



VOICE OF REASON

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Mississippi Rejects ‘Personhood’ Amendment

In a major upset, Mississippi voters decisively rejected a proposed constitutional amendment that would have effectively banned all abortions and many methods of birth control and fertility treatments. The measure, Amendment 26, went down by a crushing margin of 58% to 42% in what is arguably the most religiously conservative state in the Union.

There was a modest urban-rural divide. Nearly 63% of voters in the nine largest counties opposed the measure compared to 55% in the more rural counties. The state’s largest county, Hinds, which includes Jackson, the state capital, turned in a 76% no vote, the highest in the state. Opposition topped 61% on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, where the bulk of the state’s Catholic population resides, and in the white Republican suburbs of Jackson. In suburban Rankin County, where John McCain took 77% of the 2008 presidential vote, 57% opposed Amendment 26.

Race, religion, income and education also played a major role in the voting. The state’s rural “black belt” counties, with large African American majorities, voted 70% no, even though the proposal was supported by the African American Democratic candidate for governor and by many clergy.

Three counties containing colleges and universities voted two to one against the measure, as did voters in such small towns as Natchez, Vicksburg and Greenville, where opposition exceeded 70%.

Only 20 of the state’s 82 counties backed Amendment 26, and they were heavily white, Baptist, and rural. The heaviest support for the proposal (68%) came in George County, in the state’s southeast corner, where John McCain drew 83%, his highest statewide support. Back in 1968, George County was the number one county in the nation for third-party candidate George Wallace. A number of counties in the rural, isolated northeast gave 60% or greater support. The only relatively urban area to support the amendment, Lee County, is in the same region. Its major city, Tupelo, is the headquarters for the extreme Religious Right American Family Association.

Religion may have been the major dividing point. In the ten counties where Amendment 26 received its highest level of support, 70% of voters are white Baptists. In the ten counties where the proposal received its lowest level of support, 40% are white Baptists.

For many, this was a religious issue. The Magnolia State ranks first in percentage of Baptists and first in percentage of voters who say that religion is “very important” in their lives. Brad Prewitt, executive director of Personhood Mississippi, called the referendum a “biblical issue.” The state’s powerful Mississippi Baptist Convention endorsed the measure. Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, sent an open letter to all Baptist pastors, urging them to encourage a yes vote among the state’s active Southern Baptist voters.

Mississippi remains one of the most unfriendly states toward abortion, and only one abortion provider exists in the entire state. The state

also has a “trigger law” that would ban most abortions if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*.

The New York Times called the ballot measure “among the most extreme assaults in the push to end women’s reproductive rights.” The voters in this Deep South bastion of evangelicalism agreed.

Personhood USA, the national instigator of redefining personhood from the moment of fertilization, lost two previous campaigns in Colorado. The defeat in Mississippi is a clear setback for referenda planned in Florida, Michigan, Montana, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Battling for the Religious Right: Perry and Bachmann Go Head-to-Head

This run-up to the primary season has seen Texas Gov. Rick Perry and Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann battling to win the Religious Right vote. Both apparently see this constituency as key to the nomination, especially in some of the early caucuses and primaries in Iowa and South Carolina. Both have taken increasingly extreme positions on issues central to this constituency, even though such views may alienate independents and moderates in the general election. (A third contender for conservative evangelicals, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty failed to catch fire and withdrew after a poor showing in the Iowa Straw Poll in August. He later endorsed Mitt Romney, intimating that Pawlenty was really more of a moderate than his failed campaign suggested.)

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Court Case Focuses on Parochial School Teachers

The U.S. Supreme Court began its fall term with a complicated church-state case that could redefine the “ministerial exemption” that exempts clergy from protection under federal anti-discrimination laws. This emerging legal principle has been used in many lower court rulings but has never been sanctioned by the High Court.

In this case a teacher at Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran School in Redford, Michigan, was fired after she became ill. The church said she had a ministerial function and was a “called” teacher rather than a lay teacher after taking religious classes and teaching a religion class. The teacher, Cheryl Perich, maintained that she spent most of her time teaching secular classes such as math. She threatened to sue under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the church that runs the school fired her for violating Missouri Synod Lutheran doctrine that members should not sue the church in civil courts.

She sued, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission supported her case. A federal district court ruled in the church’s favor, but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit unanimously reversed the decision and held that Perich was a secular teacher who did not qualify for the ministerial exception.

The case pits many church groups and some separationists against civil rights groups and the federal government. The Obama administration has supported Perich. “Experience shows that religious employers invoking the ministerial exception as a defense in employment discrimination lawsuits often take a very broad view of which employees qualify as ‘ministers,’” U.S. Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. wrote in a court brief. “To lend near dispositive weight to a religious employer’s characterizations could well result in unnecessarily depriving large numbers of employees of the statutory protections Congress intended to afford them.”

The church was represented at the Court on October 5 by Douglas Laycock, generally a church-state separationist but one who takes an absolutist view that government may not intervene in or define what constitutes proper behavior for a church. Laycock, a University of Virginia law professor, argued that nonintervention was a “bedrock principle.” Richard Garnett, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame, wrote for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and a number of evangelicals that the Court should “affirm some very important principle at the heart of the separation of church and state.”

During oral arguments Justice Sonia Sotomayor worried that individuals who challenged church school decisions would have no recourse if the ministerial exception was approved on a broad basis. Justice Anthony Kennedy joined her in this concern.

In some lower court decisions, the exception has been applied to church organists and choir directors, but not uniformly.

The case could have far-reaching consequences. The National Center for Education Statistics said there are 314,000 teachers in elementary and secondary religious schools in the U.S., though it is unlikely that most would be considered ministers. Nearly 143,000 teach in Catholic parochial schools and 9,800 teach at Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod schools.

The decision in the case, *Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Church and School v. Perich*, is likely to be announced early next year. ■

Mormon Issue Dominates GOP Race

Thanks to a blunt and controversial remark by Baptist pastor Robert Jeffress at the Value Voter Summit in Washington in October, the issue of Mitt Romney’s faith became front and center again. Jeffress is senior minister at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, whose then-pastor in 1960, W.A. Criswell, launched a vicious attack on Democratic nominee Sen. John F. Kennedy, a Catholic. Criswell’s sermon, which was reproduced in millions of pamphlets, said Kennedy’s election “would lead to the death of a free church and a free state.” This year Jeffress said, “Mormonism is not Christianity but is a cult” and said voters should support “a born-again follower of Jesus Christ,” namely his candidate Rick Perry. Jeffress told reporters that Romney was not a Christian. Perry failed to condemn the remarks immediately, but backed away from them later. The remarks went viral, and they did not help Perry, who came in a poor fourth at the Value Voters straw poll.

Romney himself denounced “poisonous language” about religion and called for “decency and civility.” About 20% of Republicans and

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Perry and Bachmann, *continued from page 1*

Perry has begun to rely more on surrogates who vouch for his fundamentalist-populist credentials among the true believers crowd. His September speech at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, which produced a near-endorsement by school chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., resonated with pious evangelical rhetoric and references to America's "Christian foundation" and "Christian values." Southern Baptist leader Richard Land placed a friendly, sugar-coated article on Perry in *USA Today*, which is read (at least casually) by millions. The portrait was unctuously sympathetic, even sneering at former President George W. Bush, who came across as an out-of-touch elitist "raised by New England Episcopalians"—apparently a crime in the rural South. Other Religious Right organizations and activists are quietly organizing for Perry, whose appearances at early debates, while flawed in content, seem to have whipped up enthusiasm among Southerners, hardline conservatives, and Tea Party enthusiasts. As Chris Matthews commented on his MSNBC program, "This will give Southern evangelicals an easy out to vote against a Mormon candidate."

Perry has clashed with Bachmann over his executive order requiring vaccinations for HPV among 12-year-old school girls in Texas. Admitting that he should have consulted the legislature, Perry maintains that the decision was correct. Bachmann blasted it as an imposition of state power and a violation of parental rights. Perry appears to be less anti-science than Bachmann, though his skepticism toward global warming and climate change mark him as well to the right of the national mainstream.

Perry's ten-year tenure as governor has been controversial, particularly with the appointment of religious conservatives to the State Board of Education and his sympathy for the introduction of creationism in high school biology classes. He has also done everything to make abortion nearly impossible by hassling women who choose the option. A federal judge has invalidated portions of the sonogram law he signed. The court ruled that the law violated the free speech rights of women and their doctors.

Perry's anti-choice posture has grown more strident over the years. Wrote Emily Ramshaw in *The Texas Tribune*: "In the nearly 11 years since Perry became governor, he has thrown his support behind at least six high-profile anti-abortion bills." In January, 2011, Perry told the legislature, "We can't afford to give up the good fight until the day *Roe v. Wade* is nothing but a shameful footnote in our nation's history books."

Perry's involvement in a kind of religious revival raised many questions about whether he could be a leader of a pluralistic, religiously diverse nation. His involvement in "The Response," a day-long prayer event at a Houston football stadium in August, was widely criticized because only evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants participated, effectively snubbing 75%—80% of Americans. Even the moderate Dallas *Morning News* editorialized, "It's disappointing that the governor decided not to reach across religious boundaries. . . . The people he's spotlighting form a key part of his party's base. You need not be a hardened skeptic to wonder why a possible presidential contender would hold a prayer rally with a small band of people whose religious and political views are fused. It's one thing to ask Americans to pray on their own for the nation. It's quite another to ask only those who believe as you do—and might vote for you—to join hands."

Most participants represented what the Dallas newspaper called the "more extreme wing of evangelical Protestantism," including James and Shirley Dobson, Tony Perkins and Richard Land. The event was co-sponsored by an extremist outfit based in Mississippi, the American Family Association. This group has compared gays to Nazis and regu-

larly denounces Muslims, Jews, and other non-evangelical faiths. Its spokesperson, Bryan Fischer, thinks gays and Muslims should be banned from holding public office.

Perry compounded the negative reactions from the prayer event by meeting with a bevy of fundamentalist preachers at a gathering held at the home of James Leininger, a school voucher supporter and a major donor to far-right causes.

Many of these supporters appear to be dictating Perry's issue formation. After the governor said he didn't mind that New York had legalized same-sex marriage, invoking "state's rights," he said that he still favored a federal constitutional amendment banning the practice.

As a result of these actions, Perry is attracting grassroots support from Religious Right activists. The American Family Association appears to be supporting Perry from its headquarters in Tupelo, Mississippi, where it broadcasts over 192 talk-radio stations and sends "action alerts" to over two million supporters. The group has an annual budget of \$19 million and employs 128 people, according to *The New York Times*, which noted that the group spent \$600,000 on the Texas prayer event and contributed \$500,000 to the 2008 campaign to repeal California's same-sex marriage law.

Time's Amy Sullivan reported that Perry has never repudiated support from anti-Catholic crusader John Hagee and the extremists in the Texas Restoration Project, a "Dominionist" outfit that favors imposition of a kind of Judeo-Christian Sharia law on America's political and legal system. Perry's inauguration in 2011 included a prayer breakfast organized by David Lane, a California evangelical who specializes in "Pastor Policy Briefings." These gatherings, held in 14 states so far, are designed to get evangelical clergy to endorse candidates for public office who will adopt an evangelical-right agenda.

Another recent convert to the Perry cause is Florida anti-gay crusader John Stemberger, who told the *Miami Herald* that Mitt Romney "wasn't Mormon enough." Stemberger, who represents Focus on the Family in Florida, had supported Mike Huckabee in 2008. Co-chair of the Perry campaign in Florida will be Pam Olsen, founder of the Florida Prayer Network. Other supporters include televangelist James Robison, evangelist Rick Scarborough and pseudo-historian David Barton.

Perry has signed a national anti-abortion pledge and has endorsed an Ohio proposal that would ban almost all abortions. He has long flirted with fringe causes, including secession, opposition to direct election of U.S. Senators and letting Congress overrule Supreme Court decisions. He lambasted the federal government in his book *Fed Up!* In another book, *On My Honor: Why the American Values of the Boy Scouts are Worth Fighting For*, Perry compared gays to alcoholics and called ACLU "a small minority of atheists" and "a litigious advocate of licentious behavior." He wrote that gays and lesbians "must respect the right of millions in society to refuse to normalize their behavior." He attacked "moral relativism" and "individualism" (sure to offend Ron Paul's libertarian followers). He argued that "the weight of evidence supports Intelligent Design." *The Washington Post's* Dana Milbank concluded that Perry is "no libertarian but a theocrat."

Perry's increasing religious conservatism is reflected in his personal church going. A lifelong Methodist who used to attend Tarrytown United Methodist Church in Austin, Perry now prefers a non-denominational, fundamentalist megachurch, Lake Hills Church, in the state capital. The *Austin American-Statesman* says the 3,000-member church has "a stadium-like auditorium for a sanctuary, a rock band with a surround-sound stereo system and PowerPoint presentations that display Bible passages to accompany sermons."

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Michele Bachmann

The other primary contender for the Religious Right vote is Michele Bachmann, the fiery, outspoken two-term congresswoman from suburban Minnesota. She has carved out a niche as the never-say-die warrior for the most conservative causes. Her style is confrontational and her stances increasingly controversial.

Her life experience is steeped in fundamentalist values, from her attendance at what was once Oral Roberts University Law School to her early involvement in Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign, which drew supporters as unlikely as Pat Robertson. (This is another odd fact she shares with Rick Perry, who began political life as a Democrat in the Texas legislature and became a supporter of Al Gore's unsuccessful 1988 campaign for president.)

Bachmann straddles the Tea Party-Religious Right axis and has been heavily influenced by both strands of thought. She maintains that America has been a Christian country since its founding and that liberty comes from a religion of revelation, not from a social contract between citizens who designed constitutional protections for all.

Her public career began in 1999 after she unsuccessfully ran for a seat on her local school board in Stillwater, denouncing education that "embraces a socialist, globalist worldview." She had founded a charter school a few years before, but it was riven by controversy because it was suffused with evangelical religion. A charter school is technically a public school and cannot endorse religion. Bachmann became a disciple of David Noebel, founder of Summit Ministries, who denounced such bugbears as "The Homosexual Revolution," and "The Secular Humanist Worldview," while warning that America was becoming a crypto-Communist society and a post-Christian culture. Noebel was a long-time member of the John Birch Society.

As the new decade began in 2000, Bachmann rallied her far right and evangelical allies to defeat moderate Republican Minnesota state senator Gary Laidig in the Republican primary. She easily defeated her Democratic opponent and remained in the state senate for six years as a champion of far-right causes in what is generally viewed as a liberal state. Minnesota is the only state that has gone Democratic for president in every election since 1976. But Minnesota is also changing, and Democrats lost U.S. Senate and gubernatorial races frequently. Even their presidential margins declined from the heyday of the New Deal and Great Society.

Bachmann made opposition to legal abortion and gay rights cornerstones of her career, both in the Minnesota senate and in the U.S. House. It is unsurprising that she opposed any measures to halt discrimination against gays in employment or any moves to legalize same-sex marriage. She announced that she would reinstate the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy that the Pentagon formally ended in September if she were president. She has endorsed a same-sex marriage ban that will be on the Minnesota ballot in November, 2012, telling a Christian television network, "We will have an immediate loss of civil liberties for five million Minnesotans" if the ban fails. She also claimed, without any evidence, that "public schools will be forced to start teaching that same-sex marriage is equal, that it is normal and children should try it."

Claiming to be an intellectual, Bachmann frequently recommends books by controversial authors, including her law-school mentor John Eidsmoe and "historian" Steven Wilkins, both of whom expressed sympathy for slavery. Wilkins has espoused the view that "the South was an orthodox Christian nation unjustly attacked by the Godless North," according to Ryan Lizza in his portrait of Bachmann in *The New Yorker*.

Well Said!

"The danger of explicit appeals to faith in politics isn't the establishment of an official religion; that remains highly unlikely. Rather, faith-based politics can become faith-based laws that enforce morality codes, expand public subsidies for religious institutions or sideline religious (or non-religious) minorities. Most important, our political-religious climate threatens to replace a campaign for the best policies with a contest of the most pious."

— Jonathan Turley

Turley is a professor of public interest law at George Washington University. The above is excerpted from his article "Church and State United on the Campaign Trail," which appeared in The Washington Post on October 2, 2011.

Eidsmoe, whom Bachmann credits with informing her of America's "Godly heritage," wrote in *Christianity and the Constitution* that the U.S. is a Christian nation and that "our culture should be permeated with a distinctively Christian flavoring." Eidsmoe defended Southern secession as a "constitutional right" in a 2010 speech commemorating Secession Day in Alabama. He also addressed the defiantly racist Council of Conservative Citizens national convention in 2005. (Another racist-secessionist group, the Alabama-based League of the South, has praised Rick Perry and is likely to endorse him.) This North-South divide is one of the dirty little secrets of the Religious Right, which, after all, receives its greatest level of support in the South.

Bachmann has been receiving increasingly critical press scrutiny. *Rolling Stone* wrote, "Bachmann is a religious zealot whose brain is a raging electrical storm of divine visions and paranoid delusions." She frequently has to backtrack or revise outrageous or erroneous statements. Even the conservative *National Review* criticized her "propensity to play with fire" and her "embarrassing gaffes," noting that "she has had six chiefs of staff in her short congressional career and a bushel of press secretaries."

Her support so far has come mostly from grassroots activists, while the Religious Right leadership clearly prefers Perry. One exception may be former Christian Coalition chieftain Ralph Reed, who says she is "the real deal and is not to be underestimated."

Like Perry, Bachmann recently shifted her church affiliation to an independent evangelical megachurch. Her previous church, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stillwater, belongs to the ultraconservative Wisconsin Synod, which still teaches that the pope is the antichrist and that all other religions, including other Lutherans, have a defective faith. She denied that her church taught those beliefs, but a simple search of the Wisconsin Synod website showed that she was misinformed again.

While a very long-shot for the eventual nomination, Bachmann and her followers could still influence convention proceedings or platform planks.

Bachmann pleased an audience of thousands at the late Jerry Falwell's Liberty University on September 28 by weaving her own conversion story in a political narrative. She claimed that America was directly based on Christian teachings about human liberty. She was, wrote Sarah Posner, "more explicit than she has been on the campaign trail before, weaving her own personal salvation story into the mythology of the Christian nation, freedom, and American exceptionalism." Posner concluded, "It's probably not enough to save her floundering presidential campaign, but Bachmann today set a new standard for Republican speeches to evangelical audiences." ■

Mormon Issue, *continued from page 2*

23% of Protestants tell pollsters they are not likely to vote for a Mormon candidate, which is down considerably from 2008. (The other Mormon candidate, Jon Huntsman, called Rev. Jeffress “a moron.”)

Paul Krugman warned in *The New York Times* that the Republican Party is fast becoming the anti-science party. Except for Gov. Huntsman, all the others have expressed doubt about global warming and climate change and have refused to endorse evolution. (Romney seems to be sitting on the fence on these issues.) Republican primary voters, especially in Iowa, express the same reluctance, writes Krugman, citing Public Policy Polling that found only 21% of Iowa Republicans believe in global warming and 35% accept evolution. Krugman concluded, “Now we don’t know who will win next year’s presidential election. But the odds are that one of these years the world’s greatest nation will find itself ruled by a party that is aggressively anti-science, indeed anti-knowledge. And, in a time of severe challenges—environmental, economic, and more—that’s a terrifying prospect.”

Interestingly, McKay Coppins argued in *The Daily Beast.com* that the two Mormon candidates “are the only GOP presidential contenders who accept climate change and evolution. A look at the relationship between Mormonism and science makes a convincing case that this is no coincidence.” Coppins cited a 2007 interview in which Romney told *The New York Times*, “True science and true religion are on exactly the same page. They may come from different angles, but they reach the same conclusion.”

In other political news, Rick Perry, Newt Gingrich and Michele Bachmann announced their support for a new anti-choice bill in the Ohio legislature that would ban all abortions at a point where the fetus’s heart starts to beat, possibly as early as 22 days. The bill passed the Ohio House and now faces an uncertain future in the state Senate and certainly in the courts.

All the GOP candidates, except Herman Cain, Gary Johnson and Mitt Romney, signed a “pro-life Presidential Leadership Pledge” embraced by the anti-choice Susan B. Anthony List. The signatories pledged

to nominate only anti-choice judges to the Supreme Court and other federal courts, to Cabinet and Executive Branch positions, including the head of the National Institutes of Health, and to cut off federal funding to hospitals and clinics that perform or fund abortions. They also pledged to ban abortions after the fetus reaches a certain stage of development. Writes historian Christine Stansell in *The New Republic*, “In short, the document stakes out a position that is openly committed to extirpating in Washington any views on abortion except those of hard-core right-to-life activists.” Stansell also noted that “there is absolutely no basis to the claim that Susan B. Anthony opposed abortion. . . . In fact, neither Anthony nor any other nineteenth-century women’s rights reformer led an anti-abortion movement, proposed or supported laws to criminalize abortion, or saw abortion as a political problem.”

Michele Bachmann went even further, promising that she would ban pornography and same-sex marriages and reject Islamic law—all of which are beyond the duties of the presidency. She signed a pledge concocted by “The Family Leader,” an Iowa-based Religious Right group run by Dutch Reformed zealot Bob Vander Plaats. This pandering to extremists in Iowa could cost the GOP the general election, observed Hal Boyd in the *Deseret News*.

An increasing number of evangelical pastors are gearing up for intense political activism in 2012, according to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*. Staff writers Tom Hamburger and Matea Gold noted, “Formerly apolitical preachers in states like Iowa, backed by astute organizers and big donors, are mobilizing congregations for the election.” They added, “The pastor movement is being guided and ministered to by a growing web of well-financed organizations that offer seminars, online tools and a battery of lawyers.”

The 2012 race is being fought on new terrain. Joe Klein wrote in *Time* that the “outsiders” have ousted the “insiders” in the GOP for the first time since Barry Goldwater won the party’s nomination in 1964. “The party has changed irrevocably. It has traded in country-club aristocracy for pitchfork populism.” Also writing in *Time*, Fareed Zakaria argued that “today’s conservatives are no longer rooted in the reality of America, past or present.” ■

New Ally for Faith-Based Groups: IRFA

America’s faith-based enterprises are relying on a relatively new think tank based in the Washington, D.C., area since 2003. Called the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance (IRFA), its goal is “safeguarding the religious identity and faith-shaped standards and services of faith-based service organizations.” That means that sectarian enterprises may receive federal funds and still hire only members of their own faith traditions.

Its founder and president is Stanley Carlson-Thies, who worked in President George W. Bush’s faith-based office from its inception in February, 2001 until May, 2002. He then worked for the Center for Public Justice, a kind of center-right evangelical think tank. He has frequently been a consultant for the faith-based entities that exist in several federal Cabinet departments. A child of missionaries, he grew up in Japan, the Netherlands and Canada and wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Toronto on the role of Protestant and Catholic politics in the Netherlands, which, of course, meant the destruction of secular public schools and a “three-tiered” society dominated by religious political parties and separate school systems that characterized Dutch life until recently. Carlson-Thies received the William Bentley Ball Religious Liberty Defense Award from the Religious Right’s Center for Law and Religious Freedom in 2004. Ball was Pennsylvania’s pre-

mier advocate of tax aid to church-related schools.

IRFA’s mission statement says it “accepts as the foundational guide the teachings of the Christian Bible as understood in the historical and classical teaching of the Christian Church,” a rather vague statement that is internally inconsistent since there are numerous versions (Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and others) that constitute classical teaching. IRFA also endorses “a vigorous but limited government with flourishing civil society institutions.” Much of this rhetoric seems to reflect the group’s orientation toward the Calvinist wing of Protestantism.

IRFA’s chairman is Stephen Monsma, a former Democratic legislator from Michigan and a fellow at the Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College. A number of the group’s advisors also come from the Dutch evangelical tradition, or are associated with “centrist” organizations. They include James Skillen of the Center for Public Justice, Carl Esbeck, professor of law at the University of Missouri, and Robert Andringa, president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. One hard-right member of the Advisory Committee is Gregory Baylor of the Alliance Defense Fund.

IRFA is another formidable organization designed to clear the way

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for more government funding of and partnership with faith-based organizations. Most recently, IRFA has urged President Obama to ignore the request from the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (ARL is a member) to end “federally funded employment discrimination” by some faith-based groups. IRFA claims that such discrimination or “preferences” are legal under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. IRFA argued that “most faith-based service organizations do not fit within the confines of the definition of ‘religious employer’ that has been adopted.”

The group has also waded in on the controversy over including contraception in the Obama administration’s new health insurance regulations. These regulations require that all health plans must cover birth control, but a religious exception was added to the law, allowing religious groups that provide only for recipients of their own faiths to opt out of the requirement. IRFA blasted that coverage as a “very narrow exemption that is of deep concern to a broad group of religious leaders and institutions” in a sharply-worded letter sent to the White House on August 26. They pointedly asked White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships director Joshua DuBois “to intervene

with the administration to overturn the very narrow religious exemption.” (They apparently think DuBois is highly influential.)

Signatories of the letter include the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and Agudath Israel. But most are evangelical and include the National Association of Evangelicals, the Prison Fellowship Ministry (Chuck Colson’s group), World Relief, and the Christian Legal Society. Among the hard-right signers were Focus on the Family, the American Center for Law and Justice (Pat Robertson, founder) and former Colorado Senator William Armstrong, now president of Colorado Christian University. Two evangelical school groups included were the Association of Christian Schools International and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Some evangelical centrists, who often disagree with the Religious Right, were signers, including Evangelicals for Social Action and several Hispanic evangelical groups. They were joined by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, a small denomination, and numerous faith-based agencies and megachurch pastors.

IRFA says it “works for a day when faith-based organizations can receive government funds without sacrificing their religious identity and faith-shaped standards.” ■



Church and State in the Courts

Sectarian prayers at county board meetings violate the Constitution, a three-judge panel of the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held on July 29. The 2-1 ruling upheld a federal district court decision the year before. The Fourth Circuit’s conservative Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III was clear: “Sectarian prayers must not serve as the gateway to citizen participation in the affairs of local government.”

The court, following a 1983 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, allowed “nonsectarian” prayer to “solemnize” public occasions, but concluded that a preponderance of sectarian prayers in Forsyth County, North Carolina, “led to exactly the kind of divisiveness the Establishment Clause seeks rightly to avoid.” Any “nonsectarian legislative prayer that solemnizes the proceedings of legislative bodies” must not “advance or disparage a particular faith.” The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners voted in August to appeal the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court. Private foundations associated with the Religious Right are paying the county’s legal fees.



A lawsuit, *Shapiro v. Browning*, challenging the misleading language of Florida’s Amendment 7 has been filed. The so-called “Religious Freedom Act” passed by the legislature in May is a blatant attempt to remove the “No Aid” for religious institutions provision of the Florida Constitution and pave the way for vouchers for church-related schools.

The plaintiff, Rabbi Merrill S. Shapiro of Temple Shalom in Deltona, explained his position in an opinion piece for the *Orlando Sentinel* on October 5. “Contrary to the title of the act and the language on the ballot, this referendum is bad news for our religious freedom. The ‘no-aid’ provision of our state constitution ensures that religion will be protected from government intrusion. It protects our right to worship according to our consciences. It is the key to our religious freedom. . . . But if Floridians vote ‘yes’ to repeal the no-aid provision, they will be voting for a measure that would allow state funding of religious institutions,

thus giving religious groups an unprecedented entitlement to taxpayer funds.”



Elementary school students apparently enjoy First Amendment rights to discuss religion with their classmates, according to a complicated federal appeals court ruling. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held on September 27 that two school principals in Plano, Texas, violated the rights of two students who were barred from distributing candy and pencils with religious messages. Ten of the 16 judges joined the majority ruling which said, “We hold that the First Amendment protects all students from viewpoint discrimination against private, non-disruptive, student-to-student speech. Therefore, the principals’ alleged conduct—discriminating against student speech solely on the basis of religious viewpoint—is unconstitutional under the First Amendment.”

At the same time a separate majority said the principals were entitled to qualified immunity from personal liability because rulings in these kinds of disputes are murky and inconsistent. “The principals are entitled to immunity because the general state of the law in this area is abstruse, complicated, and subject to great debate among jurists,” Judge Fortunato P. Benavides wrote for some of those judges. The decision in *Morgan v. Swanson* included eight separate opinions.



A high school teacher does not have the right to “use his public position as a pulpit,” the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on September 13. The unanimous three-judge panel reversed a lower-court decision in the teacher’s favor. The teacher, Bradley Johnson, placed religious banners in his mathematics classroom in San Diego. The Poway Unified School District ordered him to remove them and the district “acted well within its constitutional limits in ordering Johnson

not to speak in a manner it did not desire,” wrote Judge Richard Tallman. Tallman noted that “Johnson took advantage of his position to press his particular views upon the impressionable and captive minds before him.” The teacher had displayed religious messages on large banners since 1982. His attorneys will ask for a full appeals court rehearing.



An instructor who was fired for teaching creationism and promoting fundamentalism in his classroom will not be reinstated. Knox County Common Pleas Court Judge Otho Eyster ruled in October that state laws and school procedures were followed properly. The court will not conduct additional hearings. The teacher, John Freshwater, was dismissed in January by the Mount Vernon, Ohio, School Board. Freshwater is backed by a Religious Right legal group, the Rutherford Institute, which may appeal the ruling to the Fifth District Court of Appeals.




A California public school teacher who allegedly belittled religion in the classroom could not be charged with violating the Establishment Clause. The unanimous ruling came in August by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The teacher was entitled to “qualified immunity,” and the court did not choose to examine whether the teacher was hostile to religion in his history classes at Capistrano Valley High School in Mission Viejo. Judge Raymond Fisher wrote, “We have no doubt that the freedom to have a frank discussion about the role of religion in history is an integral part of any advanced history course... We must be careful not to curb intellectual freedom by imposing dogmatic restrictions that chill teachers from adopting the pedagogical methods they believe are most effective.”



The U.S. Department of Justice announced a settlement on September 6 with officials in Henrico County, Virginia, who had denied permission to a Muslim group that wanted to construct a mosque. “Religious freedom is one of our most cherished rights, and that right includes the ability to assemble and build places of worship without facing discrimination,” said Thomas Perez, Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division. “We are pleased that the county of Henrico has agreed to take steps to ensure that all people exercising this basic American right will not encounter discrimination during the zoning and land use process.” The county, a suburb of Richmond, was accused of violating the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000. The statute prohibits religious discrimination in land use and zoning decisions.



A Muslim teacher won a consent decree against a suburban Chicago school district that had denied her request for unpaid leave for a pilgrimage to Mecca. The U.S. Justice Department, which had filed suit on her behalf, announced the terms of the settlement on October 13. The school district will have to provide mandatory training about religious accommodation and was required to pay \$75,000 to Safoorah Khan, a middle school math teacher. Assistant Attorney General Thomas Perez said, “Employees should not have to choose between practicing their religion and their jobs.”



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The U.S. Supreme Court declined on October 31 to review an appellate court ruling that displaying crosses on Utah highways was unconstitutional. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit held that erecting more than a dozen memorial crosses along the state's highways violated the First Amendment ban on “acts respecting an establishment of religion.” Justice Clarence Thomas berated his colleagues for not taking the case and said that “Establishment Clause jurisprudence [was] in shambles.”

In a related case an 11-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit declined to rehear the case of a war memorial cross in a public park in the San Diego suburb of La Jolla. The Mount Soledad cross case had dragged on for more than twenty years. A three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit decided in January that the cross was unconstitutional. The U.S. Department of Justice had also requested a rehearing of the case. The 29-foot cross was erected in 1954 to honor Korean War Veterans and sits on public land atop a mountain overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Individual plaintiffs, joined by ACLU and a Jewish war veterans group, sought to remove the cross, saying its erection and location favored Christianity. The issue has long been controversial. Even the decision on October 14 not to rehear the case was a 6 to 5 vote. ■



The Voucher Watch

- Nearly 70% of the 3,200 new voucher school students in Indiana have opted for Catholic schools, particularly in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, South Bend and Gary. Indiana has enacted the nation's broadest school voucher program, essentially allowing middle-class children to transfer to private schools. "The bottom line from our perspective is, when you cut through all the chaff, nobody can deny that public money is going to be taken from public schools, and they're going to end up in private, mostly religious schools," said Nate Schnellenberger, president of the Indiana State Teachers Association.

- State auditors concluded that there was "no statistical difference" in test scores between students in Milwaukee's two-decade-old school voucher program and those in public schools. Joe Quick, spokesperson for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, said state expenditures for voucher schools "without any evidence of improvement is harming all the public schools in Wisconsin." Earlier this year a Department of

Public Instruction report found that students attending Milwaukee public schools outperformed their counterparts in voucher schools.

- Arizona's teachers union and the state's association of school boards filed suit in September to block a new voucher program that provides private school tuition for children with disabilities. The suit charges that the generous program violates the state constitution's explicit ban on public funds for religious instruction. A similar program passed in Oklahoma in 2010 is being challenged by two public school districts.

- The House of Representatives gave final approval for the restoration of D.C. vouchers, appropriating \$20 million for Fiscal Year 2012. The program is now called the Scholarship for Opportunity and Results Act (SOAR) and is included in H.R. 2434. Public schools also received \$20 million, as did public charter schools. The Senate Bill is S. 1573, but it is unlikely that D.C. vouchers will be stripped from the Senate version. ■

Updates

Religious Smear Fails in Kentucky Election

The Republican candidate for governor of Kentucky blasted Democratic Gov. Steve Beshear for attending a Hindu ceremony at the groundbreaking for a manufacturing plant owned by an Indian company. But voters soundly rejected state senate president David Williams by more than 20 percentage points. The governor attended the opening for Flex Films in Elizabethtown, which will create 250 jobs in a state hard hit by unemployment. Williams, who refused to apologize for his remarks, castigated the governor for his "worship of idols and for participating with Hindu priests in a religious ceremony." Williams heaped it on: "What I cannot understand is why Governor Beshear has a long pattern of opposing outward displays of the Christian faith such as Christmas trees, prayers before high school football games, and posting the Ten Commandments, but apparently has no problem personally participating in displays of non-Christian religions." Williams added that he would not participate in Jewish, Muslim or Hindu prayers. Criticism was swift from religious liberty groups and from elected officials.

On election night, Gov. Beshear, who was reelected in a landslide in a Republican-leaning state, said his reelection was "a rejection of the politics of religious intolerance." Williams received one of the lowest

levels of support of any recent Republican statewide candidate, losing by overwhelming margins in Louisville and Lexington, as well as small cities and suburbs.

House Restricts Abortion Funding

The U.S. House of Representatives voted 251-172 on October 13 to bar insurance plans regulated under the new health care law from covering abortions. Providers that offer abortion coverage would have to set up identical plans without abortion coverage to participate in the new health insurance exchanges that are slated to begin in 2014. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA) said he and his supporters are trying to close loopholes in the health care act that would lead to government-financed abortions. Opponents said the bill's strict new conscience clause may lead to hospitals denying emergency care to pregnant women. In addition, millions of low-income women who receive partial subsidies to buy insurance could be denied abortion coverage. Jon O'Brien, president of Catholics for Choice, said the bill could override the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, which requires that all people have access to medical services. O'Brien said the bill "puts the views of religious leaders into the surgery room." Republicans supported the bill (H.R. 358) by a vote of 236-2, while Democrats opposed it 170-15. Both Ron Paul and Michele Bachmann skipped the vote, apparently being on the campaign trail. The bill faces strong opposition from Senate Democrats and President Obama.

In related news GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum said he would repeal all federal funding for contraception under Medicaid and the Title X family planning program. The Guttmacher Institute said such action could lead to two million unintended pregnancies. Candidate Ron Paul has released new TV ads saying that "my Christian faith" requires unequivocal opposition to abortion. Paul pledged that he will "effectively repeal *Roe v. Wade*, remove abortion from the jurisdiction of the federal courts, and will end all federal funding of abortion, including Planned Parenthood and so-called family planning services."

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Catholics Ignore Bishops

American Catholics ignore their bishops' statement on politics and public affairs, according to a poll conducted and released by Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture. Peter Steinfels, co-director of the center, presented the findings on September 6. "Those who think that the bishops have too little influence or have influence of the wrong sort may be distressed," he quipped. Only 3% of Catholics said they had read the bishops' document, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," and only 16% had even heard of it. Of those who heard about it, 75% said it had "no influence at all" on how they voted in 2008. Among those who had not heard about it, 71% said it would have made no difference. Just 4% of Catholic voters said the bishops' opinions on politics would be a major influence on their voting decisions.

Evangelicals Push Politics

There has been "a surge in election-related activities at evangelical congregations," a study at Hartford Seminary found. The Faith Communities Today survey discovered that 26% of evangelical churches were involved in voter registration programs last year, up from 20% in 2000. This trend was particularly noticeable at larger congregations, where half the congregations offered election-related programs. Only 12% of mainline Protestant congregations participated in voter education programs, down from 16% a decade ago. About 55% of Black Protestant churches, most of which are evangelical, are involved in voter registration, the same percentage reported in 2000. More than 11,000 Christian, Jewish, and Muslim congregations participated in the survey, conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Air Force Cracks Down on Religious Bias (Again)

Air Force Chief of Staff Norton Schwartz warned his commanders and supervisors to cease and desist from appearing to promote any particular religion. General Schwartz, in a memo issued to Air Force leadership on September 13, said, "Commanders and supervisors must avoid the actual or apparent use of their position to promote their personal religious beliefs to their subordinates or to extend preferential treatment for any religion." The directive may have been aimed at a "Jesus Loves Nukes" program that allegedly used Bible quotes to defend nuclear weapons. For years the Air Force Academy has been wracked by controversies involving aggressive evangelical proselytizing and the appearance of collusion with Air Force commanders. Schwartz added, "However, I expect chaplains, not commanders, to notify Airmen of [religious] programs so there is no appearance that the commanders are endorsing religion generally or any particular religion." He said his memo was intended to ensure "Constitutional protections" to members of the Air Force family. The memo was distributed to the entire Air Force Academy's 4,000 cadets on September 28. Air Force critic Mikey Weinstein, head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, cited the action as "a victory for the U.S. Constitution."

House Supports Envoy for Religious Minorities

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill that would create a State Department "special envoy for religious minorities in the

ARL in Action

Fifty-six national organizations, including Americans for Religious Liberty, have asked President Obama to keep his campaign promises to ban federal funds from faith-based organizations that proselytize the recipients of their aid and that discriminate in hiring. The September 19 letter expressed "deep concern" about the president's lack of action on this issue. The coalition asked the president "to take steps to overturn or otherwise address the troubling hiring discrimination policies adopted" by the Bush administration. Finally, they asked to meet with White House Legal Counsel Kathryn Ruemmler to press the issue in a more direct way.

Near East and South Central Asia." H.R. 440, sponsored by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), passed 402-20 on July 29. All 186 Democrats and 216 Republicans supported the measure, which aims at protecting the religiously vulnerable.

"The U.S. government needs an individual who can respond and focus on the critical situation of religious minorities in these countries whose basic human rights are increasingly under assault," Wolf said.

Twenty Republicans, mostly connected to the far-right Tea Party movement, voted against the proposal, which must be approved by the Senate. The two Republican presidential candidates who serve in the House were less enthusiastic. Ron Paul, the consummate contrarian, voted no, while Michele Bachmann did not choose to vote on the measure, despite her professed concern for religious freedom.

North Carolina to Vote on Same-Sex Marriage

North Carolina voters will decide whether to amend their state constitution to ban same-sex marriage. The vote is scheduled during the May 2012 primaries rather than the November general election, which insures a much lower turnout. By a two-to-one margin in September, the Republican-dominated legislature placed the constitutional amendment on the ballot. If it passes, the amendment will reinforce an already existing ban on same-sex marriage and will also call into question domestic partnership benefits offered by public institutions. Civil unions would also be banned. Placing the amendment on the May ballot may attract a disproportionate number of Republican voters, who will have a presidential primary. Democrats are less likely to turn out since President Obama is unlikely to face a primary challenge. North Carolina is the only Southern state that has resisted efforts to ban same-gender marriage. But the Republican triumph last November changed that dynamic. A hard-fought campaign is expected.

House Reaffirms "In God We Trust"

The U.S. House of Representatives, which seems unable to pass a single bill relating to the sagging economy, managed overwhelming support for a resolution reaffirming "In God We Trust" as the national motto. The vote on November 1 was 396-9. House Concurrent Resolution 13 reaffirmed the national motto adopted in 1956 and "supported and encouraged the public display of the national motto in all public buildings, public schools and other government institutions."

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Updates, *continued from page 9*

One Republican, Justin Amash of Michigan, a freshman and an Eastern Orthodox Christian, voted no, as did the following eight Democrats: Gary Ackerman (NY), Judy Chu (CA), Emanuel Cleaver (MO), Michael Honda (CA), Hank Johnson (GA), Jerrold Nadler (NY), Bobby Scott (VA) and Pete Stark (CA).

The few Democratic dissenters represented several religious traditions. Rep. Cleaver is a United Methodist minister. Bobby Scott of Virginia has become a leading religious liberty advocate. Three were African American, two were Asian American and two were Jewish. Five were from California and New York.

The two Muslim congressmen did not support the measure. Keith Ellison of Minnesota voted “present” and André Carson of Indiana was one of 26 members who did not vote on the resolution. The nonvoters also included presidential candidates Ron Paul and Michele Bachmann, who are increasingly absent from Congressional votes, preferring, apparently, to chase GOP primary voters.

International Updates

Berlin: Pope Benedict’s first state visit to his homeland produced mixed results. Like all papal visits everywhere, it drew fairly large crowds. But criticism was intense. His September address before parliament, his first before a national legislative body, was boycotted by dozens of legislators, mostly from the Green Party, the Left Party (former East German Communists), and a few Social Democrats. His views on family planning and divorce and the church’s inability to resolve the child sexual abuse scandals were uppermost. His hosts in Berlin symbolized some of the church’s problems. He was welcomed by President Christian Wulff, a divorced and remarried Catholic who is ineligible for Communion because of his marital status. His host was popular Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit, a gay Catholic who lives with his partner but faithfully attends Mass. These issues have provoked controversy within Germany’s Catholic Church, considered one of the world’s most liberal (and certainly the wealthiest, thanks to German taxpayers). Germany has become a more secular society in every decade. Last year, 181,000 Catholics and 150,000 Protestants officially severed membership in their heavily state-financed churches.

Budapest: Hungary’s new church law reduces the number of “officially recognized” religions from 362 to 14. But state support for them will increase by 74 million euros. The lion’s share goes to the Roman Catholic Church, the nation’s largest religious group. A new conservative coalition government is responsible for the changes, partly because of the pressure from the small Christian Democratic People’s Party.

Cairo: At least 26 Christian demonstrators were killed October 9 when, according to *The Economist*, “military police reacted with stunning brutality to the approach of a noisy but peaceful protest march.” The Copts, who are 8% of Egypt’s eighty-five million people, were protesting the government’s sluggish response to a series of church burnings blamed on Muslim fanatics. Human rights groups labeled

the government response a massacre. The Coptic Church, which traces its heritage to St. Mark, called a three-day fast. Catholic Church authorities blamed the police for using “vagabonds and a rabble force of street fighters” to attack demonstrators. Muslim extremists yelled, “No God but Allah,” according to *The Tablet*, a London Catholic weekly. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Eastern Churches, appealed to the international community to support efforts to promote greater religious freedom in Egypt.

The Economist reported, “To compound the government’s embarrassment, state-owned media responded much as in Mr. Mubarak’s day. Offering a strikingly one-sided account, government organs depicted the protesters as a Christian mob that had assaulted the army. Neglecting until too late to mention civilian deaths, they also reported, falsely, that America had offered to send troops to protect Christians. This lent weight to rumours, long fanned by Islamist extremists, that Egypt’s Christians act as a fifth column for malevolent foreign powers. Inflamed by such talk, Muslim vigilantes joined security forces late into the night of October 9th in what amounted to a miniature pogrom in central Cairo.”

Dublin: Relations between the Irish government and the Vatican are still cool. After recalling its ambassador to the Irish Republic in July, the Vatican upped the ante by issuing a rebuke and denial in September. In a lengthy response to Irish charges that the Holy See had encouraged Irish bishops to stonewall, the Vatican claimed a 1997 letter was “misinterpreted.” In language that Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore called “legalistic and technical,” the Vatican said it never encouraged bishops to withhold evidence from civil authorities. The Vatican denied that it “meddled in the affairs of the Irish state or was involved in the day-to-day management of Irish dioceses or religious congregations with respect to sexual abuse issues.”

The Vatican statement also noted that Irish law did not require mandatory reporting of suspected abuse by clergy to the police, which the government may soon propose to parliament. The Vatican is still stung by Prime Minister Enda Kenny’s July 20 speech to parliament, possibly the harshest criticism the Vatican has ever received from a European leader, especially one who is a practicing life-long Catholic. Ireland’s embassy to the Vatican will be closed, ostensibly for economic reasons, the government announced on November 3.

The Hague: Victims of clergy sex abuse filed a case against the Vatican before the International Criminal Court on September 13. Two United States-based groups, the Survivors Network and the Center for Constitutional Rights, are backing the suit, which names Pope Benedict XVI and several high-ranking cardinals as defendants. The plaintiffs claim church officials have “enjoyed absolute impunity” from prosecution. A central question is whether the court has jurisdiction over this problem. Mark Ellis, executive director of the London-based International Bar Association, told *The New York Times* that the Court will probably conclude that it does not have jurisdiction, though the filing of the suit “raises awareness” of the problem. The International Criminal Court has jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed after July 1, 2002, when the court began its work. It has jurisdiction in the 117 countries that ratified its creation, but the United States and the Vatican are not signatories—a major hurdle for plaintiffs. Most observers think the odds against Court action are enormous.

Mexico City: An amendment to the Baja California state constitution that effectively bans abortion was narrowly upheld by Mexico’s

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Supreme Court on September 28. The issue was more one of state's rights than the definition of personhood or the legality of abortion. The same court upheld Mexico City's legalization of abortion in 2008. The issue appeared to allow Mexico's states to adopt their own positions on abortion. The court statement said, "The issue under debate was the power of the states to legislate on topics that are not expressly determined by the federal constitution."

Associated Press reporter Eduardo Castillo wrote, "Sixteen of Mexico's 31 states have adopted right-to-life amendments that severely restrict abortions, though almost all continue to allow it under some circumstances like rape or danger to a mother's life. Only Mexico City has legalized abortion on demand in the first trimester."

Both the Catholic Church and the National Fraternity of Christian Evangelical Churches applauded the ruling, while human rights activists and women's health organizations deplored it.

Moscow: The Russian Parliament adopted a law limiting abortions to 12 weeks of pregnancy except in cases relating to poverty, when abortions will be allowed up to 22 weeks. The October 22 decision also requires a waiting period of two to seven days. The lawmakers rejected proposals from the Russian Orthodox Church that would have required a husband's approval for a married woman seeking an abortion and for parental consent for minors.

Paris: Praying in the streets of Paris became illegal on September 16, and French interior minister Claude Guéant said the law would be enforced against any group. The street "is for driving in, not praying," he said. Most of the problems occur in a part of eastern Paris, where Muslims have outgrown a small mosque and are awaiting construction of a larger building. On the same day, the Netherlands joined France and Belgium in banning the wearing of a burka by Muslim women in most public places.

Toronto: An annual interfaith service at Toronto's Holy Trinity Anglican Church for judges of the Ontario courts has come under fire. The service, held since 1955, is a ceremonial "kick-off" to mark a new term for the Canadian province's courts. Wrote Tracey Tyler in the *Toronto Star*: "But some legal experts question the degree to which religious symbolism should be mixing with the official business of the state, including the workings of its justice system."

The ceremony, which has also taken place at synagogues, was defended by the Thomas More Lawyers' Guild of Toronto, a conservative Catholic organization. A slightly different twist came from the Canadian Secular Alliance, whose spokesperson, Kevin Smith, told the *Star* that his group did not want the service abolished but wanted the secular group included in future events. ■

By the Numbers

Religions Vary Widely on Conservative-Liberal Scale

Rank	Religion	% Theological Conservative
1	Southern Baptist	93
2	Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	90
3	Non-denominational Protestant	88
4	Churches of Christ	83
5	Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod	82
6	Church of the Nazarene	81
7	Assemblies of God	80
8	Christian Reformed	72
9	Eastern Orthodox	70
10	Seventh-day Adventist	65
11	Reformed Church	61
12	American Baptist	57
13	United Methodist	57
14	Roman Catholic	50
15	Mennonite	47
16	Presbyterian	44
17	Evangelical Lutheran	43
18	Disciples of Christ	39
19	Black Protestant	37
20	Muslim	31
21	United Church of Christ	29
22	Episcopal	28
23	Conservative Judaism	26
24	Bahai	18
25	Reform Judaism	4
26	Unitarian Universalist	0

This survey of congregations was undertaken by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. The conservative scale ranks congregations that are "somewhat or very conservative in theological outlook." The survey also found that Muslims, Reform Jews, Unitarian Universalists and American Baptists were the most likely to have been involved in interfaith worship services during the past year. The least likely to participate were the Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Seventh-day Adventists, and Mormons. As to community service activities, Unitarians and Reform Jews were the most active, while the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Seventh-day Adventists were the least active.

See www.faithcommunitiestoday.org

Books and Culture



Presidential Campaign Rhetoric in an Age of Confessional Politics, by Brian T. Kaylor. Rowman & Littlefield, 2011, 255 pp., \$75.00.

The use of religion, specifically evangelical Protestantism, as a political weapon and rhetorical device to silence opponents is the focus of this intriguing and well-written study. John F. Kennedy was the last exemplar of the "civil-religious contract," which regarded the political and religious spheres as separate entities. However, "Beginning with a born-again Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher in 1976, religious rhetoric began to play a new and substantially more important role in

presidential campaigns."

This new emphasis on religion threatens democracy, civil peace and public policy. "As Kennedy warned, our religious focus could result in our citizens and leaders ignoring the important solutions that our nation needs. Unfortunately, when faith trumps empirical facts, public deliberation and decision-making often suffer." Kaylor adds, "Presidential campaign rhetoric in the confessional era often highlights the religious faith of the candidates and links public policy proposals to

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religion.” As a result, there is a “displacement of priorities” and a discrimination against those who do not share evangelicalism’s priorities. “With their sectarian rhetoric our presidential candidates rhetorically exclude or even demonize segments of the American polity.” Presidential candidates now run for “pastor-in-chief” and “assume the role of national worship leader,” thus resulting in “an unwritten rhetorical religious test for the presidency.” Confessional politics “harms our electoral process, democratic ideals and religious faith.”

Religious faith “becomes politicized” and loses its religious message. Furthermore, “As presidential candidates use evangelical buzzwords, meet with evangelical leaders and voters, and discuss public policy in religious terms, they legitimize the confessional demands and thus increase the level of influence of evangelical leaders.” It is also clear that “evangelicals receive preferential treatment in today’s confessional political age.”

Both parties have succumbed to religious rhetoric and the most “rhetorically religious” candidate has won in every election from 1976 to 2008, the author argues. “Being uncomfortable talking openly about one’s personal faith yields devastating results at the ballot box.”

Will this pattern ever be reversed? Unlikely, says Kaylor, a professor at James Madison University. “Until more Americans recognize the dangers of confessional politics and cease demanding such appeals, presidential candidates will likely continue to engage in the testimonial, partisan, sectarian, and liturgical religious-political discourse that is harming our electoral process, our democratic ideals, and religious faiths.” Sadly, he concludes, “What American politics desperately needs is a revival of the ideals underlying the civil-religious contract as embodied by John F. Kennedy in his speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association.” Unless the environment changes and voters reject religious excess, “It seems the United States remains without a prayer of returning to the religious-political model and wisdom of John F. Kennedy.”

This superb book should be required reading for presidential candidates and their advisors. But don’t hold your breath.

—Al Menendez

Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South, by Steven P. Miller. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, 301pp., \$24.95 paper.

Evangelist Billy Graham’s career coincided with the growth and power of the Republican Party in the South, which, the author believes, he helped to bring about. While Graham’s political involvements have been written about before, this book’s strength lies in its amazingly thorough documentation and research.

Though Graham has remained a registered North Carolina Democrat all his life, and was supportive of Lyndon Johnson’s civil rights

policies, his political preferences have always leaned Republican – sometimes decidedly so.

Beginning as a great supporter of President Eisenhower and encouraging the president’s moral crusade, he soon became a great admirer of Richard Nixon and did everything he could to help Nixon in 1960 short of an official endorsement. This included appeals to explicit anti-Catholic voting among evangelicals in secret, while professing neutrality in public. After his pro-Johnson interlude, he played a major role in the Nixon administration, helping to solidify its ties to Southern evangelicalism. Then came Watergate.

“The corrupt Nixon presidency seemed to mock the ideal of Christian statesmanship upon which so much of Graham’s political ethic rested. In the years following Watergate, the evangelist cultivated a noticeably more moderate image, which has endured ever since. . . . In short, Graham never completely abandoned the world of politics. As he shed the political residue of the Nixon era, he walked an increasingly forgiving line between his reconstructed image and the fundamental endurance not only of his basic theological assumptions but of his political inclinations as well.”

When the Religious Right emerged, Graham’s “exact relationship to the Christian Right remained unclear.” However, “The Christian Right came of age in Graham’s very backyard - both in a spatial and a spiritual sense - blossoming at the intersection of an ascendant Sunbelt South and a resurgent public evangelicalism. In key respects, Graham helped to construct the political and religious culture that made the Christian Right possible.”

Graham “possessed obvious ties with many founding fathers of the Christian Right and appeared to sympathize with important facets of the emerging Christian Right agenda.” He shared with them “a sense of national decline.” And while he “decried the tone of politicized conservative Christianity, he assisted the Christian statesmen who most benefited from that same phenomenon.”

—Al Menendez

Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to its Protestant Promise, by Kevin M. Schultz. Oxford University Press, 2011, 256 pp., \$34.95.

America’s largest religious minorities challenged Protestant hegemony as they battled for equal rights and respect, beginning about 1930. Fighting against religious intolerance was a difficult task because, writes historian Schultz, “the nativist vision of the nation picked up strength in the 1930s” and “on a day-to-day level, discrimination against Catholics and Jews was casually pervasive throughout the United States during the interwar years.” Interfaith organizations like the National Conference of Christians and Jews, as well as Catholic and Jewish enterprises, worked for good will and interfaith understanding and changed American life considerably.

By World War II these three “culture groups” had altered life so that a tri-faith image became the dominant reality. “That tri-faith image challenged the nation in unexpected ways, forcing it to alter the way power was meted out, who was deserving of social, political, and cultural recognition, and what that recognition would mean for the way the country conducted its business.”

America was now a nation of three faiths—Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. The struggle to make this permanent also affected church-state relationships. “The high wall of separation between church and state that conservative Protestants have struggled against ever since was erected in Tri-Faith America too. This was, after all, the time of the second disestablishment of religion in the United States, the result of the labors of Catholics and especially Jews fighting to ensure that their re-

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cently proclaimed first-class status in American life remained unthreatened by any residual Protestant superiority.”

The author includes an exhaustive analysis of a case challenging the distribution of Gideon Bibles in New Jersey public schools, in which Catholics and Jews were successful before the state supreme court in a case argued by Leo Pfeffer. While Catholics and Jews did not always agree, and in fact differed on several issues, their success broadened the concept of acceptance. For a short while, both Eastern Orthodox Christians and Humanists tried to claim the mantle of “America’s Fourth Faith,” but the eventual broadening of pluralism to include a wide variety of religions, as well as secularist traditions, resulted from the tri-state development. “The success of the tri-faith idea shaped American life during the second half of the twentieth century and has continued to do so well into the twenty-first.”

An interesting chapter deals with the controversy surrounding the possible inclusion of a religious preference question in the 1960 census. The concept of “religious privacy” won out, and a religion question was dropped. Jews were mostly opposed, as were the smaller Protestant churches and liberal Catholics, while Catholic officialdom and main-line Protestants were favorable, as were demographers and sociologists. Interestingly, two old church-state separation allies differed, with Paul Blanshard in favor and Leo Pfeffer opposed.

Schultz’s history is a model of judicious scholarship, admirably conceived and vigorously argued.

—Al Menendez

American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America, by Colin Woodard. Viking, 2011, 371 pp., \$30.00.

Forget red states and blue states. Journalist Colin Woodard says America’s political and cultural divisions stem from the migration of peoples with distinct religious and political characteristics who have always fought with each other. “Each of our founding cultures had its own set of cherished principles, and they often contradicted one another.” Our divisions stem from the fact that “the United States is a federation comprised of the whole or part of eleven regional nations, some of which truly do not see eye to eye with one another.” In fact, “Since 1960 the fault lines between these nations have been growing wider, fueling culture wars and constitutional struggles.”

Cleverly naming the regions of the North “Yankeedom” and “New Netherland,” he shows how those regions have joined “the Left Coast,” i.e. the Pacific area, in a cultural war against the “Deep South” and “Greater Appalachia.”

“Many whites in Appalachia, Tidewater, and the Deep South became further entrenched in a Southern evangelical worldview that resisted social reform or the lifting of cultural taboos, and increasingly sought to break down the walls between church and state so as to impose their values and moral code on everyone else.”

The Northern nations support “social change, gay liberties, sexual freedom, women’s rights, gay rights and environmental protection,” while the “Dixie bloc” favors the “traditional order, creationism, school prayer, abstinence-only sex education, abortion bans and state’s rights.” This may be an oversimplification but it works rather well.

Caught in between are the moderate “Midlands,” “Far West,” “El Norte” (the former Spanish Southwest) and other regions that usually decide elections now, since they are filled with swing voters who don’t totally fit in with the ideological divide. In fact, he argues, “The bloc that wins the allegiance of El Norte stands to control American affairs.”

The regions are increasingly suspicious of each other. “The majority of Yankees, New Netherlanders, and Left Coasters simply aren’t going to accept living in an evangelical Christian theocracy with weak or

Edwin Gaustad

Edwin Gaustad, one of America’s leading historians of religion and church-state history, died in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on March 25 at the age of 87. He wrote widely about the American experience of religious pluralism, dissent in American religion, and the religious views of Thomas Jefferson.

He was a staunch defender of religious liberty and church-state separation and a long-time ARL member. In 2002 he appeared as an expert witness in a case challenging an Alabama judge who insisted on erecting a Ten Commandments monument at a courthouse.

Gaustad was noted for his biography of Rhode Island founder Roger Williams, the *Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, and *A Religious History of America*, a classic text for students and historians alike.

nonexistent social, labor, or environmental protections, public school systems, and checks on corporate power in politics.” And he adds that America “cannot survive if we end the separation of church and state and institute the Baptist equivalent of Sharia law.” Most VOR readers will cheer the last sentence, though the author might have broadened that statement to include any concentration of religious power.

The word fascinating is often overused in reviews, but it certainly applies to this well written, carefully argued, and convincing treatise.

—Al Menendez

The Christian College Phenomenon: Inside America’s Fastest-Growing Institutions of Higher Learning, by Thomas Chesnes and Samuel Joeckel, eds. Abilene Christian University Press, 368 pp., \$24.99.

This is an important book because it examines a virtually unknown (to most of us) subculture of American higher education, one that may fill the ranks of the Religious Right of the future.

The authors surveyed 1,907 faculty at 95 conservative Christian colleges and 2,389 students at twenty of these colleges. Many academic, theological, cultural and political questions were included in this comprehensive survey.

The book is enhanced by essays from a diverse group of scholars interpreting the meaning of the results for the future of faith-based colleges in the larger American culture. They include observations from Martin Marty, the dean of historians of American religion, and George Marsden, the premier historian of American fundamentalism.

Many of the findings of the student survey confirm the expected conservative orientation. Students are far more likely to be Republicans (63%) than Democrats (12%), though about a quarter are Independents or something else. They endorse “theological conservatism” over “theological liberalism” by 60% to 18% with the rest in the middle. But most also endorse measures to protect the environment and are concerned about global climate change. Ninety percent of students think abortion is “morally wrong” and 53% are opposed to embryonic stem cell research (28% are unsure and 19% favor it).

The demographics are generally unsurprising. Eighty-seven percent of students are white, and a large majority (72%) are female (higher than at other colleges).

Interestingly, 70% of Christian college students attended a public high school, compared to 22% who attended a private Christian high school. The rest were home schooled (7%) or attended a secular private

continued on page 14

Books and Culture, *continued from page 13*

school (1%). Seventy-one percent believe the Bible “is the only authoritative source of information about God,” but 61% also say it is “acceptable to question the Bible.” Only half endorse biblical “inerrancy,” and a majority favor ordination of women.

The faculty differ in some ways from the student body: 62% are male and 94% are white. They are less likely to be Republicans (46%), while 32% are Independents and 22% are Democrats. But they are theological conservatives, 69% to 21%. More than 93% attend church services weekly or more often.

Significantly, 70% of faculty endorse allowing Roman Catholics to teach at a “Christian college that has Protestant origins,” while only 17% disagree. There is a policy at many of these colleges to require faculty to sign doctrinal belief statements that eliminate all but conservative Protestants.

Only 56% endorse the Bible as the only source of authority, while 70% think it is acceptable to question the Scriptures. At the same time 87% endorse “diversity of theological opinions” on campus. Two-thirds see “convincing evidence for human-induced climate change.” The faculty oppose funding for embryonic stem cell research 50% to 32%. They oppose same-sex marriage 75% to 14%, but are divided evenly on civil unions. Women should be allowed to become pastors, say 71%.

On three issues the faculty endorse an extreme right position: 57% think “abortion should be made illegal in the United States,” while 33% disagree; abstinence-only sex education is endorsed 57% to 34%; and 56% believe “the United States was founded as a Christian nation,” while 35% disagree.

A majority of professors and students reject evolution as “incompatible with Christianity” and favor Intelligent Design creationism. The editors address this issue: “Despite widespread acceptance and refinement of the modern evolutionary synthesis, the subject of evolution remains a contentious subject among many Christians. The theory of evolution underlies all sub-disciplines of the biological sciences, yet is often met with suspicion, hostility, or outright rejection. This resistance to the concept is often based not on scientific deficiencies, but as a perceived threat to Christian faith.”

—Al Menendez

American Religion: Contemporary Trends, by Mark Chaves. Princeton University Press, 2011, 139 pp., \$22.95.

This study of religious trends from data compiled over the past forty years is both authoritative and revealing. Some of the findings are well-known but it is good to have them confirmed. “Actively religious Ameri-

cans are more politically and socially conservative than less religious Americans. Active churchgoers support more restrictions on legal abortion, endorse more traditional gender roles, and vote Republican more often than less religious people.”

Religiously active people have themselves become more conservative, and the decline among other groups “means that more of the most religiously active people in the United States are evangelical Protestants.” Two other factors are notable: “A second cause of the increasingly tight connection between religious service attendance and some kinds of social and political conservatism is that people have been changing their religion to match their political and social views... Third, the growing gap between the highly religious and the less religious has been driven by activists from both ends of the political spectrum who pushed political parties to emphasize issues with religious resonance and who pushed religious groups to emphasize politics.”

At the same time, writes Duke professor Chaves, “the public increasingly disapproves of politicized religion” and “has become less enamored of some kinds of explicit religious involvement in politics.”

As to belief, “There is much continuity and some decline” (particularly in the percentage of adults who believe in biblical inerrancy). “No indicator of traditional religious belief or practice is going up.”

Weekly church attendance is closer to 25% than to the 40% often reported, he says. Religious involvement is affected by numerous demographic trends, including family structure. About one fifth of Protestant churches are independent of any denomination and about one fifth of Protestants attend these churches.

Another interesting fact is that “there is no increase since 1998 in congregations’ involvement in social services, receipt of public funds for their social service work, or collaborations with government.” So much for the faith-based initiatives.

This is the last word on religious change in America from someone who knows what he is talking about and knows how to interpret data.

—Al Menendez

From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism, by D.G. Hart. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011, 237 pp., \$25.00.

This book has an unusual focus. Obviously written by an evangelical for fellow evangelicals, it does not encourage a withdrawal from politics, or support for Democratic liberals, but instead urges evangelicals to become more like classical conservatives.

Evangelicals who want to enforce their moral codes through government and law are at variance with traditional conservatism, which frowns on expansive government, favors a maximum of human liberty, and rejects “perfectionism.”

Hart argues, “Evangelicalism has always espoused a form of religious and moral idealism that is profoundly at odds with political conservatism.” He explains: “Without a discourse informed either by the American political tradition or a moral philosophy that drew upon classical and Christian reflection, the Religious Right resorted to the language American Protestants knew best—the patois of civil religion and biblical morality.” That is why the Religious Right stressed highly dubious concepts about America’s “Christian identity and mission” and emphasized “biblical prohibitions,” even though “in the United States, the Bible is not legally authoritative.”

He stresses that “conservatism is not inherently or obviously biblical,” though he believes that certain Burkean conservative values have an appeal beyond religion. “Reading the Federalist Papers will do more to inform evangelicals about the greatness of their nation than meditating on the Decalogue or the Sermon on the Mount.”

Gains and Losses in House Seats

Texas and Florida were the big winners in the decennial reapportionment of the U.S. House based on the 2010 census results. Texas gained four House seats and Florida two. States picking up one seat are: South Carolina, Georgia, Washington, Nevada, Utah and Arizona. New York and Ohio both lost two seats. States losing one seat are: Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Louisiana.

The other 32 states will have no change in House members, including California, which did not gain any seats for the first time since 1920. These House changes will also affect the electoral votes for 2012.

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Hart warns that an overemphasis on religion will harm the pluralism and harmony that a democracy requires. "Some effort to remain non-partisan on religious matters in public institutions and spaces where Americans with different and contested beliefs assemble and cooperate is the only sensible policy for a republic that remains open to anyone irrespective of faith or disbelief."

This is a very provocative and interesting book but I suspect it will have more appeal to elites than to people in the pews, who are likely to continue to support the Republican party and its putatively "conservative" candidates.

—Al Menendez

The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America, edited by Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, 401 pp., \$45.00.

This anthology of a dozen essays by top-notch historians of American religious history concentrates on the evolution from toleration to complete liberty of conscience in matters of faith. Even the enactment of constitutional guarantees of religious freedom on the federal and state levels did not assure the triumph of tolerance over intolerance. Decades would pass until religious minorities felt safe and protected from majoritarian intolerance. As editors Beneke and Grenda observe, "There was often a conspicuous gap between early modern theories of tolerance and intolerance, colonial and imperial law, and the actual treatment of dissenters."

These essays cover a range of events, including the influence of Quakers in Pennsylvania, the harassment of Lutherans, Jews and Quakers by the Dutch Reformed-dominated government in New York (New Netherland), the existence of anti-Semitism, and "the prosecution of religious crime" aimed at "blasphemers and Sabbath breakers." Beneke and Grenda note, "Blasphemy statutes and other laws designed to uphold 'piety' and 'morality' transformed criticism of orthodox Christianity into alleged assaults on civil society."

Anti-Catholicism was also part of the ethos of colonial America. "Whether it originated from actual dangers or imagined threats, anti-Catholicism fundamentally shaped the religious landscape of this predominantly Protestant region." In another essay Owen Stanwood argued that anti-Catholicism was as much political as theological in nature and was related to "the broader geopolitical contest between Catholic and Protestant powers." He adds, "Catholics appeared to present real existential threats to Protestant America." This hostility declined some-

what after early Catholic bishops John Carroll and John England unequivocally endorsed separation of church and state and liberty of conscience.

In one essay Chris Beneke summarizes the state of church-state relations during the early national period of U.S. history. "The case can be made that a deeply entrenched, unofficial Christian establishment still dominated U.S. culture and politics well past the Founding era. Indeed, orthodox Protestants succeeded in maintaining the age-old prohibitions on blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking, while encouraging Bible reading in the schools. . . . Despite occasional outbreaks of violence against them, upstart groups and churches kept appearing on the landscape, worshiping publicly, and drawing proselytes. Moreover, there is evidence that public officials in the new nation actively defended the principle of religious liberty against mobs that sometimes harassed religious minorities."

This excellent volume is an essential purchase for graduate and semi-inary libraries, as well as for readers interested in the history of religious liberty.

—Al Menendez

The Cardinals: Thirteen Centuries of the Men Behind the Papal Throne, by Michael Walsh. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010, 250 pp., \$23.00 paper.

The office of cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church is an unusual one that has little to do with the early Christian clerical roles of bishop, priest (or presbyter) and deacon. The position developed slowly in the Middle Ages and became the principal advisors to the pope. Today, their main role is the election of the pope in a special meeting known as a consistory.

This interesting history cum biography thoroughly explores the role of cardinals, who often became political leaders in the secular realm as well as spiritual ones. (Think Richelieu in France and Wolsey in England). Some were scholars like Robert Bellarmine, while many were politicians and diplomats who served the papacy as secretaries of state. Some were even "men of war."

Walsh's history, along with biographies of 68 cardinals throughout history, shows some of the inherent problems and characteristics of an office that combines aspects of church and state. He concludes, "Cardinals are going to remain part of the Catholic scene for many more years to come. But not necessarily forever."

—Al Menendez



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Commentary

Oh, Canada

Canadians, it is generally agreed, are on balance more liberal than Americans. One compliment I have heard is that Canadians are English-speaking Scandinavians. But one thing that Canadians do not have is a clear constitutional guarantee of religious liberty and separation of church and state. As a result, several Canadian provinces compel their citizens to pay for sectarian private schools.

Perhaps the worst example is generally liberal Ontario, which funds Catholic schools to the same extent as public schools while refusing to fund Protestant, Jewish or other faith-based schools, in violation of simple fairness and also of Canadian international agreements. In recent months Ontario Catholic schools have disciplined high school students who wore pro-choice ribbons to school events while allowing anti-choice ribbons to be worn. Ontario Catholic schools have also banned Gay-Straight Alliance groups, which are common in public schools. Further, enrollment in Catholic "separate" elementary schools requires presentation of a baptismal certificate.

Long a leader in the campaign to end tax support for Catholic schools in Ontario, which dates to the 1867 British North America Act, is the

group Civil Rights in Public Education, Box 491, Pembroke, ON K8A 6X7 (publiced@igs.net; www.CRIPEweb.org).

But hurrah for Newfies! Newfoundland, Canada's easternmost province, visited by Vikings a thousand years ago and by John Cabot in 1497, was a separate British colony until it joined Canada in 1949. It had no public schools ever until the 1990s, only five tax-supported faith-based school systems, which were responsible for the worst education in Canada. Finally, Newfies (a term of endearing disrespect), tired of the backwardness and, as a result of two referenda in the 1990s (a three to one vote in the second), eliminated tax support for religious schools and went to US-style religiously neutral public schools. I have a set of the textbooks that are used in Newfoundland elementary and secondary schools to acquaint students with the various religious traditions represented in the province, including the (native) Inuit and humanists. It is amusing, and sad, to note that US public schools would probably not be able to adopt similar texts.

—Edd Doerr

More Findings from PDK/Gallup Poll

The Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll on education, released every August since 1969, revealed that opposition to school vouchers was higher than ever before, at 65% to 34%. In addition:

- "Americans tend to grade the public schools in their community higher than the public schools in the nation as a whole." This is particularly true of the school their oldest child attends, where 79% give that school an "A" or "B" rating. Similar high ratings are given to 51% of schools in their local community, but only 17% give A's or B's to schools nationally.

- 69% give teachers in their community an A or B grade, com-

pared to 54% for principals and only 37% for school boards. Despite intense criticism of teachers in the media and elsewhere, highly favorable grades for local teachers have increased 19% since 1984.

- Americans recognize the importance of adequate education funding. Gallup researchers concluded, "Public education funding is in crisis, particularly given the nation's current economic situation. Americans will support strategies that recognize that investments in public education are investments in our nation's economic future and well-being."