

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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APRIL 1952

FEELING THE PULSE OF AMERICA

Within the past few weeks the Executive Director has traversed much of the United States on an extended speaking itinerary which has afforded some clear impressions of the mind of our country. This itinerary commenced in Florida with a ten-lecture engagement at Stetson University, also addresses at Palatka, Daytona Beach and Orlando. It was continued to Tucson and included Ft. Worth, Corsicana, Dallas, Austin, Beaumont, Little Rock, New Orleans and Knoxville. It culminated with addresses at Franklin College (near Indianapolis), Baltimore, Nashville, Washington and New York City.

The audiences varied. Some were in large community-wide meetings, as in cities of Florida, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, where the Director spoke under the auspices of POAU. Some speeches were to Baptist educational groups, as at Stetson in DeLand; Southwestern Seminary at Ft. Worth; students from the colleges of Tennessee assembled at Belmont; and faculty and students at Franklin College with the Baptist ministers of Indiana. Sermons were delivered in Baptist churches, as in Corsicana, Texas; Knoxville and Baltimore. In two instances the Director addressed Baptist Brotherhoods, as in Austin and Knoxville; and in a third Lutheran laymen gathered from all their churches in Washington, D. C. and vicinity. One speech was to the Masonic Veterans of the District of Columbia at their annual dinner, held in the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration. The last speech is scheduled for Carnegie Hall, New York, in company with Thomas Sugrue, the Roman Catholic journalist, who dissents from his Church's desire for an ambassador to the Vatican.

From these contacts certain conclusions seem warranted. 1. The people of the Nation remain strong for maintaining the traditional American system of separation of church and state in application to any use of tax funds for sectarian purposes. 2. They are more pronounced than ever against an envoy of any kind to the Pope. 3. They are becoming alerted to the menace of clericalism, especially as symptoms of its intrusion into party politics in this country are not lacking. 4. They are really concerned about corruption in government, as recently exposed. 5. The state of religion is wholesome, with evidences of uniformly renewed interest, particularly among men.

IS VATICAN ISSUE YET ALIVE?

Notwithstanding the House, on a teller vote, eliminated \$70,000 from the State Department's budget for "a small mission" to the Vatican, the issue may yet be alive. The motion was to eliminate the item, unless the Senate should later act favorably upon any nomination from the President, which conceivably could come at some time. The Pope simultaneously put out a statement to the effect that Abraham Lincoln once recommended

an envoy to the Holy See. He should have stated that Lincoln's recommendation was not to the Holy See, but to the Papal States, in ordinary business relations between nations, an arrangement terminated by Congress in 1867. The President's unpredictable course in all matters would seem to warrant the advice that our people remain alerted to the Vatican issue. Has he a pledge outstanding, or a political debt to pay to the Roman Church?

C. E. BRYANT OF BAYLOR TO UNDERTAKE COMMITTEE'S RESEARCH PROJECT

The Executive Director, announces that the Committee will undertake an exhaustive research into the Federal Government's allotment of tax funds for church purposes.

For undertaking the project C. E. Bryant, head of press relations at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, has been engaged. The University will release Mr. Bryant for two months this summer for the work in Washington. Mr. Bryant was formerly in charge of the department of information for the Southern Baptist Convention, with headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, and is on the staff of The Christian Century, Chicago, and a journalist of repute.

"The Committee contemplates", explained Dr. Dawson, "a serious effort to identify the major violations of the First Amendment of the Federal Constitution as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court. It will endeavor to tabulate and total the sums of money annually now going to church interests. In addition it will inquire into minor infringements, admittedly in the twilight zone, but frequently alleged to give evidence of the interlocking of church and state."

He said that already the Committee is assured of full cooperation from other denominational agencies, educational and fraternal organizations and is confident that it will find active assistance from Government agencies.

"The American public, within the past dozen years", Dr. Dawson asserted "has been alerted to multitudinous attempts to override the traditional refusal of the Government to grant tax funds for church purposes. The increase in the number and force of these attempts warrants alarm lest the Constitution itself may be altered by pressured legislative opinion to mean, as earnestly contended by some churches, that it is the bounden duty of the state to aid all the churches with their enterprises. If this should come to pass, the meaning of the First Amendment, which is the great bulwark of religious liberty in this country for all religious groups, especially the smaller ones, will have been lost. Just now the greatest need is to show precisely just how far this sinister movement to destroy the historical and judicial interpretation has progressed."

RENEWED RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN ITALY

The church of Miglionico (Province of Matera) was recently closed by government order and public worship prohibited in disregard of all laws guaranteeing freedom of religion in Italy.

The Executive Secretary protested the action directly to the Ministry of Cults and received confirmation in two separate communications that the church had been closed upon direct orders from the Ministry of the Interior.

This fact is significant for the reason that it proves that the action is not the result of local police interference but has its origin in high government policy. It

also indicates the value of the assurances given to Dr. F. Townley Lord, President of the Baptist World Alliance, upon his recent visit to Italy, by the Minister of the Interior, that Italian Baptists would be granted the religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution (See World Digest for February 1952).

The pretext given for the dispositions closing the church was that it had been closed for a period of six years because of lack of believers and consequently required a new authorization to function. The Secretary showed in his reply that the church had never actually been closed and cited instances of funerals, weddings and other services which were performed during the time indicated. More important yet, he demonstrated that even if the church had been closed for the period claimed that it was not a valid nor legal reason for closing a church under Italian law and that no church had ever been previously closed for such a reason.

The church at Miglionico was founded during the last century and has a long history of persecution. The Fascist Government of Mussolini denied government recognition to every minister of the church and by means of local police action rendered practically impossible the free exercise of evangelical worship.

With the fall of the Fascist Government and the consequent military occupation of South Italy the Allied Military Government gave specific orders providing for the reopening of the church. The Italian Government subsequently ratified all legal dispositions put into effect by the Allied Military Government.

The Executive Secretary has shown conclusively that the closing of the church at Miglionico is contrary to all laws presently in force for the regulation of "admitted cults." But in the replies received from the Ministry of the Interior no attempt was made to answer the arguments against the closing of the church. This can be considered a tacit admission that there are no valid answers and that the closing of the church is simply a case of religious persecution.

THE CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Extracts from address of Executive Director commending the Baptist Temple Church of Baltimore for its lively sense of duty in respect to religious training in erecting educational building.

The present crisis in American culture at the point of religious training could be attributed directly to the shameful, ignorant, indolent and immoral conduct of the American Protestant churches for neglecting unescapable duty.

Do the churches not comprehend that our American system requires the fullest activity on their part in supplying the essential element of religious training? Have they never investigated the origin and development of our public schools? Do they imagine that it is either practicable or possible to provide strictly religious instruction in the public schools without its being sectarian and a violation of our Constitutional separation of church and state? When the churches ignore their God-given task, are they too stingy or too lazy to undertake it?

Strictly religious instruction, as allowed in some public schools at present in violation of the United States Supreme Court's prohibition of it, is so negligible that it is scandalous. If patched up so as to satisfy everybody, it would become a watered-down faith that the churches themselves would sneer at as "the public school creed". By this I do not belittle the public schools - they are our number one asset in the nation's civic life, the true source of our democracy and the greatest means to national

unity. They teach moral and spiritual values, they properly teach much about religion and most of the teachers in them are members of our various churches.

The public schools are correctly called "secular", in the same sense that our government is called secular. The word secular is not tainted. It is not synonymous with atheism, humanism or materialism. It is a perfectly honorable word used to signify public, civil activities which are removed from the area of sectarian participation and control. To damn our governmental and public school systems with the word and stigmatize them as "godless" is nothing short of immoral. To the churches, I say, stop shirking duty and passing the buck.

Baptists have throughout their history been passionately interested in religious education. We inherited from the Protestant Reformation the idea that since every person has direct approach to God, he must be educated to claim his religious privileges. Baptist democracy obligates each church member to improve himself in order to function intelligently. A Baptist ignoramus is a monstrosity.

CHURCH, STATE AND SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Ten lectures delivered by the Executive Director at Stetson University last February before the faculty, students and a statewide assembly of ministers will be published. Formal request for their publication was made by those present. Additional requests have come from audiences which have heard one or more of the lectures. Correspondents in many localities have besieged this office for interpretations of subjects discussed. The title of the new book will be, Church, State and Society in America. The chapter headings will be:

- I. THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE CHURCHES.
- II. RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.
- III. THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY.
- IV. THE CHURCHES AND THE SECULAR SCHOOLS.
- V. TOWARD DISCERNMENT OF SECULARISM, HUMANISM AND MATERIALISM.
- VI. RELIGION AND ECONOMICS.
- VII. RELIGION AND DAILY WORK.
- VIII. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.
- IX. RELIGION AND RACIAL MINORITIES.
- X. WAR AND PEACE.

It is believed that this book is greatly needed. Instead of threshing old straw, it will offer a fresh contribution on these subjects. All will be presented from the viewpoint of American origins and development, and will serve to clarify the people's thinking on many matters about which they are at present confused. For example, it will completely refute the current mischievous proposal to substitute for the historical, judicially interpreted theory of the First Amendment an utterly different theory which would permit state aid to sectarian institutions and introduce clericalism into American schools and politics. Another example will be the removal of taint from the word "secular" as applied to our system of government and public schools. The book will not be privately printed. In due time a reputable publisher will make suitable announcement about it.