

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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DECEMBER, 1951

OH, FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS!

The people of America in December 1951 find themselves much in the mood of the nostalgic soldier, who in a hot climate at Christmas time yearned for the white hills he had always known at the season. Only instead of snow-clad scenes upon which to gaze, they are longing to look out once more upon a land clothed in unsullied truth and honor.

The prosperity-obsessed, security-minded people have been rudely awakened from dreams of idyllic life, a possible return to an improved Garden of Eden crammed with physical comforts and powers, to a stark realization that they cannot forever go on living as they have. The slackening bonds of marriage, prostitution of youth's athletics, the collapse of community life through narcotics, gambling and disgusting drink, the unabashed corruption in government, the growing cynicism and contemptuous irreverence, -- these all fill them with dire apprehension. Just now they lift up their hands and cry out, "Great God, protect us by Thy might!"

It is not surprising that in this mood there is evidence of a spreading conviction that Christmas should be rescued from its former trade-soaked, commercialized character to a reverent observance, in which the real meaning of the Savior's anniversary would be remembered. Even though this conviction should not presently result in the change devoutly desired, it nevertheless helps to register the accumulating wish of the people for something more adequate than the kind of satisfactions which have been so avidly sought in the immediate past. Is it too much to hope that a rising wave of righteous feeling may grow and grow until it reaches such a volume as to sweep us forward to better days, clean out the festering centers of infection, remove the black stains, substitute honorable endeavors, restore moral beauty to America? We are in the mood -- God give the fulfillment!

It is heartening to discover unmistakable signs among the people of the coming of a new experience of religion with a distinct ethical emphasis. Possibly the New Year may bring us into a great new era in which spiritual ideals and moral values will be recognized and embraced. If to these peace could be added, we could shout that Spring-time had again come to the world!

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PROTESTING AN AMBASSADOR AT THE VATICAN

Statement of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
Washington, D. C.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, appointed and sponsored by and representing the American Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, the

National Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention, Inc., and the Baptist General Conference of America, and therefore speaking in behalf of approximately sixteen million Baptists in the United States, at a special meeting on November 13, 1951 unanimously registers its protest and declares its unalterable opposition to the appointment of an Ambassador to the Vatican, as recently announced by the President of the United States and submitted for ratification and confirmation by the United States Senate.

We deplore this proposal, because it will assuredly precipitate throughout the United States an outbreak of strife and bitterness between Roman Catholics and American Protestants, and all other Americans of like mind.

We are gravely disturbed, because this proposed appointment has injected a highly controversial, and dangerously divisive issue into American life precisely at a time when national unity is of paramount urgency and of critical importance.

We consider the proposed diplomatic relationship with the Vatican which this appointment involves, as a repudiation of the historic American principle of separation of church and state.

We denounce this proposed appointment as a violation of the American system which guarantees equal treatment of all religions, because it gives a preferential status to one religious group in the United States. Such preferential status would imperil the principle of equality. Since the only nations sending full-ranking ambassadors to the Vatican are Roman Catholic countries, which is understandable, for the United States to do likewise would be interpreted as repudiation of our American heritage. To accord a representative to the Vatican ambassadorial status will necessitate receiving a Vatican representative at Washington with similar status. Diplomatic usage will give that ambassador priority over the ambassadors of all other powers and will be tantamount to admitting the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to be the only true Christian Church and superior to all earthly powers.

We regret profoundly that by this proposed appointment President Truman has repudiated a pledge. To Dr. William B. Lipphard, then President of the Associated Church Press and the Recording Secretary of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Mr. Charles G. Ross, Secretary to the President of the United States, under date of August 4, 1948, wrote the following:

"I am glad to inform you that the President's assurance, that the mission of Myron C. Taylor, Personal Representative of the President of the United States of America to His Holiness the Pope, would be terminated when peace is made, still stands. Moreover, that will remain the President's policy and will be strictly adhered to so long as he is in office."

We are now formally at peace with our former enemies, Italy, Japan and Germany, and feel the pledge should be kept.

We discredit the argument that an American Ambassador at the Vatican will help to combat the aggressive advance of atheistic communism, because communism seems to be flourishing in many European countries like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, France, and Italy where the majority of the population is Roman Catholic, whereas communism is weak in Protestant countries of Europe like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Switzerland and Holland, and least influential in Canada, Australia and the United States.

We declare this proposal does a disservice also to the Roman Catholic Church in that the argument advanced that such a diplomatic relationship with the Vatican as a

"listening post" will enable the United States Government to acquire confidential information, may be cited by nations under communist domination in justifying their accusations of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy as engaging in espionage, and it may well place many innocent patriotic and law abiding Roman Catholics in jeopardy.

We call upon the President of the United States, in view of these considerations, to withdraw his appointment of an Ambassador to the Vatican. In the event that he does not withdraw it, we call upon the Senate to preserve the American system and principle of religious liberty for all and to safeguard the equality of all religious groups in the United States by refusing to ratify and confirm such appointment.

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"THE BATTLE FOR AMERICA"

This Committee constantly endeavors to justify the hopes of its far-seeing founders in the task of aiding the maintenance of Constitutional bulwarks for religious liberty for all. In the present critical situation the Executive Director has written a sixteen-page booklet entitled, "An Ambassador To the Vatican: The Battle For America". The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has generously provided for the printing of the first 100,000 copies. They may be had in any quantity from this office upon receipt of postage. If only a single copy is desired, ten cents should be sent. State Secretary Huggins of North Carolina has ordered 2,500, Baylor University 5,000. Among others who have ordered one hundred or more copies are: American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, New York; First Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia; Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina; First Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia; Baptist Headquarters, Honolulu, Hawaii; Baptist Union of Rochester and Monroe County, Rochester, New York; First Baptist Church of Maryville, Missouri; First Baptist Church, Wilburton, Oklahoma; First Baptist Church, Maryville, Tennessee; Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, Massachusetts; Riverside Baptist Church, Miami, Florida; Bethel Baptist Church, Montclair, New Jersey; and the Southern Baptist General Convention of California. The Baptist Standard of Texas, circulation 250,000 weekly, is reprinting the booklet in full serially. In this connection we thankfully acknowledge several offerings made by friends who would assist in the work of the Baptist Joint Committee.

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BRIEFS ON UPCOMING PUBLIC MATTERS

Francis O. Wilcox, Chief of Staff for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, writes: "May I point out that the nomination of General Clark died with the closing session of the 82nd Congress. If the President desires, he may submit the nomination again to the Senate when the session convenes in January. In this event, the nomination would again be referred to the Foreign Relations Committee and hearings would be held if the decision of the Committee were to that effect." Act now!

The Executive Director, along with five other church representatives, has consented to serve on a counselling committee to the Department of Agriculture in respect

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to the Department's Family Farm Policy. Because rural people constitute such an important element in our population and their progress is so essential to the health of a democracy, it would seem well to review farm programs in order to make sure that they are effectively serving the family farm.

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The Executive Director has been glad to serve on a civilian advisory committee of five churchmen to inform the Federal Civil Defense Administration as to what might be expected from the churches. Their booklet, "The Clergy in Civil Defense", consisting of fourteen pages, has been printed by the government and should be helpful to all pastors in learning what to do in case of war and sudden attack. We urge that every pastor secure the booklet and will be glad to assist anyone in getting it.

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We do not now have UMT, in spite of the efforts of the American Legion and the Defense Department to create the impression that UMT is now the law. The National Security Training Commission has made its first report, on October 29, including recommendations for legislation which Congressional Committees are supposed to act upon within 45 legislative days after the next session reconvenes January 8, 1952. Congress was assured of another look at UMT before it can become law. The churches, with practical unanimity, will oppose the enactment of this eight-year conscription proposal, which will add astronomical tax to our groaning war levies and probably do more to encourage war than all other measures.

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The Executive Director has been designated as a Baptist representative to attend the Third National Conference of UNESCO in New York, January 27-28. The general theme of the meeting will be, "The Citizen and the United Nations -- the Struggle for Peace, Freedom and Advancement." Foremost among the topics to be discussed will be the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, perhaps only political rights now.

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Among many speaking engagements, the Executive Director delights to be in the institutions of learning. On December 2, he conducted the dedication ceremonial for Baylor University's two-million dollar Browning Memorial Building; on February 24-29 he will deliver ten lectures at John B. Stetson University on the social implications of Christianity; and on March 14, he will deliver the annual Founder's Day Address at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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The Executive Director is delighted to acknowledge receipt of the following unusual letter from a metropolitan newspaper after his recent address on the Vatican Ambassador to a large audience of citizens in Baltimore:

"This morning THE SUN published an account of your address at the Mount Vernon Methodist Church. I would appreciate having your comments on the accuracy and objectivity of the headline and the report of the speech as they appear in the attached clipping. In those passages in which statements are attributed to you in quotation marks, were your statements correctly quoted? Does the article as a whole fairly and objectively present the essence of your views as you expressed them in your speech? Were your views as expressed in your speech presented fully, or was any portion omitted? If so, did the omission have the effect of distorting or misrepresenting your views?"

--Neil H. Swanson, Executive Editor.