Tax Privileges Secure

WASHINGTON—A member of the House Ways and Means Committee told the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here in its semiannual session that any tax reform law in the present Congress will not include changes in the deductibility provisions for gifts to churches and other charities.

Rep. James C. Corman (D-Cal.) also expressed the view that the tax reform measure will not alter current tax laws which allow gifts of appreciated property to charitable institutions to be deducted at their appreciated value, and permit ordained ministers tax-free use of church-owned parsonages.

Corman, who has long pushed for a comprehensive tax reform package, said that "no matter what I do," the provision for appreciated property gifts will be left unchanged. Corman opposes that provision of tax law, but assured the Baptist group that "there just isn't anything I can do to get the law changed." He described that provision as "one of the more scandalous tax shelters that will be left" following the expected passage of some tax reform bill during this Congress.

Corman also told the Baptist Joint Committee that his proposed "Health Security Act," a bill calling for national health insurance, would remove "all financial barriers" to adequate health care for every American.

The measure, known as the Kennedy-Corman bill, is being sponsored in the House by Corman and in the Senate by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). It calls for a broad-based compulsory program of national health insurance to be financed in part from the treasury's general fund and in part through payroll deductions similar to the present Social Security deductions.

The California congressman said that although federal programs such as Medicare and Medicaid help the aged and the very poor and were steps in the right direction, the present health care delivery system is "fragmented" and "unfair." He accused the medical profession of "charging what the traffic will bear."

The Kennedy-Corman plan would set up about 200 health care regions across the country, with financing provided from the

(See CORMAN, p. 6)

Public Affairs and the Churches

BAPTIST EDITOR HARASSED

STOCKHOLM—Although possessing a valid transit visa, editor Sven Svenson of Veckoposten was removed from an international train crossing Czechoslovakia, detained under guard for several hours, saw his Swedish passport confiscated and was ejected from the country recently, according to the Swedish Baptist weekly.

Svenson says in the article that he has no idea why such an intervention occurred, but assumes it was in reprisal for reports which the paper has published on the situation of Christian churches in eastern Europe.

Svenson had been invited earlier this year by the Ecumenical Council of Hungarian Churches to a conference held near Budapest in September. In due course he applied at the Stockholm embassies of the German Democratic Republic and the CSFR, where visas for rail transit were granted without difficulty. These were "checked without any remarks by both East German and Czechoslovakian frontier inspectors" on the non-stop sleeping car which the editor took from East Berlin toward Budapest.

"About midnight, the train stopped and shortly two uniformed Czech officials entered my compartment, awakened me and asked my identity," Svenson recounts. "They seized my passport and ordered me to get dressed, pick up my luggage and accompany them. My objections were not met with any explanation and I had only to obey—I was taken across a darkened station platform and to a room where I was placed under the surveillance of an armed guard."

After four hours of detention, he writes, "a higher-ranking officer entered and declared my transit visa invalid and said I had to leave the country at once. To my strenuous demands for explanations, he only referred me to their embassy in Stockholm, saying they would give me an answer." (Neither the Czechoslovakian embassy in Stockholm nor the Swedish foreign office had obtained any reason for the intervention as the recent Veckoposten issue appeared.)

When another train came through the station, Svenson was placed aboard—but it

was headed back toward East Germany. And, he adds, "my passport was still confiscated, so a control agent came on the train bringing it to the frontier. He gave it over to the East German authorities, who immediately returned it to me."

Svenson's article concludes, "By merely guessing, I imagine this intervention was a kind of reprisal for what we have written in Veckoposten about the persecution of Christians in the Communist countries, or else they wanted to keep me from meeting some of the Czechoslovakian church leaders who would participate in the Budapest conference." He emphasizes that this is "mere speculation on my part," however.

Sven Svenson is known as a writer of well-informed, documented articles on religious life in eastern Europe. He has published several revealing series in Veckoposten. (EBPS)

1662 ACT REPEALED

LONDON—More than 300 years of state control of Church of England services came to an end September 1 when the repeal of the 1662 Act of Uniformity became effective. This had made the Book of Common Prayer the only legal service book in England.

Also repealed are more recent measures allowing the church to use alternative services for an experimental period. Beginning next month the General Synod of the church will have the power to authorize alternative services. (EPS)

DISSIDENTS REGISTERED

KESTON, England—The dissident Baptist group in Kiev, USSR, has been registered unconditionally, enabling it to function freely without any of the restrictions heretofore imposed by the State, according to the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism at Keston College.

The 500 church members who have been meeting in the woods now have a church building which they are renovating themselves. The group separated in 1965 from the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists over the issue of state supervision of religious activities. (EPS)

DAY OF THANKFUL GIVING

WASHINGTON—Since 1621 each year Americans have set aside one day to celebrate the bountiful harvests of our land with feasts and family gatherings. Americans have a long-demonstrated history of compassion for the suffering of others both overseas and at home. In a world where hunger afflicts an ever growing number of people, it is therefore appropriate that Americans should express their thankfulness by sharing with the hungry in other countries.

Observing Thanksgiving as a Day of Thankful Giving should rekindle the original spirit of sharing of Thanksgiving and give Americans the pride and satisfaction of contributing to a better fed world.

Senators Humphrey, Clark, McGovern, Burdick, Hatfield, Culver, Kennedy, McGee, Dole, Mondale, Durkin, and Leahy recommended the observance of a Day of Thankful Giving in Senate Concurrent Resolution 70 on October 9. Representative Paul Simon made a similar recommendation in House Concurrent Resolution 438. (Freedom from Hunger Foundation Bulletin)

RIGHT TO FOOD RESOLUTION

WASHINGTON—Senator Mark Hatfield and Representative Don Frazer have sponsored a concurrent resolution in the U.S. Senate (S. Con. Res. 393) and in the House of Representatives (H. Con. Res. 66) declaring the right to food as the cornerstone of U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

The resolution asks that the right to food become a basic consideration in decisions in trade, foreign assistance, monetary reform, military spending and other areas. A target of one percent of our gross national product for development assistance to poor nations is set forth in the resolution.

Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' lobby, is mounting a letter writing campaign in support of the right to food resolution, a campaign which the American Freedom for Hunger Foundation endorses. (Freedom from Hunger Foundation Bulletin)

MORAL SENSITIVITY URGED

NEW YORK—The National Council of Churches was challenged here by its new president to take the lead in restoring commitment to moral principles and a sense of national purpose among the American people.

William Phelps Thompson, chief executive of the United Presbyterian Church, said that in its bicentennial period the U.S. seems to be "drifting."

The 57-year-old attorney from Kansas told the National Council's Governing Board that churches, as inheritors of the Judaeo-Christian ethic, are most likely to contain those persons sensitive to moral principles.

"What is needed today is for those members of the Churches to hear a clear voice calling them to practice that ethic in public and private," he declared.

Thompson took an active role in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and is a firm believer in the church stressing social witness as well as evangelism and spiritual life.

Thompson was the unanimous choice of representatives of 31 Protestant and Orthodox churches to lead the National Council for the next three years. He will take office on Jan. 1, succeeding the Rev. W. Sterling Cary, a United Church of Christ clergyman and first black president of the ecumenical organization. (RNS)

NCC FACES OLD DEBATE

NEW YORK—The National Council of Churches observed its 25th anniversary here with a low-key celebration in which a prevalent theme was the closing of the gap between Christians who stress social action and those emphasizing personal evangelism.

Both present and past Council leaders insisted that the split between socially active ecumenism, represented by the organization, and the so-called conservative evangelicals outside is being overcome.

The meeting of the Council's Governing Board at which the quarter-century mark was celebrated responded enthusiastically when the outgoing president, the Rev. W. Sterling Cary, called for no let-up in ecumenical commitment to racial justice and other issues that confronted the nation in the 1960s.

It also took preliminary steps toward endorsement of a new policy statement on

High Court Rejects Cases on Free Speech, Abortion

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court finished a second full week of work in its new term by announcing here that it will not hear arguments in cases dealing with free speech, abortion, and women's rights.

One of the free speech cases had to do with the constitutionality of a 1950 Virginia law prohibiting "vulgar, profane, abusive and indecent" language over the telephone. Both a U.S. district court and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals had held previously that the law was overbroad and therefore unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's refusal to hear the case lets those judgments stand.

The court's action brings to an end a four-year struggle by Mary Walker, of Roanoke, Va., who was tried and convicted under the law in 1971. She was fined \$25 and given a suspended 30-day jail sentence.

In a similar case, the high court let stand a lower court's ruling that a District of Columbia ban on sexual solicitation does not infringe upon free speech rights. Two

evangelism. That statement, which will be debated and considered at the next Governing Board meeting, defines evangelism in personal, social, community and public terms.

When the National Council was organized in 1950 there was hope that Protestant denominations which then reflected no interest in ecumenism or were leary of the social activism of some constituting groups would eventually join. That has not happened, although some non-Council denominations, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, take part in certain program units without becoming Council members. (RNS)

DEATH PENALTY INVALIDATED

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.—The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled unconstitutional a state law instituted in 1973 which requires the death penalty for six types of murder.

The state attorney general had asked the court for a ruling on the law after a lower court refused to impose the penalty on two men convicted of murder in the robbery of a tavern. (RNS)

D.C. men were convicted of making a "lewd, obscene and indecent" sexual proposal to a plainclothes policeman.

Although the trial court dismissed the charges, the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia reversed the earlier verdict, holding that such solicitation for sodomy, indecent exposure, and indecent sexual acts with children are categories not protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech.

The high court also declined to schedule for argument an abortion case brought by an Alexandria, Va. attorney claiming to have uncovered scientific data which refuted the premises used by the court in reaching its controversial 1973 decisions legalizing most abortions.

In his petition, the attorney claimed that the abortion issue "is one of the greatest constitutional issues in the history of constitutional government" and that widespread abortion "challenges its very survival." He also accused the Supreme Court of committing "one of the most astounding judicial errors in the history of the world."

The attorney argued in his written brief that last year, after a six-month study, he arrived at the conclusion that the court had based its 1973 decisions on "false evidence" and that the justices were now duty-bound to reconsider the premises on which those decisions were reached.

The high court's action to deny the petition upheld lower decisions by a state court in Richmond and the Virginia Supreme Court.

The court also declined to hear a case brought by a Houston, Texas company seeking to have reversed a decision by the Secretary of Labor that it violated the equal pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Houston Endowment, Inc., a firm which owns and manages several office buildings, was found guilty of paying female custodial employees ten cents an hour less than it did male employees performing essentially the same jobs.

The company argued that the jobs were "substantially different for a substantial portion of time," but both a U.S. district court and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed. The courts found that the firm's distinction between "heavy custodial work," done mostly by males, and "light housekeeping work," performed mostly by females, was artificial and that both the men and the women had essentially the same duties. (BPA)

Committee Expands Services

(Continued from page 1)

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is a denominational agency located in the nation's capital. It is maintained by nine Baptist denominational bodies in the United States and Canada. Its special assignment is to work in the areas of religious liberty, church-state relations, and public policy that affects or is affected by denominational concerns.

James E. Wood, Jr. is the executive director of the Committee and Arthur B. Rutledge, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, is the chairman.

Stan L. Hasteley was named the new coordinator of denominational services for the Baptist Joint Committee. Since January 1974, Hasteley has been assistant to W. Barry Garrett, director of information services.

In his new capacity, Hasteley will have special responsibilities in denominational services, will serve as managing editor of *Report from the Capital*, and will continue to provide press coverage from Washington under the supervision of the director of information services.

Wood, as part of his duties as executive director, will become the editor of *Report from the Capital*, which for the past several years has been edited by Garrett.

John W. Baker, director of research services for the Baptist Joint Committee, in his report on public aid to nonpublic schools pointed out the four tests of constitutionality that have been developed by the Supreme Court. They are:

1. Primary purpose: The primary purpose of the government in providing aid to schools must be secular and not religious.
2. Primary effect: The primary effect of government aid to schools must be secular rather than religious. The question here, according to Baker, is, Does the state action inhibit or advance religion or is that action essentially neutral religiously?
3. Excessive entanglement: Does the state action lead to an excessive en-

tanglement of government with religion? Does it require that the state be involved in such activities as participation in administration, in supervision of programs, etc.?

4. Divisiveness: Does the state action create a divisiveness among citizens along religious lines?

Wood, speaking to the issue of public aid to church schools, warned the Committee that in spite of Supreme Court decisions denying such aid, the parochial and private school interests are continuing to work to discover constitutional ways to obtain public funds for their schools.

There are a number of proposals before Congress, according to Baker, designed to define more precisely the requirements for lobbyists. These proposals, if enacted into law, he said, could seriously affect the work of the churches in exercising their influence on the formation of public policy.

Consequently, the Baptist Joint Committee passed a resolution asking Congress to exempt churches, associations of churches, or conventions of churches from certain tests that might be used by the Internal Revenue Service to restrict the tax-exempt status of charitable agencies seeking to influence legislation.

In discussing the right of privacy, Wood and Baker pointed out that the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) is a most important legislative victory for the right of privacy. Baker explained, "This Act provides for the safeguarding of individual privacy against the misuse of federal records, including the right of an individual to have access to his record, to challenge items therein, and to have the records corrected when necessary."

Earlier this year, at its March meeting, the Baptist Joint Committee approved a policy position that "the right of privacy is the foundation of civil and religious liberty." The Committee appealed to the President and to Congress "to set limits on and standards for the collection and dissemination of information dealing with the private affairs of individuals and groups

and to exercise diligent oversight of information-collecting agencies."

In another paper presented to the Committee, Garrett reviewed false rumors relating to government and religion. "Many people, hearing these rumors, become alarmed, circulate petitions, and otherwise become disturbed over what they think is government action against religion," he said.

He urged people, when they hear such rumors, to double-check with responsible sources of information before they come to their conclusions and before they waste their energies seeking to stop the supposed government action that never was a threat in the first place. (BPA)

Corman

(Continued from page 3)

federal government on an equitable basis. A board of trustees would negotiate with doctors, hospitals, and other health care deliverers in each region to establish fees schedules.

Corman predicted that if the plan were to go into effect, doctors and hospital administrators would be "reasonable" in helping establish a workable program. He said also that the objection of national health insurance opponents that such a system would inevitably be abused by over-use is without foundation in that over-use occurs now and is actually encouraged by many physicians.

The Baptist Joint Committee, composed of representatives from nine Baptist bodies in the U.S. and Canada, declined later in its meeting here to adopt a resolution endorsing the concept of national health insurance. The proposed statement, which referred to adequate health care as "a basic human right," was tabled when it became apparent that the group could reach no consensus on the issue.

BAPTIST BICENTENNIAL CONVOCATION

Washington, D.C.
January 12-15, 1976

Civil Religion and the Bicentennial

(Continued from page 2)

Lord. It may well be that the most serious problem confronting religion in American public life today lies in the widespread use of the name of God and religion for political purposes. God and

religion are not something a nation can possess, like some national resource to be harnessed or used to serve national interests.

Hopefully, during the Bicentennial America will look carefully and critically at the dangers of civil religion to the future of both the church and state in America.

Court's New Term

(Continued from page 3)

mand that he disclose the specific grounds for his religious protest. The high court disagreed with him and in effect let stand the lower ruling.

The court also refused to hear a case brought by a Washington state woman who wants her husband to stop calling her his wife even though they are divorced. The husband, a Roman Catholic, insists that in the eyes of God he is still married to his former wife. She, in turn, obtained a court order prohibiting her former husband from making such claims.

Washington's state supreme court, however, ruled that the blanket injunction against the husband violated his free exercise of religion rights. It further ruled that he may continue to claim that, according to his religious beliefs, his former wife is still his wife. The Supreme Court's refusal to hear his wife's challenge to that ruling allows him to continue claiming her.

3. Free speech: the High court also declined to hear an Arkansas case challenging a state law which prohibits the use of profane, vulgar, violent, abusive, or insulting language in the presence of the targeted person if such language is calculated to arouse anger or cause a breach of the peace.

The case involves the conviction of two Little Rock men who directed abusive language at a city policeman. The court's action lets stand their conviction.

4. Personal privacy: The justices took action in four separate privacy cases, agreeing to hear one, sending one back for further action to a lower court, and declining to hear the other two.

The court agreed to hear a Maryland attorney's contention that he should be allowed to invoke the Constitution's provision against self-incrimination in the face of a search of his office which provided the state with documents used against him in a criminal trial. The attorney claims that the Fourth Amendment's protection against "unreasonable searches and seizures" applies in his case.

In another search and seizure case, the high court ordered the Louisiana Supreme Court to reconsider the conviction of a school teacher accused of searching one of his student's wallet in which he found incriminating evidence. The state supreme

Independence of Churches

(Continued from page 1)

The Baptist Joint Committee therefore resolved to request "that the Congress of the United States specifically exempt churches, associations of churches, or conventions of churches from the substantiality test of Section 501(c) (3) or any modification of that Section."

MISSOURI PRESSED FOR AID

ST. LOUIS—Supporters of state aid to private and parochial schools have disclosed plans to conduct a statewide petition drive to amend the Missouri constitution.

The petition drive, seeking close to 150,000 signatures, would put before Missouri voters an amendment that would allow such tax-paid assistance as loaned textbooks, bus transportation and training for handicapped children.

Such assistance has been previously approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, but is barred by the present wording of the Missouri constitution.

School officials and religious leaders in the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses will actively cooperate in the petition drive, as will leaders in the Lutheran schools, backers said.

State senator James F. Conway (D-St. Louis), cosponsor of a constitutional amendment that was rejected this spring by the Missouri legislature, is a principal coordinator of the petition drive. (RNS)

court had ruled against the teacher and in favor of the student's right to privacy.

The Supreme Court declined to schedule for argument the case of an Oregon school teacher dismissed for practicing homosexuality. She appealed for reinstatement after a lower court declared that the law used by the school board to dismiss her was unconstitutional. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, however, that while the school board was obligated to pay damages, it did not have to reinstate her.

The high court also refused a case from Louisiana in which the state affiliate of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws argued that adult possession of the drug is a matter of personal privacy protected by the Constitution. The action in effect lets stand a lower court decision that the Louisiana statute forbidding possession of marijuana is not a matter to be settled by federal courts.

The Committee further directed its staff "to use all appropriate means to oppose any modification of Section 501(c) (3) which does not remove churches, associations of churches, and conventions of churches from the substantiality test of that Section."

Wood commented on the resolution: "While thoroughly consistent with the very founding and subsequent history of the Baptist Joint Committee, this resolution is clearly one of the major position statements ever to have been adopted by the Baptist Joint Committee and was done so unanimously."

In another resolution the Baptist Joint Committee attacked local or regional ordinances requiring permits for religious meetings or which have the effect of inhibiting the freedom of assembly in the exercise of religion. The Committee felt that many such ordinances are in violation of the First Amendment guarantees for the free exercise of religion and "the right of the people peaceably to assemble."

Members of the Baptist Joint Committee were disturbed by the rising number of reports throughout the nation concerning alleged Internal Revenue Service abuses affecting religious organizations or members of the clergy. The Committee instructed its staff to gather information on these alleged abuses and to report the findings to its March 1976 meeting. There is the possibility that the Committee will want to participate in some way in one of these cases and to pursue it as far as the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Committee in another action strongly expressed its view that religious persons or organizations should not be required by government to register as lobbyists as they seek to fulfill the mission of their church by influencing legislation. Specifically, the Committee voted "that no member of our staff register as a lobbyist or provide financial information under any new Federal law to be enacted hereafter."

It was the feeling of the Committee that government should not be allowed to investigate the financial records of churches or of religious organizations because of their activity in carrying out their concept of the mission of the church, even if that mission means activity to influence legislation and the formation of public policy.

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Report from the Capital

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