
WEEKLY BULLETIN

for March 12, 2006

The Times and the Scriptures

A Christian citizenship curriculum for developing people with an understanding of the times, to know what America ought to do (cf. First Chronicles 12:32)

Liberty U. Christian Law School on Fast Track

Christians concerned about America's direction with respect to religious liberty and moral-cultural issues got a dose of good news recently. More attorneys with a biblical worldview and a firm constitutional philosophy may join the profession soon, thanks to the American Bar Association's extraordinarily rapid approval of the Liberty University School of Law.

The school at the world's largest evangelical university, located in Lynchburg, VA, opened its doors in August, 2004, and applied successfully for the ABA's provisional accreditation on the earliest date possible, one year later. The university says approval of the application just six months after that was "virtually unprecedented," and means that the law school's first graduating class in May of 2007 will be fully qualified to take the bar examination in any state.

For discussion: Although America's founders never claimed their law was "perfect" in the sense of **Ps. 19:7** and **James 1:25** (see Backgrounder #9, *How Do We Know What Is Constitutional?*), discuss the extent to which **Deut. 4:8** applies to America's Constitution, as compared with other nations' laws. Does it make sense that in early America, aspiring lawyers were required to earn a theology degree before undertaking their legal studies? Consider Paul's description of his own legal training (at "Temple University?") in **Acts 22:3**. Discuss the description of what happens when good law is ignored in **Hab. 1:3-4**.

Boycott of SD Announced in Retaliation for Pro-Life Bill

Along with immediate courtroom appeals against the strong pro-life bill signed into law Monday by SD Gov. Mike Rounds, a tourist boycott has been announced to punish the state for challenging *Roe v Wade*. (See last week's *Bulletin*.) Specifically targeted is the popular Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Rally held each summer in Sturgis, not far north of Mount Rushmore.

Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, blamed the abortion ban on President Bush and his "anti-choice allies," and threatened that they will "pay a political price for advancing such an out-of-the-mainstream agenda." South Dakota's mainstream may be quite different from Keenan's, considering that the bill had bipartisan sponsorship and passed 50-18 in the House and 23-12 in the Senate. Ten other states are said to be considering similar laws.

Gov. Rounds said he fully supports the law, but expects it to be tied up in the courts for years before it could actually take effect.

For discussion: Review Backgrounder #14, *Roe v Wade: Fatal Right to Privacy*, for background on what is being challenged by the SD law. Do you expect that South Dakotans can stand up to economic intimidation? What does **I Tim 6:10** suggest about the right thing to do in a situation like this? As for the rest of us, are you familiar with the term "countercott"? Wouldn't this be a good year to visit Rushmore?

Why the PC Tampering with Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Photo?

Pennsylvania's Supreme Court smiled nicely for a routine photo recently, but they made the politically incorrect mistake of standing below one of four murals in their court building painted by artist Violet Oakley. It's title? "The Decalogue: Hebrew Idea of Revealed Law." When published, the photo's background had been oddly obscured. Too controversial, a bureaucrat explained, and it was cheaper to alter the background in the darkroom than to re-take the photo.

For discussion: Should the judges have posed instead below one of the other murals, "The Beatitudes: Christian Idea of Revealed Law"? Review Backgrounder #27, *The Foundational Ten Commandments*. Compare the attitude toward God's law in **Ps. 119:113, 163** and **165** with **Ps. 119:136**.

Website to check: See all four of Violet Oakley's Pennsylvania Supreme Court Building murals (three of which have Judeo-Christian connections) at www.aopc.org/Index/Supreme/photogallery9.asp.

Tiny Malta At Opposite Pole...

List Identifies World's Most Anti-Christian Nations

For the fourth straight year, North Korea tops the list of the most oppressive anti-Christian nations in the world, according to Open Doors USA. The organization evaluates nations on the intensity of their persecution of Christians. Their president, Carl Moeller, says there is good evidence that North Korea keeps tens of thousands of believers in prison camps, suffering severe abuse and torture. Saudi Arabia, also for the fourth consecutive year, ranks second on the list.

At the opposite pole, the Mediterranean island nation of Malta took a bold stand for its deep Christian heritage by revealing that its contribution to the new European Union's coinage would show "an image of Christ's immersion in water by John the Baptist" in the words of the Reuters news agency. Each EU nation is allowed to design one coin to be used throughout Europe, and the Maltese coin was chosen by a vote of the island's citizens. Their choice may be seen as a rebuke to the EU's decision not to refer to the continent's Christian heritage in its constitution.

For discussion: Small and obscure though they may be, does Malta remind us that a nation can indeed officially acknowledge its debt to God? Discuss Backgrounder #42, *Psalm 2: When Nations Defy God*. Can you find time in your discussion group, and in your private time, to pray as directed in **Heb. 13:3**? For a longer-range view of the issue of anti-Christian persecution, consider **Rev. 6:9, 16:5-7, and 17:6**.

Website to check: You'll find the complete list of the fifty most oppressive nations, along with other important news of the church worldwide, at www.opendoorsusa.org.

Court's 'Choose Life' Ruling Trumps Governor and AG

New York's governor and attorney general were overruled Tuesday by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals which declared that the phrase "Choose Life" can be used on specialty license plates to raise money for adoptions. Several other states already use the phrase for the same purpose, despite objections that the practice takes a position on a controversial issue, and uses a quotation from the Bible. (See the reference to **Deut. 30:19** in the discussion questions over the lead article in last week's *Bulletin*.)

The court ruled that prohibiting the words would be "viewpoint discrimination," and that Gov. George Pataki and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, because of persistent efforts to censor the phrase, can be sued for constitutional violations as individuals, not just as public officials.

For discussion: Another argument against "Choose Life" license plates in some other states has been "separation of church and state." Discuss how broad the definition of "church" would have to be for that argument to be meaningful. Review Backgrounder #12, *Separation of Church and State*, on this point.

TIMELY ARTICLE REFUTES NEWSPAPER CLAIM ON TEEN ABORTIONS

The prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* certainly didn't intend to embarrass the once-prestigious *New York Times*, but the timing couldn't have worked out better if they had tried. Early last week, the *Times* editorialized against laws requiring that parents be notified of their young daughter's abortion, denying that such laws have any effect. The next day *NEJM* published a multi-year study of the effects of Texas' law, showing significant reductions in the abortion rates for every age group, including as much as a 20% drop among 16 year olds.

UPDATE on an item from a previous *Weekly Bulletin*
(Date indicates edition containing the original information & discussion material)

- (2-19-06) U. S. Congressman Mike Sodrel (R-IN) has introduced a bill to protect the free speech rights of persons delivering invocations before sessions of state legislatures. The bill asserts that federal courts have no jurisdiction over any speech in the legislative branch, and reacts to a recent ruling by a federal judge prohibiting prayer in the Indiana legislature.

NEXT WEEK: Remember *Zelda*, the hopeless wannabe-girlfriend in the 1950's TV series "The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis"? No? Well anyway, she's now a California state senator, and she's sponsoring a pro-homosexual bill that critics are calling "Zelda's Revenge." Who woulda guessed?