

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

JUNE, 1950

INCREASING INTEREST IN CHURCH AND STATE CONFERENCE

Ridgecrest, North Carolina
August 16-22, 1951

We are delighted with evidences of widespread interest in the Church-State Conference sponsored jointly by the Social Service Commission and the Southern Representatives on the Committee on Public Affairs. The program follows:

PROGRAM

Morning Seminars 9:00-10:30 A. M., Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday
Dr. J. M. Dawson - Dr. W. P. Binns

"The implications of Current Legislation and Court Decisions on the Relationship between Church and State"

"A Survey of Academic interest in the Problems of Church and State"

"An Appraisal of Paul Blanshard's Contribution to Better Understanding of the Relationship between Church and State"

"The Current Concepts and Practice of Church and State Relationships Outside The United States"

"The Historic Role of Baptists in the Separation of Church and State"

"Religious Instruction in the Public Schools"

Afternoon Conferences 2:30-4:00 P. M., Thursday, Friday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Morning (if necessary)
Dr. T. B. Maston, who teaches a course in Separation of Church and State at the Southwestern Theological Seminary.

Special Evening Friday, with address by Dr. Glenn L. Archer, Executive Director, Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Washington, D. C.

FRONTAL AND SUBVERSIVE ATTACKS ON CONSTITUTION

Address by Dr. J. M. Dawson, American Baptist Convention
Buffalo, New York, June 13, 1951

This Committee is the sole joint committee set up by the four Baptist national Conventions in the United States, comprising a total membership of sixteen million. While it has many opportunities for legitimate service, its major purpose is to bear the Baptist witness to religious liberty as safe-guarded in the American Constitutional principle of separation of church and state. It was the existing and continuing threat of religious liberty which induced the Baptists to organize this Committee.

Today there is both a frontal and a subversive attack on the citadel of religious liberty in America. That citadel is the Constitution of the United States, which in the First Amendment provides a bulwark for religious liberty in the principle of separation of church and state. About the meaning of church-state separation there should be no confusion whatsoever. There was no confusion in the mind of our Baptist founder, Roger Williams, who brought the proposal to these shores in 1631. He said it meant complete separation, and when he was banished by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which had union of church and state, he set up in Rhode Island both a state and a church which were completely separate and proclaimed soul liberty for everyone, Protestant, Jew, Catholic or anyone holding any creed or none. There was no confusion in the mind of James Madison who penned the Constitution and in exposition of its principle wrote his famous Remonstrance against the appropriation of public tax monies to sectarian institutions. There was no confusion in the mind of Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, when he wrote the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut that "the wall of separation between church and state must never be breached". There was no confusion in the minds of the citizens that founded this Republic, when they refused to ratify the Constitution unless it should be amended to provide that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." There was no confusion in the minds of the justices of the United States Supreme Court, when they adopted the very words of Thomas Jefferson concerning the wall of separation never being breached and added: "No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a State nor the Federal government can, openly or secretly participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa".

Yet in spite of the traditional, Constitutional and judicial declarations as to the venerated American system of separation of church and state, it is seriously endangered. In spite of the fact that the principle has been recognized as the greatest single contribution which the United States has made to the political thought and action of the whole world, it is being ruthlessly assaulted. In spite of the fact that it has through one hundred and fifty years proved best for the state and best for the church, a powerful effort is being made to subvert it. And why? Because those who wish to obtain public tax funds for their sectarian institutions and to exercise control over government object to it.

Now, it will be asked, do those who object to the principle which safeguards the liberty of us all hope to change the accepted interpretation of the Constitution to accomplish their desire to get tax funds and exercise church control of government. By the argument that the American founding fathers in the First Amendment never intended to do anything but forbid the establishment of a single official church; that in so doing they meant to leave the Government free to aid any and all churches as it may see fit. Or, if I may state their position another way, "the founding fathers may have forbidden a monogamous union between the state and a single church, but tried to permit a polygamous union between the state and all the churches."

Unfortunately some Protestants -- a few, by no means a majority -- side with the Roman Catholics in an effort to uphold this theory. Either from self-interest or from hang-overs from church-state union of other days or in other countries, a handful of Protestants in America are lending aid and comfort to the Catholic contention. These few Protestants may render lip service to church-state separation, but they only believe in separation of church and state now and then, here and there! I say that this is unfortunate, because there is in this erroneous interpretation of the Constitution a dire threat to religious liberty in America. If adopted, it would spell the death of free churches in this country. It would mean huge government subsidies to sectarian institutions for which the politically-minded Roman hierarchy is today powerfully pressing. With these government subsidies supplementing private resources, the Romanist interests seek to overwhelm the free churches.

I utter no fanatical scare-word when I tell you that this great bulwark of our religious liberty is seriously menaced. First, by widespread ignorance of the American Constitutional principle of church-state separation. The Gallup poll recently showed that 52 per cent of the young people believe it is all right to appropriate tax funds to sectarian purposes. It is menaced in the second place by good Protestants who shrink from any utterance or action that is controversial, even though their silence may bring injury to all others. It is menaced in the third place by certain ambitious politicians who yield to sectarian pressure in order to be elected and hold their positions, regardless of the Constitution. It is menaced in the fourth place by Roman Catholic officials who carry their sectarian bias into the administration of the law. A deplorable example of this was given only a few days ago when Attorney General Howard McGrath addressed a national assembly of his fellow Catholics in Cleveland. As reported in the Associated Press and in the Roman Catholic papers, he said:

"An amendment which was intended to prevent the creation of an established church, and a phrase in a letter of Thomas Jefferson have been distorted to create, in words of Mr. Justice Black, in the famous McCollum case, a 'wall between church and state which must be kept high and impregnable.'

"It may be that in some respects Mr. Justice Frankfurter's quip that in relation with church and state 'good fences make good neighbors' is true, but not all. If anything, the state and the church must not have any fence between them."

The Christian Century of Chicago immediately called for Mr. McGrath's resignation. The Toledo Blade, a daily newspaper, said the Attorney General's statement should shock the whole country; that it was such twisting of the Constitution by biased persons that endangered the American system. From one end of the nation to the other has come the most earnest protests against such a pronounced sectarian declaration by a high cabinet officer, because he spoke against the judicially interpreted Constitution which he, as the chief law enforcement officer, swore to uphold. I agree with the Louisville editor, who said that as a private citizen Mr. McGrath might feel free to propagate his Roman Catholic belief about church-state relations, but he was not free to do it as Attorney General.

Scholars of other faiths assert that to the Baptists the world owes more than to any religious denomination for the enunciation, interpretation and wide recognition of the principles of church-state separation and religious liberty. If so, they should boldly and effectively maintain their witness for these principles, and should above all others be consistent in practice. Baptists cannot reasonably or righteously condemn others for violations of our country's Constitution, if out of self-interest or confusion, they themselves, even in marginal matters, infringe the law.

There are two great landmarks for which our fathers gave their lives -- oftentimes their very life-blood. One of these is the Bible, which is the source of our faith and practice; and the other is the Constitution, which is the guarantee of our liberties.

WHAT OF AN AMBASSADOR TO THE VATICAN?

As of this date nothing has been done by the President about a successor in respect to a personal representative at the Vatican. Some months ago leaders of the Democratic Party in Congress let it be known that any proposal to renew this relation between the United States and the Vatican would be exceedingly distasteful to them. In spite of this statement by the leaders, rumors still persist that the President intends to name someone -- perhaps a full ambassador. Whatever the facts, it behooves all Americans to continue alerted against a possible action which would be violative of the Constitution.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST TRAINING UNIONS TO STUDY "THREATS
TO AMERICAN FREEDOM", JULY 29

Fourteen thousand, four hundred and fifty local Training Unions in the South on July 29 will carry out a program on the subject, "Threats to American Freedom". The Training Union Magazine, edited by Secretary J. E. Lambdin, for July has appropriate articles by Drs. White, Binns, Courtney and Broach. This magazine, together with special treatment in the quarterlies, totalling a circulation of nearly two million copies, should afford considerable material for the study. But the leaders are appealing to the office of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs for additional literature, inclosing ten cents for single items and often a dollar for quantities.

In many Baptist churches of the South the attendance on the evening Training Unions equals that on the morning Sunday Schools. The significance of this study of freedom -- more especially religious freedom -- by such a large number of young people will do much to inform a considerable area of our country concerning a vital matter. This office hails the observance as one of the hopeful signs that the principle of separation of church and state will be safeguarded in this country.

AN IMPORTANT BOOK

Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power. By Paul Blanchard. The Beacon Press. Boston. \$3.50.

Paul Blanchard, at first ignored by national newspapers, like the New York Times, now becomes a headliner in the very publications which tabooed him. His former volume, American Freedom and Catholic Power, has sold in excess of 175,000 copies, and after two years is still selling at the rate of 1,000 per week. The present volume is a calm, non-partisan, scientifically written book. Those who argue that since the Roman Catholic Church is against Communism, the United States should ally itself with the Vatican, will derive no comfort from Mr. Blanchard. He makes crystal clear that the U. S. must combat Russian Communism as a completely conscienceless, ruthless, fanatical form of despotism. He then points out the essential differences between American democracy and the totalitarian Roman Catholic policies. In other words, the present division of power in the world, in its major aspects, is not merely a two-way struggle, but a deep-seated three-way contest which should be recognized openly as such. He insists that the current taboo on frank discussion of the "Catholic question" must be broken. The pretense of the American Catholic hierarchy that every person who challenges its policy is per se "anti-Catholic" must be exposed for its falsity.

BARDEN AGAIN INTRODUCES BILL

Graham A. Barden's new bill to give Federal aid to public education is numbered H.R. 4468. It limits Federal aid to salaries of teachers, salaries of supervisory or maintenance personnel, purchase of laboratory equipment, and maintenance and repair of public school buildings.

"I do not think there is any issue regarding the use of Federal funds for private schools", Mr. Barden said. "The Constitution precludes it and simply because it does, we ought not to deny public schools the aid they require."

Sen. James E. Murray (D.-Mont.), chairman of the Senate Committee on labor and public welfare, has introduced two bills for Federal aid to schools, providing that if public funds are expended in a state for transportation of pupils, grants also must be made to parochial schools for that purpose.