

# 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

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### THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE

Sixty-nine Baptist leaders shared in the three-day Washington conference on religious liberty sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee, October 8-10. The conference was called to analyze the proper application of the Baptist emphasis on religious freedom to current American public policies. The sessions were held at the First Baptist Church, Washington, D. C.

The list of participants included the names of fifteen Baptist editors and publicity representatives, twelve secretaries of Baptist state conventions or city mission societies, and seventeen representatives of Baptist Christian action committees. Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia were represented in the conference.

Congressman Brooks Hays of Arkansas, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, gave the opening address, speaking on the subject, "Soul Freedom and the Policies of Government." A paper by Dr. Reuben E. Nelson, general secretary of the American Baptist Convention, on the topic, "Free Churches in an Ordered Society", was presented at the same session by the associate general secretary, the Rev. W. Hubert Porter.

Dr. Theodore F. Adams of Richmond, Virginia, president of the Baptist World Alliance, was the featured speaker at the Wednesday evening conference dinner. The closing address on Thursday was given by Dr. Edward H. Pruden, pastor of the First Baptist Church,

Washington, and former president of the American Baptist Convention.

The agenda of the conference dealt with the Biblical basis of religious liberty, as well as the current problems in the application of the Christian principles. A session was also scheduled on organizational needs in the several conventions.

The emphasis of the conference was on consultation, using the round-table discussions for the consideration of border line areas in church-state relations. The conference projected some interim studies and went on record favoring a continuation conference within the next year.

### THE MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs began Thursday evening, October 10th, and concluded on Friday, October 11th.

As officers for the coming year, the Committee elected: chairman, Dr. Eldon W. Koch, pastor of the Berwyn Baptist Church, College Park, Md.; first vice-chairman, Dr. Walter Pope Binns, president, William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo.; second vice-chairman, Dr. J. H. Jackson, president, National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc.; secretary, Dr. A. C. Miller, executive secretary, Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention; assistant secretary, the Rev. W. Hubert Porter, associate general secretary, American

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Baptist Convention; treasurer, Mr. E. H. DeGroot, Jr., Washington; assistant treasurer, Mr. Ralph Cole, Washington.

Dr. Koch succeeds Dr. Edward B. Willingham, general secretary of the American Baptist and Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies, as chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee. Dr. Koch is the third chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee since its founding in 1937. First chairman was Mr. E. Hilton Jackson, Washington attorney.

Among significant actions taken by the Joint Committee was the approval of an expansion of its news coverage of the development of public affairs as they are related to Baptists and to religious liberty. The objective of the expanded communication system of the Joint Committee will be to keep the Baptist constituency informed about public affairs.

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With regard to the proposal for including the question "What is your religion?" in the 1960 Federal Census (see September, 1957 Report from the Capital), the Joint Committee took the following action:

"It is our judgment as a Committee that the inclusion of this question in the Census of 1960 would be a violation of religious liberty and separation of church and state; in the absence of Convention resolutions, we recommend that the executive groups of the member Conventions be asked to consider this matter at their next meetings."

# # #

The Joint Committee discussed the proposed Staff program of the Religious Affairs Office of the Federal Civil Defense Administration. The Religious Affairs Office wishes to provide moral, ideological, and other instruction to ministers and church groups. They wish to reach the clergy through a newsletter, staff college courses, area conferences, clip sheet service for sermons, papers, etc., and through appearances at conventions. They also wish to reach the membership through such church channels as periodicals, Sunday School materials, mission society pro-

grams, etc. They seek an organizational plan in which church leadership and community defense leadership tie together into a working organization.

On this matter, also, the Joint Committee voted to ask the cooperating Conventions to discuss the proposed program and to communicate their decisions to their constituencies. In doing so, the Joint Committee adopted this statement:

"As loyal American citizens we share with the Federal Civil Defense Administration its concern for adequate preparedness for national emergencies. However, we believe it is the function of the churches in their own way to provide ideological and spiritual leadership for their members. We believe that the churches have done and will continue to do an efficient work in informing their people of the evils of atheism, materialistic philosophies and other ideologies that are inimical to our religious heritage and American way of life. This function should remain with the churches and should not become a function of government."

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The Joint Committee approved the appointment of a committee to study the problem of moral instruction in the public schools and the problem of the coordination of religious and secular study as projected by the schools and the churches. This committee is to report to the spring meeting of the Joint Committee or to the next conference on religious liberty.

In accordance with the request made by the conference, the Joint Committee voted to sponsor another Religious Liberty Conference next year. The time and other pertinent details will be worked out by the Executive Committee of the Joint Committee.

In response to a recommendation made by the conference, the Joint Committee approved the appointment of a committee, composed of competent Baptist scholars, to study the Biblical basis of religious liberty from the exegetical approach, and to prepare a paper on the subject for presentation at a later meeting of the Joint Committee.

or at a later Religious Liberty Conference.

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The Rev. W. Barry Garrett, Jr., editor of the Baptist Beacon at Phoenix, Arizona, was named associate director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He will begin work January 1, 1958, and will be charged primarily with expansion of the office's information services.

Mr. Garrett has a splendid background for this work. As a pastor he has served churches in both the American Baptist Convention and in the Southern Baptist Convention, in both the eastern and the western states. As an editor and writer he has become known for his thoughtful analyses of denominational life. He has been particularly interested in the meaning of the Christian life as it is related to national and world affairs.

Born in Oklahoma and educated at Baylor University and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mr. Garrett served as pastor of churches in Texas, Indiana, the Carolinas, and Arizona before becoming editor of the Arizona state Baptist weekly ten years ago. He is 42 years of age.

He has served as secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Arizona and of its state executive board, and is founder of the Arizona Christian Life Commission. He has been president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, Survey Committee, and board of trustees for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is married to the former Laverne Johnson, who was educated at Oklahoma Baptist University, Baylor University, Carver School of Missions and Social Work, and Arizona State College. They have two daughters, Katherine Ann, 16, and Nancy, 14.

#### TAX SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A group of Roman Catholic church leaders recently presented a brief to the Manitoba Royal Commission on Edu-

cation asking that certain public schools be set aside as Catholic and that these be supported through real estate taxes paid by Catholics. Roman Catholics now may operate separate schools in the province but at their own expense.

This proposal serves to underscore a central public policy in the American tradition, a policy which not all Canadian provinces have been able to practice. The question is, shall people be coerced by law to support religious institutions? The fact that Roman Catholics are not asking for Protestant or Jewish money for the support of their schools is appreciated, but the principle of religious liberty protects the Catholic laity as well as the Protestant or Jewish laity. In this defense of the voluntary principle people of all faiths can protect themselves and their faith against the deadening conformity and anti-clericalism which are normal results of regimented religious participation.

# # #

The October issue of Better Schools (published by the National Citizens Council for Better Schools, 9 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. for \$1.00 per year) carries an informative summary of the law with reference to non-public school rights.

"The legal status of transportation for children to non-public schools at public expense hardly could vary more than it does from state to state. Furthermore, few legal issues affecting the schools have evoked so much strong feeling," says the writer.

He goes on to point out that, "All four basic legal situations exist in different states. In some states expenditure of public funds for this purpose is specifically prohibited by constitutional or statutory provision. In others it is expressly required by state law. In a third category are those states having statutes making the matter one to be handled on a basis of local option. The fourth classification comprises those states where the constitution and statutes are silent on the point and the courts have not ruled on it."

In reviewing the 1947 Supreme Court decision (the New Jersey case) we are reminded that the court found that the Federal Constitution does not prevent states from using tax funds for transporting parochial school pupils along with the public school pupils, but that this is based on concern for the public welfare and on the welfare of the children.

"Regarding the issue of religion and the First Amendment, the controlling opinion of the court interpreted the Amendment as preventing any level of government from passing laws which 'aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.' Further, 'No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion.' The First Amendment 'requires the state to be a neutral in its relations with groups of religious believers and non-believers; it does not require the state to be their adversary. State power is no more to be used so as to handicap religions than it is to favor them.'"

Referring again to the New Jersey case, the author says: "It must be emphasized that this decision answered basically only one legal question: Does the Federal Constitution bar use of public funds for transportation of children to non-public schools? The negative answer puts the matter squarely in the hands of the individual states which must decide whether they want to furnish this constitutionally permissible service and, if so, to what extent.

"In many respects this issue is essentially one of social policy. It is an aspect of one of the great dilemmas of our society, namely, the proper relationship of government to organized religion. Most of the children who do not attend public schools are enrolled in schools sponsored by religious groups. It is the leaders of the organized religions which operate schools who are spearheading the movement to have transportation provided for pupils

in such schools at public expense in all jurisdictions.

"...the right of parents to send their children to non-public schools is secure. Is that legal right, however, one to be enjoyed at public expense?"

#### THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The Department of Social Welfare, National Council of Churches of Christ, (297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.), has just published the "Report to the Churches" on the conference on "Policy and Strategy in Social Welfare." The booklet is available from their offices for \$.75.

The publication reports the work and findings of the four-day conference held in Atlantic City in May, 1957. The following chapter headings indicate the scope and significance of the report, and every chapter is filled with implications for church-state relations:

1. Report of the Findings Committee.
2. The Role and Function of the Churches in Social Welfare.
3. What Should Church-Related Health and Welfare Agencies Accomplish?
4. What Should the Churches Accomplish for Social Welfare by Their Social Education and Action Programs?
5. How Can Church-Related Agencies Recruit Enough Qualified Health and Welfare Workers to Meet Their Needs--and Keep Them?
6. What Should the Churches Do Together in Meeting Health and Welfare Responsibilities?
7. What Principles Should Guide Church-Related Health and Welfare Agencies in the Acceptance of Community or Tax Funds?
8. How Can the Churches Help in the Education of Health and Welfare Workers?