

November 1, 1947

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON CONSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

A second nationwide conference on the constitutional separation of church and state was held in Washington, D. C., October 13, 1947. With some sixty Protestant leaders present, Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam presided, and Dr. J. M. Dawson, Baptist Public Relations Executive, acted as Secretary. Elmer E. Rogers of the Scottish Rite Masons, recommended a legal approach. Dr. C. C. Morrison, of the Christian Century, offered a statement of purposes which required a constructive approach, devoted to the single issue of maintenance of separation of church and state as provided in the First Amendment, and appealing for support to Protestants, Jews and all other believers in the American system. On motion of Dr. Louie D. Newton, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, it was voted to create such an organization. On motion of Dr. S. M. Cavert, Executive Secretary of the Federal Council of Churches, a Steering Committee to submit constitution and plans was appointed. Episcopal Bishop William A. Scarlett extended invitation for St. Louis, which was accepted for an early meeting.

If and when the proposed organization is effected, a manifesto will be issued on its behalf. There will doubtless also be released suitable literature affording full information concerning every phase of the movement, together with address of the executive personnel and headquarters.

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FROM REINHOLD NIEBUHR AND DOUGLAS HORTON

Recent publications in America contained contributions from the above named which seemed to range these distinguished churchmen in opposition to the positions taken by the Baptist Joint Conference Committee and to that announced by the nationwide groups now organizing for insuring the separation of church and state. On calling the supposed attitude to their attention this Executive Secretary has received assurances to the contrary. Dr. Niebuhr writes: "Thank you very much for sending me the compilation of denominational resolutions on religious freedom. They are most instructive and helpful."

Dr. Horton writes under date of October 20: "There is no principle set forth in your letter from which I should want to separate myself. I agree with all you say most whole heartedly. The statement that I made which was quoted by The Churchman had nothing to do with any movement such as yours: it was directed rather against those who are motivated by blind anti-Catholic sentiment. With best greetings and with great regret that I personally could not be present at the meeting called for October 13."

CONCERNING A POSITIVE POSITION

In reply to a layman of national prominence in the leadership of church forces, the Executive Secretary asked:

"I am taking the liberty of writing you in regard to your closing paragraph in your letter in which you say you are 'convinced that a negative approach has succeeded in alienating a lot of Protestant laymen'. I do not know to what approach you are making reference. I only wish to say that the office which I head is seeking most earnestly a positive, constructive approach. Likewise I can say confidently that the eminent ministers and laymen who are now organizing a national body for the conservation of the American doctrine of separation of church and state with its corollary of religious liberty are endeavoring their utmost to find the most constructive approach possible. If you can in any wise suggest to us any principles or methods by which that can be done more effectively, we should feel most grateful to you. I cannot see, however, how it is possible to avoid specific issues and concrete cases where infringements on this American Constitutional provision occur. I can well understand how politicians would be wary of any controversial matters, how all those with political aspirations eager to keep the votes of offenders would rejoice if they could sidestep unpleasant conflict with such. But in the maintenance of the Constitutional provisions for separation of church and state, it is sometimes necessary to act in defense of the Constitution. If that be a negative approach, we shall nevertheless have to face the necessity and measure up in fidelity."

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WE CAN TAKE IT

Seldom does an adverse or harshly critical letter reach this office. Ordinarily anonymous letters receive no attention, because, of course, writers who are too cowardly to sign their names do not deserve any notice. The following quotations from an unknown Irish Catholic writer is an interesting specimen of some rabid soul evidently suffering from an inferiority complex, else a neurosis of fear, or a violent attack of religious hatred. He scrawls a ten-page letter in which he says:

"You are a liar and unmitigated bigot, the lowest type of ingrate that could probably be found in the Baptist Church...a rat...a traitor...running a pipeline from Satan's headquarters...also a white livered parasite on Catholic taxpayers. Well now, for your information, an Ambassadorship will be established at the Vatican, and ten million Irish Americans don't mean maybe either. After the 1948 election all positions of power in the government will be for all time to come under control of the particular party which will protect this Christian country under an Irish-American constitution. You imbecile religious leaders go ahead and just see how far you will get!"

Perhaps the dictionary's supply of epithets was not quite exhausted, and fortunately not all dire predictions by wishful prophets come true!

COMPLAINTS FILED AGAINST CATHOLIC AGGRESSION

The following complaints against Roman Catholic trespass upon the principle of separation of Church and State have been filed with this office. Without immediately passing on their merits, the office tabulates them and now states that full investigation will be made into them to ascertain the exact facts insofar as that is possible.

1. Mrs. J. G. Hanlin, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: "The Jesuits (Society of Jesus) as recently set up a radio station at Fordham University, New York, and called it 'The Voice of America'. The excuse for confusing this title with that used in the broadcasts of the United States Government radio station is that they mean their magazine is called America."

2. Mrs. Eunice Burks, Washington, D. C.: "An all-out demonstration of the army as given in Dallas, Texas in honor of a Catholic dignitary, just arrived, in which the army staged a spectacular display and ceremony".

3. Washington, D. C. Times-Herald: Local Baptist ministers assert that this newspaper, boasting that it is Washington's independent newspaper, displays a marked bias in favor of the Roman Catholics. Evidently under the Catholic influence on October 14, 1947 it carried at the top of its lead editorial a quotation from Matthew 16:18, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". Then the editorial observes that all attackers of the Roman Catholic Church have not been able to overthrow it, and that the institution headed by the Pope Pius XII is in excellent health today, and leaves the inference that in the conflict with Communism the United States does well to accept the leadership of the Pope. Query: To what extent does the National Catholic Welfare Conference influence the policies of that newspaper?

4. Inmate of the United States Soldiers' Home, Washington, D. C.: "The hospital here, since forty-four years ago the Sisters of Charity moved in, has been virtually a missionary institution....In the discharge of his functions the Catholic chaplain visits the hospital wards three to five times a day. On Sunday morning all Catholic patients are lined up for communion in totalitarian fashion. The Catholic nurses do practically all nursing, all injections and bandaging being left to orderlies. Many of the patients, 75 per cent of whom are non-Catholics, object to the parade of sectarian garb and display of Catholic insignia. I doubt if such an overwhelming Catholic atmosphere pervades any exclusively owned, managed and supervised Catholic hospital in the United States."

5. Pastor Constantin B. Tchubaroff, Russian Baptist Church, Rome, Italy, in letter to Dr. Frank Gigliotti, La Mesa, California: "We haste to inform you that the best preacher of our church has been arrested and that the missionary, Rev. Paul Rogosin, has been sent out of Italy. We beseech you to intercede for our church."

6. Dr. Everett Gill, Jr., Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia: "A letter from our missionary, H. W. Schwinsberg, Barranquilla, Columbia, complains that there is an apparent agreement between the office of Foreign Relations and American Embassy to freeze non-Catholic missionaries at the present number already in the country. Brother Riddell visited the ambassador and was politely turned aside. Presbyterians have been working for over four months for the United States Ambassador to obtain permission for one of their missionaries to enter. Dr. Gill says there is nothing in the Columbian law to prohibit the entering of missionaries, and that evangelical missionaries have been working there for over eighty-five years. The new government is decidedly pro-Catholic."

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THE SECRETARY TO THE EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON POST

The following appeared in the Washington Post October 24, 1947:

Once more The Washington Post, in line with its policy of valiant support of the of the United States constitutional provision for separation of church and state, has given the public a commanding editorial on October 17, under the heading, "Faith and Freedom." Excellent as the editorial on the whole is judged to be, however, it falls into serious errors needing correction.

I find no fault with your statement that separation of church and state "is not a stick that can be legitimately used to beat a religious minority," but I do express emphatic dissent from the implication that our organization is minded to use such a big stick with such intent.

In an interview given the Associated Press on October 13, I said, "We will fight for the rights of Catholics as well as for all religions in the United States." I think it can be shown that these very groups now organizing have historically so fought, with the consistent effort to secure equal rights for all sects under the Constitution, and with special emphasis on guarantees of the rights of minorities.

Some members of the present groups organizing last spring sent representatives to Rome to make a strenuous effort to induce the Italian Parliament to include guarantees of the rights of religious minorities then suffering despicable religious persecution at the hands of a religious majority in Italy, a persisting persecution which we are requesting the powers to look into at this moment.

I may be excused for saying that the recent Baptist World Congress meeting in Copenhagen appointed a commission of seven from as many countries, of which I am a member, to work for a world crusade in behalf of religious freedom. That commission met in Washington last week and adopted as its program the codification of laws relating to churches and religions in every nation, the undertaking of remedial approaches in every land where persecutions exist, and the active support of the international Bill of Rights, with its provisions for religious liberty, now being considered in the United Nations.

We lament unspeakably the fact that political leaders have at times in American history inveigled certain Protestants to join up with anti-Catholic movements. But none of these groups now organizing for insuring the separation of church and state has ever officially approved of such. Instead, as in the case of the Ku Klux Klan, they have strenuously resisted such movements.

I have personally repeatedly addressed audiences side by side with Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis and ministers of other sects in the American Brotherhood of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. I speak earnestly my wholehearted desire to see our country's unity preserved by adhering strictly to the basis of that unity. Of course, under our American system the only possible basis of such unity is a scrupulous regard for the constitutional provision for absolute separation of church and state guaranteeing religious liberty for all.

Most certainly we would be as much opposed to the President sending a personal representative with the rank of ambassador to any "fountainhead of Protestantism" as we are to his effecting a functioning partnership between the Vatican and the United States Government by what exists now. That is exactly the point we are contending for and it saddens us that with your otherwise clear grasp of the issues at stake you so completely miss the point, and in addition charge us with a motive so unworthy.

Here is one desperately serious infraction of the American principle of separation between church and state which is deplorably dividing our country at a time when

It should be fraternally united, and in effect mischievously representing our Government abroad as acting under the leadership of the Pope, thus adding to the international tensions.

J. M. DAWSON,
Executive Secretary, Office of Public Relations
for the Baptists of the United States, Washington

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A YEAR'S WORK REVIEWED

At the semi-annual meeting held in Washington, October 7, the following report was offered:

A year ago, shortly after accepting this executive secretaryship, I submitted to you a statement of what was envisioned as the duties of the office. It was stated that in addition to the functions indicated in the work of the standing committees, attention would be given (1) to requests from all the boards and agencies of the Baptist denomination, North and South, white and colored; (2) to research into public questions of concern to our people; (3) to make suitable press releases covering denominational actions or expressions of interest to the public; (4) to attendance on general meetings wherever discussion of vital issues involved in the work demanded; (5) to cooperation with other groups, both religious and civic, where matters of common interest were involved; (6) to specific cooperation with the Baptist World Alliance and the United Nations; and (7) above all to pursue task of conserving religious liberty in America and in whatever ways possible to extend it over the world.

Following a year's experience, it may be asserted that the work was on the whole correctly envisioned. A mere summary of what has been undertaken will confirm this.

First, we have tried to serve our denominational agencies in making suitable contacts with the Federal Communications Commission concerning radio; with the War Department concerning surplus properties to be allocated for church purchases; with the Department of Interior concerning Indian Affairs and war damage reparations; with the Department of State concerning Baptist personnel; with President Truman concerning Dr. Lewis' entrance into Germany.

Second, we have made diligent inquiry into questions with which our people are dealing, such as the subject of religious liberty. In addition to many articles released to the religious and secular press, the Executive Secretary has during the year written a careful book, soon to be published by the proper press, comprising eleven chapters and some two hundred printed pages, which will bring the factual discussion down to date. The book is intended to furnish the exposition and justification of our battle for religious liberty.

Third, while not attempting to attend all the state conventions and local meetings which he has been invited to address, he has spoken frequently to such. Among those he will address this Fall will be annual meetings of the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Texas and some others. At the Seventh Baptist World Congress he delivered an address on the United Nations and preached on musical evening to the vast throng assembled. At the Congress he took up his assignment with the Commission of Seven for a World Crusade in Behalf of Religious Liberty.

Fourth, the Executive Secretary has attended weekly meetings in the Department of State concerning matters of foreign policy held in consultation with leaders of national groups supporting the United Nations, also attended two meetings of the United Nations in New York.

Fifth, our office has acted as convener for a National Conference on Church and State. An initial meeting, widely representative of non-Catholic groups in America was held in the National Baptist Memorial Church here May 15, of this year. A second Conference, larger in representation and expected to be far more significant, has been called to meet in the Calvary Baptist Church here, two o'clock p. m., October 13. In connection with this effort, so essential to awakening and mobilizing the citizenship of America, to united action in respect to preserving separation of church and state with religious liberty in our country, our office has compiled the book of resolutions of church bodies on the subject, a volume which has evoked warm appreciation.

Sixth, the Executive Secretary on behalf of the Baptists and under mandate of their adopted resolutions, has appeared as a witness before two Senate Committees, one on education, in connection with the Taft-Aiken bill offering federal aid to the schools; and the other on interstate commerce, having to do with the Capper bill to prohibit public advertisements of alcoholic beverages transported from one state to another. Likewise he has appeared before the House Military Committee against conscription. He has also served with many other church groups insisting along with Baptists for Congressional action enabling the United States to assume a proper share of the dispossessed persons calling for relief in Europe.

Seventh, the most intense activity of the year has been incited by the five-to-four adverse decision of the United States Supreme Court in the New Jersey bus case upholding the use of tax money to transport Catholic children to parochial schools. As already well known, our Chairman, the Honorable E. Hilton Jackson, ably represented us in the pleadings in this case, serving without a fee, for which service we would not be unmindful. Nor would we fail to mention the generous act of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, which through its Secretary, Dr. T. L. Holcomb, tendered one thousand copies of the Court's decision together with dissenting opinions and our interpretation of the whole in a sizeable booklet for free distribution. Several issues of our monthly newsletter, REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL, were devoted to the astounding repercussion of this new historic decision in the public press, national bodies and people generally. Much time has been given in conference over this - with such bodies as the Masons, the National Education Association, inter-faith organizations; and, of course, with our Baptist Conventions. One of the most impressive and influential of such efforts was that undertaken by the Baptist pastors of Richmond, Virginia, issuing in what has been called the Richmond-Dover Resolution.

We do not attempt a forecast of activities for 1948, but anticipate that we shall proceed along similar lines of endeavor, subject to developments.

In reviewing the first year's work under the new setup and in contemplating the critical work ahead, your Executive Secretary would express profound appreciation of the hearty uniform cooperation among all our participating Baptist forces, of the cordial reception by the general public, and of the convincing significance of this office as developing apparent to all. It should be accepted that the next few years are apt to be crucial years in respect to our major contentions pertaining to church and state, both in America and the rest of the world. There is much for us to do, calling for the utmost wisdom and courage and consecration. To this end we must gird ourselves with fresh devotion.

Respectfully submitted,

J. M. Dawson, Executive Secretary.

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