

# ACLU sues N.C. to allow religious text oaths

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH—The religious texts of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and faiths other than Christianity should be allowed in North Carolina courts for oaths promising truthful testimony, the ACLU argued in a lawsuit filed against the state Tuesday.

State law allows witnesses preparing to testify in court to

take their oath either by laying a hand over a "Holy Scripture," by saying "so help me God" without the use of a religious book or by using no religious symbols.

"We hope that the court will issue a ruling that the phrase 'holy scripture' includes the Quran, Old Testament, and Bhagavad-Gita in addition to the Christian Bible," said Jennifer Rudinger, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina.

A spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office, which represents the state in lawsuits, did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

The ACLU last month called on the state Administrative Office of the Courts to adopt a policy allowing use of the Quran and other religious texts in North Carolina courtrooms. The request came

after the two top judges in Guilford County decided that Muslims could not legally take an oath on the Quran.

AOC director Ralph Walker replied in a letter July 14 that his office would not sanction use of religious texts other than the Bible until the General Assembly or the courts settled the matter.

The language of the state's law on court oaths is already broad enough to include other religious texts, so the Legislature need not clarify it, Rudinger said.

"The lawsuit is seeking a declaration by the court that this is what Holy Scripture means in the law," she said.

The issue surfaced after Muslims from the Al-Ummil Ummat Islamic Center in Greensboro tried to donate copies of the Quran to Guilford County's two courthouses last month.

Guilford Senior Resident

Superior Court Judge W. Douglas Albright and Guilford Chief District Court Judge Joseph E. Turner decided not to accept the texts for courtroom use.

Both said an oath on the Quran is not a legal oath under state law, which refers to someone laying his hands on the "Holy Scriptures." The two judges interpreted that to mean the Christian Bible.

In response, the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations asked for a statewide policy allowing oaths to be taken using the Quran.

The ACLU of North Carolina said an 1856 state Supreme Court decision sets a clear precedent for oaths with religious texts. The court decision noted that North Carolina's oath-taking statutes were written for Christians but do not limit others from swearing in the way they deem most sacred.

The ACLU said a change in the law in 1985 further supports his point.

Before that time, the law was called "Administration of oath upon the Gospels." It stated that someone to be sworn was to lay his hand on

"the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God." That year legislators took out "the Gospels" in the title and changed the language to simply read "Holy Scriptures."

The ACLU contends the change signals that legislators were trying to be more inclusive.

Denying use of other religious texts would violate the Constitution by favoring Christianity over religions, the ACLU said in its lawsuit.

On the Net  
ACLU of North Carolina:  
[www.acluofnorthcarolina.org/](http://www.acluofnorthcarolina.org/)

## Religious lines fading

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ongoing disagreements stem from two radically different views of the church.

"We Catholics are churchy people and we have a stack of beliefs about the church and perceptions of the church that evangelicals don't have," Shea says, calling this "the big block that is almost insurmountable."

Evangelicals famously champion the Reformation principle of "Scripture alone" as the source of religious authority, whereas Catholicism enshrines both Scripture and tradition as interpreted through the church. Other examples include the authority of the papacy and its dogmas about Mary.

Yet both Noll and Shea believe the evangelicals are much closer to Catholicism on central Christian teachings than more liberal Protestants.

So, does that mean the Reformation is over? Noll summarizes: "The answer is not yes, but it's moving in the direction of yes."

On the Net:

Evangelicals and Catholics Together:  
<http://www.firstthings.com/collections/coll-ECT.html>


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Before any sinner can be saved, he has to have his heart opened by the Spirit of God to see his lost, ruined, wretched and hell-deserving condition. And if you miss Holy Spirit conviction, you'll go to hell without warning! How many of our church members have been brought down under Holy Spirit conviction? The number is small, I believe less than one-half of one percent. I can count on one hand the number of preachers and teachers I know in the state of North Carolina who have been brought down under Holy Spirit conviction and have fingers left. I don't know of another Bible teacher in my family that has been brought down under Holy Spirit conviction. What about the preachers? The same. Have you been brought down under Holy Spirit conviction for salvation? You, not the other fellow. In Romans, the first three Chapters, the beloved Apostle Paul is laying the axe to the root of the tree. Man by nature is a totally depraved being that hates God. And that is the world's trouble. Man by nature cannot love God and holiness because man by nature is a child of the Devil. (Jn. 8:44) Now you may come back at me like a preacher here in the state came back at me: "He was talking to the Jews there in John 8:44". Hold your seat, preacher! Since you say my Lord was talking to the Jews, and you are a Gentile, then you are two-fold more a child of the Devil than the Jews! That makes you mad, doesn't it? It is because you have missed Holy Spirit conviction and you do not know any more about how God saves a poor, blinded, totally depraved sinner than a doodle bug knows when Sunday comes. That is just how stupid and ignorant you are. You are a leader, but you are leading your folks to hell! I received a card in the mail from a young preacher inviting me to his gathering. I read his card and wrote to him, telling him that he was trying to teach and preach Christ to others but he didn't know Christ himself. Of course, that makes an unsaved preacher mad and he would not answer me. Years ago at the barbershop a young preacher told me he was going to get married. I asked him if his future wife knew Christ. That question made him so mad he left out and has never tried to contact me again. When I ask the question: "Do you know Christ?", it makes folks so mad. Friend, if you have one ounce of spiritual sense from on High, you'd love me for asking you that question. But you hate me for asking that because you hate God. Hold your seat now, preacher. Not only do you hate God, you hate His Word and His people. That early Saturday noon, when the blessed Holy Spirit opened my heart, He showed me I hated God, His Word and His people. Before that revelation, I did not believe I hated God. Brethren, when the Holy Spirit opened my heart and revealed those truths to me, I acknowledged it unto Him. My mouth was shut. That was the death blow that came to my heart to finally break me and bring me to the end of my way. Did you ever know that a sinner has to be brought to the end of his way before he can be saved? Do you know that, Mr. Teacher? You see, self-righteousness is the last idol a sinner will give up before he is saved.

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Bishop George Brooks, Pastor Mt. Zion Baptist Church., Greensboro, NC	Sun. Aug. 21, 2005 5pm
Rev. Dr. George Cook, Jr., Pastor Greater Mt. Sinai B.C., Charlotte, NC	Tues. Aug. 23, 2005 7pm
Rev. Dr. Fred Gibson, Pastor Greater Providence B.C., Charlotte, NC	Wed. Aug. 24, 2005 7pm
Rev. Dr. Paul Drummond, Pastor First Mayfield B.C., Charlotte, NC	Thurs. Aug. 25, 2005 7pm

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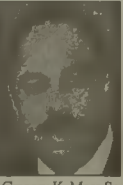


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