

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



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Roger Williams in 1636, banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony, on his way to Rhode Island to found the first free state with a free church in a free society.

THE CHRISTMAS HOPE -- RELIGIOUS VITALITY IN A WARRING WORLD

As the world draws near to the anniversary of the birth of the Prince of Peace, it is shrieking with war. Whatever may be the prospect of averting a third World War through fear of the atomic bomb, through the United Nations, or through diplomacy on the part of any group of nations, unquestionably the brightest light shining in 1950 is the vitality of the Christian churches.

In the United States in 1950 all increased their memberships -- Roman Catholics by 2 per cent and Protestants by 2.9 per cent, Baptists most of all. The American free-church system, based on voluntarism, has again demonstrated its superiority over authoritarianism and establishment. With increasing evangelistic fervor among Baptists, and with deepening fellowship and widening cooperation, as evidenced in their thrilling Eighth World Congress at Cleveland in July, Baptists, the largest evangelical group in America, should continue to lead.

Why does religion show such vitality? Is it due to a prevailing sense of insecurity and a conviction that our current conflicts have come upon us because of neglect of the spiritual?

Secular newspaper editors become aware of the historical fact that religious revivals have grown out of perturbation when material values fall desperately short of what mankind needs. Politicians, chastened by failure of their pet schemes, realize the futility of mere legislation. Diplomats discover that strategy is worthless without integrity which warrants faith. Military commanders, impervious to sweetness and light, look aghast at what might remain after the bombs have done their deadly, devastating work. Economists, seeing the dollar dwindle or disappear, admit that economic determinism is not all that determines. Technological scientists, master of all the gadgets, asserting omnipotence

through steam and electricity, omnipresence through radio and omniscience through atomic energy, humbly confess the solution is not in them. The common man cries out of his fears and unsatisfied desires, "where is the answer?"

Our times call for what Roger Williams, in the hour of his banishment, termed the "rockie strength" of the God-possessed man. One such man, like spirit-clad Elijah pitted against eight hundred false prophets; like spirit-powered David against Saul's tyrannical army; like spirit-moved Luther against the Pope's hierarchy; or like spirit-endued Williams against the minions of an outgrown order, can work wonders in a distraught world. That weary world waits for Emmanuel -- the indwelling God in men everywhere.

GUARDING THE HOLY PLACES

When the Political Committee on the General Assembly of the United Nations will discuss the Jerusalem question, it will have before it a report by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations informing it that although it has drawn up a statute based on the 1949 resolution calling for the internationalization of an area of 100,000 square miles and all the inhabitants thereof, it sees no way of implementing it in view of the refusal of the governments of Jordan and Israel to cooperate in that implementation.

The Political Committee will also, in all probability, have before it a proposal moved in the first instance by the delegation of Sweden, which would call for the substitution of the 1949 resolution by a proposal which would limit United Nations control to the protection of Holy Places in the Jerusalem area. The Swedish proposal in largest substance follows a proposal made by many Americans for the establishment of an International Curatorship over the Holy Places. The Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee, as an individual, signed such a proposal.

Under the Curatorship Plan United Nations authority would be exercised by an interfaith commission representing the principal faiths, including Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, Jews, The Greek Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church.

It is hoped that President Truman will issue a directive to the American delegation to take the initiative in seeking the protection of Holy Places under an interfaith commission responsible to the United Nations.

The function of such a Commission would be:

- (a) to authenticate the Holy sites in Palestine
- (b) to be responsible for their preservation
- (c) to insure free access to them at all times
- (d) to supervise the restoration of such Holy sites, if any, as may have been damaged in the Palestine war.

The International Commission would have the power to employ guards, and it would be responsible to the Security Council.

Up until now American representatives in the United Nations have shown little initiative in seeking to resolve this question, even though the United States last year voted against the Internationalization scheme.

It is clear that were the United States to take the initiative in proposing the solution suggested, it could be carried with the support of those countries which a year ago voted for the internationalization scheme.

The government of Israel has indicated that it would accept United Nations authority over Holy Places and there is every reason to believe that the government of Jordan would follow suit. Failure to reach a decision which is both practical and just at this session of the General Assembly will force the protraction of a situation which is dangerous to stability in the Middle East. The solution of the question along lines which are acceptable to both the governments in the Jerusalem area and which would at the same time remove the issue of Holy Places in perpetuity from the area of controversy, would be a constructive contribution to peace and justice, and to the moral authority of the United Nations.

A CHURCHMAN MISINTERPRETS AMERICA

In the October 16 issue of LIFE, devoted to education, Bernard Iddings Bell, consultant on education and religion, representing the Episcopal Church at the University of Chicago, furnished a section on religion in education. In it he made an astounding statement to the effect that the United States Supreme Court ruled erroneously in regard to the First Amendment and then proceeded to a diatribe on the lamentable spiritual condition of America as a result of excluding the churches' teaching from the public schools.

Immediately many answered Dr. Bell. Among the most brilliant replies to his piece was an editorial in THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY. The Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee wrote Dr. Bell as follows:

"Having reviewed several of your books for various publications, including THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, I have always recognized you as a brilliant, if erratic, writer. These qualities were pre-eminently displayed in your article in the current issue of LIFE.

"With your castigations of American education I find myself more nearly in agreement than with your caricatures of religion in America. Under that head I believe you indicate a strange ignorance of the total situation. While I bemoan the many defects in our American religion, it remains for all to admit that, by and large, American religion shows more vitality and dynamic power perhaps than any to be located in the world today.

"I am amazed at the dogmatic assertion that there is neither law nor intelligent opinion to support the idea that religion is prohibited from being taught at state expense. In order that you may see the reason for such pronounced statements as I am making in this letter, I enclose two articles by me which state the case as I see it, and as I firmly believe a majority of the people of the United States see it. You may be interested to know that these pamphlets are being reprinted in journal after journal and are achieving a most remarkable circulation. If they are faulty in logic or omit important facts, I would be very grateful to you to point them out."

A more deferential answer to Dr. Bell is printed in the current Horace Mann League newsletter, from the pen of Edgar Fuller, secretary of the National Council of Chief State School Officers, as follows:

"A large majority of the clergy and other citizens especially interested in religion really believe in universal education under public auspices, but there are also those who sincerely disbelieve....Fundamental viewpoints of this group, irrespective of the religious denomination

represented, appear to have been fairly and eloquently expounded by Canon Bernard Iddings Bell....Canon Bell is a friend so far as civic education is concerned, but complains that the public schools should inculcate religion.

"Most Americans will disagree with the implications of Canon Bell's position. In the first place, it is a practical impossibility to organize and administer the public schools to indoctrinate children of each of hundreds of religious faiths in the tenets of those faiths. One of the major problems in obtaining adequate programs of education is that of bringing together enough pupils, especially in the rural areas, to make such programs possible. To be completely mundane, the sort of program which costs \$300 per child per year under normal conditions would cost several times as much per child if the schools were to be splintered into numerous smaller schools on the basis of religious preferences of pupils. Since most communities either cannot afford or would refuse to pay such excessive amounts, the present programs would be seriously undermined.

"Even more seriously, such splintered of the schools would cause loss of values not measurable in money. It would breed the very sort of divisiveness that this nation has set itself to eliminate. The entire concept is fundamentally unsound because it would perpetuate both old world differences and new group differences developed in our industrial society. It would tend to prevent the integration of our population into a true and united nation. It would violate a major purpose of public education.

"More theoretically, but less fundamentally, one may disagree with Canon Bell's implied definition of religion and what the public schools have to do with it. The desired fruits of the Judeo-Christian culture are fairly well accepted by most groups within that culture. The public schools teach to achieve in their pupils most of the purposes of that culture. It is only at points of theological emphasis that the public schools leave the presentation of accumulated wisdom to others.

"...As the great educator Payson Smith has said, 'The substance and method of education are more and more reflecting concern about the moral, physical, intellectual, and spiritual development....Since both religion as increasingly interpreted and education as increasingly practiced are mutually involved in the development of character as reflected in behavior, it is inevitable that both precept and performance should become more and more the substance of education. Viewed thus, there is indeed much evidence to show that the schools, so far from being non-religious are, as a matter of fact, extremely effective for translating religious philosophies into decent individual and social behavior'....

"In the schools too, contrary to the impression Canon Bell might leave with us, there is much discussion about the facts of religious history. To some extent in the elementary school, to a considerable extent in the high school and college, and as a field for scholarship and research in the universities, religious history is studied and understood by Americans quite as well as other phases of history. The fact is that it is only when we come to the specific part of religion which is theology that public schools omit what Canon Bell would have them teach. Theology is defined by Webster as methodically formulated knowledge or belief about God; the study of religion and religious ideas..."