



VOICE OF REASON

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Obama Wins at Notre Dame

President Barack Obama became the sixth sitting president to address commencement ceremonies at the University of Notre Dame on May 17, receiving an honorary doctorate before a generally sympathetic audience whose applause easily drowned out protests from right wing zealots, most of them from outside the University community.

Critics were angry that the nation's foremost Catholic university, ranked repeatedly as one of the top 20 U.S. colleges, would honor a president who supports abortion rights and embryonic stem-cell research. What they seemed to have ignored is that polls show a majority of Catholics agree with Obama on these two issues, which may be why 54% of them voted for him.

While the national press gave what seemed to be disproportionate attention to critics such as William Donohue of the Catholic League and former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Mary Ann Glendon, most American Catholics supported Notre Dame's invitation to the president. All Catholics endorsed the invitation/appearance by a two to one margin, according to a Pew Research Center survey released April 30. As in previous polls, Catholics who attend church less than weekly were far more favorable to Obama's appearance (almost 3 to 1) than weekly churchgoers, who were opposed by 45% to 37%. Catholics were more favorable than even mainline Protestants, and only evangelical Protestants were opposed. Black Protestants and religiously unaffiliated voters overwhelmingly supported the invitation.

Significantly, 97% of the graduating seniors endorsed the visit. And while about 70 bishops criticized Notre Dame, 220 did not. Neither did the Vatican, whose official weekly newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has been consistently pro-Obama in its editorials and news stories since the president's election. The president's overall approval rating in the Pew survey stood at 67% for Catholics, compared to 60% for mainline Protestants, 33% for evangelical Protestants, 96% for Black Protestants, and 81% among the unaffiliated. Finally, Catholics were 9% more pro-choice on abortion than *all* Protestants and 2% more favorable to stem-cell research than all Protestants. (African American Protestants, Jews and the unaffiliated were the most supportive, and white evangelical Protestants the least supportive.)

This reality did not go unnoticed among a number of analysts. Writing in *The New Yorker* May 18, Hendrik Hertzberg noted, "In any case, the controversy about Obama's Notre Dame appearance is less about him than about divisions within the American Catholic community. ...The real division is between social conservatives, on the one hand, and social moderates and liberals, on the other, not between Catholics and non-Catholics."

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne argued, "By facing their arguments head-on and by demonstrating his attentiveness to Catholic concerns, Obama strengthened moderate and liberal forces inside the church itself. He also struck a forceful blow against those who would keep the nation mired in culture-war politics without end. Obama's opponents on the Catholic right placed a large bet on his Notre Dame visit. And they lost."

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Arizona Supreme Court Strikes Down Vouchers

Two voucher programs enacted by the Arizona legislature were declared unconstitutional by the state's highest court on March 25. Invoking two clauses of the state constitution, the Arizona Supreme Court said firmly: "Both the Aid and Religion Clauses prohibit certain appropriations of public money."

Indicating that "This is a matter of first impression and of statewide importance," the court said that the Religion Clause (Article 2, Section 12) is clear when it says, "[n]o public money...shall be appropriated to any religious worship, exercise, or instruction, or to the support of any religious establishment." It was designed to "reinforce other provisions in the constitution" which mandate separation of church and state.

The No-Aid Clause (Article 9, Section 10) "encompasses more than does the Religion Clause." The Aid Clause is "primarily designed to protect the public fisc and to protect public schools" because "our framers considered public education of prime importance."

The court contrasted these programs with indirect "credits against tax liability," ruling that "the funds at issue here are withdrawn from the public treasury and earmarked for an identified purpose." The two voucher programs adopted in 2006 were aimed at children with disabilities and children in foster care. "The voucher programs do not provide reimbursement for contracted services," the court held. Instead, "They are designed in such a way that the State does not pur-

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Many Catholic educators expressed their disgust and outrage at the attacks on Notre Dame. Trinity University president Patricia McGuire told her graduating class on the same day that “religious vigilantism” was “an embarrassment to all Catholics.” Mincing no words, she said, “The real scandal at Notre Dame today is not that the president of the United States is speaking at commencement. The real scandal is the misappropriation of sacred teachings for political ends. The real scandal is the spectacle of ostensibly Catholic mobs camping out at Notre Dame for the specific purpose of disrupting the commencement address of the nation’s first African American president.” To heavy applause, she concluded, “The religious vigilantism apparent in the Notre Dame controversy arises from organizations that have no official standing with the church, but who are successful in gaining media coverage as if they were speaking for Catholicism. . . . They have established themselves as uber-guardians of a belief system we can hardly recognize. There is a narrow faith devoted almost exclusively to one issue. They defend the rights of the unborn but have no charity toward the living. They mock social justice as a liberal mythology.”

For his part, President Obama did not ignore the issues that led to the controversy. Admitting that some issues may be “irreconcilable” because of their “complex and contradictory” nature, He called for a continuing search for a “common ground,” invoking “open hearts, open minds and fair-minded words.” Facing the issue squarely, the president pleaded: “Maybe we won’t agree on abortion, but we can still agree that this is a heart-wrenching decision for any woman to make, with both moral and spiritual dimensions. So let’s work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions by reducing unintended pregnancies, and making adoption more available, and providing care and support for women who do carry their child to term. Let’s honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion, and draft a sensible conscience clause, and make sure that all of our health care policies are grounded in clear ethics and sound science, as well as respect for the equality of women.”

Endorsing the president’s appearance, the national Jesuit weekly, *America*, accused the president’s critics of becoming “today’s sectarians” who not only demand “adherence to a particular political program” but “threaten the unity of the Catholic Church in the United States.” Catholic journalist and author David Gibson told readers of *The Washington Post* on the day of the commencement: “When he speaks at Notre Dame, Barack Obama—an African-American Protestant with a Muslim father—may enunciate a vision that resonates more genuinely with American Catholics than the pronouncements of the church’s high-decibel spokesmen.” ■

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A Message to the Texas State Board of Education

The undersigned scientific and educational societies call on the Texas State Board of Education to support accurate science education for all students by adopting the science standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or TEKS) as recommended to you by the scientists and educators on your writing committees.

Evolution is the foundation of modern biology, and is also crucial in fields as diverse as agriculture, computer science, engineering, geology, and medicine. We oppose any efforts to undermine the teaching of biological evolution and related topics in the earth and space sciences, whether by misrepresenting those subjects, or by inaccurately and misleadingly describing them as controversial and in need of special scrutiny.

Signed by 54 scientific and educational organizations.

Arizona Supreme Court, *continued from p. 1*

chase anything; rather it is the parent or the guardian who exercises sole discretion to contract with the qualified school.”

The court was clear. “No one doubts that the clause prohibits a direct appropriation of public funds to such recipients. For all intents and purposes, the voucher programs do precisely what the Aid Clause prohibits. These programs transfer state funds directly from the state treasury to private schools. That the checks or warrants first pass through the hands of parents is immaterial; once a pupil has been accepted into a qualified school under either program, the parents or guardians have no choice; they must endorse the check or warrant to the qualified school.”

Realizing the emotional arguments used by voucher proponents, the court added, “The voucher programs appear to be a well-intentioned effort to assist two distinct student populations with special needs. But we are bound by our constitution.”

The case, *Cain v. Horne*, reversed an appeals court. This decision, one of the clearest defeats for vouchers in any court in recent years, attracted national attention and concern. Supporting Arizona public school plaintiffs were ACLU of Arizona and People For the American Way. Supporting the voucher programs were several Religious Right groups, including the Institute for Justice, the Pacific Legal Foundation, and the Alliance Defense Fund. ■

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Edd Doerr, *President*
Albert J. Menendez, *Research Director*

Obama Lifts Ban on Embryonic Stem Cell Research

In a widely expected move, President Barack Obama issued an executive order on March 10 that lifted restrictions of federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The new policy opens the door for more federal funding of research that might result in cures for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, spinal ailments and other illnesses that cause thousands of deaths each year. The move was widely praised by the scientific and medical communities, who had chafed under the restrictions imposed in 2001 by President George W. Bush.

President Obama promised "science without ideology." He also signed a second order designed to protect scientific research from politics. The president remarked, "Promoting science isn't just about providing resources — it's also about protecting free and open inquiry. It's about letting scientists like those who are here today do their jobs free from manipulation or coercion, and listening to what they tell us, even when it's inconvenient—especially when it's inconvenient."

Obama directed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop guidelines within 120 days that will regulate how this research will be conducted. He indicated that human cloning would not be an option. Addressing some religious critics, he said, "As a person of faith, I believe we are called to care for each other and work to ease human suffering."

Obama left the resolution of complex moral and ethical questions for NIH and, perhaps, Congress to resolve. He said, "We will develop strict guidelines, which we will rigorously enforce, because we cannot ever tolerate misuse or abuse."

Polls, including Gallup and Rasmussen Reports, showed majority support for the president's decision, including large majorities of Democrats and Independents and 40% of Republicans, including former

First Lady Nancy Reagan, who said she was "very grateful" for the decision. Opposition is still intense among many evangelicals and from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The New York Times welcomed the move in a March 10 editorial, which said in part: "We welcome President Obama's decision to lift the Bush administration's restrictions on federal financing for embryonic stem cell research. His move ends a long, bleak period in which the moral objections of religious conservatives were allowed to constrain the progress of a medically important science."

But a number of states are resisting the trend and are taking steps to limit stem cell research. The Georgia Senate, dominated by Republicans, passed a bill on March 12 that bans therapeutic cloning and the creation of embryos for any purpose other than procreation. Georgia's GOP Gov. Sonny Perdue said he would sign the ban if it passes both houses of the legislature. The Mississippi House of Representatives also passed a bill banning the use of state funds "for research that kills or destroys an existing human embryo." A bill making its way through the North Dakota legislature would define an embryo as a person. Louisiana and Oklahoma banned all embryonic stem cell research a few years ago.

Maggie Fox, health and science editor for Reuters, reported on March 17: "A bill filed last week in the Texas legislature would ban the use of state funds for stem cell research. Arizona already has a law on the books that says university researchers cannot use state funds to manipulate embryonic stem cells in pursuit of treatment of potential cures. Another Arizona law prohibits Arizona scientists from experimenting with any type of human embryo or fetus." ■

Secular Community Continues to Grow

Americans who do not identify with any religious tradition now constitute 15% of the adult population, up from 8% in 2001, according to a national survey. The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008) is the most recent of similar surveys conducted in 1990 and 2001. It is based on data collected from 54,461 respondents. About 5% of respondents refused to indicate any religious identity, leading principal investigators Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar to conclude: "The U.S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious, with one out of every five Americans failing to indicate a religious identity in 2008."

The nonreligious 15% are heavily male (more so than any other religious or quasi-religious group) and young, though not as young as Muslims. Nearly 60% of the unaffiliated are male. Only smaller majorities of Muslims and members of Eastern religions (Buddhist, Hindu) and new religious movements are male, while majorities of Christians and Jews are female. Pentecostals and Baptists have large female majorities.

The nonreligious are somewhat younger than all American adults (29% are age 18 to 29 compared to 22% of the national population). Only 30% are older than 50 compared to 40% of all adults. Muslims and Eastern religion adherents are the youngest of all, while Baptists and Jews are the oldest (58% of Baptists and 51% of Jews are older than 50).

Because of age composition, the nonreligious have more singles and fewer marrieds, but their divorce rate is slightly lower than for all Americans. Pentecostals and new religious movement members have the highest divorce rate, while Mormons and Jews have the lowest.

About 11% of the nonreligious live in nonmarital relationships, similar to the rate for Muslims and new religions and higher than for Christians. Mormons are more likely to be married than any other group.

Among ethnic groups Asian Americans are the most likely (27%) to report nonaffiliation compared to 16% of whites, 12% of Hispanics and 11% of African Americans.

As to levels of education, Kosmin and Keysar write: "Another significant finding is that the Nones are only slightly better educated than the average American. This may reflect the changing make up of the population of Nones, as a wider spectrum of people are choosing this option." The best educated groups are Eastern religions (59% college

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Louise Olsen Gallun

Louise Olsen Gallun, a member of ARL's Board of Directors since 2004, died February 9 in Muskegon, Michigan. Gallun had been a Democratic Party activist in Maryland from 1986 until she moved to Michigan in 2006. A membership director for the Woman's National Democratic Club, Gallun was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 2004. She loved literature and theater and was a 1971 graduate of Old Dominion University in her hometown of Norfolk, Virginia. Her husband, Rev. Gary Gallun, is a Unitarian Universalist minister in Muskegon.

Commandments Monument Can Stay in Utah

The Supreme Court ruled on February 25 that permanent monuments erected in public parks are a form of government speech that does not require access for every group. The unanimous decision, which overturned the Tenth Circuit appeals court, cleared the way for the town of Pleasant Grove, Utah, to retain its Ten Commandments monument while rejecting a Seven Aphorisms plaque favored by a new religious group called Summum.

The decision was reached by justices who held that: “The placement of a permanent monument in a public park is best viewed as a form of government speech and is therefore not subject to scrutiny under the Free Speech Clause.”

Religious implications triggered by the First Amendment’s Religion Clauses did not play a direct role. Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the court, said that permanent monuments erected in publicly-owned and controlled parks are presented “for the purpose of presenting the image of the City that it wishes to project to all who frequent the park.” Therefore, it appears that governments may decide which monuments to accept and which to reject. Alito added, “A public park, over the years, can provide a soapbox for a very large number of orators – often, for all who want to speak – but it is hard to imagine how a public park could be opened up for the installation of permanent monuments by every person or group wishing to engage in that form of expression.” This ruling also protects “a government entity’s acceptance of privately donated, permanent monuments for installation in a public park.”

The decision implied that since Pleasant Grove’s Pioneer Park had 15 permanent displays, both secular and religious, its choice of monuments fell under the rubrics of a 2005 decision allowing a Commandments display at the Texas State Capitol that was found to be part of a larger historical exhibit. Still left unresolved is whether cities can only erect certain religious displays. In a similar 2005 case from Kentucky, the High Court held that displays designed solely to convey a religious message are unconstitutional. Alito alluded to this when he acknowledged that “this does not mean that there are no restraints on government speech,” adding that such actions must “comport with the Establishment Clause.” Nor can governments use the principle as “a subterfuge for favoring certain private speakers over others based on viewpoint.”

Six justices filed or joined concurring opinions, with spins of their own. Justices John Paul Stevens and Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote, “Recognizing permanent displays on public property as government speech will not give the government free license to communicate offensive or partisan messages,” and suggested that “the effect of today’s decision will be limited.” Justice David Souter warned that if government accepts a display with “some religious character, the specter of violating the Establishment Clause will behoove it to take care to avoid the appearance of a flat-out establishment of religion.” The two reactionary justices, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, sneered that cities should not be concerned “about breaching the ‘so-called’ wall of separation between church and state.”

Religious Right activists hoped the ruling in *Pleasant Grove v. Summum* would pave the way for more religious monuments. Jay Sekulow, representing Rev. Pat Robertson’s American Center for Law and Justice, said, “It’s a landmark decision that clears the way for government to express its views and its history through the selection of monuments – including religious monuments and displays.” But Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, retorted, “Government has no business erecting, maintaining or promoting religious symbols or codes. The answer in this case is to remove the Ten Commandments from the public park, not compound the problem by

adding more sectarian material. ... No one expects that a community would be required to erect every symbol it is given. The question lurking below the surface is why government should have the right to display religious symbols and signs at all.”

The High Court announced on February 23 that it will return to this issue when it accepted for review *Salazar v. Buono*, a case involving the display of a cross at the Mojave National Preserve in California. The Christian symbol was erected by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1934 and has since been replaced several times by private groups. Congress declared the cross a “national memorial” in 2003. ■

Secular Community, *continued from page 3*

graduates) and Jews (57%). Since 1990 members of Eastern religions have passed Jews in the percentage of college graduates in their ranks. Among the unaffiliated 31% are college graduates compared to 27% of all adults, 35% of Muslims, 31% of Mormons, 35% of “mainline Christians,” 25% of Catholics and 16% of Baptists. All religious groups except Muslims and new religions have seen an increase in college graduates since 1990, which may reflect their youthful profile.

The nonreligious are now strongest in New England, where their percentage of the population now exceeds their traditional Pacific Coast stronghold. Vermont is the most nonreligious state. Kosmin and Keysar, who are associated with Trinity College in Hartford, observe: “The most significant influence on American religious geography over time has been the increase in the Nones, or No Religion bloc. As noted earlier, nationally the Nones more than doubled in numbers from 1990 to 2008 and almost doubled their share of the adult population, from 8% in 1990 to 15% in 2008. Moreover, the Nones increased in numbers and proportion in every state, Census Division and Region of the country from 1990 to 2008. No other religious bloc has kept such a pace in every state. Nones have historically been concentrated in the West region and particularly in the Pacific Northwest (i.e. Oregon and Washington), where now they account for about one-quarter of the population. However, this pattern has now changed and the Northeast emerged in 2008 as the new stronghold of the religiously unidentified. In 2008 Vermont reached 34% Nones, New Hampshire 29%, Maine 25%, and Massachusetts 22%. A surge in the proportion of Nones also occurred in the Mountain States of Colorado, Idaho, Nevada and Wyoming (28%) in 2008.”

Much of the growth in the unchurched population in New England comes from the collapse of the Catholic population, which has declined from 50% in 1990 to 36% in 2008. The nonaffiliated population grew from 8% to 22% over the same time period. Catholics, still the largest national group at 25%, declined in the East and Midwest, while growing a bit in the South and West, particularly in California, Texas and Florida. The “other Christian” (Protestant) population declined everywhere, particularly in its Southern stronghold and in the West.

Two never-before-asked questions suggest that this growing estrangement from institutional religion is likely to last. Nearly 30% of those who had been or were presently married said they did not have a religious wedding ceremony, and 27% said they did not expect to have a religious funeral.

This survey shows many similarities to other recent national investigations of religion by Pew, Gallup, and Baylor University. ■

Obama's Faith-Based Council Shows Diversity

The 25 members of President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships include six representatives of secular community organizations, two Muslims, one Hindu and an assortment of Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Representatives of Orthodox and Reform Judaism were included, as were leaders of Catholic Charities and the National Council of Churches. A few evangelicals were chosen as well as several women religious leaders: Sharon Watkins of the Disciples of Christ; Peg Chemberlin, a Moravian clergyperson; and Bishop Vashti MacKenzie of the A.M.E. Church. Melissa Rogers, a constitutional lawyer and director of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity Center for Religion and Public Affairs, is expected to make the case for nondiscriminatory administrative processes. Rogers is one of the few staunch church-state separationists on the Council.

The Council membership has already been attacked from left and right. Frances Kissling, former president of Catholics for Choice and now a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Bioethics, wrote on religiondispatches.org: "That leaves a majority of religious leaders on the Council who are likely to lead the nation down a road in which respect for women's rights will be as absent from their recommendations for government policy and funding as they are in the religious institutions they represent. For me, and for many feminists, President Obama's Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships will be about as respected as President Bush's Council on Bioethics. As with that Advisory group, the majority presence will drown out the minority and in this case, it will not be junk science that prevails but junk religion. I am so sorry that I have to draw this conclusion."

Conservatives have criticized the selection of Harry Knox, director of the religion and faith program at Human Rights Campaign. The Catholic League and the Knights of Columbus called Knox a "pope-basher" for his criticism of Benedict XVI's recent rejection of condoms

on a trip to Africa. Bill Donohue, president of the extremist Catholic League, who is noted for his outrageous rhetoric, told Cybercast News that "the appointment of Knox is exactly the kind of bastardization of common sense that the Obama people are putting forth. Quite frankly, I would prefer to see the entire faith-based initiative closed down."

Melissa Rogers, however, defended the administration in an interview with *Christianity Today's* Sarah Pulliam, "The Obama office has a much broader mandate. There is an effort to see, for example, where the areas of agreement are on issues like encouraging responsible fatherhood, reducing the number of abortions, and promoting good stewardship of the environment. And the administration is involving religious and secular communities not only in discussions about social service partnerships but also about what the government's policy should be on domestic and global poverty."

Rogers also defended Obama's decision to take the religious hiring issue off the immediate agenda for the Council. She said, "There are specific conscience protections for healthcare workers in federal statutory law. These statutes will continue to exist no matter the outcome of the administrative process—an administrative agency cannot undo federal statutes. The administrative process asked whether a Bush regulation dealing with these issues should be rescinded or retained."

The discrimination in hiring issue will now be decided by the White House Legal Counsel and the Department of Justice.

The Council met in April in Washington. *Washington Times* religion writer Julia Duin noted that the group has decided on a specific agenda: "The 25 council members will not oversee grants to faith-based groups, but they are expected to inform public policy in four areas: interfaith work, responsible fatherhood initiatives, ways to decrease teen pregnancy and reduce abortions, and fighting poverty." ■

Mainline Protestant Clergy Move to Democrats

While "mainline" Protestant voters divide almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans at election time, their clergy now favor Democrats by a whopping 56% to 34% margin over Republicans. This finding was revealed in a new survey released March 6 by Public Religion Research of Washington, D.C.

Not only do mainline Protestant clergy favor Democrats but they are also unabashed liberals, at least 48% of them, compared to 22% of all American voters surveyed on election day 2008. Nearly three quarters of United Church of Christ clergy, two thirds of Episcopalians, 60% of Lutherans and Disciples of Christ and 52% of Presbyterian clergy call themselves political liberals. United Methodists are evenly divided, with 39% conservative, 38% liberal and 23% moderate. American Baptists (the most liberal Baptists) are the most conservative (49% to 32% liberal and 19% moderate). All mainline clergy break down as 48% liberal, 33% conservative and 19% moderate in their political ideology.

These ministers are collectively in favor of government-guaranteed health insurance (67%), more environmental protection (69%), and greater involvement by the federal government in solving social problems (78%).

The issue of same-sex marriage, however, is more contentious. The clergy are divided three ways, almost equally, over support for gay marriage, civil unions, or no legal recognition at all. Baptists and Methodists are the most conservative, while pastors in the United Church of Christ

and the Episcopal Church are the most liberal. Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Disciples are moderately liberal.

Public Religion Research president Robert P. Jones said the mainline clergy are "an important swing constituency that has been moving slowly but steadily away from the GOP since the early 1990s."

The survey was sent to 6,000 clergy, with a 44% response rate, which is considered quite respectable in the field. John Green, a senior fellow at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, was an adviser to the project and supervised its data collection.

Church	Political Attitudes of Clergy		
	% <i>Liberal</i>	% <i>Conservative</i>	% <i>Moderate</i>
United Church of Christ	74	13	13
Episcopal	66	21	13
Disciples of Christ	62	22	16
Evangelical Lutheran	60	23	17
Presbyterian	52	32	16
United Methodist	38	39	23
American Baptist	32	49	19
All mainline	48	33	19

Source: Public Religion Research, 2009

Who Voted Liberal? A Study of Congress

Baptist and Jewish Democrats have the most liberal voting records of major groups, just a bit less liberal than the half-dozen religiously unaffiliated Democrats in Congress. These religious influences can be discerned from a detailed study of *National Journal's* ratings of the last Congress that ended in 2008. The most conservative voting records were compiled by Republicans who belonged to nondenominational "Christian" churches, Baptists and Presbyterians. Mormon Democrats were the least liberal (though still 64% so) and Mormon Republicans were the fourth most conservative.

A study correlating religious affiliation and political party by ARL research director Al Menendez shows that each religious group shows wide divergences between Democratic and Republican members, which overshadows any independent religious influence on Congressional voting. Regionalism also interacts with religion. Members from the South, for example, are generally more conservative in all religions and in both parties, a finding indicative of deep-seated Southern conservatism, which transcends even the evangelical groups that predominate there.

For example, Baptist Democrats are 57 points more liberal than Baptist Republicans, reflecting the fact that 22 of 28 Baptist Democrats in the 110th Congress were African Americans. Differences of 50 points or more were found among Episcopalians, Presbyterians and nondenominational Christians. The smallest difference, 34 points, came from Eastern Orthodox Christians, though their smaller number tends to skew the results (Tables 1 and 2).

An overall ranking of liberal versus conservative voting shows Jews and Catholics in the top two spots (Table 3). This is partially due to the fact that 90% of Jews and two thirds of Catholics in the 110th Congress were Democrats. Mormons have the lowest liberal voting, reflecting the 80% Republican membership in their congressional ranks.

The bottom line is that political party is far more important than religious affiliation in shaping the *political* orientation of each religious group. There are relatively few issues on which religion plays an independent influence when other factors (party, ideology, constituency, region) are held constant.

—Al Menendez

Table 1		Table 2		Table 3: Liberal Ranking by Religion (Combined Democrats and Republicans)	
Religion	% Democrats Voting Liberal	Religion	% Republicans Voting Liberal	Religion	% Liberal
Baptist	76.8	Jewish	32.9	Jewish	72.8
Jewish	75.9	Eastern Orthodox	31.9	Roman Catholic	57.7
Episcopalian	74.9	United Church of Christ	29.6	United Church of Christ	51.5
Roman Catholic	73.7	Roman Catholic	27.3	Eastern Orthodox	51.3
United Church of Christ	73.4	Methodist	25.1	Lutheran	51.1
"Christian"	70.9	"Protestant"	24.6	Methodist	45.7
Presbyterian	70.4	Episcopalian	24.4	Baptist	44.6
"Protestant"	69.9	Lutheran	23.8	"Protestant"	41.6
Lutheran	68.6	Mormon	20.4	Episcopalian	39.7
Methodist	67.0	Presbyterian	19.7	"Christian"	37.6
Eastern Orthodox	65.8	Baptist	19.5	Presbyterian	36.9
Mormon	64.4	"Christian"	14.2	Mormon	29.2
<i>Subgroups</i>		Note: This figure is strongly influenced by the percentage of Democrats and Republicans within each religious group's delegation in Congress.			
African American Baptist	80.8				
Hispanic Catholic	74.6				
Unaffiliated	88.1				
Buddhist-Muslim	85.7				

U.S. Muslims: Religious but Not Politically Conservative

A study of U.S. Muslims by the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies found that only 21% call themselves political conservatives. About 38% are moderates and 23% are liberals, while 18% are uncertain of their political stance.

Even fewer identify with the Republican Party. Democrats retain the allegiance of 49% of Muslims, while 37% are independents and only 8% are Republicans.

Muslims are the most racially diverse religious group in America: 35% are African American, 28% white, 18% Asian American, 18% "other" race, and 1% Hispanic. They are also younger than average, with 36% being between ages 18 and 29, double the percentage of all

U.S. adults. These younger Muslims are relatively apolitical. Only 51% of young Muslims are registered to vote, compared to 65% of all U.S. young people and 78% of Protestants.

Religion plays a key role in Muslim daily lives. Muslims rank second to Mormons in the percentage of those who say "religion plays an important role in their lives." Nearly 80% of Muslims answered yes to this question, compared to 85% of Mormons, 76% of Protestants, 68% of Catholics and 39% of Jews. In the general population 65% responded affirmatively.

The Gallup report, *Muslim Americans: A National Portrait*, was released in March. ■

Importance of Religion = Presidential Vote

Generally speaking, states whose residents say that religion is an important part of their daily lives supported John McCain in 2008, according to a Gallup Poll released this past winter. The Gallup Poll Daily asked 355,334 adults throughout 2008 whether “religion was an important part of your daily life,” and 65% responded positively. The “yes” percentages ranged from 42% in Vermont to 85% in Mississippi. New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts joined Vermont in being the only states where fewer than 50% responded yes, while Alabama and South Carolina ranked second and third as America’s “most religious states.”

John McCain carried 16 of the 19 states with above average “yes” responses to the question, with only North Carolina, Indiana and Virginia supporting Obama. At the other end Obama carried 16 of the 21 states with below average responses. Of the “least religious states” Obama carried all except Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Arizona – two of which were the home states of the GOP ticket. Interestingly, Obama did best in the ten states with “average” levels of religiosity, winning all but Nebraska. This comports with Obama’s strong showing among political moderates and independents, who are numerous in states with a “moderate” religious identity.

Gallup spokesperson Frank Newport explained that the results are not easy to explain definitively. “The question of why residents of some states (e.g., Mississippi and other Southern states) are highly likely to report that religion is an important part of their lives, while residents of other states (e.g., Vermont and other New England states) are much less likely to report the same is fascinating, but difficult to answer simply. Differing religious traditions and denominations tend to dominate historically in specific states, and religious groups have significantly different patterns of religious intensity among their adherents. The states have differing racial and ethnic compositions, which in turn are associated with differing degrees of religiosity. Certain states may attract immigrants with specific types of religious intensity. In addition, there may be differing ‘state cultures’ that are themselves associated with life approaches that give varying degrees of credence to religion as a guiding force.” ■

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Charter Schools: Some Facts and Figures

America’s 4,600 charter schools educate 1,407,421 students in 40 states and the District of Columbia, according to a report issued in February by the Center for Education Reform, a pro-voucher, pro-charter think tank in the nation’s capital.

Charter schools enroll about 3% of all U.S. students since the first charter school law was passed in Minnesota in 1991. Charter schools are public schools that are free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools. The largest number of such schools are found in California, Arizona, Florida, Texas, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. As a percentage of all students (public and private), the District of Columbia and Arizona have the highest charter school enrollment. Ten states have not authorized charter schools: Alabama, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia.

One of the more interesting facts is the number that have shut down. Since the charter school movement began, 657 of about 5,250 schools, or 12.5% have closed. The reasons are varied: 41% closed for financial deficiencies, 27% because of mismanagement and 14% for poor academic performance. Others closed because of problems with local school boards or because of inadequate facilities. As a percentage of all charter schools, the highest failure rates were in Virginia (42.9%), North Carolina (23.7%), New Jersey (22.9%), South Carolina (21.7%), Nevada (21.2%), Kansas (20.0%), Arkansas (19.4%), Connecticut (19.2%), Florida (17.7%) and Alaska (16.1%).

The Center for Education Reform claims that charter schools are outperforming conventional public schools despite having “fewer resources and tremendous obstacles.” The 2009 Accountability Report says charter schools are “making notable gains in raising student achievement serving a diverse student population in urban, suburban and rural settings,” though the report admits that “more in-depth research is still needed.”

These rosy assessments may be premature. For one thing, only 30 of the 40 states allowing charter schools have provided credible data, making it difficult to generalize when comparing 30 states to all 50. Then, there is little information about the charter school student bodies in terms of race, ethnicity, family income, educational level of parents and other factors that could skew the data. If these schools are more selective, as is true of most private schools, their student bodies already have an edge over public schools, which must serve a large body of poor, disadvantaged, non-English speakers and disabled or special needs students. These are factors that need to be considered when looking at math and reading test scores. ■

Jewish Voters Likely to Remain Democrats

According to Israeli journalist Shmuel Rosner, America’s Jewish voters are unlikely to defect to the Republicans, despite repeated forays by GOP operatives and the Republican Jewish Coalition. Many thought John McCain would come close to Ronald Reagan’s modern record Jewish vote of 1980 (near 40%), but he fell back to 21% on election day. “In the end, Obama’s Jewish problem proved to be no problem at all, and the story remained what it has been over the course of the past

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Jewish Voters, *continued from p. 7*

seven national elections, with Jews voting for Democratic candidates by colossal margins,” writes Rosner in the February 2009 issue of the neocon monthly *Commentary*, which was once a relatively liberal journal when published by the American Jewish Committee from 1945 to 2006.

Rosner argues that concern for Israel is no longer the major issue for Jewish voters. “The fact that Republicans have repeatedly been unable to play the Israel card is not solely due to the fact that Israel is no longer the central issue on the Jewish-American agenda. . . . The inescapable conclusion is that if a candidate claims to be a friend of Israel, the claim will be accepted and believed, so long as his positions on other issues are deemed acceptable.”

The only bright spot for Republicans may be the growing Orthodox Jewish vote. “The Orthodox tend to vote Republican in much higher numbers than the Jewish community overall. Indeed, it is even possible that the Orthodox constitute a majority of the Jews who vote Republican. Given that the Orthodox are younger than the Jewish

average, and are proportionally growing much faster, over time one might expect the share of Jews who vote Republican to increase.”

While Rosner includes no statistics, returns from predominantly Jewish precincts in New Jersey and Pennsylvania bear this out. Obama received 75% to 80% support in areas where Reform and secular Jews predominate, as in Pennsylvania’s Lower Merion Township, northeast Philadelphia and the Squirrel Hill neighborhood in Pittsburgh, and in such New Jersey communities as Short Hills, Highland Park and Cherry Hill. But McCain polled 70% in Lakewood Township, New Jersey, which is substantially Orthodox Jewish and is the location of the largest yeshiva in North America. In Deal, a small town on the Jersey Shore populated largely by Orthodox Jews from Syria, McCain won three to one, compared to a two to one margin for Bush over Kerry. In 2000 both Lakewood and Deal voted for Al Gore, whose running mate, Joe Lieberman, was an Orthodox Jew.

Nationally, the American Jewish vote remains solidly Democratic, and the Democratic percentage of Jewish members of Congress is higher today than ever. ■



The Voucher Watch

- Despite expenditures of \$128.8 million in public funds per year on voucher schools in Milwaukee, those schools do not perform any better than the city’s public schools. Researchers from the University of Arkansas issued reports in March that found “no overall statistically significant difference between voucher schools and public schools in either math or reading.”

About 120 voucher schools, more than 80% of them faith-based, enroll 22,500 students under the voucher program. Alan Borsuk, a reporter with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, wrote: “The first research since the mid-1990s comparing the academic progress of students in Milwaukee’s precedent-setting private school voucher program with students in Milwaukee Public Schools shows no major differences in success between the two groups. . . . The finding that voucher students weren’t really doing any better is probably not good news for advocates of a program that was envisioned in 1990 by backers as a powerful way to raise overall education results.”

Other reports found that the financing of the voucher program puts a disproportionate share of the cost of the program on Milwaukee property taxpayers, causing an imbalance between Milwaukee and the rest of the state. Another disturbing finding is that only 69% of teachers in voucher schools are state certified compared to 94% of public school teachers.

- A bill that would have created a statewide voucher program in Georgia failed to reach a committee vote. Its sponsor, Eric Johnson, a Savannah Republican, withdrew his bill on March 12, admitting that he did not have the votes to move the legislation forward. Georgia has a small voucher program for special-needs students.

- On March 10 the U.S. Senate in effect ended the controversial D.C. voucher program after next year. The \$410 billion omnibus spending bill included language restricting voucher funding. A Republican amendment offered by Sen. John Ensign of Nevada that would have extended voucher funding was defeated 58 to 39. The only way to revive the program now would be through passage of a stand-alone reauthorization bill, unlikely with Democratic majorities in both houses.

Hearings may be held later in the spring to examine the \$14 million voucher program. Sen. Joe Lieberman, chair of the Governmental Affairs Committee, which has jurisdiction over the program, voted for the Ensign Amendment and is expected to support a reintroduction of a new voucher program. The voucher defeat came despite furious lobbying and pro-voucher editorials in all three Washington, D.C. papers as well as a surprise endorsement from D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty, a Democrat, who broke with Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, a long-time foe of vouchers.

The fact that voucher programs affect a relative handful of students is a factor in national opposition to them, argued Walt Gardner in the *Christian Science Monitor* (March 16): “That’s why vouchers are opposed by many groups. They believe in the right of parents to send their children to any school they want, but they also recognize that not all children will be the beneficiaries of this policy. Instead, they want to improve all neighborhood public schools to make vouchers unnecessary, except in rare instances.”

- A long-awaited U.S. Education Department study of D.C. vouchers was released April 3 and showed mixed results. Voucher students were four months ahead of their public school counterparts in reading but there was no difference in math performance. There were no gains among the voucher students who had been in the lowest-performing public schools. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said, “I don’t see vouchers as being the answer.” The Obama administration does not support the continuation of the voucher program, said Duncan, but is in a quandary over the existing students. Duncan said the long-term solution is “dramatically better public schools.” The study was conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences, a research division of the Education Department. The report’s results were seized upon by pro-voucher advocates and by the *Washington Post*, which has become a vociferous defender of vouchers, reversing its long-held opposition.

- President Obama decided on a compromise in budget documents released May 7. He proposed setting aside enough money for students in the D.C. program to continue receiving grants until graduation, but no new students can join the program. Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, who led the fight to end vouchers, said the compromise is “a fair solution, but an honest examination of the program’s overall effectiveness is still necessary.” Congress may choose to reauthorize the entire program, end it immediately or approve Obama’s plan.

- (See “Arizona Supreme Court Strikes Down Vouchers” on page 1.) ■



Church and State in the Courts

A California law school may refuse to recognize the Christian Legal Society (CLS) as a student group, according to a March 17 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit. The University of California's Hastings College of Law denied CLS official recognition five years ago because the group requires members to sign a statement of faith that prohibits homosexuality. Hastings, located in San Francisco, said the CLS standards violated the college's strict nondiscrimination policies. CLS filed suit in 2004, charging viewpoint discrimination. The 9th Circuit rejected that claim, ruling instead, "The parties stipulate that Hastings imposes an open membership rule on all student groups – all groups must accept all comers as voting members even if those individuals disagree with the mission of the group. The conditions on recognition are therefore viewpoint neutral and reasonable."

The religious group won similar cases against Arizona State University and Southern Illinois University in 2005, but faces another case against the University of Iowa.



In March the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision upholding a ban on the participation by coaches in student-led prayer. The case involved Marcus Borden, a football coach at East Brunswick High School in New Jersey, who led prayers with his players since 1983. In 2005 the school district ordered him to stop. Borden complied but filed suit, claiming his free speech rights were violated. In the 3rd Circuit decision, Judge Michael Fisher concluded, "A reasonable observer would conclude that he is continuing to endorse religion when he bows his head during the pre-meal grace and takes a knee with his team in the locker room while they pray." The Supreme Court obviously agreed when it denied cert.



A federal appeals court cleared the way for victims of sexual abuse by priests to sue the Vatican. The extraordinary ruling, apparently a first for U.S. courts, said the case, *John V. Doe v. Holy See*, could proceed despite the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, which prohibits cases by individuals against sovereign nations. The March decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit said the case could be an exception to the statute. The court upheld a 2006 federal district court ruling in Portland, Oregon, that the Holy See could be sued even though it is considered a sovereign nation. An anonymous Oregon man alleged that he was abused in 1965 by Fr. Andrew Ronan, a now-deceased Irish priest transferred to the U.S. His suit asserts that the Holy See was negligent "in failing to warn of his propensities." A lower court will now decide if the plaintiff can prove that Fr. Ronan was an employee of the Vatican "acting within the scope of his employment."



Religious activities in public schools continue to provoke federal lawsuits. In February parents of children in the Irasburg Village School in Vermont, joined by ACLU, filed suit in federal court accusing the school board of allowing religious discrimination in its seventh grade classroom. The suit charges that teacher Wally Rogers proselytized stu-

dents, purchased evangelical books for students to read and retaliated against students who complained of the religious orientation of his reading program. The suit charged that these actions had been occurring for 15 years with the knowledge of school authorities.

But in Lindenhurst, New York, students charged that school officials refused to give a Bible club permission to meet after school. School officials said the student group had failed to submit the required applications to reserve space. The suit was filed in federal court for the Eastern District of New York, on Long Island. Students were backed by the Arizona-based Alliance Defense Fund.

In Santa Rosa County, Florida, a federal court ruled in January that Pace High School was wrong to encourage a panoply of religious activities on school property. Two Pace High School students, backed by ACLU's Northwest Florida Regional Office, brought suit. Kelli Hernandez, a reporter with the *North West Florida Daily News*, explained, "Additional conditions of the injunction prohibit the school system from promoting or sponsoring prayer during school-sponsored events, including graduation, holding school-sponsored events at religious venues when alternative venues are reasonably available, and permitting school officials to promote their personal religious beliefs and proselytize in class or during school-sponsored events or activities."

Still unresolved is the annual baccalaureate service held at local churches and involving school sponsorship. The court held that teachers could not participate in planning or speaking at the service, as in the past, but could attend. A worship event for graduating seniors is still being planned for May 29 at Pace Assembly Ministries, a Pentecostal church in the largely Baptist and Pentecostal county, a suburb of Pensacola. ACLU attorney Benjamin Stevens indicated initial support for the church-sponsored and voluntary event. "We believe the religious leaders should be responsible with the parents for educating our youth about religious beliefs and not school officials," said Stevens. The school district is not allowed to be involved financially, either, according to the January ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Casey Rodgers. Rodgers agreed with the main thrust of the suit filed in August 2008 that students at Pace High School "face overt compulsion to adopt the religious beliefs of school officials."

These constant conflicts over religion in schools seem inevitable. K. Hollyn Hollman, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, observed in the March 14 *Nashville Tennessean*: "Religious freedom is the crown jewel of the Constitution and public schools play an important role in upholding the Constitution's ban on establishment of religion, while protecting the free speech and free exercise rights of students. ... There is no doubt that cases concerning religion in the public schools turn on precise facts and the balance of competing principles."



Officials at Louisiana's maximum security Angola Penitentiary were charged with denying Catholic and Muslim inmates access to worship services and religious materials in a suit filed in February in a Baton Rouge federal court. Louisiana's ACLU brought suit on behalf of two inmates but praised prison officials for agreeing to remove an overt religious reference from a monument outside prison gates.

In a related case, an evangelical organization filed suit on February 13 in U.S. District Court in Muskogee, claiming the Oklahoma Depart-

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Church and State in the Courts, *continued from p. 9*

ment of Corrections with refusal to allow inmates access to religious materials. The suit, filed by Wingspread Christian Ministries, said the actions violated the First and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Oklahoma Religious Freedom Act.



A Christian-only youth ministry lost a federal lawsuit in California on February 6. Every Nation Campus Ministries charged in 2005 that a nondiscrimination policy at San Diego State and Long Beach State Universities violated their religious freedom rights. The colleges maintained that adherence to a strict nondiscrimination policy toward gay and lesbian students required that they withdraw recognition from the Christian student group, which requires all members to accept Christianity and reject homosexuality. District Judge Larry Burns said the schools' policies were intended to regulate conduct, not speech or association. Lawyers for the student group said they would probably appeal the ruling.

Recognized groups receive financial benefits, access to meeting areas and subsidized rentals of meeting facilities. Greg Moran, staff writer for the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, noted, "In order to get recognition, groups must abide by the nondiscrimination policy that says membership cannot be withheld based on race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability and the like." University attorney Susan Westover said, "This ruling keeps the doors open for all student organizations which, in order to gain official recognition, must be inclusive, not discriminatory."



After a series of victories in Virginia, breakaway Episcopal congregations are finding some courts unsympathetic to their view that departing congregations have a legal right to take their property with them. A Colorado judge ruled March 24 that a seceding parish in Colorado Springs must return its church building to the diocese. District Court Judge Larry Schwartz found that Grace and St. Stephen's church property is legally held in trust for the Colorado Diocese and does not belong to the parishioners who voted to sever ties with the national church.

Judge Schwartz said, "While freedom of religion recognizes the right of any faction within a church to leave that church whenever they

choose, the trust that has been created through past generations of members of Grace Church and St. Stephen's prohibits the departing parish members from taking the property with them."

The church, a historic Gothic structure, is valued at \$17 million. When the rector and a majority of church members voted two years ago to join the conservative Convocation of Anglicans in North America, they refused to leave the property, continuing to worship there under a new denominational name. The Colorado court joins the California Supreme Court in its ruling that dissidents cannot seize the assets of a building that belongs to the diocese.

Nearly 500 members who refused to secede have been worshiping in a nearby parish, but will probably return to Grace-St. Stephens. The dissidents had argued that the church was a nonprofit corporation under Colorado law, but Judge Schwartz rejected their claim.

In California, Judge Adolfo Corona of Fresno Superior Court issued a preliminary opinion on May 4, likely to be followed by a summary judgment, supporting the Episcopal Church against the claims of the breakaway Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin. Judge Corona ruled: "A hierarchical church is one in which individual churches are organized as a body with other churches having similar faith and doctrine, and with a common ruling convocation of ecclesiastical head vested with ultimate ecclesiastical authority over the individual congregations and members of the entire organized church. In a hierarchical church, an individual local congregation that affiliates with the national church body becomes a member of a much larger and more important religious organization, under its government and control, and bound by its orders and judgments." The entire diocese broke with the national church and wants to retain all of the existing properties and assets.

Virginia Episcopalians asked the Virginia Supreme Court in April to overturn a local court decision awarding property worth \$30 to \$40 million to a breakaway group called the Anglican District of Virginia. Fairfax Circuit Judge Randy Bellows has repeatedly ruled in favor of congregations that have broken with the national Episcopal Church and its Virginia dioceses and want to keep the properties long invested with the national church. "Our ultimate goal is to return faithful Episcopalians to their church homes and to restore religious liberty in the commonwealth of Virginia," said Henry Burt, secretary of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia.

Several other denominations and two other Episcopal dioceses in Virginia filed briefs in support of the Diocese of Virginia. The Virginia Supreme Court has not decided whether to hear the appeal.



A Texas law that requires a daily moment of silence in public schools was upheld by a federal appeals court. The March 16 decision by a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held the 2003 Texas law constitutional because it allows the silence to be used for any activity, not an expressly religious one. A Dallas couple, David and Shannon Croft sued on behalf of their three children who are enrolled in a suburban Dallas school district. The Texas law sets aside one minute for children to "reflect, pray, meditate or engage in any other silent activities."



The Arizona Court of Appeals upheld a state corporate income tax credit designed to help students attend private schools. The two-to-one ruling said the law was constitutional because it did not violate state or federal provisions dealing with religion and education and served a valid nonreligious educational purpose without directly aiding religion. The

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Count of Appeals decision upheld a 2007 ruling by a lower court. In 1999 the Arizona Supreme Court upheld a similar income tax credit for donations by individuals to pay private school tuition grants.



A school district in St. Johns County, Florida, violated the First Amendment rights of two third-graders by forcing them to attend an assembly that included a “proselytizing” and “sectarian” song. At issue was the song “In God We Still Trust” released by the country music group Diamond Rio and performed by students at the Webster School. The school and two teachers denied that they had forced the students to sing the song or be eliminated from the recital. On April 22 U.S. District Judge Harvey E. Schlesinger ruled that “In God We Still Trust” is a “song overtly espousing a specific religious viewpoint and attacking those who do not share in the same belief.” The judge added that third graders are “more easily influenced by their teachers” and “extremely sensitive to signs of disapproval and disappointment from the same teachers and their classmates.” The teachers, the judge concluded, “ostracized the objecting students from their classmates and effectively penalized them for exercising their constitutional right to object.”



A creationist group that seeks to train future science teachers filed suit in federal court in Dallas in April, claiming that a Texas agency violated their civil rights. The Institute for Creation Research was denied a request to offer a master’s degree program in science education by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The higher education agency rejected the degree program on academic grounds. THECB commissioner Raymund Paredes said the institute’s proposed program could not prepare future instructors adequately because of their adherence to creation science and a young earth theory. The Institute calls itself “the only graduate school which specializes in creationism-informed science education.”



A public high school history teacher who called creationism “religious, superstitious nonsense” was found to have violated the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause in a May 1 decision by a federal court in Santa Ana, California. Christian student Chad Farnan filed suit in 2007 alleging that teacher James Corbett made repeated comments in class that were hostile to conservative Christian students and made them uncomfortable. Judge James Seina said he tried to balance free speech and religious rights. “The court’s ruling today reflects the constitutionally permissible need for expansive discussion even if a given topic may be offensive to a particular religion. The decision also reflects that there are boundaries.... The ruling today protects Farnan, but also protects teachers like Corbett in carrying out their teaching duties.” Corbett remains at Capistrano Valley High School. The student, backed by Advocates for Faith and Freedom, a conservative legal group, had cited 20 instances of anti-religious comments in Corbett’s classroom, but the judge dismissed 19 of them. The Capistrano Unified School District, which paid for Corbett’s attorney, was found not liable for his classroom conduct. ■

Editorial

National Day of Prayer: A New Direction

President Barack Obama departed from another George Bush tradition this year by deciding against holding a National Day of Prayer service in the East Room of the White House. Bush, surrounded by evangelical leaders, routinely observed the first Thursday in May with lavish and highly-publicized ceremonies.

Obama decided this was not appropriate for a pluralistic society. His proclamation also changed the tone, reminding U.S. citizens that “we continue to live in a Nation where people of all faiths can worship or not worship according to the dictates of their conscience.” Obama reminded Americans that religious observances should be linked to charitable actions and that all religions share common bonds and values. He said: “Let us also use this day to come together in a moment of peace and goodwill. Our world grows smaller by the day, and our varied beliefs can bring us together to feed the hungry and comfort the afflicted; to make peace where there is strife; and to lift up those who have fallen on hard times. As we observe this day of prayer, we remember the one law that binds all great religions together: the Golden Rule, and its call to love one another; to understand one another; and to treat with dignity and respect those with whom we share a brief moment on this Earth.”

This is a welcome change. Our colleague and friend J. Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, wrote in the “On Faith” column for *Newsweek*: “I have long contended that Congress’ official designation and the President’s predictable proclamation of a National Day of Prayer is misguided. It is not government’s job to tell the American people what, where or when to pray.”

As might be expected, the Religious Right castigated the president. James Dobson said Obama “missed an opportunity to honor America’s Christian heritage” by not observing the day at the White House. This is precisely what the president should not do. Honoring America’s heritage of religious liberty and diversity is appropriate. Singling out one religious tradition is not.

Unfortunately, a Christians-only approach still tends to dominate the National Day of Prayer at other venues. The Capitol Hill ceremony included evangelical football players and Dick Eastman of “Every Home for Christ,” a parachurch group. A separate National Catholic Prayer Breakfast met for the fifth straight year, with mostly Republican politicians and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia as the featured speakers.

In the Tennessee capital, only Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Pentecostals were allowed to participate. “This is not an interfaith event. This is a Christian event,” co-sponsor Charles McGowan told the *Nashville Tennessean*. In North Carolina’s capital only Christians were invited. “This is not a multifaith gathering,” organizer Don Rayno informed the *Raleigh News Observer*.

This hijacking of the National Day of Prayer by political and religious conservatives shows the ever-present danger of mixing church and state. President Obama hit the right notes in his actions, though many of us would be happy if the day, which dates back to 1952, could be completely separated from quasi-governmental sponsorship or encouragement. Americans are quite capable of deciding for themselves when or if they wish to pray. ■

Updates

The Texas Evolution Vote: A Draw

The Texas State Board of Education narrowly voted to remove two provisions from its science standards that raised questions about key principles in evolution but approved several compromise amendments that may still be used to undermine the teaching of evolution. The contentious votes, often by eight to seven margins, occurred on March 25-27 and seemed to please no one.

National Center for Science Education (NCSE) deputy director Glenn Branch commented, "At its March 25-27, 2009, meeting, the Texas state board of education voted to adopt a flawed set of state science standards, which will dictate what is taught in science classes in elementary and secondary schools, as well as provide the material for state tests and textbooks, for the next decade. Although creationists on the board were unsuccessful in inserting the controversial 'strengths and weaknesses' language from the old set of standards, they proposed a flurry of synonyms—such as 'sufficiency or insufficiency' and 'supportive and not supportive'—and eventually prevailed with a requirement that students examine 'all sides of scientific evidence.' Additionally, the board voted to add or amend various standards in a way that encourages the presentation of creationist claims about the complexity of the cell, the completeness of the fossil record, and the age of the universe."

NCSE executive director Eugenie C. Scott was even more blunt, "The final vote was a triumph of ideology and politics over science."

Texas Freedom Network president Kathy Miller added, "The word 'weaknesses' no longer appears in the science standards. But the document still has plenty of potential footholds for creationist attacks on evolution to make their way into Texas classrooms. Through a series of contradictory and convoluted amendments, the board crafted a road map that creationists will use to pressure publishers into putting phony arguments attacking established science into textbooks."

The New York Times was a bit more sanguine in a March 31 editorial that concluded, "This was not a straightforward battle over whether to include creationism or its close cousin, intelligent design, in the science curriculum. That battle has been lost by Darwin's opponents in the courts, the schools and most political arenas. Rather, this was a struggle to insert into the state science standards various phrases and code words that may seem innocuous or meaningless at first glance but could open the door to doubts about evolution. In the most ballyhooed vote, those like us who support the teaching of sound science can claim a narrow victory."

Religious Right Link Costs GOP Votes

While it is difficult to prove empirically, the Republican Party's close links to the Religious Right have likely cost it votes, particularly in the Northeast, the moderate suburbs of the Midwest and the Upper Northwest, where middle-of-the-road Republicans were once influential. These areas, strongholds also of mainline Protestantism, upscale moderate Catholicism, and the religiously unaffiliated, are far less Republican than at any time in recent history.

Pollster John Zogby adds to this conversation by warning that GOP ties to the Religious Right are alienating voters. Writing in his weekly *Forbes.com* column, Zogby argues, "As we look today at where the GOP stands, it is obvious that the party's tight alliance with the Christian right is not helping it. Ongoing trends and recent elections

make that clear, as does a recent *New York Times*/CBS poll that found just 31% of respondents said they had a favorable view of the Republican Party, the lowest figure in 25 years....Our Zogby polling and that of others finds growing concern among young Evangelicals about global warming and poverty, issues that are the Democrats' home turf. Among all 18- to 29-year olds, our post-election poll found 65% voting for Obama. Republicans are currently losing an entire generation. Despite all of these factors, the national Republican Party remains closely tied to the Christian right and the narrowest issue positions it has represented. Any elected congressional Republican who deviates from the tightest religious orthodoxy on those issues, as well as some conservative economic stands, risks a primary challenge."

If the GOP is to have any future, it must change both its image and posture. Zogby writes, "However, the GOP's odds of pulling that off would be much better if it is seen as something more than the party that represents just one slice of the American pie. Stumping for God, guns and banning gay marriage – what I like to call the God, guns and gonads platform – just won't appeal to young people. However, none of this means that Republicans must turn on a dime against the beliefs of Christian conservatives and others on the right. Instead, Republican voters should allow candidates to hold some different policy positions, and it must involve cooling the rhetoric on divisive issues, including abortion, gay rights and the meaning of patriotism."

Politics, Religion Affect Views On Islam

Opinions about Islam and perceptions of U.S. relations with Muslim nations are heavily influenced by religious views and political affiliations, according to recent polls. A Pew Poll, for example, found that 11% of Americans still think President Obama is a Muslim. But 20% of Republicans and only 7% of Democrats believe he is a Muslim, while 25% of evangelical Protestants persist in believing that myth.

A *Washington Post*-ABC News Poll found that Republicans and evangelicals hold the most unfavorable views toward Islam, while liberal Democrats and the religiously unaffiliated are most sympathetic.

About 60% of Republicans and 40% of Democrats and Independents hold negative attitudes towards Islam. Among conservative Republicans 65% view Islam unfavorably, while 60% of liberal Democrats hold positive views. Among all Americans unfavorable views outnumber favorable ones by 48% to 41%.

Nearly two-thirds of secular Americans say Islam is a peaceful faith, as do 60% of Catholics, 55% of mainline Protestants and 48% of evangelical Protestants. Twice as many Republicans as Democrats say that "mainstream Islam encourages hostility and violence" against non-Muslims.

Democrats and Independents are also far more likely than Republicans to favor attempts to improve U.S. relations with Muslim nations. While 88% of Democrats and 62% of Independents think Obama's efforts in this direction are correct, only 35% of Republicans agree.

Conservatives Cheer IRS Ruling

The Internal Revenue Service ruled in May that ministers do not risk their church's tax-exempt status by advocating "values" during election campaigns. In a letter to the Houston-based Niemoller Foundation (named for a German pastor who opposed Hitler), the IRS said the group did not break the law when it invited evangelical pastors to a series of closed-door conferences that praised Texas Gov. Rick Perry during his 2006 reelection campaign. Clergy still cannot endorse candidates or spend substantial portions of their nonprofit budgets on legislative lobbying but are free to engage in actions, even political ones, that support their "moral values."

The Texas Freedom Network (TFN) filed the complaint, saying that a Niemoller-sponsored event encouraged clergy to mobilize congregational support for Perry and spent \$1.2 million on "Pastor's Policy Briefings" in 2005. TFN spokesperson Don Quinn told the *Dallas Morning News* that the decision will "further embolden wealthy special interests who funnel campaign money through nonprofits that want to drag churches into partisan campaigns."

Republicans applaud the ruling since they will probably be the main beneficiaries. Noted Ralph Hallow in the *Washington Times*, "The long-awaited IRS decision benefits Republicans, since religious conservatives constitute a large and influential bloc in the party's electoral coalition."

Islamic School Revises Textbooks

An Islamic school in Northern Virginia that has close ties to the Saudi government has revised its religious textbooks in response to widespread criticism that they fostered hatred for other religions. The Islamic Saudi Academy, which enrolls 900 students, was criticized by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom last year for passages seeming to uphold *Jihad*, the stoning of adulterers and converts from Islam, and condemning Judaism and Christianity. According to an Associated Press analysis of the new books, many of the offensive passages had been removed or modified. AP reviewed them with assistance from Ali al-Ahmed, director of the Institute for Gulf Affairs, which had urged changes in the schoolbooks. Some passages are still deemed discriminatory, and al-Ahmed said, "It shows they have no intention of real reform." Several Academy graduates have been convicted of terrorist activities.

Air Force Exonerates Religious Video

The Air Force, under fire for years for promoting evangelical Christianity, investigated an e-mail message from a commander in Europe directing personnel under her command to view an "inspirational" video from a conservative Catholic website. The commander, Colonel Kimberly Toney, leader of the 501st Combat Support Wing in Europe, urged thousands of air personnel to watch material found on *4marks.com*. The website also contained attacks on President Obama for his support of abortion rights, calling the President, "a veritable forerunner of the Antichrist."

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation, which monitors religious bias in the armed forces, received 60 complaints from military personnel. Master Sgt. Jeffrey Thompson, a fellow Catholic, led the criticism of Colonel Toney, who later apologized and said she was unaware of the "inappropriate" material also appearing on the group's website. "The Third Air Force Command in Europe has opened a broader investigation into the episode," according to *New York Times* reporter Eric Lichtblau. Mikey Weinstein, director of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, told Lichtblau: "There's a pervasive pattern of constitutional abuse when you have a wing commander who sends out a direct, proselytizing e-mail with a link to a Web site that slanders the president of the United States."

On April 2 the Armed Forces daily newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, reported that Toney's actions were judged inadvertent. Therefore, she was not reprimanded or demoted. "After a thorough consideration of the facts, the Third Air Force has concluded Colonel Toney acted inadvertently and unintentionally and did not willfully violate Air Force policy or (Equal Employment Opportunity) guidelines," said Lt. Col. Dave Honchul, 3rd Air Force's director of public affairs.

ARL Author and Friends



Dannel McCollum (right) author of *The Lord Was Not on Trial*, and former three-term mayor of Champaign, Illinois, shown here with actor Hal Holbrooke, Rev. Betty G. (Mrs. James) McCollum, and Dr. James T. McCollum, principal in the 1948 Supreme Court *McCollum* case, and member of the ARL Advisory Board. Holbrooke was in Champaign for a bicentennial Lincolnfest.

Religious Right Suffers Two Defeats

A Virginia state senate committee rejected a bill that would have allowed sectarian or denominational prayers by state police chaplains at public events. (See VOR, Issue 106, p.13). The bill had passed the Virginia House but was defeated on a voice vote on February 23. Republicans supported the measure, some said, as a way to curry favor with the Religious Right and embarrass Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine, who had promised to veto it. The bill would have allowed sectarian prayers at public academy graduations and memorial services. The state police superintendent urged inclusive and generic prayers, after a federal appeals court ruling disallowing sectarian prayers at the Fredericksburg City Council. That action caused the resignation of six of the 17 police chaplains last year.

In Oklahoma the State Senate Education Committee rejected a Republican-sponsored bill that would have mandated classroom discussion of alternative theories to evolution and would have encouraged religious viewpoint expression in science classes. The vote was seven to six. (See VOR Issue 106, p. 12).

Arkansas Reconsiders Ban on Atheists

A newly-elected legislator, Richard Carroll, filed a resolution in February to remove Arkansas's 1874 ban on atheists holding public office or testifying as a witness in court. Article 19, Section 1, of the Arkansas Constitution states: "No person who denies the being of a God shall hold any office in the civil departments of this State, nor be competent to testify as a witness in any court."

That provision is almost certainly unconstitutional, since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 1961 case, *Torcaso v. Watkins*, that such religious tests are unconstitutional. At that time the High Court unanimously held, "We repeat and again reaffirm that neither a State nor the

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Federal Government can constitutionally force a person to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion.”

Carroll, incidentally, is the highest-ranking elected official of the Green Party and is a Catholic. Several other states, including Texas and Tennessee, retain these outmoded religious tests in their constitutions, partly at least because general constitutional revisions are rare occurrences.

One Religious Right group, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, sent a letter to the Arkansas legislature endorsing the change. “While it is unlikely that these laws will ever be enforced, removing them is more than symbolic. It signals to U.S. citizens and to the rest of the world, that the freedom and sanctity of conscience—including the right to believe there is no God at all—is a fundamental right for all people.”

Texas Sex Education Deemed a Failure

Despite spending \$18 million in federal funds on abstinence-only education, Texas public schools have done a poor job in educating students about sexuality, according to a report from the Texas Freedom Network (TFN) Education Fund. Texas has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country.

The report charges: “More than 96 percent of school districts – with more than 3.7 million students – fail to teach any medically accurate information on responsible pregnancy and disease prevention.” Furthermore, “Sexuality education materials used in Texas schools regularly contain factual errors and perpetuate lies and distortions about condoms and STDs.” Finally, “Research shows that students enrolled in Texas secondary schools are likely to hear a variety of exaggerated, distorted and even outright false information about the consequences of sexual behavior.”

TFN also found: “Instruction on human sexuality in Texas often promotes stereotypes and biases based on gender and sexual orientation,” and “Some Texas classrooms mix religious instruction and Bible study into sexuality education programs.” The religious elements, found in about 10% of secondary school districts, are clearly unconstitutional and could trigger First Amendment Establishment lawsuits.

Antievolution Bills Lose in Five States

A committee of the Iowa House of Representatives rejected a so-called Evolution Academic Freedom Act on March 13. The bill claimed it would protect scientific integrity and objectivity and would protect creationist teachers and students from being “penalized for subscribing to a particular position or view regarding biological or chemical evolution.” The Iowa State Education Association and two hundred faculty members from Iowa universities urged the legislature to reject House File 183, saying, “It is misleading to claim that there is any controversy or dissent within the vast majority of the scientific community regarding the scientific validity of evolutionary theory.”

New Mexico Senate Bill 433 died in committee as the legislature adjourned on March 21. The bill would have required schools to allow teachers to inform students “about relevant scientific information regarding either the scientific strengths or scientific weaknesses pertaining to biological evolution or chemical evolution.” It was opposed by teachers and legal specialists. Criticism of the proposal came from the state’s Public Education Department, the Higher Education Department, and the Office of Education Accountability.

Florida antievolution bills SB2396 and HB1483 apparently died in committee before the close of the regular legislative session on May 1.

The proposals had been denounced by Florida Citizens for Science and many educators.

Similar bills died in committee in Alabama and Missouri. Only Louisiana has adopted legislation promoted by the Discovery Institute, the institutional center for intelligent design creationism.

Clergy Sex Abuse Claims Increase

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a report in March showing a 16% increase in allegations of clergy sex abuse between 2007 and 2008. There were 803 allegations filed by 706 victims against 518 clergy members, 83% of whom are dead or defrocked. The church spent \$436 million in legal settlements, attorney fees and counseling costs. Only 13 of the 803 cases involved abuse that occurred in 2008. The overall increase was fueled largely by a 93% increase in reported abuse from members of religious orders, rather than parish or diocesan clergy.

Critics Denounce Prison Library Regulations

ACLU and a coalition of religious organizations have protested a rule proposed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons that allows officials to ban certain religious materials from prison chapel libraries. In January the Bureau of Prisons said it would ban books that “could incite, promote, or otherwise suggest the commission of violence or criminal activity.” The vagueness of that provision and the role of government in censoring books are central to the opposition. A letter signed by leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the American Jewish Congress, Muslim Advocates, the United Methodist Church, Seventh-day Adventists and others was submitted to the Bureau of Prisons general counsel in March.

“Distributing and reading religious material is as protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as worshipping in churches or preaching from the pulpits. It is not the role of the government to dictate what is religiously acceptable,” said David Shapiro, staff attorney for ACLU’s National Prison Project.

Two years ago a similar attempt at censorship of religious materials in prisons prompted Congress to pass the Second Chance Act, which forbade prison officials from restricting prisoner access to all religious materials except those that could provoke criminal behavior.

The conservative Alliance Defense Fund joined the coalition of its erstwhile opponent, ACLU.

North Dakota Rejects Personhood Bill

By a 29 to 16 vote, the North Dakota Senate rejected a bill that would have defined embryos as persons. The April 3 vote reversed a House vote in February that had approved the bill. Opponents argued that contraception, stem cell research and in-vitro fertilization would be threatened under the law. The vagueness of the proposal also suggested that miscarriages could be prosecuted. The Montana legislature and the Colorado electorate have rejected similar proposals backed by a national group called Personhood USA. However, North Dakota lawmakers approved two bills that critics say will restrict access to abortion.

Bible Classes Draw Limited Audience

Only 28 of Georgia’s 180 school districts have offered courses on the Bible since the legislature passed a law two years ago allowing Bible

classes. Georgia was the first state to allow (or encourage) elective courses on the Bible. Texas and Tennessee followed Georgia's lead but Alabama and Missouri rejected efforts to incorporate Bible study in the curriculum. According to AP writer Dorie Turner, many Georgia districts "have shied from offering the controversial courses because of fear of lawsuits and a lack of interest among students." The declining interest was noted at South Effingham High School near Savannah, where attendance at a "Literature and History of the New Testament" course declined from 62 last year to 20 during the year ending in June 2009.

Prayers Remain at Maryland Commencement

University of Maryland President C.D. Mote Jr. overruled the school's senate and decided to retain an invocation at the annual commencement ceremony in May. The senate, which includes faculty, students and staff, had voted 42 to 14 to remove the prayer, usually delivered by Christian clergy, because many graduates and their families "felt excluded or marginalized," according to Senate Chair Kenneth Holum. President Mote concluded, however, that: "For many people, a prayer of gratitude and a moment of reflection are an important part of our commencement tradition."

Hitchens Warns Evangelicals

Christopher Hitchens, writing in *Newsweek* April 6, said the recent battle over science teaching standards in Texas "can be seen as the last stand of Protestant evangelicals." As Hitchens pointed out, the battle extends well beyond Texas because of that state's enormous impact on the school textbook publishing industry. "The Lone Star State commands such a big share of the American textbook market that many publishers adapt to the standards that it sets, and sell the resulting books to non-Texans as well."

Hitchens warns evangelicals that there are unintended consequences even from political victories. "The Texas anti-Darwin stalwarts also might want to beware of what they wish for. The last times that evangelical Protestantism won cultural/political victories – by banning the sale of alcohol, prohibiting the teaching of evolution and restricting immigration from Catholic countries – the triumphs all turned out to be Pyrrhic. There are some successes that are simply not survivable."

Faith-Based Funding, Maryland Style

The Maryland legislature's textbook/technology program for "nonpublic" (mostly faith-based) schools is receiving less funding than in recent years. The 2010 budget allocation is \$2.4 million compared to \$3.6 million in 2009 and \$6 million in 2001. The 10-year total is \$37.75 million in "nonreligious textbooks and computer hardware and software" for 370 participating schools. (However, at the last minute Gov. Martin O'Malley increased funding by \$2 million in a supplemental budget, raising the funding to \$4.4 million for 2010, and making the ten-year total \$39.75 million.)

The legislature also included several faith-based schools and community centers in its 2009 Bond Bill Funding. The Senate and House of Delegates funded \$15 million in such projects as food banks, science centers, museums, veterans' memorials and shelters. Included was \$970,000, or 6.5% of the total, for faith-based projects. Roman Catholic groups received \$475,000 compared to \$320,000 for Jewish centers and \$175,000 for Protestant ones.

Legislators refused to approve a bill that would have given a tax credit to businesses that donate to scholarship programs in nonpublic schools.

International Updates

Berlin: Voters in the German capital rejected a proposal to establish religion classes in local schools. The April 26 vote was 365,908 to 344,592 against the plan. German Chancellor Angela Merkel endorsed the religion-in-schools idea, while Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit vigorously opposed it. At present most German states require religious classes in schools, usually divided into Catholic or Protestant courses. Berlin schools offer an ethics course. Supporters of the religion lessons proposed religion classes, divided into Catholic, Protestant or Muslim, in addition to the inter-religious ethics course, but voters apparently feared opening the schools to greater religious divisiveness.

Geneva: A controversial resolution denouncing "defamation of religion" was approved by the U.N. Human Rights Council on March 26 by a vote of 23-11, with 13 nations abstaining. The resolution was proposed by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which represents 56 Muslim nations. The resolution states, "Defamation of religion is a serious affront to human dignity leading to a restriction on the freedom of their adherents and incitement to religious violence. Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism." It calls on governments to protect religious sites, shrines and symbols and urges states "to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and beliefs."

Critics, however, said the resolution could be used to silence human rights activists and religious dissenters and could restrict freedom of speech and religion for adherents of minority religions. Canada's representative said, "It is individuals who have rights, not religions. Canada believes that to extend (the notion of) defamation beyond its proper scope would jeopardize the fundamental right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of expression on religious subjects." European Union members also opposed the measure. Germany's representative on the council argued, "The European Union believes

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ARL In Action

• ARL president Edd Doerr has been named to the National Advisory Board for the Center of Inquiry's Office of Public Policy. The group lobbies primarily for church-state separation and women's rights. The Center describes itself as "a grassroots organization that encourages policy-making based on evidence and reason."

• Al Menendez's article on John Newton, an 18th century opponent of the slave trade in England and a supporter of religious freedom, appeared in *Liberty* magazine's January-February 2009 issue.

• In April ARL joined the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations in a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, urging Pentagon reconsideration of a policy that bars Sikh Americans from serving in the Armed Forces. Since 1981 members of the Sikh faith have been unable to serve in the U.S. Army because of a regulation disallowing religious headwear. (Some Sikhs have served but must disavow a tenet of their religious faith, namely the wearing of turbans and unshorn hair and beards.) Religious accommodation, under the Free Exercise of Religion Act, seems justified in this case since there is no health or security breach involved. The government should be neutral toward all religions, in military as well as civilian life, unless there is a compelling reason otherwise.

that a broader, more balanced and thoroughly rights-based text would be best suited to address the issues underlying this draft resolution.”

More than 200 organizations, including the World Jewish Congress, the American Islamic Congress and the International Humanist and Ethical Union, urged rejection of the resolution. These groups argued that “defamation of religion” has “no validity in international law because only individuals, and not concepts or beliefs, can be defamed,” according to Terry Sanderson, vice president of the National Secular Society of the United Kingdom.

Havana: The Cuban government refused to issue visas to a delegation of U.S. religious freedom analysts on the eve of their planned April 14-16 fact-finding visit to the western hemisphere’s only Communist nation. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) had planned to visit Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Santería leaders and sites. Spokespersons for USCIRF, an independent congressionally-mandated panel, had “received reports that there are improvements in some sectors in Cuba,” said USCIRF chair Felice Gaer. In recent years USCIRF has placed Cuba on its annual “watch list” of countries where religious liberty is severely restricted. The visa refusal came during the same week that President Barack Obama lifted several travel and financial restrictions on Cuban Americans.

Kyrgyzstan: This predominantly Muslim nation in Central Asia has banned the wearing of headscarves by children in schools. The March 3 decision by the Education Ministry was clearly an attempt to limit religious influences in public schools. “We are a secular state,” Damira Kudaibergenova told Reuters. The government is also concerned that some students are skipping Friday afternoon classes to attend religious services.

London: Four out of five British citizens reject creationism, according to a survey by the think tank Theos. The survey of 2,060 across the United Kingdom found only 17% believed in either creationism or intelligent design. In Northern Ireland, however, the figure was 41%, due to the large number of evangelical Protestants in the once-embattled province. The lowest support came in eastern England. Researchers were somewhat surprised that 20% of Londoners were creationists. “That may well be due to the growth of Pentecostal churches in London, which are growing at an extraordinary rate,” said Paul

Woolley, director of Theos.

Olinda and Recife, Brazil: Outrage and furor accompanied Archbishop José Cardoso Sobrinho’s excommunication of doctors who performed an abortion on a nine-year-old rape victim. The girl’s mother was also excommunicated. The girl was 15 weeks pregnant with twins after being allegedly raped by her stepfather. Doctors feared carrying the pregnancy to term could have resulted in her death. Vatican Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, head of the Congregation for Bishops, defended the harsh punishment. But dissent occurred even within Vatican walls when Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, criticized the excommunication decree and said doctors had a right to make difficult moral law decisions when “life was in serious danger because of the pregnancy in progress.” Fisichella, the Vatican’s top bioethics official, argued these points in the lead article in the March 15 issue of *L’Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State, apparently approved the article, which said the local Brazilian archbishop should have acted “pastorally” instead of “rushing to judgment.” Brazil’s president, Lula da Silva, calling himself “a Christian and a Catholic,” also criticized the excommunication decree.

United Nations: Another clash involving gay rights and religion is expected when a UN declaration calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality comes up for a vote. The U.S. announced on March 17 that it would sign the declaration, another Obama administration reversal of the Bush administration, which refused to support the nonbinding document last December. The U.S. was the only western nation refusing to support a declaration signed by 66 of the 192 U.N. members, including all 27 European Union members in addition to Canada, Japan, Australia and Mexico. The *Washington Post* reported on March 18: “The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because Congress was still being notified of the decision. They said the administration had decided to sign the declaration to demonstrate that the United States supports human rights for all.”

On December 19 more than 50 nations, including members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, opposed the declaration. So did the Vatican, a non-voting member. The new document is still likely to force strong opposition. Wrote AP’s Matthew Lee: “But 70 U.N. members outlaw homosexuality, and in several, homosexual acts can be punished by execution.” ■



Books and Culture

The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960, by Shaun A. Casey. Oxford University Press, 2009, 261 pp., \$27.95.

We are now approaching the 50th anniversary of the election of John F. Kennedy, America’s first and still only Catholic president. This new book by an evangelical scholar reopens an examination of “the religious issue,” specifically the prevalence of a virulent anti-Catholicism, that pervaded the campaign, especially at the grass-roots level.

Casey’s retelling of that exciting and historically compelling campaign is admirable. He has dug up some fascinating vignettes of how religious antagonism rose during the last month of the campaign. “Aided and abetted by the Nixon campaign, a spasm of anti-Catholic literature was soaking the country to an extent not seen before or since. The decentralized engines of Protestant bigotry were ramping up for the fall election, and an astonishing array of co-belligerents was plotting Kennedy’s defeat.”

Southern Baptists were prominent in the anti-Kennedy campaign but the Massachusetts Senator was defended by the Baptist Joint Committee and by a courageous newspaper editor, E.S. James of the *Texas Baptist Standard*. “Another conservative Protestant denomination in the South, the Churches of Christ, produced a large volume of anti-Catholic tracts and papered the countryside with them.” The powerful National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) coordinated the anti-Catholic campaign. “The primary focus of the NAE’s work before the election was a massive campaign to distribute anti-Catholic literature to its member denominations. . . . The NAE was narrowcasting its message to a specific segment of American society, not broadcasting it to the general population. It would seem fair to conclude that it might have helped to shore up evangelical opposition to Kennedy.” In summary, “With all of the activities of various conservative Protestant groups, a formidable array of tactics, people, and money were assembled to defeat Kennedy.”

Unlike most previous historians, Casey accuses Richard Nixon of “clandestinely plotting with Protestants” like Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale and “fanning the flames of bigotry in secret” by employing a noted anti-Catholic, former Missouri Congressman O.K. Armstrong, to coordinate the underground religious campaign. “In many ways, Nixon’s religious strategy foreshadowed the rise of the Religious Right. He exploited the oppositional nature of much of evangelical Protestantism’s historical engagement with American public life in a self-aggrandizing fashion. By playing to Protestant fears about a Catholic president, Nixon chose to fan the flames of intolerance in a manner that he could not publicly acknowledge.”

From the vantage point of a half century later, Casey’s observations about the underlying meaning of the Kennedy election and its relevance for today are instructive. While he admires JFK’s explicit endorsement of church-state separation, he says that merely affirming separation today may not be enough because of changes in the way religion interacts with public life. He also sees irony. “The sort of pressure from the church to which Kennedy denied he would be subjected has now become routine.”

His interpretation of Kennedy’s personal Catholicism also challenges conventional wisdom. Far from being a thoroughly secular man, Kennedy “was not a Catholic intellectual, but he was as religiously literate as most Catholic politicians,” and “The impact of his faith may not have been overwhelming, but it was not negligible either.”

Casey concludes that the 1960 election teaches still relevant lessons. “First, the political independence of faith communities is good for both the faith communities and the democratic polity. . . . Formal endorsements of politicians by faith communities are usually misguided. It is much better for faith communities to set out principles and rules of engagement, to provide issue education, to allow public space for debate, and to avoid the overt and covert coercion of voters.”

Secondly, “The complex tale of the election of America’s first and only Catholic president yields much for the country to digest. The background of a growing religious diversity makes the issue of the role of religion in democratic politics all the more pressing. John Kennedy’s trailblazing victory as a member of a religious minority who won a presidential election despite significant opposition from the majority Protestantism of the day should give Americans hope that they may yet again choose a president who helps them to break down some of the many internal barriers that have been erected in the United States.”

The author has uncovered a great deal of new material in university archives, including Kennedy speeches before varied religious groups in the five years preceding his run for the White House. Casey also reveals a now forgotten statement issued by JFK on October 16, 1960: “A frank renunciation by all churches of political power as a means to religious ends would greatly improve the political climate.” Another revelation: Kennedy “feared Protestant clergy” and “distrusted Catholic clergy since they seemed to be willing to undermine Catholic politicians.”

Casey’s first book must be rated a considerable achievement.

—Al Menendez

Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion, by T. Jeremy Gunn. Praeger, 2009, 297 pp., \$49.95

In May President Obama downplayed the National Day of Prayer, an annual event set up by Congress in 1952 and now dominated by fundamentalists like James and Shirley Dobson of Focus on the Family, and in his brilliant May 17 commencement address at Notre Dame University he pointedly appealed to Americans of all persuasions, from conservative Christians to humanists, to work together for the common good.

In *Spiritual Weapons*, Jeremy Gunn, one of the country’s leading

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experts on religious freedom issues (and a new member of ARL’s board of directors), looks at the roots of what he calls “America’s National Religion” (ANR). Unlike what sociologists have called “civil religion,” this ANR can be thought of as having three major elements: “governmental theism,” “military supremacy,” and “capitalism as freedom.”

ANR got under way as the “cold war” developed during the Truman administration and really took off during the Eisenhower years, with the 1952 congressionally mandated National Day of Prayer, the addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 (How did we ever win World Wars I and II against an enemy whose troops had the motto “Gott mit uns” [“God is with us”] on their belt buckles?), the addition of the “In God We Trust” to our paper money in 1955, and the adoption of the same phrase as our second national motto in 1956. Gunn shows how the young evangelist Billy Graham came to epitomize the ANR.

Gunn also shows how government used religion as an “engine for its purposes,” something that constitutional architect Madison denounced in 1785, and how some religious leaders willingly become handmaidens of government. As extended case studies Gunn explores the way in which religion, specifically Catholic Church leadership, and government worked hand in glove during the Eisenhower years to overthrow the elected government of Guatemala and to impose an unpopular, incompetent regime in South Vietnam.

Gunn’s book is too rich in detail for easy summary. Among those important details is the interesting note that at its beginning in the early Twentieth Century Christianity was politically and ideologically neutral, something that the Falwells, Roberstons, Dobsons, Reeds, and others changed radically beginning in the 1970s. And, as much as today’s fundamentalists denounce “atheism,” their economic gurus are two atheists, Milton Friedman, the innovator of the school voucher plan for tax support of faith-based schools, and Friedrich von Hayek. Go figure. It might be said that the ANR movement culminated with the administration of George W. Bush.

Let me join with such experts as David Little, John Witte, and Derek Davis in giving this important book five stars.

—Edd Doerr

Holy Hullabaloo: A Road Trip to the Battlegrounds of the Church/State Wars, by Jay Wexler. Beacon Press, 2009, 288 pp., \$16.00.

Fasten your seat belts as Boston University law professor Jay Wexler takes you for a fun ride through some of the Supreme Court’s important church-state rulings and, literally, to the actual locales where the cases started. He includes the rulings on school vouchers, creationism in science classes, school prayer, and others. The author is a strong church-state separationist. I just wish he had included a chapter on the seemingly endless battles over reproductive choice, surely one of the hottest church-state and religious liberty hullabaloo, and that he had explored Justice Scalia’s controversial decision in the 1990 *Oregon v.*

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Smith case in which the ultraconservative justice based his ruling on a 1940 decision that the Court itself overturned in 1943 (*Gobitis* and *Barnette*). Wexler's book is brisk and entertaining.

Beacon, by the way, is the publishing house that brought us the magisterial 1967 book *Church, State and Freedom* by the dean of church-state experts and ARL adviser, the late Leo Pfeffer.

—Edd Doerr

Practicing Catholic, by James Carroll. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, 385 pp., \$28.00.

Historian and novelist James Carroll tells, in this engaging autobiography, why he remains a progressive Catholic despite serious disagreements with the current policies of the Vatican and its national hierarchies. Carroll was Boston University's Catholic Chaplain from 1969 to 1974 when he resigned the priesthood and became a writer, best known perhaps for *Constantine's Sword*, a study of Christianity's responsibility for anti-Semitism through the centuries.

By the Numbers: Some Election Day Follow-Up

- In 46 states, the candidate who carried the Independent vote carried the state. The exceptions were North Carolina, where a majority of Independents backed McCain but Obama carried the state, and Kansas, Nebraska and Arizona, where Independents backed Obama but McCain prevailed.
- 26% of voters are under age 30 in Utah and Idaho while only 10% are under age 30 in Washington State.
- 22% of voters are over age 65 in Florida compared to 12% in neighboring Georgia.
- 41% of voters are Hispanic in New Mexico compared to 1% in Vermont and Maine.
- 56% of voters are white evangelicals in Arkansas, more than in any other state.
- 70% of white voters in Hawaii supported Obama compared to only 10% in Alabama.
- Obama won a majority of white voters in 19 states.
- 58% of voters are college graduates in Colorado compared to 34% in West Virginia, Mississippi and Idaho.
- In terms of party self-identification, Democrats led Republicans and Independents in 26 states, while Republicans were first in 14 states and Independents in 9 states. (In Rhode Island Democrats and Independents were tied).
- Obama carried six of nine Independent states and one Republican state (Indiana). McCain carried six Democratic states (Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, West Virginia).
- 33% of Democrats in Oklahoma voted for McCain.
- 22% of Republicans in Hawaii supported Obama.
- 67% of Hispanic Protestants voted for Obama, up from John Kerry's 40%, while 72% of Hispanic Catholics supported Obama, up from Kerry's 58%.
- Only 27% of voters said they approved of President Bush's job performance. In not a single state, including Utah, did a majority approve of Bush's record.

Source: National Election Pool exit poll, conducted by a consortium of ABC, CBS, NBC, AP, CNN and Fox.

An unabashed admirer of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, Carroll maintains that reform-minded Catholics will eventually triumph, even though they seem dispirited and outnumbered today. He writes, "Reform is coming not from the collapsing clerical establishment but from the people. ... To be Catholic today is to be in the act of leaving behind the narrow denominationalism of the now finished Reformation." He endorses "the humane and hopeful agenda laid out by Pope John XXIII, which still demands our loyalty."

Carroll is dismissive of the reign of Benedict XVI: "Never has the world needed a rational, energized, and fully reformed Catholic Church more, yet never has the Catholic Church's need for reform been more manifest. From the sexual neurosis that abets a multitude of preventable deaths from AIDS, to the ongoing scandal of a hierarchy that refuses to attend to the deeper sources of abuse of children by Catholic priests, to the antifemale bigotry enshrined in the all-male priesthood, the Catholic Church is doing serious damage." He also rips into "patriarchal clericalism" that has "reached a state of calcified corruption."

Carroll argues that John F. Kennedy represented what most American Catholics believed about church-state relations, and about conscience and reason in religion. "Conscience, not doctrine, had never been more steadfastly affirmed" than during JFK's campaign for president." Kennedy, says Carroll, represented the new and proper thinking about "church authority in tension with the enshrined American respect for individual conscience, of the distinction between public and private morality, of the wall of separation between church and state."

Carroll wryly observes that Kennedy was caught between a rock and a hard place in 1960, opposed by Protestants who disliked all Catholics and by conservative Catholics who thought (correctly) that he would not be subservient to the hierarchy. "Kennedy's religion was an unavoidable issue, and not only for Protestant bigots. Catholic bishops, including Spellman (who would openly support Richard Nixon in 1960), were not at all sure about his detached brand of Catholicism, and soon their suspicions were proven apt. One of the staples of Kennedy's foreign policy speeches, for example, was his standard reference, when discussing problems of underdeveloped nations, to the 'population explosion.' But in 1959, the Catholic bishops, through their organization in Washington, condemned that term as 'a recently coined terror technique phrase'."

Like liberal Catholics everywhere, Carroll is not going anywhere. He maintains that he is just as much a part of "a universal community that transcends space and time" as the present leadership.

This is a richly rewarding book by an author of considerable literary skill who is not loath to express his strongly-held opinions.

—Al Menendez

The Other Preacher in Lynchburg: My Life Across Town from Jerry Falwell, by John Killinger, Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2009, 201 pp., \$24.95.

Jerry Falwell, the late televangelist and front man for the misleadingly named, now happily defunct, Moral Majority, was one of the reasons for the founding of Americans for Religious Liberty. As I write I am looking at a 1980 fundraising letter by Falwell in which he attacks ARL co-founder Edward L. Ericson (author of the 1982 book *American Freedom and the Radical Right*) and People for the American Way founder Norman Lear. Ericson and ARL co-founder Sherwin Wine regarded Falwell and the rest of the strutting religious right as serious threats to religious freedom, church-state separation, religiously neutral government, and rights of conscience.

Like author John Killinger, I too have had encounters with Falwell, on the Hannity and Colmes show and a Washington TV show. After doing a six-hour (sic!) appearance on the Ray Briem show on KABC in Los Angeles, Briem asked if I would return to debate Falwell. I agreed.

After I flew out to L.A. again, however, Falwell failed to show and sent a local minister in his place. I later learned from a TV station in Washington that Falwell only agreed to appear when he was the center of attention. But I digress.

John Killinger, Harvard and Princeton educated author of over sixty books and a former college professor, served as minister of First Presbyterian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, Falwell's home town, from 1980 to 1986. Those six years and a short stint in L.A. gave him, a trained theologian, unique insights into the Falwell phenomenon. Among his observations:

Falwell "more than anybody else, was responsible for forging the religious right into a formidable political bloc in America."

In the early 1970s the "Great Polarizer" and his operations issued \$6.5 million worth of bonds that the S.E.C. charged Falwell's church with "fraud and deceit"; an appellate judge found a "creative way" to save Falwell's church and save creditors from financial harm.

"The religious culture of America was filled with these audacious, narcissistic, self-serving priests of the airwaves, who were forever hawking books and gewgaws and keeping vast teams of employees at work opening people's gifts, recording addresses into donor rolls and sending out SOS's requesting more and more money to keep them from 'going under'."

"The whole, basically anticultural religious movement was spreading like a mucky fungus across American Christianity."

Falwell joined the Southern Baptist Convention, "as I understand it, because he wanted to get the thousand dollars the Southern Baptist Convention was awarding to its colleges, universities, and seminaries for each of the students enrolled in their institutions."

"He [Falwell] was Karl Rove before there was a Karl Rove."

Killinger notes that he, a Lynchburg Episcopal minister, and two local professors, all of whom had been critical of Falwell, were subjected to IRS audits for three years during the Reagan administration, though the author cannot be certain that Falwell was behind the audits. Interestingly, ARL co-founder and religious right critic Ed Ericson was also audited around the same time. Coincidence?

Falwell's "church and college didn't pay their bills promptly. Sometimes they defaulted on them altogether."

"I knew [Falwell] was a street fighter, but even some street fighters have ethical standards. Jerry Falwell, I decided, didn't."

Killinger's book is not only a good read but presents a wealth of background on an important religio-political operator and bully.

—Edd Doerr

The American Elections of 2008, edited by Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier. Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers, 2009, 194 pp., \$19.95 paperback.

Eleven political scientists and journalists contributed essays to this anthology, covering the media, campaign finance, public opinion surveys, and the general election campaign. Furman University's James L. Guth stands out with his insightful analysis of the religion factor. He concludes, "Obama also made inroads into critical groups that supported Bush in 2004. He won the always pivotal Catholic vote, primarily by improving on the usual Democratic majorities among Latino and less observant white Catholics and breaking even with McCain among the more traditionalist regular Mass attendees among whites. Just as important, Obama returned Latino Protestants to the Democratic fold, held or increased the Democratic margin among almost all other religious minorities, including Jews, and won even more secular voters. In most cases, he benefited from increased turnout in these groups, especially among his fellow African American Protestants, where Obama's support verged on unanimity."

Guth places the 2008 results in historical perspective: "There was

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certainly a higher vote for the Democratic candidate in many religious communities. And yet, the continuity of religious voting is just as impressive: Evangelicals remained (perhaps even more entrenched) as the religious core of the reduced GOP and the Democrats dominated among ethnoreligious minorities, much as they have throughout history." He also cautions against over-interpreting results as illustrative of a permanent change. "The 2008 election produced a majority Democratic religious coalition, but President Obama will have to consolidate these gains by accommodating both the party's usual religious constituents and the new ones."

Did the 2008 election constitute a realignment toward the Democrats or the beginning of one? It is certainly too early to tell, since only the success or failure of Obama administration policies can produce a long-range change. Florida International University political scientist Nicol Rae observes, "The historical and symbolic significance aside, Obama's election does not necessarily mean that deep change in the political system and the direction of public policy will follow, although the potential for such change does seem to be present." Rae also warns that "the partisan cleavage between religious and more secular voters, while temporarily subsumed by economic issues in the 2008 campaign, has by no means evaporated." Cultural issues still have "a continuing potential to generate bitter partisan conflict in American politics."

—Al Menendez

Write These Laws on Your Children: Inside the World of Conservative Christian Homeschooling, by Robert Kunzman, Beacon Press, 2009, 256 pp., \$27.95.

Kathryn Joyce's *Quiverfull*, reviewed in ARL journal No. 106, showed how the fundamentalist patriarchy movement places high importance on homeschooling. Al Menendez' 1996 book *Homeschooling: The Facts*, published by ARL, explored this phenomenon in detail. *Write These Laws on Your Children*, by a professor at my alma mater, Indiana University School of Education, updates us on homeschooling with, among other things, in-depth studies of six homeschooling conservative Christian families.

While there are no precise figures on the number of children being homeschooled, the number clearly grew from insignificance in the mid-1970s to somewhere around two million today. Homeschooling parents are generally reticent about discussing the subject with "outsiders" or public school officials. What is clear is that the majority are fundamentalists of one sort or another and are generally hostile to public education. In the rather paranoid view of many of these parents public schools are "Pharaoh's schools" or hotbeds of "socialism" or "secular humanism."

Among Kunzman's useful insights is this: To an unappreciated extent, homeschooling "began to gain traction" with the fadeout in the 1980s of the smaller "white Christian academies" that sprang up in response to public school desegregation.

Professional educators generally frown on homeschooling because far too many homeschooling parents lack the training to be proficient teachers, especially as subject matter grows more difficult as children grow older, and because homeschooled children are too often isolated from their peers and from the diverse society in which they will spend

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Books and Culture, *continued from page 19*

most of their lives.

Kunzman brings up a topic to which little attention has been paid for many years, “dual enrollment,” sometimes called “shared time.” In view of the difficulty homeschoolers have with some subjects at the secondary level such as chemistry, physics, foreign languages, etc., some homeschoolers enroll their children part time in public high schools. At one level this makes sense. However, different states and school systems have widely varying rules regarding part time students involving money and scheduling. In general, placing homeschooling kids part time in public schools can often be a major headache, especially if a large and varied number of students are involved. It could also be said that “dual enrollment” amounts to public schools enabling homeschooling, which most professional educators regard as deleterious to children.

Before homeschooling really got under way some communities got into “dual enrollment.” A faith-based school could farm out its students part or half time to public schools for those subjects with little or no religious content and expensive to teach. The private school could then double its enrollment in religion-sensitive subjects like history, biology, and literature at no extra cost, thus obtaining tax-paid assistance with religious education. As it happens, “dual enrollment” was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1985 in *Grand Rapids v. Ball*. Whether “dual enrollment” for homeschoolers will be challenged is anyone’s guess.

Kunzman’s book is an important look at an increasingly important educational and possibly church-state problem area.

—Edd Doerr

Losing My Religion: How I Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in America – and Found Unexpected Peace, by William Lobdell. Collins, 2009, 291 pp., \$25.99.

A riveting memoir by the former religion editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, *Losing My Religion* is primarily an account of the author’s personal loss of religious faith after converting to evangelical Christianity as a young man. Lobdell moved from evangelicalism to a serious flirtation with Catholicism and was under instruction to become a Catholic when his paper assigned him the story of the clergy sexual abuse scandals in the Los Angeles archdiocese. His subsequent investigative journalism contributed to his renunciation of Christianity and his disillusionment with institutional religion of all kinds.

An honest look at religious institutions in modern America, it has been praised by both the “new atheists” and evangelicals for its unflinching portrait of the varieties of religious practice today. One value of the book is the author’s inside view of how news about religion is seen and reported by secular journalism.

—Al Menendez

Blind Spot: When Journalists Don’t Get Religion, edited by Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Roberta Green Ahmanson. Oxford University Press, 2009, 220 pp., paper, \$19.95.

Religious freedom specialist Paul Marshall sets the tone for this book with the opening paragraph. “This book is about media coverage of major news stories in which religion is a major component and how journalists often miss, or misunderstand, these stories because they do not take religion seriously, or misunderstand religion when they do take it seriously.” This theme underlies all nine essays, showing how the religious factor in world affairs, elections and popular culture is often missed by reporters, thereby depriving readers of vital information.

Timothy Shah and Monica Taft argue that “religion is a robust global force, increasingly vibrant, assertive and politicized the world over.” They add, “The end result of religion’s deepening and spreading politicization is that it has become an important factor in almost every

New from ARL

The Lord Was Not on Trial **The Inside Story of the Supreme Court’s Precedent-Setting *McCollum* Ruling**

by Dannel McCollum

“One of the striking differences between public schools in the United States and most European countries is that here children’s religious education is left in the hands of parents and religious communities—not the public schools. The 1948 McCollum decision was a major step towards helping to ensure that public schools are not in the business of deciding which religious beliefs should be favored in public schools.”

—T. Jeremy Gunn, Director, ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief

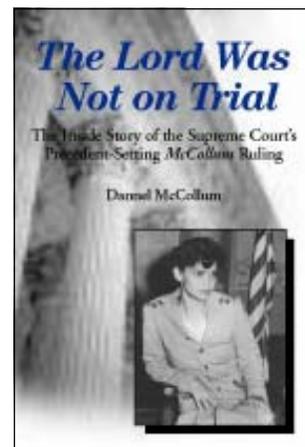
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—Edd Doerr, President, Americans for Religious Liberty

Dannel McCollum is the former three-term mayor of Champaign, Illinois and a former U.S. Army reserve officer. His books include *Your Life and Mine: Problems and Projects in Conservation*; *A Guide to the Big Vermillion River System*; and *Essays on the Historical Geography of Champaign County, Illinois*.

245 pages / \$18.00

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major area of world politics. Today religion is the most common source of civil wars currently raging.”

Michael Rubin says bluntly that Middle East reportage is marred by “the general ignorance of religion among Western journalists.” He writes, “Analysis without an awareness of religion will always be faulty. Religion need not and should not be the central focus of reporting, but Middle East political and diplomatic reporting devoid of religious context is apt to be inaccurate.” Political scientist Allen Hertzke agrees: “Taking religion seriously, and understanding its complexities, enhances a story’s accuracy, depth, and significance.”

Most of these seasoned scholars think journalists for both secular and religious publications often miss the point or intentionally misrepresent events through ignorance rather than malevolence.

As is often the case with scholarly anthologies, some of the material is a bit dated. The one essay on religion in presidential politics, for example, discusses the Bush-Kerry race of 2004. That is fine but the 2008 election is probably of greater consequence for the present and future.

The book has a bit of a conservative bias, with a foreword by Michael Gerson and an afterward by John DiIulio Jr., both former Bush administration staffers. DiIulio claims that “most of America’s Founding Fathers were Bible-believing Christians in the Anglo-Protestant tradition,” a view rejected by most historians, though he does admit that they created “a constitutional regime that was intelligently designed to beget and sustain religious pluralism.” DiIulio also overstates his case when he charges: “Our country’s leading journalists and top media outlets, print and electronic, have frequently missed or misconstrued just about every significant story about religion in everyday American life.”

Most of the essayists in this generally fair-minded volume believe that journalists can and should do a better job in reporting the religious dimensions of the news. That should include a willingness to explore the negative as well as the positive contributions of religious groups.

—Al Menendez

Waiting for the Apocalypse: A Memoir of Faith and Family, by Veronica Chater. W.W.Norton & Company, 2009, 330 pp., \$23.95.

The author recounts the often hilarious but ultimately sad story of her family’s involvement with a fundamentalist brand of Catholicism often called “Traditionalism.” They were so opposed to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council that they moved to Portugal in the 1970s, hoping and expecting to find a medieval Catholic world more congenial to their tastes. The year spent in rural Portugal turned out to be an unmitigated disaster. They were unemployed, spoke no Portuguese and lived in a primitive, backward area that was almost totally irreligious. The Catholic Church there was just as rotten and liberal in their view as the one they fled in California! Returning to America, they got involved in the reactionary Society of St. Pius X, in the news lately when one of its bishops denied the Holocaust, and with a wacky Brazil-based group that combined political Fascism with Tridentine religion.

This talented author tells an inside story of fundamentalism in a Roman Catholic setting. The story could easily be replicated in any number of other religions, where similar characteristics of intolerance, parochialism, fear of change and disdain for modernity are found.

—Al Menendez

Epic Journey: The 2008 Elections and American Politics, by James W. Ceaser, Andrew E. Busch, and John J. Pitney, Jr. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009, 221 pp., \$24.95 paperback.

Three well-known political scientists give us their take on the last election. The presidential primary season, as well as state and congressional elections, receives as much attention as the presidential general

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election. Readable and comprehensive, the book argues that Obama’s victory was substantial in many respects. He had the largest popular vote margin of any incoming Democrat since FDR in 1932. He also had coattails. “The 2008 Democratic gain [in Congress] for consecutive elections is striking.” Obama’s gain among Catholics, suburbanites, white professionals, younger voters and Hispanic Protestants gave the Democrats a major opportunity to reshape public policy and presented the Republicans with a major challenge to recoup their losses.

—Al Menendez

Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Cold War, by Michael Phayer. Indiana University Press, 2008, 333 pp., \$29.95.

Historian Phayer concludes, after much searching in newly opened archives, that the Vatican saw Europe (and the world) engaged in a death struggle between Communism and Fascism during the 1930s and 1940s. Pope Pius XII thought Communism was the greater evil, had a longer staying power, and was a greater threat to the survival of the church. He therefore took a harder line toward the Soviet Union than toward Nazi Germany and failed to rally Catholic opinion wholeheartedly against the Axis Powers. He could, of course, have chosen another route, supporting democracy against both totalitarianisms.

Phayer does not believe Pius XII was pro-Nazi but says his political and diplomatic decisions were motivated by “an obsession with Communism.” Phayer, author of serious books on the Catholic Church and the Holocaust era and a professor emeritus of history at Jesuit-related Marquette University, takes particular umbrage at those elements within the Vatican who sympathized with the Fascists and helped many war criminals escape justice after the war through various “ratlines” managed by “loopy” Austrian bishop Alois Hudal and a coterie of Argentine diplomats. Hudal, who favored “the marriage of Nazism and Catholicism,” was “despised and demoted by Pope Pius XI but remained in Rome during the war years.”

The Vatican’s claim that, as a neutral state, it helped refugees of all political persuasions is dismissed by Phayer. “The reality of the Holocaust made such a policy by a church-run state a moral farce in the postwar era. In fact, the Vatican not only offered asylum to refugees, including fugitives, but it also helped them escape to South America.” Allowing Croatian Nazis to elude justice was morally indefensible. “If the case against the Holy See were to be decided on the basis of moral law and historical fact, the Vatican would be hard put to defend itself.”

Phayer sees the Spanish Civil War as a seminal event. “Although the Holy See had abandoned Hudal’s ideas, the Spanish civil war confirmed that fascism could indeed be used to fight bolshevism. This was a lesson in practical politics that neither Hudal nor Pacelli would forget, which explains why after World War II, they would engage in ratline activity.” Even Pius XI’s 1937 encyclical condemning Nazism was softened and “stepped lightly around the issue of racism so as to keep the concordat [between Germany and the Holy See] intact.”

Phayer relishes diplomatic intrigues. Pius XII, according to new
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evidence, wanted to “eliminate Hitler while preserving a strong anti-Soviet Germany” and gave covert support to a plot to overthrow Hitler, while the German dictator gave serious thought to a counterplot to kidnap the Pope. Nothing is quite black and white. Spain’s Francisco Franco, who “sent the Spanish Blue Division to Germany to fight bolshevism during World War II” also “allowed thousands of Jews to find sanctuary in his country.”

While there are many commendable books on this subject in print, this one has the benefit of new archival material and the careful, balanced judgment of a historian who admits that most historical conclusions remain tentative and subject to the discovery of new evidence.

—Al Menendez

What Happened at Vatican II, by John W. O’Malley. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, 380 pp., \$29.95.

From a perspective of nearly a half century later, historian John O’Malley places the Second Vatican Council in historical context, showing what changed and what did not and how the changes have impacted both the Roman Catholic Church and the world.

Perhaps the most important change was the approval of a Declaration on Religious Liberty. O’Malley, professor of history at Georgetown University, writes, “Its advocacy of forms of separation of church and state, as well as the kind of primacy it gave to conscience over obedience to ecclesiastical authority, aroused fierce opposition...”

This council was one of the most important religious events in the Twentieth Century. O’Malley writes: “Vatican II was unprecedented in the history of councils for the notice it took of changes in society at large and for its refusal to see them in globally negative terms as devolutions from an older and happier era, despite the fact that the council met just shortly after the bloodiest half-century in the history of the human race. It recognized that a profound shift in human awareness was taking place in the substitution of a dynamic and more evolutionary concept of nature for a static one. Furthermore, it recognized that this changing situation raised new problems that the church and society at large had to face. The church, it made clear, is *in* the modern world – not above it, nor below it, not for it, not against it. Therefore, like everybody else *in*

Should Churches Get Government Aid? Poll Says No

A poll in the May 17 issue of the widely read *Parade Magazine* showed respondents opposed to federal government support of churches by 86% to 14%. The issue arose when the Barna Group, an evangelical polling firm, discovered that 20% of households have reduced their donations to churches in the past year. An estimated \$3 - \$5 billion in contributions has been lost. So some churches have appealed to Uncle Sam (who else?), and the ever-watchful Department of Homeland Security announced in April that \$100 million from the economic-recovery program will be available to food and shelter programs, including those run by religious organizations. Billions more are apparently coming from the Faith-Based office. An unresolved problem is whether religious groups that run these programs can require their workers to adhere to certain religious beliefs or practices. The *Parade* poll was specific: “Should churches receive government funding without restrictions?” An overwhelming majority of respondents said no.

Views on Evolution by Religion

Percentage who agree that evolution is the best explanation for origins of human life:

Buddhist – 81	Muslim - 45
Hindu – 80	Black Protestant - 38
Jewish – 77	Evangelical Protestant - 24
Catholic – 58	Mormon - 22
Eastern Orthodox – 54	Jehovah’s Witness - 8
Mainline Protestant – 51	

Source: 2008 Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey

the world, the church must assume its share of responsibility for the well-being of the world, not simply denounce what it finds wrong.”

—Al Menendez

The Realignment of Pennsylvania Politics Since 1960: Two-Party Competition in a Battleground State, by Renée M. Lamis. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009, 398 pp., \$65.00.

This solid volume tells why Pennsylvania has become a barometer of national electoral change that often votes within a percentage point or two of the national outcome. The Keystone State is undergoing significant demographic and attitudinal changes, many rooted in religious and cultural values. Lamis draws on census data and opinion polls, correlating them with election returns to substantiate her belief that the “after-shocks of the culture wars” explain why Democrats have gained ground in the Philadelphia area, in prosperous, fast-growing suburbs and in college towns, while Republicans have gained in western Pennsylvania’s rural and small town areas.

A political junkie’s dream book, this well written case study is buttressed by 208 fact-filled charts, tables and maps. Read it and become an instant expert on Pennsylvania politics.

—Al Menendez

A People’s History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story, by Diana Butler Bass. HarperOne, 2009, 353 pp., \$25.99.

Written in the style of Howard Zinn’s *People’s History of the United States*, this unorthodox, alternative view of two millennia of Christianity will appeal primarily to religious progressives. The author emphasizes the social-justice and dissenting traditions within Christianity and highlights many less well known figures. Her reason for writing was to counter triumphalism and insularity. “In the late twentieth century, however, the very word *Christian* began to take on negative meanings, increasingly defined by its most narrow partisans.”

Her take on Thomas Jefferson is striking. She says that Jefferson, Lincoln and Jimmy Carter were America’s “most thoughtful presidential theologians.” “To Jefferson, the evidence of history proved that Christianity was not rational and that religions needed to be judged by reason. ... Despite this unflinching criticism, Jefferson did not reject Christianity outright. Instead, he embarked on a journey to discover the primitive purity of Christianity, hoping to reform the faith.” Jefferson and other enlightenment advocates influenced a strain of Christianity, which in turn influenced the development of religious liberty. “Eventually Jefferson’s softer form of providential deism became widespread—closely tied to enlightenment ideals of freedom, liberty, and benevolence.”

Finally, “By enlarging the sphere of benevolence, Jefferson argued that republican government would flourish and social harmony—a kind of reasonable Christian utopia—would result. Jefferson crafted a vision of Christianity that was rational, natural, and orderly.”

—Al Menendez

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Commentary

'Law's Little Acres'

John E. Coons' essay "In Defense of the Sovereign Family" (Dec 2008) leads up to his conclusion that government "must create some financial arrangement that will enable ... the parents' authority to educate their children." What this circumlocution means is that government should compel all taxpayers to contribute involuntarily to the support of faith-based nonpublic schools, presumably by means of a device Coons has long favored but coyly refrains from naming: school vouchers.

What Coons goes out of his way to avoid discussing is the principle, found in the First Amendment and most state constitutions, that government may not compel any citizen to support any religious institution, directly or indirectly.

Coons refers to public schools pejoratively as government schools, the implication being that they are somehow lockstep authoritarian institutions. This is an odd way to view our almost 15,000 separate school districts, nearly all of them run by elected boards of local citizens, parents, and taxpayers and subject to state laws intended to prohibit discrimination or indoctrination. Our public schools, however imperfectly, bring together students and teachers from all parts of the religious, ethnic, political, and class spectra, honoring our national motto "E pluribus unum," Coons' oft-touted voucher plan would fragment our school and community populations along creedal, class, ethnic, ideological, and other lines and so increase the financial and social costs of education.

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in the March 2009 issue of First Things.

Let's Rid D.C. of Vouchers

Regarding the Feb. 24 editorial "Voucher Subterfuge":

The District's school voucher plan should be allowed to expire. It was foisted on the city against the will of its majority by a Republican-controlled Congress. Millions of Americans have rejected vouchers or their variants in some 25 statewide referendums by an average proportion of 2 to 1. Studies have shown that vouchers do not really improve

education. And taxpayers should not have to pay for faith-based schools that commonly practice forms of discrimination unacceptable in public schools.

Let's just improve our public schools.

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in the Washington Post on March 5, 2009.

'Private money solves nothing' [sic ???]

Suzanne Fields writes, "Vouchers are key to education reform." ("School choice a piece of cake?" Opinion, Thursday). Most Americans disagree. Between the late 1960s and 2007, millions of voters in 25 state referendum elections voted against any and every form of tax aid to faith-based private schools by an average vote of 2-1. In the District's only vote on the subject the voters rejected a tax-code voucher plan 89% to 11%. At least three fourths of the state constitutions prohibit tax aid to private schools and voters have defeated attempts to overturn those proscriptions.

Many inner city school systems face difficulties, and the first solution is for our society as a whole to address poverty and all its accompanying problems. Nearly all studies of school voucher plans have shown that they simply do not solve the real problems.

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in the Washington Times on April 12, 2009.

continued on page 24

"[W]hen you get into the domain of promoting particular views about the basis for skepticism of evolution, and those views are not really valid, then I think we have a problem. I think we need to be giving our kids a modern education in biology, and the underpinning of modern biology is evolution. And countervailing views that are not really science, if they are taught at all, should be taught in some other part of the curriculum."

Presidential science adviser John Holdren, head of the White House Office of Science and Technology, in ScienceInsider.



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Commentary, *continued from page 23*

“Innovative Practice Can Be Fostered in Religiously Neutral Public Schools”

Nina Rees and Doug Mesecar invoke “innovation” (letter, Nov 19) to again push the discredited school voucher idea. They carefully avoid mentioning that “well-established private schools” are either in the \$25,000 tuition range, and thus beyond the reach of a voucher plan, or faith-based schools that exist largely for the purpose of pervasive sectarian indoctrination and generally practice forms of discrimination and selectivity that would be intolerable in public schools.

In any event, millions of voters from coast to coast have shown conclusively in 25 statewide referenda that they don’t want to pay taxes to support nonpublic schools through vouchers or any other means.

By all means let’s have more carefully thought out innovation in education, but there is no good reason why this cannot be done in religiously neutral public schools that exist to serve all children and that do not discriminate by religion or ideology in hiring teachers.

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in the December 10, 2008 issue of Education Week.

‘Putting Enrollment Story into Context’

The Gazette’s March 11 piece on Montgomery County Catholic school enrollment decline and March 18 comments by Catholic school officials need to be put in context.

Nationwide, Catholic elementary and secondary school enrollment peaked in 1965 at about 5.5 million students. Since then it has steadily dropped to a current level somewhere below 2.5 million while the Catholic population has grown.

The 40-plus year decline is due to many factors, including satisfaction with public schools and disagreement with some church teachings.

In the long run, the shifting of Catholic students to public schools strengthens public schools and increases support for improving public schools.

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in the Montgomery [County, MD] Gazette on March 26, 2009.

‘Religion and Vouchers: Faulting a New Report’

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s recently issued report on school voucher programs, described in your article “Transparency Time for Vouchers?” (April 1, 2009), offers nothing new, but simply reiterates the same tired old line: “Give us your money, go away, and shut up.”

On Page 9 of the report, for example, we are told that “voucher laws and programs should take vows of silence regarding participation in religious instruction or activities.” And on Page 19, it continues in this vein, saying: “school ‘inputs’ and operations (such things as teacher qualifications, admissions policies, and discipline procedures) ought not be further regulated by government.” In other words, Fordham wants taxpayers to blindly fund private schools that practice divisive forms of selectivity, discrimination, and indoctrination that would not be permitted in public schools. Is it any wonder then that voters and lawmakers consistently reject voucher plans?

—Edd Doerr

Letter published in Education Week on April 22, 2009.

A Terror Assassination

The May 31 murder of Dr. George Tiller in his Wichita, Kansas, church, nothing less than a terrorist assassination, was far more than just a tragedy for a courageous, caring physician who was one of the very few to provide a rarely needed medical procedure for women with seriously problematic pregnancies. It was also a vicious attack on the right of all women to legal and appropriate medical care, an assault on the freedom of conscience of all women, and an ever so clear act of intimidation against health care providers out of sync with a dangerously misguided fundamentalist patriarchalism. The propagandists who demonize freedom of choice share in the responsibility for this act of violence.

—Edd Doerr