



REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

★ RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ★ BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

★ PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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BAPTISTS SPEAK ON CHURCH-STATE PROBLEMS IN 1959

(A survey of Baptist resolutions and actions)

Baptists of all fellowships throughout the United States expressed a lively interest in religious liberty and church-state problems in 1959. In a survey of the church-state resolutions and actions of national, state and regional Baptist bodies for the year it was seen that Baptists overwhelmingly reaffirmed their faith in the American principle of separation of church and state. More than 20 such bodies (not including district associations) expressed anew their allegiance to their heritage of freedom. Many conventions had expressed themselves clearly on these matters in recent years and thought it not necessary to repeat themselves, although their positions remain the same.

Stirred by the lack of clarity of the exact meaning of separation of church and state in many situations, both among themselves and among the public in general, the Baptists are beginning to take significant steps in "depth" studies in this field. In the report of the American Baptist Convention's Public Affairs Committee special attention was called to the leading and positive role of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in helping the Baptists to meet their "many strategic opportunities for a constructive Baptist witness." The report set forth in some detail a six-point interpretation of the meaning of separation of church and state as enunciated by C. Emanuel Carlson.

Likewise the Southern Baptist Convention noted "with satisfaction" Dr. Carlson's proposals of the basic meaning of separation, and it urged "penetrating study, intensive teaching and prophetic preaching of the biblical principles and insights that form the foundation of religious liberty."

Other signs of Baptist re-thinking of their church-state positions are seen in the effort of the North Carolina Baptists to work out a formula for the application of the separation principle in relation to their institutions, the appointment of special committees in several states to work on the problem, and in the annual Religious Liberty Conference sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. Steps were taken to develop state or regional religious liberty conferences in various sections of the nation.

Kentucky Baptists faced up to the gravity of the church and state situation, and, because of a lack of general consensus on the part of religious groups, called for an interfaith conference on religious liberty and separation of church and state. Baptists, Protestants, Jews and Roman Catholics would be invited to sit down together in this conference to discuss these common problems.

A matter of major concern to several conventions was the stewardship of Christian influence on the part of Baptist church members. Nearly a dozen conventions set forth the responsibilities of Christian citizenship and urged their people to assume wider leadership in civic affairs and to enter fully into the democratic process.

A subject of increasing concern in Baptist circles in 1959 was the relation of the churches to taxation. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs announced the subject of its religious liberty conference in 1960 to be "The Churches and American Tax Policy." The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention initiated special studies on the taxability of income producing church property that is unrelated to the worship program. The District of Columbia convention asked its Christian Life Committee to study the taxation of church property in the District, and the Pennsylvania convention called on its churches to "pay all duly levied taxes gladly as a recipient of public services."

Nearly a dozen conventions passed resolutions or took actions on the use of public tax funds for church institutions. All those that spoke on the subject voiced strong opposition to the use of tax funds for the benefit of sectarian hospitals, schools and other institutions. Some confusion in the South, however, was revealed, because while Texas Baptists were repudiating the practice of leasing a hospital built by the aid of Hill-Burton funds, Arkansas Baptists were leasing a \$2.5 million Hill-Burton hospital in North Little Rock. Louisiana Baptists, who have leased such a hospital at Homer, La., voted to restudy their policy in the matter.

Both state Baptist conventions and the national Religious Liberty Conference voiced opposition to the

use of public funds to aid parochial schools, including the provision of free transportation for pupils of religious schools. The Baptists of Texas and Tennessee took steps to divorce a school each (Buckner Orphans Home and Harrison-Chilhowee Baptist Academy) from public tax subsidies. At the same time strong faith was expressed by Georgia, Rhode Island and North Carolina Baptists in the public school system, and they urged church people to support the public schools. Rhode Island petitioned the state General Assembly for larger public school appropriations.

Looking for a solution to the problem of religion in education, North Carolina Baptists advocated a program of released time religious education in connection with the public schools. The Religious Liberty Study Committee of the Virginia Baptist General Association found that some of their churches had not heeded their appeal in 1958 to withdraw from programs of teaching Bible in the public schools which they felt are contrary to the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the U. S. Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court in the McCollum case. Consequently they voted again this year to appeal to their churches not to participate in such programs.

Ten Baptist state conventions took note of the problems involved in a Catholic candidate for president of the United States. They agreed that a person's religion per se should not disqualify him from public office, but they were also outspoken in their opposition to candidates whose allegiance is with organizations that demand institutional allegiance above that to the United States. Two conventions asserted that no bigotry is involved in asking candidates their views on separation of church and state.

On the other hand, at least one state convention confused the difference between the President's personal religion and his duties as president. In view of his visits abroad and because "the President is the official and highest representative of the people of the United States" this resolution called on Mr. Eisenhower "to exhibit his faith in all countries in which he visits." It "respectfully requested" the President "to attend services in a Christian church upon each Lord's Day he is away on his mission."

Exercising their "right to petition" Baptists in 1959 were prolific in their requests upon government. Their resolutions ranged over much of the legislative field. Several states asked their legislatures to enact laws regulating the liquor business, prohibiting pari-mutuel gambling, and to tighten up on the Sabbath laws. Other requests related to the abolishment of capital punishment, better housing, revision of immigration laws, protection of civil liberties, economic growth of both the United States and underdeveloped nations, birth control, disarmament, atomic weapons, outer space, United Nations policies, lending programs of the U. S. to foreign countries, Food for Peace bills, laws against obscene literature, requests not to recognize Red China, and many others.

In order to implement these resolutions several Baptist bodies took steps to instruct committees or others to let the legislators, public administrators, their Representatives and Senators know what is the position of the churches on these matters. Some of them seem to carry poorly veiled threats and others

indicated that the churches should turn on the pressure to accomplish their legislative objectives.

All Baptists were not agreed on government loans to church institutions. Wayland Baptist College in Texas withdrew an application for a government subsidized loan, but some conventions indicated that they saw no violation of the principle of separation of church and state if their institutions received loans from the government. No special conditions regarding terms or rates were mentioned. The assumption would seem legitimate that those favoring loans would approve them for all parochial schools.

Miscellaneous resolutions included opposition to an ambassador from the United States to the Roman Catholic Church, protest of the "pledge" in Protestant-Catholic marriages to rear the children as Catholics, favoring removal of the loyalty oath from the National Defense Education Act of 1958, support of Bible reading in the public schools in Pennsylvania, commendation of Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (FOAU), protest of persecution of evangelical Christians in Catholic Spain, and objection to the President's visit to the Pope.

Religious Liberty in Canada

While Baptists in the United States were taking note of church-state issues, their Canadian Baptist brethren were likewise wrestling with similar problems. The Baptist genius universally calls for an emphasis on liberty.

Religious liberty problems created by the divergence of Roman Catholic faith and practice and the Protestant principles of individual responsibility to God were faced by Canadian Baptists in their resolutions of 1959. The Central Canadian Baptist Conference protested discrimination by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in giving the Roman Catholic clergy free time on radio and television, for giving excessive publicity to the death of Pope Pius XII and the coronation of Pope John XXIII. They protested the Canadian government's policy of favoritism in immigration quotas from predominantly Roman Catholic countries. The Baptist Federation of Canada protested discrimination in favor of the Roman Catholic Church on the French language network, Radio-Canada.

The right of petition was exercised by Canadian Baptists in several matters. The Baptist Federation of Canada protested the income tax exemption for teaching Nuns and Brothers of the Roman Catholic faith who are teaching in the public schools and in the Roman Catholic separate schools and who are paid by public taxation. They requested the Canadian Parliament to amend the income tax laws to require such Nuns and Brothers to pay income taxes.

The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec deplored the lax enforcement of Sunday laws and asked the government to help curtail the sale and advertising of liquor. The Baptist Federation of Canada asked Parliament for a Bill of Human Rights similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the U. N.

An interfaith approach to religious problems is carried on by the United Baptist Convention of the

Maritime Provinces of Canada. They maintain a Baptist Committee on Protestant Affairs which works in cooperation with similar committees appointed by other Baptist groups and by other denominational fellowships. The purpose of this committee is "to serve in defense of Protestant rights, to disseminate information and literature, and to work cooperatively with the Inter-Church Committee." In its report the Protestant Affairs Committee said, "We Baptists need to re-examine our belief and practice on Church and State."

Special problems in Canada pointed out by the Protestant Affairs Committee were how to deal with pressing problems relating to church and state, reli-

gion and the public schools, sectarian domination in health, and how to reach Roman Catholics with the gospel.

The Maritime United Baptist Convention took note of the Protestant Affairs committees already existing in some of the Associations and urged the others to follow the same plan. A meeting was planned for the Fall to discuss and study the important church-state issues before Maritime Baptists. In facing these issues the Committee urged "that all Baptists concentrate all their power with the aid of the Holy Spirit to win the lost to Jesus Christ. The strongest ally to the Protestant cause today is the Bible believing pulpit."

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHURCH-STATE AFFAIRS INDICATE COMPLICATED PROBLEMS

Aid To Church Schools in France

PARIS -- Debate is in progress here concerning state aid to France's financially hard-pressed Roman Catholic schools. Legislation has been proposed for a system of "conventions" between the government and the private schools.

This is believed to mean, among other things, that the government would appoint and pay teachers in the free schools, as the Catholic institutions are called. It would also reserve the right to inspect scholastic standards while leaving the schools entirely free in the matter of religious instruction.

Opposition to the French proposals is expected from the Socialists, Radicals and other anti-clerical elements. The anti-clericals fear the spread of church schools. One of the principal aims of the revolutionaries at the end of the 18th century was to overthrow the Church's control of education, but it was only in 1886 that the anti-clericals finally managed to abolish religious instruction in the public schools. Now they fear that the present measures to aid the church schools and then progressively bring them under state control is a swing of the pendulum toward the eventual reestablishment of religious instruction in the public schools.

Wants Religious Teachers In Public Schools

NEW YORK -- Teachers and administrators with religious backgrounds in New York State's educational system is the hope of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. "It is important that those who teach our young people be persons who understand that knowledge is of value only insofar as it is in accord with the spiritual truths inherent in our Judeo-Christian tradition," the governor said.

"While we in the United States have wisely decreed that Church and State shall be kept separate and that public education shall not become the vehicle for any one religious faith," he continued, "this does not mean that there is no connection between religion and education."

Speaking at the 150th anniversary dinner of the New York Bible Society, Gov. Rockefeller declared that "there are no two objects of greater importance to our present and future than religion and educa-

tion." He strongly endorsed the state's policy of released time for religious instruction of school children, but he emphasized that religion starts in the home. The governor is a Baptist and is a member of the Riverside church in New York.

Catholics And Religious Liberty

GENEVA -- Officials of the World Council of Churches and nine other international Protestant bodies, in a statement issued here, expressed hope that the Ecumenical Council summoned by Pope John XXIII would "speak clearly on the question of religious liberty." The statement urged all non-Roman Catholics who speak about the forthcoming meeting of the Catholic bishops to underline the importance of the matter of religious freedom.

Government Donations To Church Agencies

WASHINGTON -- The U. S. Department of Agriculture said here that it gave more than half a billion pounds of surplus food to voluntary agencies for distribution to needy persons abroad in the first quarter of the 1960 fiscal year.

Among the commodities donated to religious and charitable groups for overseas aid in the July-September quarter were 262 million pounds of flour, 145 million pounds of dried milk, 77 million pounds of cornmeal, 13 million pounds of wheat, and over 5 million pounds of corn.

Recently the donation of dried milk has been terminated, and relief agencies are protesting to Washington that this will cripple the most vital part of their overseas relief program. Late reports, however, indicate that the government is purchasing dried milk in order to donate it to church relief agencies. In the year that ended June 30, 1959, they received 554 million pounds of dried milk from the stocks the Department of Agriculture has acquired in the course of supporting farmers' prices.

Baptists Ask Interfaith Conference

LEXINGTON, KY. -- Kentucky Baptists meeting here in annual session took note of current problems in religious liberty in this country and instructed

their committee on public affairs to inaugurate an annual inter-faith conference on religious liberty. The proposal came in the report of the state's public affairs committee. It was suggested that Roman Catholics and Jews as well as evangelical groups should be invited to participate.

Texas Baptists Adjust School Program

DALLAS, TEX. -- Following accusations by some Texas Baptist leaders that church-state separation was being violated, steps are being taken to dissolve the Independent School District of Buckner Orphans Home here. Texas law provides for such school districts on the campuses of eleemosynary institutions.

The school district on the campus of the Baptist institution has been receiving a total of \$40,000 in per capita income from the state, none of which was paid to Bible class teachers. Under the new plan elementary and junior high school grades will be operated on a private school basis on the Buckner campus, receiving no state aid. The other students will be assigned to public schools in adjoining districts.

The plan must meet the approval of the State Board of Education. If this is done the Buckner board of trustees will consider the problem in the Jan. 5 meeting. About 100 students will be involved in the transfer to other schools.

Maryland Denies Atheist A Commission

ROCKVILLE, MD. -- A Maryland circuit judge upheld the state's attorney general in denying a commission as notary public to a man who refused to take an oath declaring belief in a Deity. The case arose when Roy R. Torcaso of Bethesda, Md., refused to sign the oath required by Maryland law for notaries public, which says, "I do declare that I believe in the existence of God..."

Circuit Judge Ralph G. Shure ruled that the Maryland law was not contrary to the federal Constitution because it did not interfere with Mr. Torcaso's private employment "or his citizenship." The state, he held, has the right to set its own requirements for holding an office of trust.

Attorneys for Mr. Torcaso have indicated plans to appeal to the Maryland Supreme Court and to the U. S. Supreme Court, if necessary. The American Jewish

Congress and the American Civil Liberties Union are assisting in the case.

Survey On Aid To Church Schools

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. -- Public funds should not be used to support parochial schools, declared 52 per cent of adults queried by the Minneapolis Tribune's Minnesota Poll. However, a substantial minority, 41 per cent, said they were in favor of government aid to church-supported schools.

Of Roman Catholics interviewed, 75 per cent favored government aid, 19 per cent opposed it and 6 per cent gave no opinion. Among Protestants, 29 per cent supported public aid, 64 per cent did not, and 7 per cent were neutral.

Religious Liberty Stories Rate High

In surveys of the top religious news stories in 1959 religious liberty items ranked high. In a questionnaire sent out to Southern Baptist editors for the top ten Baptist stories of the year the Texas Baptist rejection of a hospital in Texarkana, Tex., partly built by federal funds was voted first place.

Religion editors across the country rated the recent birth control issue as the top religious news story of 1959 in a survey by the Religious News-writers Association. Other stories rated high were the debate over the likelihood of a Catholic being nominated for, or elected to, the Presidency, and the improvement in Protestant-Catholic relations.

In his top ten religious news stories of the immediate past decade Richard T. Sutcliffe, producer-commentator of "Church World News," weekly transcribed radio program of the United Lutheran Church in America, selected two stories that have religious liberty overtones. Pope John's call for an Ecumenical Council has evoked calls from Protestant leaders for an emphasis on religious liberty for non-Catholics in Catholic countries. The other story of the decade dealing with religious liberty, according to Sutcliffe, was the Communist oppression of Christians behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains.

In his top ten for 1959 the first three on Sutcliffe's list are Pope John's Ecumenical Council, the debate of the birth control issue, and the possibility of a Roman Catholic candidate for President.

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