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85-80

News Analysis

Religion's Year At High Court
 Upheld Church-State Separation

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--It was the year of religion at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Surprisingly, it was also the year of the big comeback for separation of church and state.

On the heels of recent high court terms that left advocates of separation lamenting their losses, the just-concluded 1984-85 term must seem like the return of the good old days.

At the term's outset last October, prospects for the following nine months looked anything but promising. In 1983, the court had upheld a divisive Minnesota plan to funnel tax dollars into parochial schools through the circuitous route of tuition tax deductions for parents who choose sectarian schools for their children.

That shattering blow was followed by rulings upholding a Nebraska practice of paying a chaplain at the state legislature with tax dollars and a Pawtucket, R.I., tradition of using public money to erect and maintain a Christmas nativity scene.

Church-state experts of all persuasions seemed unanimously convinced a trend was clear: the court's traditionally strict interpretation of the Constitution's religion clauses was on the way out. The new buzzword was "accommodation," meaning a majority of the justices favored more breathing room for religion in the public sphere.

What was easy to overlook, nevertheless, was the simple fact that the apparent trend-setting decisions came on 6-3 or 5-4 votes, margins too narrow to make sweeping predictions about future cases.

What happened in the 1984-85 term was that the fragile majority crumbled as swing justices switched over to vote for a stricter line on church-state separation in a string of new disputes.

In terms of volume alone, the recent term featured decisions in more church-state cases--seven--than in any previous term in the court's 195-year history. Of these, three were clearly the headliners.

Two of the three--dealing with the ever-volatile issue of public aid to parochial schools--were decided July 1, the next-to-last day of the term. That each invalidated a well-established program of using tax dollars to support sectarian education was unquestionably the term's biggest surprise.

By striking down a New York City program that sent public schoolteachers, at public expense, into parochial schools to provide specialized instruction, the court outlawed a 19-year practice in the nation's second-largest city. This was the first test at the nation's high tribunal of the historic 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act's mandate to provide equal services to parochial and public schools in underdeveloped neighborhoods, mostly in large cities.

That law--a centerpiece of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society--long had been considered beyond challenge, even though it represented a veritable bonanza for sectarian school interests.

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Less surprising--but perhaps even more important--was the court's same-day invalidation of a Grand Rapids, Mich., scheme using state funds to provide a similar "shared-time" program to help parochial schools provide services they presumably could not otherwise make available.

To many observers, the Grand Rapids plan was ludicrous on its face in that it called for the "desanctification" of sectarian school classrooms during periods when public schoolteachers were present by removing crucifixes and other sacred objects and posting a sign reading, "Public School Classroom."

Despite these largely unexpected victories, parochial aid opponents would be well-advised not to make too much of them. In each of the two cases, after all, the court divided 5-4, with Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. providing the key fifth vote. Two years ago, it was Powell who made the difference on the other side in the Minnesota tax deduction case.

In the other headline church-state dispute of the term, a more comfortable 6-3 majority struck down an Alabama law prescribing a daily silent prayer period in that state's public schools. Earlier, the court had affirmed a lower federal panel's invalidation of a companion statute mandating oral prayer.

Despite the ravings of Jerry Falwell and others that the decision signaled the death of religious freedom in the U.S., what the court did was reassert the view that government has no role in the religious indoctrination of schoolchildren. It was a ruling rightly applauded by those who understand that truly voluntary prayer needs no mandate or encouragement from legislatures or local officials.

In another of the church-state disputes, the court held 8-1 that states may not require private employers under all circumstances to give employees a day off each week for religious observances. It represented another strong affirmation of the Constitution's ban on an establishment of religion.

Over the sole dissent of Justice William H. Rehnquist, the majority struck down a Connecticut law giving employees an absolute right to demand the day off regardless of the inconvenience caused to the employer or fellow workers. At the same time, the court indicated clearly it will continue to abide by previous rulings requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations to meet their workers' need for time off for religious purposes.

In a similarly well-reasoned decision, the court unanimously held that the commercial activities of private religious groups are not exempt from minimum wage requirements. The decision rejected claims by the extremist Alamo Foundation of Alma, Ark., that application of the federal fair labor law violated its free exercise of religion.

Although the justices did not question the religious nature of the foundation, they properly held that religious groups that compete in the open marketplace should not be given an advantage over competitors by paying sub-minimum wages.

In its other pair of church-state cases, the court found itself deadlocked by 4-4 votes owing to the mid-term illness of Justice Powell. The tie votes settled only the particular disputes, with no precedent-setting impact on similar problems elsewhere.

One of the disputes reopened the question of nativity scenes sponsored by cities and towns. In a case from Scarsdale, N.Y., a heavily Jewish community outside New York City, the court held that space in a town park must be provided for a creche. The court thus sided with a group of Scarsdale citizens who had challenged the decision of local officials not to permit the display.

The other 4-4 deadlock came in a decision affirming a lower ruling that a Nebraska woman must be given a driver's license in spite of her refusal to have her photograph made. The woman argued a state law requiring the photo would have forced her to violate the Decalogue's prohibition against making a graven image.

With the single exception of the Scarsdale creche ruling, each of the other six can be interpreted as a victory for separationists. Yet some of them were narrow victories, subject to future revision and overturning. The pair of parochial aid wins came by the narrowest of margins. And while 5-4 decisions are just as binding as unanimous rulings, they are clearly more precarious.

What remains to be seen is how long the present court can hold up against the onslaught of advancing age. Five of the nine justices are 76 or older, a factor that may yet give Ronald Reagan the rare opportunity for a president to shape a court to his own specifications.

It is that prospect--not the present court--that sends shudders down the spines of church-state separationists.

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Court Rejects U.S. Appeal Of
Wamble Parochial Aid Victory

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
7/3/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--One day after invalidating a New York City plan that sent public schoolteachers into parochial schools to provide special courses, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the federal government to review a similar case from Missouri involving Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor G. Hugh Wamble.

Attorneys for the Department of Justice, Department of Education and parents of parochial schoolchildren in Missouri had asked the high court to review a federal district court decision striking down a "bypass" device used by the Department of Education to deliver federal funds to Missouri parochial schools. That method was devised by Congress in 1974 to provide federal dollars under Chapter 1 of the Education Act to states whose own laws forbid aid to nonpublic schools.

The bypass provision was challenged by Wamble, a Midwestern Seminary church history professor who has earned a national reputation for fighting parochial aid. A minister, Wamble argued his own case in a five-month trial in 1977 in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Stevens Jr., of Kansas City. Although Stevens delayed his decision in the case for more than seven years, he finally invalidated the Missouri bypass device last December.

When the government appealed directly to the Supreme Court, Wamble counter-appealed. In April, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs asked the high court to delay rulings in the New York City case and another similar case from Michigan until hearing arguments in the Wamble dispute. But the court, in a pair of rulings July 1, invalidated both "shared time" programs, laying down the rule that public dollars may not be spent on the premises of parochial schools in such schemes.

In one of them, a case testing the 19-year practice of New York City officials to use Chapter 1 funds to provide remedial reading and math and other services inside parochial schools, the 5-4 high court majority invalidated the practice on grounds it carried the potential of excessively entangling church and state. That was the main issue in Wamble's challenge to the Missouri bypass plan.

Wamble said he was "very pleased" with the rulings "because the rationale of those two decisions seems to me to dictate a favorable disposition of my case." He added: "I am optimistic about the final outcome."

Although the government appealed its defeat in the Wamble case directly from the district court to the Supreme Court, it also appealed simultaneously to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, a safety valve move in the event the high court rejected the case. Because it did, Wamble noted, the government may now go back to the Eighth Circuit if it so chooses.

In the meantime, attorneys for all parties contacted by Baptist Press expressed the view that a stay of injunction imposed by Judge Stevens pending the outcome of the New York City case has been lifted. That injunction forbids any further expenditure of Chapter 1 funds through the bypass device in Missouri parochial schools.

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A Department of Justice attorney who helped argue the case before Judge Stevens said the government would need some time to decide its next step. Linda Lance, noting the New York City decision colors the Wamble case, said attorneys from Justice and the Department of Education will have to reassess the situation before deciding to keep alive the Eighth Circuit appeal or drop the case.

Attorney Charles Wilson of Washington, who represented parents of parochial schoolchildren in the lower proceedings, underscored the urgency of reaching some resolution to the question of how services under Chapter 1 are to be delivered to parochial schools.

Noting the law requires Chapter 1 funds be spent equitably in both public and parochial schools, he predicted "enormous additional costs" in administering the funds in light of the New York City decision. The ruling, he said, does not eliminate the law's requirement to assist underprivileged students enrolled in parochial as well as public schools.

The effect of the New York City decision, he added, is "bizarre" in that it will necessarily reduce funding to public schools under Chapter 1 by requiring more costly methods of delivering services to parochial schoolchildren.

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Mission Leaders Vow Not To Let
Consultation 'Fizzle Out'

By Leland Webb

Baptist Press
7/3/85

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Baptist mission leaders from 21 nations ended their first global evangelization strategy consultation vowing not to let their plans for greater cooperation in missions "fizzle out."

They spent two and a half days at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center listening to reports on Baptist mission activities and proposing plans for stepped-up gospel witness worldwide.

Christian researcher David Barrett provided a key term in reporting on a series of declarations by Christian groups over the past century that had called for world evangelization. Each had "fizzled out," he said, because participants failed to carry out concerted action.

"This consultation must not be just a beautiful idea, but the launching pad for the formulation of practical strategies," insisted Rafael Sereno of Colombia.

In one such outgrowth, representatives of Baptists in six Asian nations--South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines--agreed to explore ways to coordinate their efforts in foreign missions. One plan discussed was formation of a regional body to send out their own missionaries.

Kee Man Han, pastor in South Korea, said Korean Baptist churches and associations have sent missionaries overseas, but there is no convention structure to do so. "Neighboring nations are asking us to send missionaries," he reported, and young people are volunteering, but Korean Baptists are not prepared to train them. He asked the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to consider sending missionaries to train Koreans to be foreign missionaries.

Participants listened, sometimes in astonishment, to reports of mission efforts by Baptists in other countries. Alexander Montero told of Venezuelan Baptists' 22 home missionaries and their first two foreign missionaries and of projections for hundreds more within 15 years.

When asked how Venezuela can support so many missionaries, Montero explained economic sources have enabled the country's 122 Baptist churches and 9,000 members to provide support. "And we trust we will be able to in the future," he added.

"For almost a century the Baptist churches in Nigeria particularly, and other countries of Africa, have depended on gifts from the Foreign Mission Board through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," Samuel S.T. Ola Akande, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention noted.

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"We have come to the place where we feel we must fend for ourselves. We cannot continue to say, 'Give me, give me, give me.' We must give ourselves."

Give and take among participants at the consultation, described as a meeting of peers, was brisk and frank.

"It wasn't just a Southern Baptist gathering--it was a global gathering where we could speak freely," said Waldemiro Tymchak, secretary of the Board of World Missions for the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

To keep information circulating and plans moving, the group set up a small organization. They elected R. Keith Parks, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board president, interim chairman and Azariah McKenzie, executive secretary-treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, interim vice-chairman.

"Conveners" chosen for five geographical regions are to share data from the consultation with other Baptists in their areas. They also are to urge election before the end of 1986 of regional chairmen who will become part of a coordinating committee.

Parks, who proposed the consultation two years ago, had tried from the start to keep the meeting international and not dominated by Southern Baptists. He was the only Southern Baptist on the steering committee which sent invitations to the consultation. Invitations went primarily to Baptist groups with which the Foreign Mission Board works and which send or plan to send their own foreign missionaries.

Simultaneous translation of proceedings into Chinese, Korean and Spanish languages was provided for those not fluent in English. Participants or their related Baptist organizations paid their transportation and other expenses. The Foreign Mission Board arranged the meeting facilities.

The idea-exchange aspect of the "open agenda" meeting prompted many suggestions with wide-ranging implications:

--Representatives of several European Baptist bodies and of the two Middle East nations present decided to explore a closer missions connection among them.

--Horst Niesen of the European Baptist Mission told of a fresh approach in preparing new missionaries: Their national Baptist co-workers in the country of service provide on-the-field orientation.

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--Venezuelan Baptists offered their newly developed plan for Baptist world discipleship.

--Tymchak of Brazil presented a detailed proposal for a continent-wide strategy of Christian witness in South America.

Parks helped set the tone of openness. "We need to discuss together," he told the assembly, "what kind of missionaries are needed, where they are needed and how long they are needed."

The Foreign Mission Board, he continued, must reexamine and make changes, sometimes "radical," in some of its approaches.

He pointed to the need of "partnering" in the world mission process "in a way that we have never done before." He added what could have been the consultation theme: "We must be open to new ideas."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Gambling On Indian Lands
Threatens State Regulation

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)--Without federal legislation to clarify regulation of gambling on Indian lands, the nation's gambling industry may have found a way to circumvent state laws prohibiting various forms of gambling, a Southern Baptist anti-gambling expert has warned.

Larry Braidfoot of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission said if such legislation is not enacted, Southern Baptists and others "stand to lose the results of our successful resistance to the spread of the gambling industry."

Several pieces of legislation now pending in Congress would establish federal guidelines regulating gambling on Indian lands.

Braidfoot pointed out the "essential element in all the legislation" is that a form of gambling which is prohibited by the state would be prohibited on Indian lands.

"If this prohibition is not made clear," he emphasized, "a state can be effectively penetrated by any gambling group which is able to find some Indian tribe willing to allow its land to be used."

Promoters of dog racing and jai alai are attempting to establish gambling operations on Indian lands in New Mexico and Arizona, even though those activities are forbidden by state law. The promoters are hoping to build on the widespread growth of high-stakes bingo on Indian lands after permission for such gambling was granted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In recent hearings in both the House and Senate on the need for federal guidelines, lawmakers heard contrasting views from agencies.

Spokespersons for Indian tribes claimed, for example, that concerns about organized crime infiltrating their operations were unfounded and that the tribes were capable of self-regulation.

Spokespersons from state agencies in Arizona, California and Nevada countered that the only effective way to curb problems related to gambling, including that on Indian lands, is to make gambling activities subject to the laws of the state within which the lands are located. Several speakers pointed out that such a recommendation was made by the Presidential Commission which studied gambling in the mid-1970s.

Following the hearings, Braidfoot expressed specific support for H.R. 2404, introduced by Rep. Norman Shumway, R-Calif. Shumway's bill, he said, "appears to establish most clearly the prohibitions needed to prevent circumvention of state laws."

He urged Southern Baptists to register their concern with members of the two committees with jurisdiction: the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, chaired by Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., and the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by Sen. Mark Andrews, R-N.D.

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Huff Urges Peace Committee
To Find 'New Direction'

By James H. Cox

Baptist Press
7/3/85

MIDDLETOWN, Ky. (BP)--The newly-elected second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention believes the SBC "peace committee" elected during the convention's annual meeting in Dallas must lead the SBC in "another direction" in order to find a way out of the controversy that has divided the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

Henry B. Huff of Louisville, Ky., a 60-year-old lawyer and prominent Baptist layman, defeated retired Little Rock pastor W.O. Vaught in a run-off election during the June convention.

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Huff said he thinks the only way the committee can accomplish its goal is "if it leads us in another direction" because neither side in the denominational controversy "can be compromised." He remains dubious, however, about a quick resolution to the conflict since many people "don't want peace unless they can win."

Huff said he would "not be at all surprised" to see 60,000 persons attend the 1986 convention in Atlanta. Asked about the prospect of working with Atlanta pastor Charles Stanley, reelected in Dallas to a second term as SBC president, Huff said he had sent Stanley a letter of congratulations. In it, however, he also registered his concern over parliamentary procedure at the Dallas meeting.

Huff, parliamentarian many times for the annual meetings of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, claimed "many" of the decisions in Dallas were "just plain heavy handed," adding that he would take "a great deal of interest" in parliamentary procedures to be used at the next convention.

While he said he was "not a theologian," Huff said he does "know parliamentary law" and "can get into that." As moderator, he said, "you can be courteous" to people. When they (a reference to SBC messengers) ask for a point of order, they "deserve to be recognized," he declared.

Huff said he has been receiving copies "every day" of original letters from "across the country" which are being mailed to Stanley by SBC messengers who were "greatly disturbed" over the parliamentary actions in Dallas.

Huff, a former president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, is a member of Louisville's Crescent Hill Baptist Church, where he will become chairman of the deacons there for the third time Sept. 1.

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(Cox is associate editor of the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.)

Parham: Infant Death Rate
Presents Disturbing Trend

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
7/3/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Recent trends in America's infant mortality rate, especially in the South, "ought to trigger the moral alarm bell" within churches and Congress, declared a leader in the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Robert Parham, director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, pointed out while the U.S. infant mortality rate has continued to decrease, national studies indicate the rate of decline has slowed.

Furthermore, 10 of the 15 states with the highest infant mortality rate are in the South. South Carolina has the country's highest rate with 14.8, followed by Louisiana (14.2), Mississippi (14.0) and North Carolina (13.5).

Other southern states among the top 15 are Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Virginia and Texas.

The infant mortality rate--deaths to children under one year of age per 1,000 live births--has been estimated at 10.6 for 1984, compared to 10.9 in 1983, 11.5 in 1982, 11.9 in 1981 and 12.6 in 1980.

Parham said Southern Baptists and other Christians in the South "should be disturbed by the fact that the infant mortality belt and the Bible belt overlap."

He noted that two-thirds of infant deaths are associated with low birth weights resulting in part from inadequate prenatal care and poor nutrition, "both of which are products of poverty and hunger."

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Studies have shown that infants weighing 5.5 pounds or less are 40 times more likely to die in the first month than babies in the normal weight range. Low-weight infants also are twice as likely to suffer severe handicaps such as deafness, blindness or mental retardation.

The United States ranks 12th internationally in infant mortality rate, according to latest estimates prepared by the United Nations. Ahead of the U.S. are Australia, Canada, Spain, Japan and major industrial countries of western Europe.

Within the U.S., data for the period 1968 through 1982 indicate 10 states—including Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and South Carolina—have experienced "adverse trends" in infant mortality rate which cannot be accounted for simply by 'random fluctuation,' according to an official in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Studies also show the rate continues to be much higher for blacks than for whites. In 1982, the last year for which statistics are available, the rate among blacks was 19.6 compared to 10.1 among whites.

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Japan Resists Gospel
But Future Looks Good

By Mike Creswell and Marty Croll

Baptist Press
7/3/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Japan is one of the hardest places in the world to reach people for Christ, but prospects for future church growth look good, according to both Japanese Baptists and more than 180 Southern Baptist missionaries working with them.

In the last decade they have watched revivals sweep through the surrounding countries of China, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. Thousands are being won to Christ each year throughout much of Asia through crusades and local church work.

But in unfertile Japan, Christian growth has been slow and hard-won.

Despite many years of work by countless Christian missionary groups, fewer than one percent of Japan's 119.9 million people are Christian. Twice that number claim they're atheists. Most of the rest consider themselves Buddhists and Shintoists.

There are reasons for such figures. Three cited by Japanese Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries working there are language, Japan's history and intense nationalism.

The Japanese language, called "the devil's tongue" by Western missionaries as early as the 16th century, is complex and designed to politely convey feelings rather than blunt specifics. It uses fewer sounds than any other major language and each word can mean many different things. Verbs veil the time element. To put across their point many Japanese trace the written word with their finger in the palm of their hand as they speak. But written Japanese is hardly simple. By the ninth grade a Japanese youngster has learned 1,850 characters—enough to read a simple newspaper. Thousands more characters must be learned to grasp more sophisticated Japanese literature.

The Japanese language has proven difficult for Japanese Christians to use in conveying Christian concepts. Pastors have been caught between society's idea that any leader should speak formally and the need to convey Christian ideas simply so they can be easily understood. Now, however, it appears that complex, formal sermons are being abandoned by many Japanese Baptists in favor of messages "more direct, more positive, more practical—sermons that really try to touch the everyday lives of the Japanese people," said Japan Baptist Convention leader Hidetsugu Ando.

"I think they are very conscious to preach in such a way that someone who is there for the first time would be drawn to come back," he said.

One leader who has worked to simplify his preaching is Shuichi Matsumura, president of the Japan Baptist Convention and one of the country's most widely known Baptist leaders. He observed when he uses the word "love," he must interpret what he means to sort out various connotations.

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The same applies to "salvation" and other terms. Matsumura has found his new approach important, "not just to the common people, but to all the Japanese people," he said. "They have fixed ideas, preconceptions."

"When we use the Japanese word for 'God,' what a person understands depends on the person," said Ando. "The Japanese don't have the concept of one creator, God. It boils down to the influence of Japanese culture on their language."

Explaining spiritual concepts is a challenge in any language, but in Japanese, Christian concepts have been defined by words traditionally associated with Buddhism and Shintoism. Thus, most spiritual words in Japanese carry "Buddhist baggage," explained missionary Charles Whaley of Georgia, who is praised by co-workers and nationals for his mastery of the language. Translators of the word "believe" most often turn to a word associated with politics; the Japanese word for "church" implies a social club.

More Japanese would embrace Christianity if their language accommodated the idea of having sinned against their Creator and needing forgiveness for it, said Hiroko Nomura, a Japanese Baptist living in Sapporo who speaks excellent English.

"The Japanese language has no real good word for sin," Nomura said. "The word used means 'serious crime.' The Japanese person who hears this thinks the concept does not apply to him, because he has not committed a serious crime." The Japanese word implies a crime against a group, not against God.

History also helps explain why Christianity has been slow to take hold in Japan. Starting in 1638, it was banned for two centuries. Protestant missionaries began working in Japan in the late 1800s, but during World War II they left, and a military government forced all Christians to merge into one united church, the Kyodan. The Kyodan, or the United Church of Christ in Japan, is now the largest Protestant body with some 200,000 members. Baptists left this group after the war.

Another blow to Christianity in Japan has been the closeness Buddhism and Shintoism enjoy with nationalism. To stop being Buddhist or Shintoist for many Japanese means to stop being Japanese. School children in Japan visit major temples and shrines of the faiths much as children in America visit the Washington Monument or the Liberty Bell.

Yet there are signs of hope. Baptists here have had a slow but consistent growth: there are now more than 28,000 Baptists in Japan; the 200th Baptist church was constituted during 1984. Many Baptist workers think more rapid growth may be ahead.

Convention leaders and missionaries agree that the Japanese people are searching for a security and happiness their material well-being has not brought, and that there are many indications which suggest the people are searching for spiritual truth.

Studies show half of all Japanese men and almost three-fourths of the women claim they're interested in Christianity; Bibles can be found in about half of all homes.

"In Japan, the people are materially well off, but spiritually they are still in darkness," said Ando. "In a recent newspaper survey they asked young people the color of their future, and they said, 'Gray.' This reveals the spiritual hunger in the hearts of many."

The convention is changing to meet changing needs. Leaders are urging that churches be started anywhere, such as in homes and in rented public buildings. The convention is searching for new ways to help churches grow. And leaders are encouraging lay people to teach and help start new churches--departing from a time-honored system of a strongly influential pastor overseeing all aspects of church life.

These new approaches to evangelism, and others refined since the Japan Baptist Convention began in 1947 with 16 churches, are beginning to take hold. When Ando became a pastor 20 years ago, he thought establishing 1,000 churches with 100,000 members was completely out of range.

Now, however, convention leaders see it as "a reachable dream."

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