

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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DECEMBER, 1953

GREETINGS AND FAREWELL

After the joyous Christmastide and upon the arrival of the glad New Year, I shall relinquish the position of Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. I cannot do so without a sincere word to all who have helped to make the seven full years spent in this office the crowning work attempted in life. Greetings! From the representatives of the Baptist Conventions, North and South, white and colored, which sustain this Committee, I have received the utmost fraternal regard and cordiality. This same spirit of comradeship and shoulder-to-shoulder support has ever been shown by the masses of our people who compose these Conventions, now totalling some 17,000,000 members in the United States. In addition I have experienced fellowship, forever to be cherished, from Protestants generally, from civic and fraternal organizations, educational forces, Jewish constituencies, and from many others in responsible places. It is also a pleasure to recall helpful contacts with Governmental leaders and frequent courtesies from the press of the Nation.

As to principles and policies practiced and pursued in the office, they have become fairly well known throughout the Nation, and need no elaboration here. It affords satisfaction to review them, and I wish to say that in whatever way they were administered imperfectly, I shall always be comforted that in the conscientious effort to accord every one respect and adhere to the right, I served under God, church and country as it was given me to see the right and up to the full measure of my strength. My final task was one in which I found peculiar delight. It was responding to the request of the Broadman Press to rewrite my predecessor's book, Champions of Religious Liberty, which will be used in study classes by Southern Baptist youth in their Training Unions and in our Baptist Schools.

In respect to accomplishments of this Committee, it is encouraging to report that due to the common heritage of history, tradition, and law, together with sympathetic coordination with many other organizations, most of the issues championed by us have triumphed. It should be pointed out, however, that there are many fringe questions which are arising and these are directed toward the ramparts we watch. Most important of all, the central bulwark of religious liberty in the United States, namely the First Amendment of the Federal Constitution, is under continuous assault, and

although enemies of freedom realize they may not hope to repeal it, they nevertheless attempt to reinterpret it in a manner to change radically the whole American system as we have defined it. In other words not only in Russia, Italy, Spain and Latin America, but unfortunately in our own country religious liberty is endangered.

I may be permitted to record that I have endeavored to uphold the standards by speeches and lectures over the Nation, in four books published on the subject while in office, in this monthly newsletter widely circulated, in numerous pamphlets and unnumbered pieces of information, in two trips to Europe at the invitation of the Baptist World Alliance, in cooperation with the United Nations, assistance in organizing Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and by participation wherever I could with the churches. It has been a crowning privilege of life humbly thus to serve, and I contemplate far greater success in preserving religious liberty for everybody will come to my successor, Dr. C. Emanuel Carlson.

Joseph M. Dawson.

THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Upon complaint of Jewish and Roman Catholic parents, the Supreme Court of New Jersey has ruled that the Gideon Bible which had been distributed in the public schools of that State is a sectarian book. The Court said:

"We find from the evidence presented in this case that the Gideon Bible is a sectarian book, and that the resolution of the defendant Board of Education to permit its distribution through the public school system of the Borough of Rutherford was in violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution...and of Article I, paragraph 4, of the New Jersey Constitution.

"We are here concerned with a vital question involving the very foundation of our civilization. Centuries ago our forefathers fought and died for the principles now contained in the bill of rights of the Federal and New Jersey Constitutions.

"It is our solemn duty to preserve these rights and to prohibit any encroachment upon them. To permit the distribution of the King James version of the Bible in the public schools of this state would be to cast aside all the progress made in the United States and throughout New Jersey in the field of religious toleration and freedom. We would be renewing the ancient struggles among the various religious faiths to the detriment of all. This we must decline to do."

This Court decision serves to recall the fact that it was at the instance of Roman Catholics that the Bible was first excluded from public schools in the United States. After a series of court actions by Catholics, reaching from Maine across the country, the Supreme Court of Ohio yielded to their claims to rule that reading the Bible in the public schools must be excluded. Three other states then by law prohibited Bible reading in these schools.

The question arises, Why do Roman Catholics who object to the King James version of the Bible in the public schools strive so hard to retain church instruction in them? Why did they protest so vigorously the McCollum decision of the United States Supreme Court which ended church instruction in the public school buildings in collaboration with the public school authorities? Why are they usurping public schools for their own sectarian uses, necessitating court action like that taken by citizen committees in Missouri to oust the priests and nuns with their distinctive garb, insignia and textbooks? We let one of the Nation's foremost Constitutional lawyers answer, Leo Pfeffer, author of that monumental book, Church, State and Freedom:

"Before the McCollum decision there was no Catholic position on released time. Actually for a considerable period most Catholic leaders were either opposed to the program or apathetic to it.....It is not too much to say that the Catholic Church is today the most passionate defender of the released-time principle. It would seem that such passionate defense is subject to explanation only in terms of higher strategy.... The great complaint against the public schools today is that they are 'godless'. What the Catholic Church [has always] wanted was either the right to bring its own dogma into the public schools for the teaching of Catholic children, or a share of the public school funds for the support of Catholic parochial schools."

The action in Missouri tends to show the intention of the Roman Catholic Church "higher strategy". The Missouri Association for Free Schools publishes the following statistics:

Total number of counties where nun-taught public schools existed (Bollinger, Chariton, Clark, Cole, Dunklin, Franklin, Henry, Lincoln, Montgomery, New Madrid, Osage, Perry, Phelps, Pike, St. Charles, St. Genevieve, Scott, and Warren).	18
Total number of such schools	25
Total number of nuns employed in such schools, their salaries being paid out of public tax funds	94
Total amount of salaries paid to said 94 nuns out of public tax funds.	\$140,956
Total amount of state aid paid to these schools in addition to the salaries of nun-teachers.	\$470,259.62
Local taxes for the support of these parochial "public" schools has been estimated approximately	\$350,000.00

"It is readily seen, therefore, that total expenditure of public tax funds for the support and maintenance of Roman Catholic parochial schools which purport themselves to be public schools in the state of Missouri, reaches the staggering sum of \$961,215.62."

Inasmuch as the illegality of this procedure has been vigorously defended by the Roman Catholic Church, it seems pertinent here to quote from the opinion of Supreme Court of Missouri which upheld the verdict of the lower court in the Franklin County school case:

"The trial court found 'that in the operation of the schools...known as the Gildehaus Schools and the Krakow School, the policy and laws of the State of Missouri with respect to the separation of the Church and the State have been ignored and violated; that the policy of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to education is in effect wholly or partially in said schools; that one of the schools at Gildehaus and the school at Krakow were prior to 1931 operated by the Roman Catholic Church as private sectarian parochial schools under and in accord with the Roman Catholic laws and policies; that while there have been some minor changes in the method of operation of said schools since their induction into the free public school system, the changes made are not sufficiently substantial to make either of said schools a free public school; that each of said schools including the district owned school at Gildehaus is in fact controlled in the main by members of recognized orders of the Roman Catholic Church and by officials thereof; each of said schools to a great degree is managed and administered in a manner to promote the interests and policies of the Roman Catholic Church and of adherents of the Roman Catholic faith.....--and were not free public schools within the meaning of the Constitution and laws of the State of Missouri; and

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that said schools were ineligible for support from public school funds and by public authority.'

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HOW RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FARED IN 1953

Dr. W. E. Garrison issues his annual report on "The Year in Religion" for Religious News Service. He writes:

"Religious liberty gained ground by some court decisions involving Jehovah's Witnesses. More and more the American principle prevails that the right of any religious group to sound its note does not depend upon the popularity of its message or methods. It is not so in some other countries.

"In East Germany all the churches have faced and survived the efforts of a Communist-controlled government to sap their strength by imposing penalties for 'illegal meetings', cutting off previous subsidies, hindering the raising of voluntary funds, taking over youth organizations, and forbidding social welfare work; but about the middle of the year a sudden change of policy under a new Soviet commissioner removed many of these restrictions.

"Roman Catholic activities have been checked in Communist-dominated countries. All the previous restrictions upon Protestant liberty in Spain have been reaffirmed in principle and continued in practice. In Colombia Protestant leaders claimed there were 49 attacks on Protestant churches in the 12 months ending July 1953, and that many U. S. citizens, mostly missionaries, have been victims of violence without police interference. Similar events reportedly have occurred in Guatemala and in rural parts of Mexico, where however there were efforts to give police protection."

Of course, Dr. Garrison's summary, however respected, is much too limited. Baptists are very solicitous about their imprisoned leaders in Czechoslovakia and much concerned about several infected spots in the United States, namely:

1. The continued gift of government properties to sectarian interests, as the offer of twenty acres of land in Phoenix, Arizona to Brophy College for the establishment of a Jesuit University; and the outright gift of a million-dollar hospital to the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

2. The suit pending in Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico for the right of non-Catholics to bury in the common cemetery and to conduct worship in the pueblo. Are we to adopt Spain's intolerance?

3. The suit pending in Kentucky for the ouster of sectarian teaching in the public schools.

4. The unceasing effort of some to reinterpret the Constitution in a manner to obtain tax funds for churches.

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IMPORTANT BOOKS

American Liberty and "Natural Law". By Eugene Gerhart. Beacon Press. \$3.00

This is a long needed book with an authentic account of natural law, presenting the various views concerning it and offering a reasonable explanation of it.

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