

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The American Baptist Convention
The Southern Baptist Convention
The National Baptist Convention of America
The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
The North American Baptist General Conference
The Baptist General Conference of America



1628 14th Street, N.W., Washington 9, D.C.

C. EMANUEL CARLSON, Ph.D., Executive Director

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LOOKING AHEAD

The fall meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs marked the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Washington office. For almost a decade prior to that event the Joint Conference Committee had worked without an established office and without an executive staff.

Open-minded group thinking has been the emphasis of the body. The objectives are to work constantly toward a true discernment and an effective practice of right relations between the institutions of the church and those of the state. In his first report to the Joint Committee on October 2, 1946, Dr. Joseph M. Dawson said: "At this point I venture to say since it is an outright pioneer work for us, none of us is prepared fully to define it. The Joint Conference Committee has discerned certain great objectives, but probably would disclaim having an entirely comprehensive vision of the whole scope of endeavor. Perhaps with the more serious undertaking now in establishing the Executive office the Committee will be able the more fully to define and describe the range of our activities."

While important clarifications have been gained, the above spirit still marks the work of the Committee. With changing conditions new problems arise. The fundamental principles which are based on Divine revelation and man's long experience remain, but the specific applications must be constantly rethought and shared afresh.

The meeting marking the tenth anniversary of the office very appropriately took the form of a full discussion of the Committee's work and the methods by which it can best do the work at the present time. In calling the meeting to order the chairman, Dr. Edward B. Willingham, General Secretary, American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies, paid tribute to the early leaders who had brought into being this "point at which Baptists of the United States could unite hearts and minds for action." He indicated that with the growing experience of the Committee we have learned that "we need to anticipate crises, and prepare our people to act wisely and without emotion."

AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

In line with this spirit the meeting focused on future needs and opportunities. "The objectives and activities needed in the Joint Committee for the defense of the spirit and practice of religious liberty" was the topic for thorough discussion in the sessions of the Committee.

The agenda adopted for the meeting provided for extended discussion of five questions:

1. What can the Joint Committee do to help make the Baptist insights more relevant and vital during the training of our prospective ministers?

2. What can the Joint Committee do to be of help to our laity and youth in gaining a clear understanding of and appreciation for our Baptist insights on church-state relations?
3. What can the Joint Committee do to help facilitate a clear Baptist witness to the communities where our churches are?
4. How can the Joint Committee contribute toward understanding of and respect for our positions in the minds of legislators and public officials?
5. What can the Joint Committee do to make the Baptist insights understood and accepted among non-Baptists around the world?

A number of definitive actions were taken by the Committee on recommendation of its standing committees. These will be the basis for future educational efforts with reference to these issues.

OFFICERS ELECTED

The election of officers placed the following leadership in responsibility for the coming year:

Chairman	Edward B. Willingham, General Secretary, American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies
1st Vice-Chairman	Walter Pope Binns, President, William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri
2nd Vice-Chairman	Joseph H. Jackson, President, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
Secretary	A. C. Miller, Executive Secretary, Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention
Asst. Secretary	W. Hubert Porter, Assistant General Secretary, American Baptist Convention
Treasurer	E. H. DeGroot, Jr., Attorney, Washington, D. C.
Asst. Treasurer	Ralph Cole, C.P.A., Washington, D. C.

The following are the chairmen of the standing committees:

Finance	Ralph Cole
Domestic Issues	A. C. Miller
World Issues	Frank H. Woyke

The members of the Joint Committee paid tribute to the former chairman of the Committee on Domestic Issues, Dr. Donald B. Cloward, Executive Secretary, Council on Christian Social Progress, American Baptist Convention, who passed away the week before the meeting.

Most of the cooperating conventions were well represented in the meeting, two of them sending the full quota of delegates permitted under the Committee constitution. The meeting was highlighted by the participation of three convention presidents: Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.; Dr. C. C. Warren, Southern Baptist Convention; Dr. Harry L. Dillin, American Baptist Convention.

Several other representatives participated in the meeting for the first time, either by virtue of recent appointment or by designation as proxies. Among these were: Rev. H. C. Bonell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Nashua, New Hampshire; Miss Miriam R. Corbett, Council on Christian Social Progress, American Baptist Convention; Rev. Martin Erikson, Editor, The Standard, official organ of the Baptist General Conference of America; Dr. G. Frank Garrison, Assistant Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist

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Convention; Miss Alma Hunt, Executive Secretary, and Mrs. R. L. Mathis, President, Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Convention; Dr. A. Lincoln Smith, Pastor, Congress Heights Baptist Church, Washington, D. C.

A WEALTH OF CREATIVE THOUGHT

The various representatives of the cooperating conventions placed on record a wealth of ideas which look toward increased effectiveness and expansion of the work of the Committee. The Executive Committee was instructed to study all the ideas expressed with a view to recommending the best possible program.

In considering the service of the Joint Committee to the seminaries, Dr. Culbert G. Rutenber, Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Eastern Baptist Seminary, Philadelphia, envisioned this office as a source of information for teachers of social studies, church history, and related fields. He pointed out the possibility of workshops, of graduate research projects, of a textbook on church-state relations, and urged that the Director maintain the maximum contacts with the seminaries.

Dr. Frank H. Woyke, Executive Secretary, North American Baptist General Conference, of Forest Park, Illinois, emphasized the importance of an adequate philosophic and practical content in the curriculum, while Dr. Porter W. Routh, Executive Secretary of the Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee, explained the opportunities open in the regular denominational programs of orientation for seminary students.

The importance of an adequate content of political and social science in the college or pre-seminary training of the student was urged by Dr. Harry L. Dillin, President, Linfield College, McMinnville, Oregon, currently president of the American Baptist Convention. He noted that he had found pre-ministerial students prone to avoid political science.

The discussion of Joint Committee assistance to the organizations of men, women, and youth were highlighted by remarks from Mrs. Jeanne Bradbury of New York, an active leader in the women's organizations of the American Baptist Convention, and by Mr. George Schroeder, Executive Secretary, Brotherhood Commission, Southern Baptist Convention. Mrs. Bradbury pointed to the innumerable opportunities and responsibilities of women for instructional contributions and called for the inclusion of pertinent Biblical and historical materials in the publications for the women's societies, and in youth programs and assemblies. She concurred in the position that "Where New Testament religion is accepted and acted upon, democracy with all its blessings is inevitable."

In behalf of the men, Mr. Schroeder offered a ten-point program by means of which to convey the information needed. "We are not going to build a concern until we pass along to them some knowledge," he said.

Speaking of the effective Baptist witness in the local community, Dr. Theron Chastain, Executive Secretary, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, described the needs for affording strong backing to the pastors and churches who face the specific issues. He looked for more careful study of the nature of the church, and more assistance for the local church in discerning the broad background of the problems they face in the community.

Dr. R. Alton Reed, Executive Secretary, Relief and Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dallas, Texas, emphasized that the interpretation of true Biblical insights, which Baptists seek to advance, requires adequate training and understanding on the part of the pastors, and free participation in the life and program of the community.

Dr. Eldon W. Koch, Pastor, Berwyn Baptist Church, College Park, Maryland, teamed up with Rev. Gordon R. Anderson, Pastor, Lakeside Baptist Church, Mus-

kegon, Michigan, and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Baptist General Conference of America, to advocate careful attention to our semantic problems, urging that clarity of concept is needed to avoid negativism.

Dr. Ernest F. Campbell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia, stressed the need for keeping constantly before our people the specific instances where our freedom to worship God as we are led is endangered.

Dr. A. Lincoln Smith, Pastor, Congress Heights Baptist Church, Washington, D. C., called attention to the vast resources for research in the field of church-state relations available in the nation's capital, and urged that we take advantage of them, possibly through a program of fellowships.

With reference to the question on how to gain understanding of and respect for our Baptist positions on the part of legislators and public officials, Mrs. Carl Tiller of Cheverly, Maryland, outlined the various means by which our views can be made known to these national leaders. She pointed out that it is important for us to try to understand their views as well, and said, "We cannot act like a pressure group, but should learn to speak with the reasoned conviction of the chosen group that we are."

Dr. A. C. Miller, Executive Secretary, Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, said that legislators and public officials come from among the people and therefore should be equipped even before they enter their positions with a knowledge of what Baptists believe. We have a long range educational job to do in building the soil out of which these officials come. He emphasized that we must reaffirm our positions and restate the principles that support our positions on the basis of scriptural teaching. "During the last few years we have been growing so much we have been content with that growth and have simply said, 'We are doing all right. Just look at our statistics.' Someone might raise a question as to whether we Baptists are growing or whether we are just spreading. We have been spreading so much that we have not taken time to really grow in knowledge of what has made Baptists."

In speaking of making Baptist insights understood among non-Baptists around the world, Dr. Baker J. Cauthen, Executive Secretary, Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, noted that this category includes the preponderance of the world's population. In addition to the great non-Christian segments such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam, the Communist bloc, there are the Roman Catholic and Eastern Catholic churches, as well as our own Christian evangelical friends who are not quite aware of our Baptist point of view.

"The basic thing is that we ourselves should know our own positions," Dr. Cauthen said. "God, our personal God, makes himself known to any man through a wonderful experience of vital dynamic living faith that sparks between person and person. Out of this grows the idea that He comes to any individual man or woman anywhere in the world and their own spiritual needs are in a position to be met." Dr. Cauthen reviewed some of the circumstances in the world today that have a bearing on how we make our witness, such as the new nationalisms rising in many countries, the resurgence of the ancient religions of the Eastern world, the challenge of world Communism.

He also pointed to the effective witness of "following our Lord to the cross....let us not forget that inside these areas of suffering are the men and women who are called upon to go to prison, to see a church burned down; their suffering and standing for their principles are among the most effective ways of making Baptist beliefs known and accepted around the world."

Dr. Frank H. Woyke, Executive Secretary, North American Baptist General Conference, spoke of the importance of remembering that our Baptist genius is a regenerate church membership. "The best way we can meet others and cooperate with them is to be committed to our own way and to understand our own way."