

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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MAY, 1953

CHAIRMAN WILLINGHAM SPEAKS ON BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

Before the Southern Baptist pastors and laymen in Houston, Texas, Dr. E. B. Willingham, chairman of the Joint Committee on Public Affairs, delivered an address which has been widely quoted. Among other things, he said:

"When we rise to declare and defend religious liberty we are championing every other area of freedom. When religious liberty is threatened, every other freedom is jeopardized. Today unscrupulous assaults are being made against soul liberty. These arise from philosophies and powers which deny the existence of God and the place of religion in men's lives. Our generation has seen the blighting effect of godless Communism as nations have been forced to submit to the overwhelming power of organized intrigue and militarized might. I also see religious liberty threatened from within the pattern of religion itself--from those who claim special privilege and prestige, and denounce all others as heretics. Further, I construe as a menace to religious liberty current attacks which are made upon individual character. We have reached a sad state of affairs when a man may have his life smeared and his influence crippled by unsubstantiated attacks and charges against his character and record. We do not question the right to investigate an individual where there is evidence of such need, but it is going too far to smear a group, class or profession with ungrounded suspicion."

Other threats and dangers which could "rob us of our liberty," Dr. Willingham said, include "economic pressures of the times...use of public tax moneys in the financing of church-related institutions," and the "tendency toward regimentation in worthy undertakings."

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION ELECTS MEMBERS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

W. R. Alexander, Texas; M. Theron Rankin, Virginia; Courts Redford, Georgia; A. C. Miller, Tennessee; Walter Pope Binns, Missouri; E. F. Campbell, Virginia; E. H. DeGroot, Jr. D. C.; Eldon W. Koch, Maryland; George B. Fraser, D. C.; Harold E. Ingraham, Tennessee; Porter Routh, Tennessee; Mrs. George R. Martin, Virginia; George W. Schroeder, Tennessee; J. W. Storer, Oklahoma.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION ADOPTS RESOLUTION CONCERNING MINISTERS RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

The resolution as offered by Garis T. Long, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, is as follows:

Whereas, two bills (H.R. 1236 and H.R. 2249) have been introduced into the 83rd Congress of the United States which extend Social Security benefits to ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers, and

Whereas, Social Security participation by ministers may have a direct bearing on the principle of the separation of church and state, and

Whereas, the question of Social Security benefits for Southern Baptist Ministers is vitally related to the services offered by the Relief and Annuity Board of our Convention, and

Whereas, six of the major denominational groups of our country have already taken action favoring Social Security participation by their ministers, and

Whereas, a number of our constituency feel that, as tax-paying citizens, ministers of the Gospel should have equal rights and benefits relative to Social Security along with other tax-paying citizens; therefore,

Be it resolved: That a special committee of 9 members be appointed to give careful study to the question of participation by ministers in Social Security benefits, and report its findings and recommendations, if any, to the Convention in 1954; and

Be it further resolved: That the committee shall make its report, or recommendations, if any, to the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention for action by the committee.

Since the introduction of the two House bills noted in Dr. Long's resolution, Representative John E. Fogarty (D.-R.I.) says of his new bill (H.R. 5041) that it would not treat clergymen as employees and would make their participation completely voluntary on an individual basis. It would also, he says, provide that a church or religious organization which initially approved social security coverage for its clergy could withdraw from the program after a trial period.

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BAPTIST STRENGTH IN RUSSIA

Dr. F. Bredahl Petersen of Copenhagen, President of the European Baptist Federation, who is now in this country, reports that despite the Soviet control of children under the age of 18, the number of Baptists in Russia has grown from 400,000 a generation ago to more than 3,200,000 at the present. This amazing growth he attributes to persecution.

WHAT IS MEANT BY COMPLETE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE?

From different religious bodies, committees and speakers occasionally come pronouncements on America's system of church-state separation which unmistakably indicate lamentable confusion over its meaning. For example, a group of Lutherans recently meeting in Alexandria, Virginia, released a statement to the effect that separation should never be complete. A Dartmouth College professor, T. S. K. Scott-Craig, fears that church and state have been "separated too much" and predicts "deified nationalism and deified democracy." A Negro author interprets separation to mean that a Christian must not vote or participate in politics.

It seems appropriate to quote in answer to these objections a paragraph from the Executive Director's book, AMERICA'S WAY IN CHURCH, STATE AND SOCIETY, pages 17-19:

"Some hesitating Protestants have been won to the Old World notion of utilizing government for promoting religion. In this they are forced to define the term 'secular', which is rightly applied to the American government, as antithetical to religion, as do

Roman Catholics. This has again and again been declared an error by the United States Supreme Court. It is wholly contrary to the genius of our system. The Oxford Dictionary, while conceding that secularism, as a philosophy under some circumstances, can assume the character of antireligion, says that the terms 'secular' and 'secularistic' need have no such connotation.

"Protestants who by birth and training have been accustomed to even a mild state promotion of religion, as in Scotland, have devised a theory of a 'lay state' which, they assert, in our country would be opposed to clericalism, would be unidentified with any particular church, but would intersect religion at some point for the purpose of cooperating with it.....

"The confused Protestants who hold by it seem quite unaware that because the term 'lay state' immediately conveys the idea of religion functioning with government officially, it thereby repudiates the fundamental concepts of the Founding Fathers. The theory also carries with it implications of the use of taxes and government force, in the framework of which a religiously functioning state would necessarily have to operate. It is strange that it should have been left to a Britisher, Lord Bryce, to point out that the sole function of the American state, in respect to religion, is to recognize its existence and protect its liberty. It is stranger still that those who desire a lay state, subject to the official controls of religion, do not understand that the hope for a real Christian state, or school, for which they pray, can only come from a religious society of which each of these is a part, and that in Christianizing society individual Christian citizens may be produced who will ensure a Christian state through the influence of the Christian principles and the Christian spirit.....

"Only on a moral and spiritual level can religion function in our government. All who see clearly the admirable provisions of the American system for a free secular state and a free, vital religion devote no effort in trying to enlist government assistance for the promotion of religion, but emphasize the obligations of religion through its own uncontrolled, voluntary organization. They are convinced that this is the surest way to create and maintain a religious society in this nation, out of which may come the moral and spiritual ideas and conduct of citizens, whether private or public. They are equally convinced that a government 'of the people, by the people, for the people,' must remain forever separate from one or many religions on the organizational level--completely separate, not just now and then, here and there....."

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THE PRESS AND CHURCH VIOLATORS

In his address before the Southern Baptist Convention, the Executive Director said concerning an incident which occurred some time previous in Houston, Texas:

"In public discussion of issues pertaining to public interest, church violators of the Constitution must not be treated as if they were sacrosanct. While the great body of the press is intelligent and courageous in respect to violators, whether of one church or another, some newspapers in certain localities are not. Contrary to the best journalistic traditions and without regard to public interest, these exceptions withhold important facts or deliberately distort them. Sometimes in doing so they pretend to champion brotherhood to discourage bigotry. But reputable judges on the bench, as shown in recent court decisions in New Mexico, Colorado, Missouri and Wisconsin, have not thought that brotherhood and charity called for ignoring or flaunting the law. If open discussion of church violations is to be denied, under any influence whatsoever, then free institutions in this country will be doomed."

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MORE IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENTS

- May 18. -- National Educational Conference, Bellevue-Stratford, Philadelphia.
- May 19. -- International Federation for Narcotics Education, Washington, D. C., President's Address.
- May 21. -- United Nations Conference with National Organizations, Department of State.
- May 26. -- Address American Baptist Convention, Denver, Colorado, "The Baptist Continuing Witness to Religious Liberty."
- June 4. -- Address National Memorial Baptist Church Dinner, Washington, D. C., "Keeping Open the Doors to All Countries For Missions."
- June 17-18. -- Attendance on Southern Baptist Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.
- September 16-17. -- Eighth National Conference on Citizenship under Auspices of National Education Association and U. S. Department of Justice.
- October 13. -- Semiannual Session of Baptist Public Affairs Committee.

Note: No mention is here made of numerous sermons, book reviews and various committee conferences during the summer.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS WORK COMMENDED

When the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs addressed the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. W. P. Binns, chairman of the Southern members, offered a resolution of appreciation, prepared by Dr. Louie D. Newton, which was unanimously adopted with a standing vote. The Committee's report was punctuated with repeated applause. The Convention has steadfastly and loyally supported the Committee's work.

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