



# REPORT

from the Capital

## Prominent church-state issues likely to resurface in 109th Congress

As the 109th Congress goes to work in an atmosphere charged with increased partisanship, legislative battles over religious and moral issues will likely remain as prominent as they were in the last session, according to Washington observers of church-state issues.

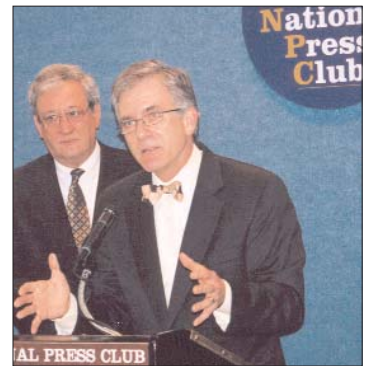
Hollyn Hollman of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and Roger Limoges of the Interfaith Alliance, say many of the religious freedom and moral issues that arose in the 108th Congress will come up again.

And with a handful of conservative Republicans in the Senate replacing moderate Democrats, some church-state legislation approved by the House but halted in the Senate could have more hope of passing.

Hollman, the BJC's general counsel, said she expects "three major issues will be back" — another attempt to allow churches to engage in partisan political campaigning while maintaining their tax-exempt status; a series of bills that would strip federal courts of their jurisdiction to rule on various church-state issues; and President Bush's continued efforts to expand the government's ability to fund social work through churches and other religious charities, also known as the "faith-based initiative."

Limoges, the Interfaith Alliance's deputy director for public policy, agreed with Hollman's assessment, but also said he expects church-state issues to arise in Senate fights over confirming Bush's nominees to federal courts — especially one or more possible vacancies on the U.S. Supreme Court. He said his group would be particularly concerned with nominations "that are going to be couched in [terms of] whether someone is a good Catholic or a good person of faith."

Adding to the church-state issues arising in the nation's capital this year, says BJC Executive Director J. Brent Walker, are the Ten Commandments cases now before the U.S. Supreme Court. At a Jan. 13 press event at the National Press Club, Walker said, "while religious expression by public officials is ordinarily permitted, there are constitutional limits. The posting of the Ten Commandments by government officials in a way that demonstrates endorsement of them — such as in a monument on Capitol grounds or in a county courthouse — clearly crosses the line drawn by the First Amendment."



J. Brent Walker speaks at a January 13 press event at the National Press Club in Washington.

### Church electioneering

Both Hollman and Limoges said they expect another attempt from Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., and religious right forces to pass the so-called Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act. Proponents have pushed the bill in the past two sessions of Congress, including forcing a floor vote in the House. Although it has failed, it has steadily gained support.

Hollman noted that some of the bill's chief opponents in the House "are no longer there." Chief among them is retired Rep. Amo Houghton, R-N.Y., who chaired a key subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee that dealt with the proposal. His departure "might make the bill more likely to get through the committee process," Hollman said. ➔

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### 'Court-stripping' bills

Last fall, the House passed two bills that would strip federal courts of their ability to rule on marriage issues and on the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance. While the Senate never acted on the proposals, they are likely to come up again, Hollman said.

"We saw last term that court stripping is a new popular strategy for addressing issues that may not do as well [for them] in the federal courts," she said.

She also noted that a third "court-stripping" proposal that ran out of time in the House is likely to gain publicity and momentum because of two high-profile court cases that will be in the news this spring. The bill would have removed jurisdiction from federal courts in cases involving displays of the Ten Commandments on government property.

"Given the attention that will be on the Ten Commandments because of the Supreme Court's decision to hear cases this term, we will likely see legislation designed to protect government displays of the Ten Commandments," Hollman said.

### Faith-based initiative

Bush's faith-based initiative also is likely to come up again, Limoges and Hollman agreed, although they differed slightly on



how. Because of many conservative religious leaders' perception that President Bush's stances on religious and moral issues are why he won re-election in November, Hollman said, they may try to pressure more moderate Republicans into legislative advancement of the faith-based plan.

"I think that there will be some members of Congress coming back with more confidence post election that will try again to move faith-based legislation," she said.

"Some who interpret the president's win as a mandate for 'moral values' — including his top kind of faith-related domestic priority, which is the faith-based-initiative — may push to pass something akin to the CARE Act,"

Hollman continued. That bill was left languishing in the last Congress, but in its original version would have made it easier for government to provide social-service funding through churches.

Limoges predicted Bush would make a renewed attempt at writing the faith-based plan into federal law. In his first term, he attempted to push authorization for funding of virtually all social services through churches and other deeply religious charities. The effort was stymied in the Senate. He then used his administrative powers — executive orders — to accomplish much of the same in individual federal agencies.

— By Robert Marus, Associated Baptist Press, and staff reports

## Court rules government must stop funding faith-based mentoring group

A U.S. district court judge has ordered the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to halt its funding of a faith-based organization in Phoenix that mentors children of prisoners.

Judge John C. Shabaz of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin agreed Jan. 11 with the Freedom from Religion Foundation, which argued that the grant to MentorKids USA violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

Shabaz noted that HHS had suspended funding of the program after the Madison, Wis.-based foundation sued. He said that the department was "effectively conceding that federal funds have been used by the MentorKids program to advance religion."

Shabaz noted that the program hires only Christians as mentors and encourages them to share the gospel with the youth they mentor.

"We are completely encouraged," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the foundation. "We believe that the faith-based initiative is unconstitutional."

Daryl Reese, executive director of MentorKids USA, told Religion News Service the program had received \$60,000 of a three-year grant that would have totaled \$225,000. He said the program could now not have the funding to further increase the

number of children it serves.

"MentorKids USA has acted with integrity in the use of federal funds," his organization added in a statement. "These funds were always used to help adult mentors be positive influences for at-risk children and never to preach."

Steve Barbour, a spokesman for HHS Administration for Children and Families, said the agency had no comment on the ruling.

George Washington Law School professor Ira Lupu said a significant part of the foundation's suit was dismissed in November. The foundation had argued that conferences and directors of offices of President's Bush's faith-based initiative were all unconstitutional.

The remaining parts of the suit dealt with two HHS grants.

"He didn't order the government to do anything more elaborate in terms of sort of policing and monitoring its grants," Lupu said of Shabaz's decision. "You wonder how did a group like this get a grant in the first place. ... That part of the case looked easy for the Freedom from Religion Foundation."

Shabaz ruled that the foundation did not give sufficient evidence that the other grant in question — one involving a partnership between Emory University in Atlanta and several foundations — also violated the Establishment Clause.

— RNS



J. Brent Walker  
Executive Director

## Focused BJC remains ready for church-state challenges

Looking back over 2004, the Baptist Joint Committee has had a very good year fighting for religious liberty and upholding the separation of church and state as a means of protecting our God-given freedom. This monthly publication has chronicled our work, our successes and, yes, a few failures.

However, I want to emphasize two recent accomplishments that serve to highlight the nature of the Baptist Joint Committee's mission.

First, as part of a thorough revision of our long-standing bylaws, we have changed our name from "Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs" to "Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty." For decades the BJC has focused its mission on preserving religious liberty and upholding the separation of church and state. We are the only *religious* group in Washington that works *only* on church-state issues. The new name will highlight this distinctive and help us dispel the mistaken notion that the Baptist Joint Committee is an advocate for all "public affairs" issues.

Without disparaging the importance of issues such as social justice, the environment, abortion, war and peace, and civil rights, we Baptists have long upheld the seminal importance of soul freedom, religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Moreover, there is no more important issue today than religious liberty. And, it is under severe attack. As BJC board member David Currie has often said, if religious freedom goes, all of the freedoms we enjoy as Americans will soon be lost. Through a disciplined focus on this one thing, we are able to make a significant contribution to the preservation of religious liberty.

Second, through the outstanding work of our general counsel, Hollyn Hollman, we have recently filed three friend-of-the-court briefs in the U.S. Supreme Court. Two briefs focus on a case dealing with government-sponsored displays of the Ten Commandments (see Hollman Report, p. 6) and one addresses a case dealing with the rights of prisoners to exercise their religion under federal law (see Hollman Report, *Report from the Capital*, Dec. 2004, p.6). In addition to influencing a decision of the highest court in the land on two critical issues, our filing these briefs highlights another extremely important aspect of our work. Religious liberty is protected by *both* clauses in the First Amendment — No Establishment and Free Exercise. We strive everyday to enforce both of these clauses, without allowing either one to dominate or obscure the other. So, we uphold the

Establishment Clause by saying "no" to attempts by government to favor one religion, pick out the preferred scriptural passages, and then display them in a way that endorses the religious message. At the same time, we honor Free Exercise values by saying "no" to the attempts by government to burden the religious liberty of everyone, but particularly that of prisoners whose rights are especially vulnerable. Our filing briefs in these cases demonstrate clearly that dual commitment.

Finally, I want to thank all the readers of this column for your words of encouragement and for your financial support. Although at the time of writing this column the year-end numbers have not been finalized, we have every reason to believe that 2004 will prove to have been a very good year financially. While we continue to cherish our relationship with our constituent Baptist bodies, we depend more and more on individual donors like you to make what we do possible. Thank you for giving, in many cases sacrificially, to support our mission.

Many of you have been kind enough to make memorial gifts. These year-end gifts are listed to the right. Thank you for remembering and honoring these friends by your thoughtful gifts.

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In memory of Bob Alsheimer  
Dr. Sylvia Campbell

In honor of Rosemary and John Brevard  
Robert and Parma Holt

In honor of Hardy and Ardele Clemons  
Reba S. Cobb

In memory of Margie Cliburn  
Chris Breeze

In honor of James and Marilyn Dunn  
Thomas and Judith Ginn  
Rabbi David Saperstein

In memory of Jerry W. Earney  
John and Janet Wilborn

In memory of Beverly Olds  
Hugh W. Olds Jr.

In memory of Becky Washington  
Sidney C. Reber





Bush administration, Baptist Joint Committee file

# BRIEFS

in Ten Commandments cases

By Robert Marus

Two friend-of-the-court briefs filed recently in the U.S. Supreme Court present differing views on the role of the Ten Commandments in American history and whether government entities can display them.

The Bush administration, represented by the Justice Department, and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty with the Interfaith Alliance, have filed briefs in two highly anticipated cases involving government displays of the Decalogue.

The Baptist Joint Committee submitted its brief to the Supreme Court Dec. 13 in *Van Orden vs. Perry*, a Texas case the justices will hear in March. The week before, Bush administration officials submitted a brief in *McCreary County vs. Kentucky*.

In the Texas case, BJC General Counsel Hollyn Hollman and University of Texas Law School professor Doug Laycock ask the high court to overturn a decision delivered by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In it, a three-judge panel of the appel-

late court ruled unanimously that a massive granite monument of the Protestant translation of the Ten Commandments, located on the grounds of the Texas Capitol in Austin, does not violate the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion.

In that ruling, Judge Patrick Higginbotham, writing for the court, said the commandments monument had a secular purpose in teaching about the history of the development of the state's legal system, and could not be viewed by a reasonable observer as an endorsement of religion.

"Even those who would see the Decalogue as wise counsel born of man's experience rather than as divinely inspired religious teaching cannot deny its influence upon the civil and criminal laws of this country," Higginbotham wrote.

However, the BJC brief argues that the display, as it currently exists, cannot be viewed as simply or primarily secular in its purpose or effects.

"The alleged secular effect of demon-

strating the commandments' important role in the development of American law is not explicitly stated at the site of the display, is not known to the reasonable observer, and depends on a premise that is demonstrably false," it says.

The brief notes that the introductory line of the commandments, "I am the LORD thy GOD," appears in larger type than the rest of the text, near the top of the Texas monument.

The BJC brief further observes that, although a few of the commandments mirror prohibitions against murder and theft found in laws of societies around the world and throughout history, the Decalogue begins with a set of explicitly religious instructions on idolatry, honoring the Sabbath, blasphemy and other topics.

"The two tables of the commandments are a unified whole, and Texas displays them as such," the brief says. "So even 'Thou shalt not kill' is not a mere statement of secular ethics, or of Texas law; Christians

and Jews believe it to be a direct command from God, personally delivered to Moses on Mt. Sinai."

But, the brief contends, the very arguments that attorneys must put forth in support of government-sponsored displays of the commandments can undermine the texts' religious meaning. For such a display to avoid running afoul of the First Amendment's ban on government support of religion, government lawyers must prove that it has neither a primarily religious purpose nor effect.

"Structuring the litigation in this way demeans the religious teachings that governments set out to endorse," the brief reads.

The Bush administration's brief came in *McCreary County, Ky. vs. ACLU*. In that case, a divided panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found in late 2003 that Ten Commandments displays in courthouses and a school district in three different Kentucky counties violated the First Amendment. The majority judges said the displays were not erected with a sufficiently secular purpose and that they appeared to endorse religion, even though they had later been modified to incorporate legal and historical documents beyond the commandments.

In the Bush administration brief, Acting Solicitor General Paul Clement and a group of Justice Department attorneys argue that the Kentucky displays do not violate the First Amendment, in part because "justices of this court, decisions of lower courts, and the writings of countless historians and academics have long recognized the significant influence that the Ten Commandments have had on the development of American law."

The Justice Department officials also deny one of the requirements set forth for

such displays by the lower court. "To hold, as the court of appeals did here, that any acknowledgement of religious history must be accompanied by elaborate disclaimers or explanations bespeaks a fundamental hostility to or suspicion of religion that has no place in establishment clause jurisprudence," they contend.

But in the BJC brief for the Texas case, the religious groups note assertions that the Ten Commandments have had a significant influence in forming the nation's laws may be ill-founded, no matter what judges may have said in the past.

"To say that the Ten Commandments exercised 'extraordinary influence' on American law ... is to wrap a kernel of truth in such a vast overstatement as to demonstrate that the statement is a pretext to justify displaying the commandments," they contend.

"What is plausibly true is that three of the Ten Commandments are an early example of prohibitions on homicide, theft, and false witness ... and that the commandments have been more visible than other ancient sources because they are part of the sacred text of the dominant religious tradition in Western culture. It is hard to plausibly claim any more than that."

Furthermore, the brief argues, "Penalties for murder, theft, perjury, and defamation tend to appear early in the development of all legal systems, including those of ancient civilizations with no reliance on the Jewish scriptures."

And, it continues, early American prohibitions on such crimes stemmed directly from long-accepted tenets of English common law, the forerunners of which were pre-Christian in origin: "The American law of murder, theft, perjury, and defamation thus traces back through centuries of English law to the barbarian

## Public displays imply endorsement

There is nothing in the case to rebut the explicit endorsement that appears on the face of the monument. The display is given no meaningful context independent of the sacred text itself. In that sense, the religious display is gratuitous — not explained by, or plausibly motivated by, anything apart from the religious teaching embodied in the displayed text. To a reasonable observer who comes upon this display — no matter how sophisticated the observer — the only perceptible effect of the display and the only imaginable purpose of the display, is to endorse the religious teachings thus displayed. Such an endorsement is clearly unconstitutional under this Court's cases."

— from the BJC brief

laws of non-Christian Germanic tribes — and this line of development is far more direct than any development from the Ten Commandments."

The U.S. Supreme Court often agrees to hear cases to resolve conflicting decisions between different appeals-court circuits. However, these cases mark the first time since 1980 that the high court has dealt with the issue of Ten Commandments displays on government property. That year, the court decided *Stone vs. Graham*, in which they found unconstitutional a Kentucky law requiring public schools to post the commandments on the walls of each classroom.

Since then, the lower federal courts have developed a hodge-podge of rules on allowing Ten Commandments displays in public settings — with some displays found acceptable when they are included as a part of a larger exhibit on the development of America's legal system and some displays are found unconstitutional. In their brief, the BJC and the Interfaith Alliance ask the court to create a clear standard for what is constitutionally acceptable in such cases.

"By holding governmental units to an objective standard, much sham litigation will be avoided, and this court will no longer invite governmental units to desecrate sacred texts," they write.

The justices will hear oral arguments in *Van Orden vs. Perry* (No. 03-1500) and *McCreary County vs. ACLU* (No. 03-1693) March 2 and are expected to render decisions in the cases before the court adjourns in July.

— ABP

## Public displays can lead to 'desecralized' texts

"Time after time, in litigation that is nearly always highly publicized, government minimizes the religious significance of government-sponsored religious practices or displays. Government insists that sacred texts are really primarily secular in their meaning, or that they have been displayed primarily for secular purposes and have primarily secular effects. In this process, government lends its weight to distorted readings of sacred texts; indeed, government litigators deliberately desecrate these sacred texts. Secular readings of the text are promoted; the religious understanding of the faith groups to whom the text is sacred are deemphasized or ignored."

— from the BJC brief





## Supreme Court's review of Ten Commandments cases an opportunity for education on religious liberty

K. Hollyn Hollman  
General Counsel

When the Supreme Court hears arguments in two Ten Commandments cases this March, many of you will have the opportunity to discuss the issue with friends, family and co-workers.

Disputes over such displays make headlines and have dominated recent conversations about the role of religion in public life. The media will likely present the usual caricature of a conflict between secular forces intent on banning

religion and religious forces eager to use any means available to promote their beliefs. The debate will be more interesting and productive if supporters of religious liberty for all get involved and reframe the issue.

We should take every opportunity to respond to the mischaracterizations and oversimplifications that will surely fill the airwaves. Those who rally around monuments in the name of protecting religion should be met with equally passionate voices from those who believe religion is best protected when the government does not try to do the work of the church. Here are a few suggestions on how to move beyond the usual red herrings.

First, when proponents of government-supported Ten Commandments displays argue that the Commandments are good rules for living, please tell them you agree. Certainly most, if not all, of the Commandments enjoy broad popular support. The idea that religious teachings offer benefits to society is not controversial. Allowing the government to choose which teachings it endorses is.

The debate has never been about the teachings, but about the proper *teacher* and manner of teaching religious values. Just because something offers a benefit does not mean the government can or should promote it. I find my Sunday school class extremely helpful, but I would never expect the government to support it. The government can endorse many things, but thanks to the First Amendment, it cannot favor your religion, nor denigrate mine.

Second, many people will argue in favor of Ten Commandments displays because they want to fight what they feel is a growing secularism in our culture and the declining influence of religion. Again, many Christians will

share the concern. But, fighting secularism through government promotion of religion seems a particularly weak strategy. Religion will not gain center stage in our society by relying on the government; communities of faith must work hard and demonstrate the appeal of their faith. A pastor in Texas recently told me that his congregation was quick to find fault with the removal of the Ten Commandments until he challenged them on their own efforts to know and live according to the Commandments. It takes little creativity to find ways to promote religious values better than defending an unconstitutional display of Scripture.

Forbidding the government from making religious decisions, favoring a particular religion, or promoting religion in general does not promote secularism. To the contrary, it provides an environment where religion can have great influence.

Third, many contend that the Ten Commandments are the basis of our law. While religion has had a profound influence on the development of our country, this argument promotes a false history and a limited view of the Scriptures. There is no evidence that the Ten Commandments played a significant role in the development of American law. Certainly there is no evidence that the Constitution, which only mentions religion in the First Amendment and the prohibition on religious tests for office, derives from a religious text. A quick review of the Commandments reveals that half (depending on how you count them) of the Commandments deal with our duties to God for which we have no secular legal counterpart.

It is incorrect and disrespectful to reduce the Ten Commandments to a secular, historical document. They hold a unique place in the history of particular religious faiths. Those faiths, and not the government, should define their place in our society.

You cannot emphasize the sacred nature of the Ten Commandments and not conflict with the Constitution's protection against government supported religion. Similarly, you cannot stress the secular aspects of the Decalogue, without shortchanging their religious significance.

The BJC is urging the Court to clarify the law in a way that recognizes the fundamental religious value of the Ten Commandments and upholds our country's fundamental commitment to religious liberty. We hope you will help others understand.

*The debate has never been about the teachings, but about the proper teacher and manner of teaching religious values. Just because something offers a benefit does not mean the government can or should promote it. ... The government can endorse many things, but thanks to the First Amendment, it cannot favor your religion, nor denigrate mine.*

## Reeves named staff attorney at Baptist Joint Committee

Stephen Reeves, a native of Austin, Texas, has been named a staff attorney at the Baptist Joint Committee.

Reeves began work at the BJC as a counsel-in-residence last fall after serving an internship at the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.



Stephen Reeves

Two Texas churches, First Baptist Church, Austin, and Second Baptist Church, Lubbock, financially supported his work in Washington, D.C.

His position replaces the assistant to the general counsel position vacated by Andrew Daugherty, who left the BJC in 2004 to enter full-time ministry.

"Stephen is poised to make a great contribution to the work of the BJC," said BJC General Counsel Hollyn Hollman. "His experience in Texas on church-state issues and his legal training will prove invaluable."

Reeves is a graduate of the Texas Tech University School of Law in Lubbock, Texas. He earned a degree in history from the University of Texas.

## State Court says religious attire cannot determine jury selection

The New Jersey Supreme Court has ruled that people cannot be barred from juries solely because their clothing or occupation suggests they are devoutly religious.

The court ruled Dec. 22 that an assistant Essex County prosecutor abused his discretion during jury selection when he tossed a man whose attire and prayer cap suggested he was Muslim, and another who said he was a missionary. The prosecutor contended that people who are "demonstrative" about their religions "tend to favor defendants."

*"Excluding people from juries based on their religious belief or expression violates the principles of freedom found in the Bill of Rights."*

— Ed Barocas, legal director of the New Jersey ACLU, on the New Jersey Supreme Court ruling

In a 6-0 decision written by Chief Justice Deborah Poritz, the court noted that followers of certain faiths are readily identifiable by their clothing and that some religions, notably Mormons, require missionary activity. Excluding them from juries because of those displays of faith amounts to nothing more than "religious bias rooted in stereotypes," Poritz wrote.

The ruling entitles Lloyd Fuller, 24, of Orange, to a new trial on his conviction for robbing a take-out restaurant while armed with a water pistol. He was sentenced in 2001 to 10 years in prison and is currently at a halfway house.

"The court has struck another blow against those who would discriminate on the basis of religion," said Assistant Deputy Public Defender Frank Pugliese, who argued Fuller's case.

The ruling, which granted that jurors can be dismissed if there is some other evidence that they are biased, was applauded by the Rutherford Institute, a Virginia-based group that fights for

religious liberty, and the state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Both had joined the case as friends of the court.

— RNS

## Appeals court upholds law protecting prisoners' religious rights

A federal appeals court has ruled that the portion of a 2000 law protecting religious accommodation of prisoners is constitutional.

The decision by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals marks the third time an appeals court has upheld the same section of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.

In this case, inmate Ralph Benning sued the Georgia Department of Corrections, citing the law in his request as a "Torah observant Jew" for a kosher diet and permission to wear a yarmulke.

Georgia officials argued that the section of the law was unconstitutional because it advances religion by giving preferential treatment to prisoners solely because of their religion.

"Singling out free exercise rights for protection is not an impermissible endorsement of religion," the court responded in a Dec. 2 ruling. It left it to the lower court to determine if the state must give Benning a kosher diet and permit him to wear a yarmulke.

The sole decision by an appeals court that has declared the section of the law unconstitutional has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and will be heard this term. — RNS

*"The court's decision is a victory for RLUIPA and, more importantly, a strong endorsement of the principle that there is no constitutional barrier to laws that accommodate and lift burdens on religious exercise. God willing, this is a preview of how the Supreme Court will decide this same issue this term."*

— Derek Gaubatz, senior legal counsel for the Becket Fund, in a statement on the ruling. The Becket Fund represented Benning in the case.

## Divinity school students begin spring internships at the BJC

Coleman Fannin of Elberton, Ga. and Tyler Gillespie of Dallas, Texas, are serving spring internships at the Baptist Joint Committee.

Fannin attends Baylor University in Waco where he is a candidate for a Master of Arts degree from the religion department. In May 2004 he earned a Master of Divinity degree from George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Gillespie, who attended Baylor as an undergraduate, is a candidate for a Master of Divinity degree from Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C. He is scheduled to graduate in May 2006.



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## REPORT from the Capital

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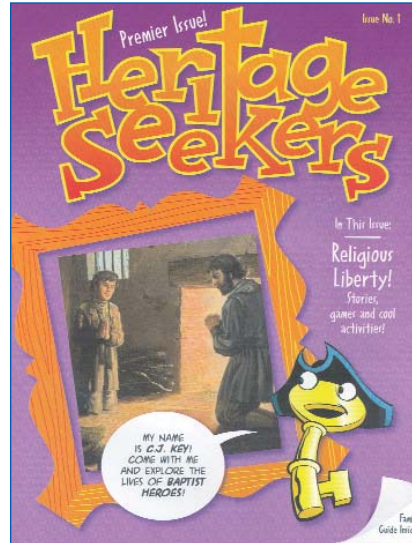
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## Heritage Seekers, Premier Issue

Center for Baptist Heritage & Studies, Richmond, Va. • Issue No. 1 • [www.heritageseekers.org](http://www.heritageseekers.org) • 804-289-8434

It's a sentiment that has been expressed many times before: "Young people today do not know their heritage." Indeed, knowledge of our Baptist heritage could further erode if we do not make it a priority to teach our children and grandchildren. To help educate a new generation about Baptist distinctives, the Center for Baptist Heritage & Studies, a Richmond, Va., -based organization, has published the first edition of its quarterly magazine, *Heritage Seekers*.

For starters, the bold colors, striking visuals and overall professional quality of the publication are noteworthy. Today's video-game savvy generation will appreciate the design that invites them to discover the impressive substance within. Led by the mascot "C.J. Key" (Culpeper Jail Key), readers are taken on an educational journey that introduces them to their rich Baptist history. To name just a few of the offerings inside, the 24-page magazine contains stories, word puzzles, games, and Baptist-hero trading cards. But perhaps the highlight of the premier issue is the comic book-style storytelling of the plight of James Ireland, an 18th Century Baptist preacher who was imprisoned in the Culpeper, Va., jail for preaching without a license. Also, to help youngsters navigate through the text, the publication includes "key word" boxes that pro-



vide the definitions of more advanced vocabulary words.

Religious Liberty, the main theme tackled throughout the premier issue by writers Leon and Nancy Castle, is cleverly presented for young minds to conceptualize. "Pathway to Freedom," an interactive game challenges players with questions, the answers to which are found in stories throughout the magazine. Young history buffs will enjoy reading the 1775 letter to Nathaniel Saunders, a Baptist minister, warning him what would happen if he continued to preach.

*Heritage Seekers* has something for everyone, including adults who will enjoy brushing up on their Baptist history or find themselves experiencing something for the first time. One section titled "Family Guide" is written specifically to parents, with historical background information and helpful tips to facilitate teaching Baptist heritage in the home. The magazine also has a helpful section titled "Church Corner," where it provides a lesson for church classroom settings such as missions groups or Sunday school classes.

— BJC staff

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