

BAPTIST FEATURES

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November 13, 1960

By C. Emanuel Carlson
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WASHINGTON--The election of 1960 came at the close of a very lively campaign in which the name "Baptists" received unprecedented publicity. The pictures spread before the Nation were not all taken of deliberate poses, nor were all taken of graceful positions.

Nevertheless, an overall image of Baptist concern has undoubtedly emerged in the awareness of the Nation, and several important political insights have come into much clearer focus. The Baptist tradition and its current expressions may be entitled to more credit than the public media have so far recognized.

No Religious Test

First and foremost, it is the Baptist insight that a Nation's morality is a matter of its total culture, not specifically derived from some one religious faith, which is basic to our no-religious-test-for-public-office clause in the Constitution. Baptists have long fought for the principle of equal civil rights for all regardless of religious affiliation.

Many spokesmen had fears regarding the political freedom of some candidates, but I know of no one who would eliminate the no-religious-test principle. The solidarity of the American public in supporting this provision is demonstrated by the effectiveness with which religious "attacks" could be turned to the advantage of the candidate.

No Church Interference

Closely related to this observation is the evidence that churches and church leaders ought not to try to interfere with the free operation of the democratic processes. The most overt instance of attempted intervention was the case of the pastoral letters by the bishops in Puerto Rico, and the results were decisive. It may be that other churchmen played on the bank of that same river. Or should one say they played with the same fire?

This does not mean that churches should not carry forward sound educational work in producing effective Christian citizens, nor does it prevent clear proclamation of the broad principles and insights of a faith even during the heat of a campaign. It is the intervention in the free processes of political life which is out of order. No church leader has the right to use his spiritual position to say "You must or must not vote thus or so."

The campaign has left some scars and some embarrassments. Some strains also remain within Christian fellowships. These can be valuable teachers if they are rightly understood, and then permitted to heal.

No Regulation Of Conscience

The right under American law of a candidate for office to declare his own conscientious position without the approval of spiritual "superiors" has also come into focus in this campaign. When the 165 Roman Catholic public leaders called for more careful study of the "relationship between religious conscience and civil society," they declared themselves in favor of the "inviolability of the individual conscience."

Among the fundamentals of religious liberty they listed "the freedom of a church to teach its members and the freedom of the members to accept the teachings of their church." While these statements need clarification showing that freedom to accept necessitates freedom not to accept, and that freedom for a church to teach implies freedom from coerced financial support, yet the statement was an encouragement to hope that our positions may soon be understood. Undoubtedly, Baptists have been influential in bringing the analysis to its present point of progress.

No Tax Exemption For Politics

The taxability of contributions to political campaigns, or to lobbying projects, has also become more clearly understood. Contributions to church work are deductible but contributions to political campaigns are not.

The necessity and the rightness of this law become apparent when it is considered in its application to businesses or special professional interests. Abuses in this area are part of the long story of the corruption of politics by economic aspirations.

The corrective laws have been in line with the political ideals of the churches, as well as being a normal provision in the separation of church and state. It is not known that any proper religious work has been impeded by the laws, but a clearer knowledge of the law might relieve any tension or uncertainty.

No Dodging Of Public Issues

The importance of identifying the areas of Christian concern and of inquiring about the candidates' positions have also been demonstrated in the campaign. Not a few positioned themselves first, and asked the questions afterwards. There may be some arguments in favor of this order of events, but the changing of one's position also has some inconveniences and at times a price tag.

It is not clear whether the right people were asked the right questions in recent months. The matter of the use of federal funds for sectarian education was often discussed with candidates for the administration, but perhaps less often with the candidates for Congress who will vote the policies of the future in this matter.

No End To Our Task

A new high concern for proper church-state relations has found expression in Baptist ranks. It is neither ignorant nor bigoted.

On the contrary, a sound new beginning has been made toward the implementing of our spiritual insights through the democratic processes into policies which are helpful to the whole cause of freedom and congenial to the American public when properly understood.

In the years ahead we Baptists will draw heavily on what we have learned during the past election campaign. Perhaps the most important lesson is that we must do our educational work consistently and carefully without waiting for the challenge or the excitement of a crisis.

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Baptists Will Support
Sen. Kennedy More If--

(11-13-60)

STOCKTON, Calif.--(BP)--A Baptist newspaper editor predicted here more Baptist support for President-elect John F. Kennedy if--

According to Floyd Looney, "If Sen. Kennedy makes good on his pledges about church-state separation and aid to parochial schools, he will have more support from Baptists in carrying them out than he will from much of the crowd who put him where he is."

Looney, of Fresno, edits the weekly California Southern Baptist, published by the Southern Baptist General Convention of California. It has a circulation of 22,500.

Looney made his prediction in giving the editor's report to the annual session of the general convention.

Earlier here, the convention's public affairs committee commended the newspaper for its editorial stand on church-state before the election.

The California Southern Baptist editor announced his personal support of Republican candidates Richard M. Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge. He openly and severely criticized them, however, for their stand on parochial school aid from the federal treasury.

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"The Republican candidates have said they are for things we are against, while the Democratic candidates have said they are against the same things we are," Looney observed. He based his personal support of the Nixon ticket on the grounds "we can battle the issues with Nixon better than we can with Kennedy."

The Massachusetts senator announced he was against political power being used to advance religion, voicing the feeling held by most Baptists. He opposed federal aid to sectarian education.

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Louisianans Dedicate
New State Building

(11-13-60)

ALEXANDRIA, La.--(BP)--Baptists from throughout the state witnessed the dedication here of the new Louisiana Baptist Building.

Robert L. Lee, executive secretary of Louisiana Baptist Convention here, opened the doors of the building for an open house. The convention staff will use the new building.

Ramsey Pollard, Memphis, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, dedicated the structure to "the glory of Jesus Christ and the many workers who have gone to their reward."

He said he felt the building stands as a monument to the Baptists who first came to Louisiana and started Baptist churches.

The building cost \$1,350,000. It includes a Baptist Book Store connected by a covered walkway. A 30-foot high chime tower serves as an architectural balance with the main three-story office building and the book store.

Louisiana Baptist Convention offices have been located in Alexandria since 1947 when they moved here from Shreveport. An aluminum solar screen mounted outside the second and third floors is one of the main design features of the new building.

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Telegram To Kennedy
Makes Pledge To Him

(11-13-60)

STOCKTON, Calif.--(BP)--A telegram went from Baptists convened here to President-elect John F. Kennedy.

It pledged the Massachusetts senator the support of Southern Baptists in this state as he carries out his campaign promises to maintain separation of church and state and to forbid federal tax aid to parochial schools.

The nearly 800 messengers to the 1960 session of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California passed the resolution.

The convention also defeated a move to recognize messengers from churches having open communion and admitting alien immersion. The convention constitution denies this recognition.

Open communion refers to the observance of the Lord's Supper in which anyone present may take part. The majority of Southern Baptists believe the supper in a Baptist church must be restricted to Baptist church members.

Alien immersion is that administered by other churches than Baptist. It includes also sprinkling and pouring, which some churches consider baptism rather than immersion. The majority of Southern Baptist churches require a candidate for membership to be re-baptized if he comes from another denomination.

The convention adopted a further resolution praising Convention Executive Secretary-Treasurer S. G. Posey, who retires Dec. 31. He has served 10 years. The convention voted him supplement retirement income of \$450 a quarter during 1961.

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It gave him the title executive secretary-treasurer emeritus after he retires. It asked Posey to continue to aid the state convention in whatever way he can after he retires.

No successor to Posey has been named.

Here is the text of the resolution about Sen. Kennedy:

"Whereas Sen. John F. Kennedy has been chosen to serve as President of the United States and,

"Whereas he, during his campaign, repeatedly stated that he stood for separation of church and state and that he has been and is opposed to aid to parochial schools, and

"Whereas he has repeatedly avowed that he will not be influenced in any decision by clerical and ecclesiastical pressures and,

"Whereas these public declarations are in keeping with the historic position of Baptists on such vital questions as religious liberty and the separation of church and state, therefore

"Be it resolved, we, the messengers to the Southern Baptist General Convention of California in annual session in Stockton, Calif., . . . pledge to President-elect Kennedy our sincere prayers and unqualified co-operation with him in his efforts to carry out his duties as President and in his efforts to fulfill the above pledges such as he made during his campaign."

The California convention will operate under a \$1,447,000 budget next year. The Cooperative Program goal portion is \$875,000. Southern Baptist Convention agencies will get 24 per cent of the Cooperative Program goal.

Dates for the 1961 session at Santa Monica, Calif., were set for Nov. 14-16. W. Burman Timberlake, Sacramento minister, succeeds Charles L. McClain of Long Beach as convention president.

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Pelican State Adopts
\$2,655,000 New Budget

(11-13-60)

PINEVILLE, La.--(BP)--Louisiana Baptist Convention here adopted a 1961 budget of \$2,655,000. The Cooperative Program portion for Southern Baptist Convention agencies will be \$833,333.

The convention voted to meet next year, Nov. 14-16, in West Monroe, La. It will meet in 1962 at Baton Rouge.

It retained the district promotional program as an "integral division" of the state missions department of the convention. Under the district missions program, associations of churches are grouped together geographically into 13 districts to help carry out state missions.

H. A. Hunderup, Jr., New Orleans minister, succeeded H. C. Abbott, Shreveport layman, as convention president.

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