

GIFT GIVERS

Agape International Ministries

August/September 1999

Putting God Back in the Public Square

– Roy S. Moore, Circuit Judge, 16th Judicial District

In his first official act, President George Washington did something that would be unthinkable today. He prayed in public! Two hundred years later, few government officials are bold enough to make earnest professions of faith.

Even the American justice system, which is firmly rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, has developed a bias against public worship and the public acknowledgment of God that ought to give the most militant atheist cause for concern. If judges can deny Christians and Jews the right to express their beliefs in the public square, they can surely deny secular humanists (devout believers of a different sort) the same right.

In California, creches and crosses have been removed from downtown Christmas and Easter displays. In Kansas, city hall monuments featuring religious symbols have been torn down. In Rhode Island, high school graduation invocations and benedictions have been banned. In Alabama, students have been prohibited by federal court order from praying, from distributing religious materials, and from even discussing anything of a devotional or inspirational nature with their classmates and teachers.

In the courtroom in which I preside, the public display of the Ten Commandments and voluntary clergy-led prayer prior to jury organizational sessions have sparked not only a national controversy but also an epic legal battle. In 1995, I was sued in federal court by the ACLU and the Alabama Freethought Association. Just prior to that case being dismissed for lack of standing (the ACLU and Alabama Freethought Association failed to show that they had been or were about to be injured), a separate lawsuit was filed in Alabama state court requesting a ruling on whether the First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the display of the Ten Commandments and voluntary prayer in the

courtroom. A state circuit court judge presiding in Montgomery County, Alabama, held that the practices in Etowah County were unconstitutional under the First Amendment's "Establishment Clause," which reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...."

It would appear that the circuit court judge and others were not impressed when the members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed a resolution stating that (1) the Ten Commandments are a declaration of fundamental principles that are the cornerstones of a fair and just society; and (2) the public display, including display in government offices and courthouses, of the Ten Commandment should be permitted.

The state circuit court's ruling was appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court and, appropriately, was set aside by the Alabama Supreme Court in 1998. Nevertheless, federal constitutional issues regarding public worship and the public acknowledgment of God remain unresolved.

Historical Precedent

When the federal legislature met in 1789, one of its first actions was to appoint chaplains in both houses of Congress. (Congress still recognizes God by appointing and paying chaplains who open each session with a prayer—even the recent session devoted to the impeachment proceedings against President Clinton.)

On the very day that Congress approved the wording of the First Amendment, its members resolved to request of President Washington a day of public thanksgiving and prayer for the peaceful manner in which the Constitution was formed.

A month earlier, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, one of the most important documents in our history. Article III of the Ordinance declared, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged."

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Are You Ready?

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

– Jeremiah 8:20

Is this what Christians face today, particularly in America? In this issue are two articles, “Putting God Back in the Public Square” and “My Daughter’s Death Will Not Be in Vain,” which delineate the sad condition of our nation, a condition not unlike the one which the prophet Jeremiah faced in his day. How has our America, often called that “shining city on the hill,” fallen into such dire spiritual straits? What has happened to our country? And, more importantly, what can we do about it?

As Darrell Scott, the father of two Columbine victims, points out, we don’t need more finger pointing, more restrictive laws, more religion, or more church buildings. In his words, “God is what we need!” He then goes on to challenge us to develop a sacred disregard for legislation that violates our consciences and denies our God-given right to communicate with Him. Judge Roy echoes this challenge by stating that “we must not be silent while every vestige of God is removed from our public life and while every public display of faith is annihilated. The time has come to recover the valiant courage of our forefathers, who understood that faith and freedom are inseparable and that they are worth fighting for.”

Clearly then, the solution to the problems of our nation is God Almighty. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

According to this passage, it is also clear that God expects His people, meaning those who claim to be a part of His church — we who call ourselves Christians — to be the ones who humble themselves before Him and repent for turning a blind eye to the lost among us. To again quote Darrell Scott: “The real villain lies within our OWN hearts. Dare to examine your own heart before you cast the first stone!” It is easy to lament our nation’s growing moral decay and its sickening consequences and then throw up our hands in defeat, but it is much more difficult to come to the realization that many of us — God’s chosen people, his Church body, Christians — are responsible for these conditions.

God didn’t say that He would forgive the sin of our nation. Rather He will forgive the sin of His people. In other words, we, His church, must first repent of our sinful ways and selfish hearts, then He will forgive our sins and heal our land. It is our responsibility to be not simply hearers of the Word of God, but doers as well. (James 1:22)

Never forget that only what you do for Christ will last. Merely having your name on the church roll is not enough. God’s will is clear: He wants all “men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) As Christians, we must be willing to go out into the world to bring the lost to Christ. A new time of harvest is here. Are you ready for the task at hand?

– WADE DAVID

(...continued from front page)

Every president of the United States (with only one possible exception) has been administered the oath of office with his hand on the Bible, ending with the words “so help me God.”

The Supreme Court begins every proceeding with the ringing proclamation, “God save the United States and this Honorable Court.”

Throughout our history, the executive and legislative branches have decreed national days of fasting and prayer.

Public offices and public schools close in observance of religious holidays.

United States currency bears our national motto, “In God We Trust.”

Also by law, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag affirms that we agree “one nation under God.” Congress would not even allow a comma to be placed after the word ‘nation’ in order to reflect the basic idea that ours is a “nation founded on belief in God.”

It is ludicrous and illogical to believe that it is constitutionally permissible for all three branches of the federal government to acknowledge God openly and publicly on a regular basis, and yet at the same time accept the notion that the federal government can strictly prohibit the states from doing the very same thing. Have we become so ignorant of our nation’s history that we have forgotten the reason for the Bill of Rights: It was meant to restrict the federal government’s power over the states, not to restrict the states from doing what the federal government can do.

False Neutrality

The Pharisees demanded of Jesus, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” He asked them to produce a coin and tell him whose image was inscribed on its face. When they replied, “Caesar’s,” Jesus gave his answer: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”

We have to render an awful lot to Caesar these days, but we do not and should not surrender our freedom of conscience. The state can’t tell us how we ought to think or what we ought to believe. As Jefferson testified, “Almighty God hath created the mind free.”

But in the latter half of the 20th century the state is trying to take by force the unalienable rights freely given by God, declared in the Declaration of Independence to be “self evident.” Caesar is trying to tell us when, where, and how we can profess our faith.

Since the 1960s, judicial activists have made a concerted effort to banish God from the public square. They have done this by deliberately destroying the distinction between “religion” and “religious activity.” These terms may sound similar, but in fact they are very different. Religious activities may include many actions that would not themselves constitute religion. For example, prayer and Bible reading might be characterized as religious activities, but they do not constitute religion, and they are not limited to any specific sect or even to religious people. One may read the New Testament to gain wisdom, and school students may pray before a big exam. Neither activity was intended to be, is, or should be, proscribed by the First Amendment, even if practiced in public. Sadly, however, it seems that the judicial activists are winning the war. Consider the 1997 case in Dekalb County, Alabama. There, a federal district court determined that a student’s brief prayer during a high school graduation ceremony was a violation of the First Amendment because it allegedly coerced unwilling citizens to participate in religious activity.

No student should ever be forced by law to participate in prayer or in other religious activity. But to outlaw the public acknowledgement of God simply because another student might have to witness it is as illogical as abandoning a school mascot or motto because it might not be every student’s favorite or because some might not believe in “school spirit.”

In this context, one of the most famous Supreme Court justices, William O. Douglas, once wrote that forbidding public worship discriminates in favor of “those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.”

Disastrous Consequences

October 1997 — Pearl, Mississippi; December 1997 — Paducah, Kentucky; March 1998 — Jonesboro, Arkansas; April 1998 — Edinborough, Pennsylvania; May 1998 — Fayetteville, Tennessee; April 1999 — Littleton, Colorado. These dates and places — these outbreaks of mass violence and needless loss of young lives — serve as a cruel reminder of something gone wrong, desperately wrong, in a nation founded upon faith in God and a respect for His eternal commandments.

Liberal commentators in the media, academe, and the justice system deride the notion that restoring prayer and posting the Ten Commandments can help stem the tide of violence and bloodshed. They prefer secular solutions, especially ones that involve more federal spending and regulation. In effect, they favor more concertina wire, metal detectors, and armed security guards instead of the simple and effective teaching of moral

absolutes. When will they understand that secular solutions will never solve spiritual problems?

With our stomachs full and our minds preoccupied with the pleasures of the world, we fail to seriously ponder the reason for the tragedies that are regularly occurring before our very eyes. We rarely contemplate the significance of the Judiciary's usurpation of power and suppression of religious liberty. When and if we do, we are too often afraid to take a stand — ashamed of our faith in God, afraid to hazard the notion of putting God back into the public square.

We must not wait for more violence, for a total breakdown of our schools and our communities. We must not be silent while every vestige of God is removed from our public life and while every public display of faith is annihilated. The time has come to recover the valiant courage of our forefathers, who understood that faith and freedom are inseparable and that they are worth fighting for.

In the words of that great Christian and patriot, Patrick Henry, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

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Remember to Save Your Work?

One day, God the Father agreed to judge a contest which would determine who was the better computer programmer, Jesus or Satan.

As the contest began, the two contestants began typing furiously. Lines of code streamed up their respective screens for hour on end. Seconds before the end of the competition, however, a bolt of lightning struck, taking out the electricity. Moments later, the power was restored, and the Father announced that the contest had ended. He asked Satan to show what he had come up with.

Visibly upset, Satan cried, "I have nothing. I lost it all when the power went out."

"Very well, then," said the Father. "Let's see if Jesus fared any better."

Jesus entered a command, and His screen came to life in vivid display, with the voices of an angelic choir pouring through the speakers.

In astonishment, Satan stuttered, "B-b-but, how? I lost everything, yet Jesus' program is intact! How did He do it?"

The Father chuckled, proudly, "Oh Evil One, don't you know that Jesus saves."

CAMEM Harvest Fund Performance

August, 1999

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***OUR GREAT GOD CONTINUALLY
SURPASSES OUR EXPECTATIONS!***

Special Provision for New FC's in Effect Now

As an encouragement to small and medium-sized churches, a special provision is in effect through the end of 1999. New Founding Church positions with an initial donation of \$3000 or less, will be given full Harvest Unit credit for the initial donation. The usual \$1500 expansion donation will be waived under this special arrangement. In effect, this will quadruple the monthly Direct Harvest (projected at \$200, instead of \$50) that would normally be available to a Founding Church starting with a \$3000 donation!

NOTE: All expansion donations will apply if the Founding Church elects to give additional donations. This special arrangement only applies to churches that have been meeting regularly for at least three months. It does not apply to other organizations, missionaries, or groups within a local church.

Children's Feeding Program in Ladyville Continues through Summer

Through a special arrangement with a local restaurant in Ladyville, Belize, most of the children who were receiving lunch during the school year continued to be fed through the summer. The principals of the the three elementary schools helped CAMEM obtain the necessary permission from parents to continue this ministry to the needy children. Since the schools buildings were closed for the summer, arrangements were made with the City Council to use Ladyville's community center for this purpose. Local resident and CAMEM friend, Frank Sibley, generously volunteered his time to oversee this program during lunch each day.

CAMEM Harvest Fund Performance

JANUARY 1998 THROUGH JULY 1999

\$1,000 Donation to CAMEM

These figures attest to the power of the Almighty upon the Harvest Fund and to His willingness to bless His children through CAMEM. Only the Lord Himself knows what He plans for the future, but this much has already become recorded fact.

Beginning with a \$1,000 donation to CAMEM, this table shows the results of the first nineteen months of the ministry's operation. Note that Love-gifts to this Seeker and growth of the original amount in the Harvest Fund are more than double the projected amounts shown in Appendix A, Example A of the CAMEM booklet.

God's grace enabled CAMEM to give this Seeker Love-gifts totalling \$2,344.53. From the same donation CAMEM was able to give other Seekers \$1,899.12. And the original \$1000, rather than being depleted by the distribution of these benefits, has been increased to \$4,749.50 (4.7495 HU). All of it added together means that during this period the Lord multiplied the original \$1,000 into \$8,993.15.

Although these figures accurately report what has already taken place, they must not be construed as a projection of what will happen in the future. CAMEM neither promises nor guarantees that Seekers will ever receive any Love-gifts from CAMEM.

MONTHLY LOVE-GIFTS

Month	Net Monthly Gain	Percent Distributed	Total Allocated by CAMEM for Love-Gifts	Direct Harvest (remainder of allocated amount)	Amount Sent to This Seeker (held until at least \$50)
Jan-98	17.7%	56%	\$ 99.12	\$ -	\$ -
Feb-98	18.5%	53%	105.69	5.69	-
Mar-98	21.0%	48%	118.10	18.10	-
Apr-98	19.3%	53%	132.93	32.93	56.72
May-98	22.3%	46%	145.40	45.40	-
Jun-98	14.8%	67%	157.48	57.48	102.88
Jul-98	18.2%	56%	169.77	69.77	69.77
Aug-98	16.7%	59%	177.26	77.26	77.26
Sep-98	12.2%	84%	196.99	96.99	96.99
Oct-98	13.9%	72%	196.13	96.13	96.13
Nov-98	17.4%	59%	209.02	109.02	109.02
Dec-98	19.7%	50%	\$ 214.86	\$ 114.86	\$ 114.86
Jan-99	18.3%	56%	245.56	145.56	145.56
Feb-99	20.3%	50%	262.79	162.79	162.79
Mar-99	19.5%	50%	278.06	178.06	178.06
Apr-99	21.9%	46%	315.31	215.31	215.31
May-99	24.1%	42%	354.28	254.28	254.28
Jun-99	21.4%	48%	409.78	309.78	309.78
Jul-99	17.4%	59%	\$ 455.12	\$ 355.12	\$ 355.12

HARVEST UNITS

Beginning Harvest Units	Growth in Harvest Units	Ending Harvest Units
1.0000	0.0779	1.0779
1.0779	0.0937	1.1716
1.1716	0.1279	1.2995
1.2995	0.1179	1.4174
1.4174	0.1707	1.5881
1.5881	0.0776	1.6657
1.6657	0.1334	1.7991
1.7991	0.1232	1.9222
1.9222	0.0375	1.9598
1.9598	0.0763	2.0360
2.0360	0.1453	2.1813
2.1813	0.2149	2.3961
2.3961	0.1929	2.5891
2.5891	0.2628	2.8519
2.8519	0.2781	3.1299
3.1299	0.3701	3.5001
3.5001	0.4892	3.9893
3.9893	0.4439	4.4332
4.4332	0.3163	4.7495

CUMULATIVE TOTALS

Total to This Seeker From Beginning	Total to Other Seekers from This Donation
\$ -	\$ 99.12
-	199.12
-	299.12
56.72	399.12
56.72	499.12
159.60	599.12
229.37	699.12
306.63	799.12
403.62	899.12
499.75	999.12
608.77	1,099.12
\$ 723.63	\$ 1,199.12
869.19	1,299.12
1,031.98	1,399.12
1,210.04	1,499.12
1,425.35	1,599.12
1,679.63	1,699.12
1,989.41	1,799.12
\$ 2,344.53	\$ 1,899.12



Bonnie's Corner

It has really been a wonderful month for CAMEM and Agape, but for others (the Kennedy and Bissett families) it has been a tragic month. I will not elaborate on this subject, because the news media has done enough of that. Even though they have been very much in the lime light and we think of them as very important people, we have to remember, first of all, that they are human beings. They are parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins just like most of us.

We need to think of them in these terms and remember that they hurt when losing a loved one. Let's all remember the families of these three in our prayers. The Kennedy's have had an over abundance of tragedies. Whether you admire them or not, please pray for them. After all, God loves them, just like you and me.

As I was trying to decide what to put in my article for this issue, something came across the Internet and found it's way to my desk. I was so touched by it that I passed it on to a few other people. The response I got from my friends was so touching that I decided to share it with everyone. Hopefully, you have not already seen it, and it will be as touching to you as it was for me.

Keep Your Fork

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So, as she was getting her things "in order," she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what Scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. The woman also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say.

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked. "Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained. "In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance to end the great meal!" The woman continued, "So I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder... 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them, "Keep your fork...the best is yet to come." The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing, her favorite Bible, and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled. During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you, oh so gently, that the best is yet to come.

God has promised us the best if we follow Him, but it is up to us to accept the best or not.

We would like to extend our sincere sympathy to our dear friends and CAMEM Seekers, Barb and John Gardner. Barb's mother passed away earlier this month after an extended illness. Please join us in praying that the Lord will pour out His love and comfort in their lives.

- Bonnie



My Daughter's Death Will Not Be in Vain

Testimony of Darrell Scott – father of two victims of Columbine High School shooting – Littleton, Colorado, before the Subcommittee on Crime – House Judiciary Committee – United States House of Representatives, Thursday, May 27, 1999, 2:00 p.m. – 2141 Rayburn House Office Building.

Since the dawn of creation there has been both good and evil in the heart of men and of women. We all contain the seeds of kindness or the seeds of violence. The death of my wonderful daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, and the deaths of that heroic teacher and the other children who died must not be in vain. Their blood cries out for answers. The first recorded act of violence was when Cain slew his brother Abel out in the field. The villain was not the club he used. Neither was it the NCA, the National Club Association. The true killer was Cain and the reason for the murder could only be found in Cain's heart.

In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. I am not a member of the NRA. I am not a hunter. I do not even own a gun. I am not here to represent or defend the NRA, because I don't believe that they are responsible for my daughter's death. Therefore, I do not believe that they need to be defended. If I believed they had anything to do with Rachel's murder I would be their strongest opponent. I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy -- it was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies! Much of that blame lies here in this room. Much of that blame lies behind the pointing fingers of the accusers themselves. I wrote a poem just four nights ago that expresses my feelings best. This was written way before I knew I would be speaking here today.

Your laws ignore our deepest needs
Your words are empty air.
You've stripped away our heritage.
You've outlawed simple prayer.

Now gunshots fill our classrooms.
And precious children die.
You seek for answers everywhere.
And ask the question "WHY"?

You regulate restrictive laws.
Through legislative creed.
And yet you fail to understand.
That God is what we need!

Men and women are three-part beings. We all consist of body, soul, and spirit. When we refuse to acknowledge a third part of our makeup, we create a void that allows evil, prejudice, and hatred to rush in and wreak havoc. Spiritual influences were present within our educational systems for most of our nation's history. Many of our major colleges began as theological seminaries. This is a historic fact.

What has happened to us as a nation? We have refused to honor God and in doing so, we open the doors to hatred and violence. And when something as terrible as Columbine's tragedy occurs -- politicians immediately look for a scapegoat such as the NRA. They immediately seek to pass more restrictive laws that continue to erode away our personal and private liberties. We do not need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre. The real villain lies within our OWN hearts. Political posturing and restrictive legislation is not the answer. The young people of our nation hold the key.

There is a spiritual awakening taking place that will not be squelched! We do not need more religion. We do not need more gaudy television evangelists spewing out verbal religious garbage. We do not need more million dollar church buildings built while people with basic needs are being ignored. We do need a change of heart and an humble acknowledgment that this nation was founded on the principle of simple trust in God. As my son Craig lay under that table in the school library and saw his two friends murdered before his very eyes, he did not hesitate to pray in school. I defy any law or politician to deny him that right!

I challenge every young person in America and around the world to realize that on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School — prayer was brought back to our schools. Do not let the many prayers offered by those students be in vain. Dare to move into the new millennium with a sacred disregard for legislation that violates your conscience and denies your God-given right to communicate with Him. To those of you who would point your finger at the NRA, I give to you a sincere challenge. Dare to examine your own heart before you cast the first stone! My daughter's death will not be in vain. The young people of this country will not allow that to happen.

— COPIED

Are You Happy?

Did you know that Sunday, August 8th was “Admit You’re Happy Day?” Although, this has not been officially declared a national observance, several governors signed proclamations declaring it’s observance in their states.

When I read this announcement in our local newspaper, my first reaction was, “Why do we need a day set aside just for the purpose of admitting that we’re happy?” Then, it came to my mind that I know a number of people who would have a difficult time thinking of anything in their lives that they were happy about. These people profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Yet, they have such a negative mindset that they live in a continual state of unhappiness and misery. No one has a perfect life, but everyone can



find something to be happy about, no matter their circumstances. It is our fleshly nature to focus on the negative rather than the positive. Our society “feeds” this nature through gossip, media reports, and alarmists. We must “guard” our minds from the onslaught of negativism.

Happiness is a choice. We choose how we will react to the situations with which we are faced. For a Christian, every day should be “Admit You’re Happy Day”. Psalm 144:15 says “happy is the people, whose God is the Lord.” The word “happy” is translated “blessed” in other versions of the Bible. The Lord has truly blessed our nation abundantly! His longsuffering grace and mercy are revealed each day in our lives. We should live as happy (blessed) children of God.

Clergy Appreciation Month. October is Clergy Appreciation Month. Mark this on your calendar and begin planning now to show your appreciation to the leaders of your local church. Ministers are some of the most overworked and underappreciated people in our society. They and their families sacrifice in many areas of their lives to minister to our families’ needs. Let them know that you love and support them by planning something special during the month of October!



Justice — when you get what you deserve.

Mercy — when you don’t get what you deserve.

Grace — when you get what you don’t deserve.

Captive Audience

A little girl became restless as the preacher’s sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, “Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?”



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