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REPORT from the Capital

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♦ Capital Campaign Update ♦

BJC supporters rise to Baugh's challenge

WASHINGTON — A Texas Baptist family's spontaneous challenge to jump-start the Baptist Joint Committee's capital campaign to build the Center for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill netted the organization nearly \$1.2 million dollars in just a couple of weeks.

BJC Executive Director J. Brent Walker, executive director announced in a July 24 e-mail to supporters that a matching funds challenge from the Baugh family of San Antonio was wildly successful. In little more than two weeks, donors gave or pledged a total of \$688,372.73 in response. An unnamed donor who gave a \$200,000 gift requested it not be matched, meaning the challenge raised \$1,176,745.46.

"The Baugh family has always supported the Baptist Joint Committee's fight for religious liberty. Now Babs has taken that support to a new level," Walker said.

A half-million dollar gift and matching challenge has energized our capital campaign and put us closer to making the Center for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill a reality."

All told, Walker said, the capital campaign total to date stands at slightly over \$2.5 million of the \$5 million goal.

The matching funds challenge kicked off during the BJC's annual luncheon, held June 29

in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly and American Baptist Churches USA Biennial in Washington, D.C. There, Walker awarded the Baugh Family the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award.

Babs Baugh, then, in a surprise announcement, said her family would match any new pledges or gifts made to the campaign between June 29 and July 15.

The center is part of a capital campaign to help purchase, renovate and endow a home on Capitol Hill to house the organization's permanent offices. The facility will also contain working

space for BJC partner organizations and visiting scholars.

BJC leaders said they hope such a building will establish a highly visible presence for the Baptist conception of religious freedom near the Capitol. For most of its existence, the organization has rented space in the Washington offices of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"I am so moved by the incredible generosity of Babs, the Baugh family and all of you who took up the challenge," Walker wrote. "The BJC is now closer to having the funds required to build the center ... a little over halfway there. Thank you! With the continued support of friends like you, we will surely [succeed.]"

— ABP and staff



Babs Baugh, with her husband, John Jarrett (right), is presented with the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award at the RLC luncheon in Washington.

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REPORT

from the Capital

At annual Religious Liberty Council luncheon, Balmer seeks ‘true Baptists’

WASHINGTON — One of the most prominent historians of American evangelicalism called on “true Baptists” June 29 to re-assert their prophetic role “as watchmen on the wall of separation between church and state.”

Randall Balmer, a history professor at Columbia University, told more than 550 supporters of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty that many of America’s Baptists, in recent decades, have “lost their way” (see pages 4-6 to read the full text of the address).

“They have been seduced by leaders of the religious right into thinking that the way to advance the gospel in this country is to abandon Baptist principles,” he said.

Former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, a Southern Baptist, was among the examples he listed. Moore’s controversial decision to place a massive monument to the Protestant translation of the Ten Commandments at the center of the rotunda in the Alabama Supreme Court building ultimately cost him his job — but it also made him a folk hero among many of the nation’s conservative Christians.

Moore argued that his oath to defend the United States and Alabama constitutions required him to “acknowledge God” as “the source of law” by creating the monument.

“Why not post the Decalogue in public places? Because, quite simply, it trivializes the faith and makes the Ten Commandments into a fetish,” Balmer said. “What Roy Moore was peddling was idolatry, pure and simple — a conflation of the gospel with the American political order.”

Balmer also assailed Baptists who have, he argued, so aligned themselves with political movements, they have diminished their ability to call the very officials they helped elect to moral account.

Balmer argued that Baptists who oppose such entanglements between religion and government need to bring their wayward brethren back into the fold.

“Every true Baptist understands that any attempt to baptize the faith with the imprimatur of the state ... ultimately diminishes the integrity of the faith,” Balmer said. “I’m asking Baptists to reaffirm their heritage. I’m asking them to rededicate themselves to the importance of liberty of conscience. Baptists were once a minority themselves, so they should know better than most the importance of protecting the rights of minorities, religious and otherwise.”

The speech came during the 17th annual meeting of the BJC’s Religious Liberty Council, held in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly and the American Baptist Churches USA Biennial in Washington. The RLC is composed of individual supporters of the BJC.

The council re-elected its three officers to second one-year terms. RLC co-chairs are Hal Bass, a professor at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and a member of First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia; and Cynthia Holmes, a St. Louis attorney and member of Overland Baptist Church in Overland, Mo. Henry Green, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Annapolis, Md., was re-elected as RLC secretary.

After Balmer’s address, BJC supporter Babs Baugh, whose family was awarded the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award at the luncheon, announced she would match every new dollar given to the campaign until July 15th (see page 12 for more about the challenge).

—ABP and staff



Randall Balmer delivered both personal support for the BJC and the keynote address at the 2007 RLC luncheon in Washington, D.C.

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INSIDE:

- ☐ Reflections 3
- ☐ Balmer address. 4
- ☐ Guest View 7
- ☐ Truett rally 8
- ☐ Hollman Report . . . 10
- ☐ News 11

High Court denies taxpayers' ability to challenge faith-based funding

WASHINGTON — A closely divided Supreme Court ruled June 25 that a group of taxpayers do not have the legal standing to challenge President Bush's promotion of religious charities just because they think it violates the First Amendment.

In a 5-4 ruling that could have implications for the courts' ability to hear religion lawsuits, the majority said that status as a taxpayer does not qualify one to sue over federal expenditures not clearly tied to congressional action, even when those expenditures violate religious freedom.

The decision in *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* is a victory for the White House and something of a setback for advocates of strong church-state separation. It also marks the first time the Supreme Court has dealt with President Bush's efforts to expand the government's ability to fund social services through churches and other religious charities.

"This ruling is a win for the thousands of community and faith-based nonprofits all across the country that have partnered with government at all levels to serve their neighbors," Bush said in a statement the White House released after the decision. "Most importantly, it is a win for the many whose lives have been lifted by the caring touch and compassionate hearts of these organizations."

The Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation sued the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, headed by director Jay Hein. The suit claimed the office and its actions violate the Constitution's ban on govern-

ment establishment of religion.

A federal district court dismissed the suit, saying the plaintiffs did not have standing to argue the case in court. But the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that ruling, saying the Foundation and three of its members, as taxpayers, had the right to challenge White House allocations used to fund conferences that promoted the faith-based initiative.

The Supreme Court has long held that taxpayers do not generally have standing to sue the government over how it disburses funds because the connection between individual tax-

payer contributions and expenditures is too remote. Individuals who sue the government must prove a specific "injury," in legal terms, from the governmental act.

In 1968, the court recognized a special exception to the generalized standing doctrine in regard to Establishment Clause cases. In *Flast v. Cohen*, the court said the exception was reasonable because of the special history of the clause, which bars government support for religion. Many of the Constitution's framers argued forcefully against European-style state support and financing of churches.

But in the latest decision, the majority noted Congress did not specifically authorize the expenditures — instead, they came from general funds that Congress provided to Bush. Therefore, the court said, the plaintiffs didn't meet the *Flast* decision's test requiring a clear nexus between congressional action and the government expenditure alleged to violate the establishment clause.

— ABP



Supporters honor, memorialize others with gifts to BJC

In memory of Bob Alsheimer

Cathy and John Baskin

In memory of John F. Baugh

A. David Courtade
Neal Knighton

In memory of Caitlan Creed

James M. and Marilyn Dunn

In honor of

Ann Virginia Davis
Kevin and Bronwyn Gilliam
Mark and Sundi Spivey
Dr. Virginia Boyd Connally

In honor of James M. and Marilyn Dunn

Susan Borwick
A. David Courtade

In honor of Rep. Chet Edwards of Texas

John and Karen Wood

In memory of Jack Prince

Frances Prince Corlew

In memory of Herbert H. Reynolds

A. David Courtade
Neal Knighton
Keith and Jaclanel McFarland

In honor of Joy Reynolds

Keith and Jaclanel McFarland

In memory of J.T. Rutherford

Ann Rutherford

In memory of Sara Rutherford

Charlotte L. Beltz

In memory of Hull Youngblood

Suzii Paynter and family

REFLECTIONS

A summer upon which to reflect & remember

Looking back over the seven decades of the life of the Baptist Joint Committee — the big picture — one sees an arc that traces a steady growth in resources and effectiveness in the fight for religious liberty. However, when viewed year by year — a series of snapshots — that trajectory reveals fits and starts, successes and failures, two steps forward and one step back (and sometimes one forward and two back), the happy marriage of now 14 Baptist bodies and an acrimonious divorce (Southern Baptist Convention).

Every now and then we experience a major breakthrough, a quantum leap forward, a coming together of God's providence with faithful friends to spur breathtaking advances in the BJC's ministry. The past month — anchored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly and American Baptist Churches Biennial in Washington, D.C. — is one of these rare, *kairos* moments.

It started off with a highly successful Baptist Unity Rally for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill. More than 200 champions of religious liberty gathered early in the morning to hear religious, educational and political leaders read portions of that famous sermon delivered by George W. Truett from nearly the same spot in May 1920, eloquently expounding on the importance of religious liberty and church-state separation and the role Baptists have played in advancing those principles over nearly four centuries. (I knew things were going well when, although overcast, the rain waited until 10 minutes after we finished!)

Holly Hollman led a CBF workshop, titled: "You're in Washington. Be an Advocate!" that was attended by an overflow crowd. This insightful instruction on how to more effectively advocate for the BJC and religious liberty was accompanied by numerous BJC-arranged meetings on Capitol Hill with members of Congress and their staff.

At the joint CBF/ABC plenary session, the BJC was honored and humbled to receive the first ever American Baptist Religious Freedom Award, along with a generous gift to advance our capital campaign to establish a Center for Religious Liberty. The nice things that American Baptists' BJC board members — Aidsand Wright-Riggins, Valoria Cheek and Sumner Grant — said about the BJC and a spontaneous ovation from the 5,500 Baptists gathered in the Washington Convention Center were truly heartwarming.



J. Brent Walker with Reps. Chet Edwards of Texas (left) Bobby Scott of Virginia at the Baptist Unity Rally for Religious Liberty. Rod Reilly photo

The annual luncheon of the BJC's Religious Liberty Council kept the ball rolling. More than 550 RLC members and BJC supporters were inspired by Randall Balmer's rousing address. But they were astonished by

what happened next. Having the night before handed me a check for half-a-million dollars for our capital campaign, Babs Baugh arose to challenge the crowd (and all BJC supporters) to do the same and agreed to match every gift or pledge that was made to the capital campaign by July 15.

That part wasn't planned. I don't know who was more surprised — me or Babs' husband, John Jarrett. Babs later told me that the "matching offer just popped in

my head while I was listening to Randall Balmer's speech. I knew that either God or Papo [her father, John Baugh, who passed away in March] put it there. So I had better do it or I'd be in serious trouble with one of them — and neither is a good choice."

Others must have felt the same way. By July 15, \$688,372.73 had been pledged or given by you — our generous and faithful supporters. The bottom line — these pledges and gifts, the matching funds, the half-million-dollar-gift and nearly a million dollars previously raised — add up to more than \$2.5 million dollars. This is more than half of what we need to reach our \$5 million dollar goal for the campaign!

I hope you were able to be a part of the rally, the advocacy workshop, the CBF/ABC joint meeting, the RLC luncheon and the matching campaign. If you were not, you missed something special.

We simply must seize the momentum of this moment to press forward to greater heights. Won't you be an advocate for religious liberty in your community, encourage and pray for the BJC in its ministry, provide financial resources — for our annual budget, endowment, and the capital campaign — to allow us to garner the resources we need to effectively defend and extend religious liberty for all?

If you do, the next 70 years will see the BJC soar to a level we now can only imagine. The stakes are too high, and the freedoms we enjoy too fragile, to do anything less.



J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

"We simply must seize the momentum of this moment to press forward to greater heights."



IN SEARCH OF BAPTISTS

By Randall Balmer

An address presented at the
Religious Liberty Council luncheon
June 29, 2007, in Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir," the letter began. "Start looking for a new job. The moral majority is going to put you and President Carter type of Christians out of a job." This letter, written in August 1980 by a man from Dallas, was addressed to Jimmy Carter's religious liaison, Robert Maddox, a Baptist. "Any staunch Christian would not support gays, would not support the ERA which contradicts God's plan for women and would support voluntary prayer in the school. You guys are real bummers. You don't even deserve to be called Baptists."¹

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it's difficult to locate with any precision exactly when so many Baptists in America ceased being Baptist. Some people, I suppose, would point to the storied gathering in Houston in 1979, when busloads of Southern Baptist "messengers" began electing a succession of denominational presidents whose commitment to church-state separation was, shall we say, tepid.

Others might cite the changing views of Wallie Amos Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas. In 1960, during the heat of the presidential campaign, Criswell declared: "It is written in our country's constitution that church and state must be, in this nation, forever separate and free." Religious faith, the redoubtable fundamentalist declared, must be voluntary, and "in the very nature of the case, there can be no proper union of church and state." Twenty-four years later, however, on August 24, 1984, during the Republican National Convention, Criswell changed his tune: "I believe this notion of the separation of church and state was the figment of some infidel's imagination."²

Still others might quote the head of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. "We'll see who represents Baptist views," he declared recently, taunting his ecclesiastical adversaries. "I know I represent the views of overwhelming numbers of Southern Baptists." The appellation Baptist apparently belongs to whoever can rally the largest following.

Let's review. It's my understanding — admittedly from the perspective of an outsider — that a Baptist has two fundamental convictions: a belief in adult (or believer's) baptism and a conviction about liberty of individual conscience and the separation of church and state. These notions have a long and rich history, going back (arguably) to the New Testament and certainly to the era of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, when Anabaptists were persecuted for their beliefs.

The Baptist tradition in America, of course, can be traced to Roger Williams, who arrived in the New World in 1621 to become pastor of the Puritan congregation in Salem, Mass. Williams, however, quickly ran afoul of the theocratic aspirations of the Puritan divines, who sought the collusion of the church with the state. Williams understood the dangers of this configuration and argued against it. He sought to protect what he called the "garden of the church" from being contaminated by the "wilderness of the world." His strategy for doing so was the construction of what he called a "wall of separation" between the two.

The theocrats of Massachusetts were in no mood to listen to Williams's objections. They expelled him from the colony, whereupon he went to Rhode Island (which the Puritans regarded as a kind of cesspool of religious heresy) and founded there a colony that enshrined Baptist principles of liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state.

The founders of this nation, in their wisdom — and due in part to the agitation of Isaac Backus and John Leland, both of them Baptists — decided to encode William's ideas into the First Amendment to the United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Although it is probably fair to say that Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were more concerned to protect the new nation from religious factionalism, it's worth remembering that Roger Williams wanted to shield the integrity of the faith from the meddling of the government.

That is a quintessential Baptist idea. So too is liberty of conscience and the protection of the rights of religious minorities. "Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty," the Baptists from Danbury, Conn., wrote to President Jefferson in 1801. "Religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals." Although this letter, signed by Nehemiah Dodge, Ephram Robbins, and Stephen S. Nelson, is less widely quoted than Jefferson's famous "wall of separation" reply, it provides a good summation of Baptist views. The Danbury Baptists emphasized that "no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions."³

So much of the discussion surrounding the First Amendment in recent years has focused on protecting public policy from religion. And it is a sentiment that has received a good bit of play recently in the hysterical fulminations of a passel of secular fundamentalists, notably Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and

Christopher Hitchens. Their putative concern about religion posing a threat to democratic institutions worries me not at all. Our form of government has proven itself remarkably durable for more than two centuries now. And I believe that our unique form of representative democracy in a pluralistic setting actually benefits from the calisthenics of being stretched and pulled in various directions. Besides, whatever threats we face these days emanate not from people of faith but from those who regard the Constitution as an impediment and civil liberties as a nuisance.

My concern about the various attempts to compromise the First Amendment is quite the opposite. I worry that the integrity of the faith is diminished by its entanglement with the state. By taking such a position, I'm confident that I stand with Roger Williams, the progenitor of the Baptist tradition in America, and a long line of Baptists stretching from Williams and Leland and Backus to George Washington Truett, James Dunn, and Brent Walker.

Let's revisit, for example, the issue of prayer in public schools. First, it's time, once and for all, to put much of the nonsense about school prayer behind us. The Supreme Court did not outlaw prayer in public schools. That's a canard, and it's high time we say so. As long as there are algebra tests, there's going to be prayer in schools. The issue is prescribed public prayer in public schools. In the early 1960s, the Court ruled, correctly, that such activity threatens the establishment clause of the First Amendment — and, in so doing, it endangers the integrity of the faith.

I attended a meeting a few years back where a representative of the religious right in this town actually proposed that the way to maneuver around the Supreme Court was to have schoolchildren recite a Hindu prayer on Monday, a Jewish prayer on Tuesday, a Christian prayer on Wednesday, and so on. No real Baptist would stand for such tomfoolery, for Baptists, following the lead of Roger Williams, recognize the perils to the faith of too close an association with the state. I, for one, have no interest in having my daughter or my sons recite a Shintō prayer at the beginning of each school day, much less a prayer written by Congress or by the state legislature or even by a local school board. Baptists, of all people, understand that making prayer rote and obligatory makes prayer into a mockery.

So too with the rage to post the Ten Commandments in public places. Why the Decalogue, first of all? Why not the Sermon on the Mount, for those who want to make the argument that the United States is a "Christian nation"? The Sermon on the Mount, after all, is the highest expression of Christian ethics, although it does contain some of that unfortunate language about peacemakers and those who show mercy and turning the other cheek and loving one's enemies and storing treasures on earth. It also talks about the dangers of praying in public, after the manner of the hypocrites. Perhaps that's why we prefer the retributive justice of the Ten Commandments over the ethic of love outlined in the Sermon on the Mount. Still, the soaring aspirations of the Sermon on the Mount surely would comport better with the American temperament than the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments.

But why not post the Decalogue in public places? Because, quite simply, it trivializes the faith and makes the Ten Commandments into a fetish. I was one of the expert witnesses in the Alabama Ten Commandments case, where Roy S. Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, plopped a two-and-

one-half-ton granite monument emblazoned with the Decalogue into the lobby of the Judicial Building in Montgomery. Moore, who had run for office as the "Ten Commandments judge" and who claims to be a Baptist, repeatedly refused the requests of other religious traditions to have their sacred texts represented in the Judicial Building. And he also refused to acknowledge other precedents for American jurisprudence: the Code of Hammurabi, the Justinian Code, or the English Common Law tradition. He wanted only the Decalogue.

My testimony in that case was that religion has flourished in the United States as nowhere else precisely because the government has stayed out of the religion business. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution set up a free market for religion, and the happy effect is that we have in America a vibrant, salubrious religious marketplace unmatched anywhere else in the world. The economic metaphor is especially apt: Adam Smith in his pivotal treatise on free markets, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, used religion to make his point about the value of free markets. The religious vitality we see in the United States is due in large measure to the fact that, throughout our history, we have abided by the venerable Baptist principles of church-state separation and liberty of individual conscience.

The lesson of Montgomery, Ala., is that when religion looks for sanction from the state, religion is diminished. Faith is reduced to a fetish. Some of you may recall that after Judge Thompson ruled, properly, that "Roy's Rock" violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, and workers were preparing to remove it, one of the protesters screamed, "Get your hands off my God!"

Unless I'm mistaken, one of the Commandments etched into the side of that granite monument says something about graven images.

Too many Baptists in America have lost their way. They have been seduced by leaders of the religious right into thinking that the way to advance the faith in this country is to surrender Baptist principles and seek the imprimatur of the state. This subversion takes many forms, ranging from the chimera of the so-called "school choice" movement and the attempt to prescribe prayer in public schools to posting the Decalogue in public places and supporting the mischief of faith-based initiatives.

There is even a movement afoot among counterfeit Baptists like David Barton and Rick Scarborough to ignore the First Amendment and to deny that the founders ever intended church and state to be separate. I've come to equate these people with the Holocaust deniers and those who debunk global warming — not to suggest that there are moral parallels among these groups but merely because of the brazenness of their denials in the face of overwhelming and irrefutable evidence to the contrary.

On the face of it, it's not difficult to understand why even Baptists would be tempted to compromise Baptist principles. With the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency in 1960, the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the changes to immigration laws the following year, and the rise of the counterculture in the late 1960s, Baptists and others discerned that America was changing. Specifically, they recognized the eclipse of the religious hegemony that Christians, especially Protestant Christians, once enjoyed. The free marketplace of religion had

(Continued on page 6)

always worked to their advantage, in part because Baptists and other evangelicals know better than almost anyone else how to compete in the arena of popular discourse. But the arrival of others into this gorgeously diverse and pluralistic nation meant that Baptists and Protestants and Christians no longer had the field to themselves. Rather than rely on the time-honored principles of the religious free market and rather than compete on a more-or-less equal footing, they sought to change the rules to their advantage.

And when Jimmy Carter, a true Baptist, refused to play along with their ruinous scheme, many Baptists elected to abandon Baptist principles in favor of policies that would, ostensibly, advance the cause of the faith. But as Roger Williams understood centuries ago, collusion with the state is a Faustian bargain. In this case, a succession of Republican politicians, from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush, exploited religious voters in the interest of their own political ambitions. The identification of the religious right with the Republican Party has deprived the faith of its prophetic voice. Where are the Baptist voices of conscience decrying this administration's immoral war in Iraq, the relentless assault on civil liberties, and the abomination of torture?

In too many cases, the answer is that those voices have been co-opted by the promise — very often the mirage — of access to political power. They have traded the foundational Baptist principles of church-state separation and liberty of individual conscience for the illusion of political influence. The religious right has ransacked the faith in exchange for a conference call with Karl Rove.

And what have they to show in return? Precious little. The so-called Baptists in the ranks of the religious right have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. If I were a Baptist, I'd be tempted to sue for trademark infringement!

And too many Baptists have stood by as putative Baptists like Roy Moore perpetrated various stunts aimed at compromising the genius of the First Amendment. I want to know why every Baptist in Alabama didn't storm the Judicial Building in Montgomery and demand, in the name of Baptist principles, that "Roy's Rock" be removed immediately as an affront to the integrity of the faith — which, as Roger Williams taught us long ago, suffers when it is confused with the state. What Roy Moore was peddling was idolatry, pure and simple — a conflation of the gospel with the American political order.

I confess that I'm not up-to-date on current Baptist thinking about perdition, but I have to believe there is a somewhat warmer place awaiting the Baptist leaders in Alabama who stood by idly in the face of this nonsense. Not Gehenna, perhaps, but somewhere a tad warmer than the norm. I was thinking more along the lines of Houston — or Washington.

My time is drawing to a close and, this being a gathering of Baptists, I must segue into the altar call. I'm asking Baptists to reaffirm their heritage. I'm asking them to rededicate themselves to the importance of liberty of conscience. Baptists were once a minority themselves, so they should know better than most the importance of protecting the rights of minorities, religious or otherwise. "Our contention is not for mere toleration, but for absolute liberty," George Washington Truett declared from the steps of the Capitol on May 16, 1920. "There is a wide difference between toleration and liberty ... It is the consistent and insistent contention of our Baptist people, always and everywhere, that religion must be forever voluntary and uncoerced, and that it is not the prerogative of any power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to compel men to conform to any religious creed or form of worship, or to pay taxes for the support of a religious organi-

zation to which they do not believe."

Most important, I ask that Baptists reclaim their heritage as watchmen on the wall of separation between church and state. That entails a stern and unstinting rebuke of those supposed Baptists who seek to undermine the First Amendment, the best friend that religion has ever had. They are not real Baptists, for no true Baptist would stand for the compromise of such a foundational Baptist principle.

And let's remember the perils of lusting after political influence. Religion always functions best from the margins of society and not in the councils of power. That is the great lesson of American history — and, arguably, all of church history. Once religion hankers after temporal influence, the faith loses its prophetic edge. The proper place for all believers, Baptist or otherwise, is on the margins, calling the powerful to account, all the while refusing the seductions of power.

Let me be clear about what I am not saying. I am not arguing that people of faith should not participate in the political process. Not at all. I happen to believe that the arena of public discourse would be impoverished without voices of faith.

But let those voices be clear and uncompromised by unsavory political entanglements, unburdened by the empty promises of religious favoritism, and free from the ritualistic piety of patriotism. The marketplace of religion in America, encoded into the First Amendment, is a Baptist idea, and it is one that has worked remarkably well for more than two centuries now. But the underlying premise is that no religion, no creed, no faith enjoys a preferential legal status. Everyone in America enjoys liberty of conscience to believe — or not to believe — as she sees fit. Every true Baptist understands that. Every true Baptist recognizes that my right in a pluralistic context to believe and worship as I see fit presupposes my willingness to let others do likewise.

Finally, every true Baptist understands that any attempt to "baptize" the faith with the imprimatur of the state — whether it's the Ten Commandments or faith-based initiatives or public prayer in public schools — ultimately diminishes the integrity of the faith. Roger Williams warned us about that nearly four centuries ago. Those warnings were prescient then. Today, they're urgent.

1 Letter (handwritten), Terry Miller [Dallas, Texas] to Bob Maddox, August 22, 1980, "Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox, Religious Liaison," Box 3, Jimmy Carter Library.

2 W. A. Criswell, "Religious Freedom and the Presidency," *United Evangelical Action* 19 (September 1960), 9-10; quoted in Richard V. Pierard, "Religion and the 1984 Election Campaign," *Review of Religious Research* 27 (December 1985), 104-105.

3 Quoted in *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America's Founders*, ed. Forrest Church (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 127.



Dr. Randall Balmer is professor of American Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University, a visiting professor at Yale Divinity School and the author of *Thy Kingdom Come: An Evangelical's Lament* (Basic Books).

GUEST VIEW

◆ Doug Marlette 1949 — 2007 ◆

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist 'got it'

"We Baptists Gotta Stick Together — After All Nobody Else Will Have Us!" Saith Will B. Dunn.

Those are the words Doug Marlette put in Will's mouth. In 1990 the embattled Baptist Joint Committee asked Doug to allow the Rev. Will B. Dunn to give the late great Southern Baptist Convention some advice. That's what Doug came up with, quite on his own. We, the BJC, put it on a button, wore it and handed it out at the convention. The original sketch, blue lines and all, remains framed on the wall of the BJC offices in Washington.

Doug revealed that he understood the Baptist tap root. Nobody else will have us because when we are true to ourselves we are essentially dissenters. Nobody else will have us because we will not have them. It's not that we are nasty lone wolves. We can be really ecumenical when it comes to working together and caring for others and following Jesus. But we are not going to fit into anyone's establishment.

We are not going to mouth a creed. "There is one mediator between God and humankind, the one, Christ Jesus." Doug "got it." We come to God directly, personally. Without formula or filter. We come freely or not really. Soul freedom matters; so do the Baptist churches that help us stick together.

The authentic Baptist way suited Doug just fine. It was the folk faith of his upbringing. It fit his independent spirit, his artistic temperament. It sustained his passionately held freedom of conscience. It was the best of what he had gleaned from his southern religion.

The Rev. Will B. Dunn came boldly to the comic page, full of foibles and fumbles, fully human but with a heavenly message. The editorial cartoons parsed political reality, punctured pretense, jabbed hypocrisy and reduced phoniness to ridicule.

Bypass Baptist Church, served by Rev. Dunn, is spookily familiar. The weddings and funerals seem like live reports, not figments of fantasy. One suspects that with great good humor, Doug was exposing Baptists, as we are, warts and all.

Doug understood that there is a cluster of distinc-

tives around the culture Christianity he knew. He shared a churchy spirituality, a principled piety that is rooted in being a real Baptist. After all, nobody else will have us.

We are an odd breed, a churchly crowd without a creed. "Jesus is Lord" is our holy motto. We want that same freedom for everyone else. We can handle pluralism head on, as did Doug, because we ourselves are pluralists. Doug portrayed that so fairly but brutally that some people just couldn't take it.

Krista Tippet suggests that many modern media mavens think religion is all belief. That's why they fail to understand. Religion is actually about the drama of life, how

we get along, the ways of doing day to day. Doug knew that. So all the efforts to catalog beliefs and engage in the labeling of religions is a futile exercise. Doug had fun with it.

Doug Marlette saw the failures, the contradictions, the gaps, and the roughness of his region's religiosity. He knew the experienced beauty and power of "baptistified"

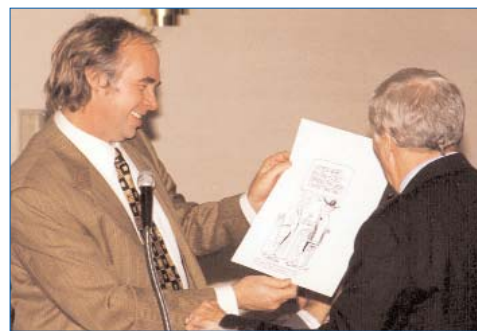
Christianity as Martin Marty tagged it (*Christianity Today*, 1983). He accepted the notion that a god who could be defined is God denied. Tough stuff! So Doug's faith, like kudzu, that damn vine, is ubiquitous.

Dang, Doug, we miss you already.

James M. Dunn is the president of the Baptist Joint Committee Endowment and a professor of Christianity and Public Policy at Wake Forest Divinity School in Winston-Salem, N.C. The cartoon shown in the center was a gift from Marlette to Dunn upon Dunn's retirement as BJC executive director in 1999.



James M. Dunn
President
BJC Endowment



Marlette, shown here in 1996, presents Dunn with a cartoon he drew to commemorate Dunn's 15 years as BJC Executive Director.

Baptists Unite: BJC holds religious freedom rally at Capitol

Participants read excerpts of Truett sermon, cast vision for ensuring freedom for all

WASHINGTON — Eighty-seven years after George W. Truett thundered a call for separation of church and state to more than 10,000 Southern Baptists gathered in the nation's capital, a smaller but more diverse group of Baptists paid tribute to the legendary pastor's message and called for a renewed commitment to full religious liberty.

Sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the speeches took place near the Capitol building, where Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, gave his May 16, 1920, address.

While George Washington laid the physical cornerstone of the Capitol in 1793, "its true foundation is on the first freedom — freedom of religion," Congressman Chet Edwards (D-Texas) said at the June 29 event.

Edwards said former Baylor University president and later chancellor Herbert H. Reynolds, gave him a copy of Truett's sermon several years ago. The sermon "made an indelible imprint" on him and caused the defense of religious liberty to become his "political calling in life."

"Our religious freedom must be protected by each generation," Edwards said. "There are politicians in each generation, in the name of religion, who would do it great harm."

Edwards and Congressman Bobby Scott, D-Va., addressed the crowd, composed mostly of those attending meetings of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the American Baptist Churches USA. BJC Executive Director Brent Walker introduced Edwards and Scott as leading members of Congress committed to preserving religious liberty.

Scott spoke of current church-state challenges like President Bush's faith-based initiatives program that

"allows discrimination with federal funds." He urged Baptists committed to full religious liberty to "continue to make your voices heard."

Alliance of Baptists leader Stan Hastey referenced the "sunny May day" in 1920 when Truett, influenced by John Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress and Baptist newspapers that came to his North Carolina home, gave his famed address.

"By every account, it was a remarkable occasion," said Hastey, whose introduction was followed by nine Baptist leaders reading excerpts from Truett's lengthy and influential sermon.

The readers included Amy Butler of Washington's Calvary Baptist Church; Steven Case of First Baptist Church of Mansfield, Penn.; Quinton Dixie of Indiana University-Purdue University; Pamela Durso of the Baptist History and Heritage Society; Jeffrey Haggray of the D.C. Baptist Convention; Robert Marus of Associated Baptist Press; Julie Pennington-Russell of First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga.; Bill Underwood of Mercer University; and Daniel Vestal of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right," Vestal read from Truett's sermon. "... God wants free worshippers or no other kind." Haggray echoed Truett's affirmation that religious liberty "was preeminently a Baptist achievement."

Large sections of Truett's address, not read at the Baptist Unity Rally for Religious Liberty, dealt with Baptist doctrines and even challenged Roman Catholic theology and practice. Yet Truett concluded that "a Baptist would rise at midnight to plead for absolute religious liberty for his Catholic neighbor and for his Jewish neighbor and everybody else." (Continued on page 9)



More than 200 attended the BJC's June 29 Baptist Unity Rally for



for Religious Liberty in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol.

Kathleen Armstrong photo



Participants of the Rally included, Curt Lucas, national coordinator for public policy and social advocacy for American Baptist Churches USA (top); the Rev. Jeffrey Haggray, executive director/minister of the D.C. Baptist Convention (above); Rep. Chet Edwards of Texas (far left); the Rev. Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor, First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga. (left) and Rep. Bobby Scott of Virginia (below).

Photos by Rod Reilly



At the rally's conclusion, BJC general counsel Holly Hollman said the religious liberty enjoyed by Americans today is worth the efforts of Truett and others before and since.

"Religious liberty is our right, and its protection our responsibility," Hollman said.

— ABP





K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

Hill visits offer opportunity for advocacy and dialogue

During the recent Baptist gatherings in Washington, several friends of the BJC took time to exercise their rights of citizenship in the most direct and often overlooked way: they visited the offices of their elected representatives. They introduced themselves or got reconnected with past acquaintances, thanked them for their service,

talked about the reason they were in town, vouched for the work of the BJC, and encouraged their representatives to defend religious liberty.

It is easy in this day of Internet petitions and multimillion dollar political campaigns to overlook the opportunity, or discount the value, of personal contact with an elected representative. Yet most members of

Congress pride themselves on constituent service. They rarely turn down the opportunity to meet with someone from their home district or state. As a quick tour of congressional Web sites demonstrates, members of Congress serve you and take pride in offering a variety of services, from Capitol tours and sales of flags flown over the Capitol to information about federal grants. Moreover, many explicitly state that they and their staff always welcome the opportunity to meet constituents.

Through the years, BJC staff has worked with members of Congress and their staffs to evaluate and influence legislation on various matters that affect religious liberty. We try to be a substantive resource for staff, as well as a prophetic voice for those we serve. Our work is greatly enhanced when members hear directly from their constituents. The next time you are in Washington, consider visiting your members of Congress and engaging them on current religious liberty issues. Here are three good reasons.

First, because you will be welcomed. On Capitol Hill, all members of the House of Representatives and Senate have an office with a staff assigned to various policy areas where they regularly meet with constituents and interest groups. Most of the offices create a specific state-inspired environment, decorated with state flags, photos and memorabilia, giving constituents a

feeling of ownership in their representation. The offices are there to serve you and that includes listening to your perspective on issues of federal public policy. When you engage your elected official, you have the opportunity to make a difference and experience one of the benefits of living in a democracy.

Second, because it is effective. A successful visit with your elected official takes preparation. However, as some first-time advocates learned in June, it is not difficult when the meeting is well-planned and the agenda is specific. During the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's General Assembly, I led a workshop, aided by several BJC board members, designed to prepare those who would have meetings on the Hill. In short, a good meeting includes elements of careful preparation, concise presentation, appropriate praise and post-meeting contact. While each visit differs depending on the attendees and the specificity of the issues discussed, a constituent's voiced concern for protecting religious freedom and the separation of church and state can have an impact on how a member addresses the issue and eventually how they vote.

Third, because it is rewarding. Those who met with members or their staffs reported the experience as a positive personal experience, as well as being an avenue to advance religious freedom at the policy level. Some made connections and began conversations that no doubt will continue when they want to influence their member on a particular issue in the future.

As the BJC looks toward the future and its plans to expand our capacity, we hope more of our friends and supporters will make it a habit to come see us and plan to meet with their elected representatives in Congress, too. If we can help you, let us know. In the meantime, we will continue to be your eyes, ears and voice for religious liberty in the nation's capital. Thank you for your support of our work!

“The next time you are in Washington, consider visiting your members of Congress and engaging them on current religious liberty issues.”

During overlapping meetings, Baptist leaders speak candidly about cooperation

WASHINGTON — Sitting on stools on a convention center stage, the Revs. Roy Medley, Tyrone Pitts and Daniel Vestal recalled how they came to know each other as they worked together in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Their almost casual chat took the place of a more formal sermon as several Baptist groups that usually meet separately — and express theology differently — held a recent joint worship service here.

“What you see on this stage tonight is three brothers in Christ,” said Vestal, head of the Atlanta-based Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to a combined congregation of 5,500 worshippers. “We’ve gotten to know each other and love each other and we found that we have a whole lot more in common than we have that divides us.”

Baptists from a range of fellowships and denominations came together for worship, rallies and to say — at least symbolically — that splits and divisions from the past will not prevent them from joining hands on issues like missions and religious freedom.

They often disagree with more conservative Southern Baptists, but they want people to know they are Baptist, too — just a different kind.

“They want to be able to define Baptists to themselves and in the public square since it often appears that Southern Baptists are defining everyone,” said the Rev. Bill Leonard, dean of the Wake Forest University Divinity School in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Now, Baptists who agree on issues like reducing poverty and hunger and respecting religious diversity are seeking ways to actively find common ground.

Medley, general secretary of the Valley Forge, Pa.-based American Baptist Churches USA, said the joint worship — which bridged the end of the CBF meeting and the start of his denomination’s biennial gathering — is the kind of thing that “makes God happy.”

“This is, in and of itself, an awesome God

moment,” he said. “American Baptists, Cooperative Baptists, Progressive Baptists coming together. ... It gladdens our hearts.”

The American Baptists and the Southern Baptist Convention split more than 100 years ago over lingering racial tensions, while the CBF split in the 1990s after the Southern Baptists took a more conservative turn. The Washington-based Progressive National Baptist Convention, which Pitts serves as general secretary, was born in the civil rights movement at a time when racial issues divided many churches and even the movement itself.

Pitts said Katrina brought Baptists together to form a network that has fostered rebuilding churches and communities.

“With that joint effort, we were able to do more together than we would have ever been able to do separately,” he said.

During the joint worship service, Cooperative and American Baptists announced a partnership to send missionary couples to Thailand and Haiti. At a news conference, Baptist leaders said the groups would work together to start churches. And Medley said the CBF, American Baptists and the Alliance of Baptists (a smaller moderate group) will co-sponsor a forum between Baptists and Muslims “so that we can begin to agree to work more towards issues of understanding and peace together.”

Baptist leaders also affirmed their plans for a larger gathering planned for next January in Atlanta. With the encouragement of former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, both Baptists, there will be a “Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant.” Predominantly white and historically African-American Baptist groups will emphasize their commitment to feeding the hungry, promoting peace, and caring for the sick and marginalized.

— RNS



CBF coordinator Daniel Vestal speaks during a panel discussion with ABC USA general secretary Roy Medley, left, and Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, during the combined CBF/ABC USA worship service June 29.

Rod Reilly photo