

FROM WASHINGTON OFFICE
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FOR RELEASE AFTER DECEMBER 20, 1961

World Council Speaks
On Religious Liberty

WASHINGTON (BP)--- A strong resolution on religious liberty was approved by the World Council of Churches meeting at New Delhi, India, according to C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Carlson's observations on the meeting of the World Council of Churches were made in an interview with James O. Duncan, editor of the *Capital Baptist*, here.

The religious liberty resolution came as a result of work by a special Study Commission on Religious Liberty and by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

Commenting on the resolution, Carlson said: "It is a highly important message to member churches, to the new nations and the old ones, to Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic church leaders, to the West and to the East, and not least to over-zealous politicians in all lands who want to make religion a tool for purposes of state policy."

The 750-word resolution said that human attempts to "coerce or eliminate faith are violations of the fundamental ways of God with men."

It further said that Christians see religious liberty as "a consequence of God's creative work, his redemption of man in Christ and his calling men into his service."

Religious liberty, according to the resolution, must include the right to worship, to teach, to practice, to observe, to change and to maintain one's religion in public and private. Each of these points was spelled out by the World Council statement.

Carlson attended the meeting of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs at Bangalore, India, preceding the World Council meeting, as a fraternal representative of the Baptist World Alliance. He attended the World Council meeting as an "adviser" upon invitation of the Council.

In his interview with Editor Duncan, Carlson pointed out some differences between this meeting and the one in Evanston, Ill., in 1954. He said that the New Delhi meeting was less "western" and related itself more closely to current world problems than did the Evanston assembly.

Carlson reported that some newspaper editors in India lifted their eyebrows when the Christians came to their country and claimed that Christ is "the" Light of the world. The editors questioned the propriety of such a claim in the light of western wars, he said. "One could sense that the world is asking evidence to support our professed faith in Christ," he observed.

Commenting on the reception of the Russian Orthodox Church into World Council of Churches membership, Carlson reported that the Russian delegates were heartily welcomed. He said, "One could sense the conviction that economic and political differences do not justify refusing fellowship among Christians, so they were welcomed as fellow Christians, not especially as 'Russians.'"

A new "basis" of membership in the World Council of Churches was approved at New Delhi. It is as follows: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

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Membership in the World Council of Churches "has been controversial among Baptists ever since it began in 1948," Carlson said, "and apparently it will be more so as rival structures begin to feel its strength, and as political interests seek more religious undergirding."

Three of the sponsoring groups of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs are members of the World Council of Churches. They are the American Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

Four of the Baptist Joint Committee groups are not members of the World Council of Churches. They are the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Conference, the North American Baptist General Conference, and the Baptist Federation of Canada.

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An Interview on World Council of Churches

(12-8-61)

FOR RELEASE AFTER DECEMBER 20, 1961

EDITORS' NOTE: C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C., attended the meeting of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Bangalore, India, November 11-15, 1961, as a fraternal representative of the Baptist World Alliance. He also was present at the World Council of Churches meeting at New Delhi, India, November 18 - December 6. He attended in the capacity of "adviser" upon the invitation of the World Council of Churches.

Following is an interview with Carlson by James O. Duncan, editor of the Capital Baptist, Washington, D. C.----Baptist Press

Q. How would you state your purpose in going to the meetings in India?

A. That is a good starting point. I have been at several ecumenical meetings in a variety of capacities. In 1954 I attended the Assembly in Evanston as an "alternate" in the American Baptist Convention delegation. In 1957 I attended the North American Faith and Order Conference as a "consultant," having been considerably involved in a preparatory study. My status at New Delhi was that of "adviser." This is to be distinguished from the Church "delegates" who are seated as voting members, and also from the "observers" who look and listen but without voice. An "adviser" attends on invitation of the World Council of Churches in view of some specialty or some previous contribution. In my case I assume I was invited because of my membership in the special study commission on religious liberty. Through the past several years I have worked much on papers and drafts in that field. My purpose in going was two-fold: first, to be on hand to interpret Baptist viewpoints in my special area of concern, and second, to see and hear for myself to know what happens.

Q. You were in Southern India to another meeting before you went to New Delhi, were you not?

A. Yes, I was at Bangalore for the meeting of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). This group serves as advisory to the World Council of Churches on problems of international relations, including those in religious liberty. "World Confessional Bodies" like the Baptist World Alliance are invited to send a "fraternal representative." I have attended those meetings for the past several years in behalf of the Baptist World Alliance. I was designated to this role now, presumably because of my responsibility in the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Religious Liberty and Human Rights, which now includes problems of war and peace. The same reasons apply here.

Q. How did this assembly compare with the Evanston assembly of 1954? Do you see trends or changes taking place?

A. Certainly there are large differences. In my estimation this assembly was "dated 1961," and could not have taken place in 1954. Representatives of Churches in the newer nations, from Asia and Africa, were much more prominently involved now. In other words, this meeting was less "western." The World Council of Churches, like the United Nations, is changing as the world changes. This process was furthered by the admission of 23 new church bodies, ranging all the way from a Pentecostal group in South America to the Eastern Orthodox Church of Russia. That brought the total up to nearly 200 Church bodies involved from all continents.

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In 1954 the theme was the Christian's hope. That discussion was less directly related to the Christian life than this year's discussion of "Christ the Light of the World." The present day awareness of the darkness of international tensions, of the needs in underdeveloped nations, of the fears and anxieties of people everywhere gave a striking backdrop to the theme. Also, this theme raised some eyebrows in India. To some Indian editors it seemed nervy for the World Council of Churches to come into the East and proclaim Christ as "the" Light of the world. Some ventured to question the propriety of it in the light of western wars. One could sense that the world is asking evidence to support our professed faith in Christ.

Q. Did you sense any special attitudes regarding the admission of the Russian Orthodox Church to membership?

A. Yes, I felt that they were heartily welcomed. The vote was overwhelming for admission and the applause seemed spontaneous. One could sense the conviction that economic and political differences do not justify refusing fellowship among Christians, so they were welcomed as fellow Christians, not especially as "Russians." I was interested to note that a Pentecostal group from Latin America joined at the same time as the Russian Orthodox Church. This illustrates the wide spread.

Q. How many Baptists were there?

A. Dr. Ernest Payne of England, who was then vice-chairman of the Central Committee, issued the call for a "Baptist tea" one afternoon. I counted 60 present, and I could think of several Baptists who were not here. I believe Dr. Payne said there were 26 Baptists among the 600 delegates. Several are on the staff of World Council of Churches, some are on staffs of national councils, the rest were guests, observers, fraternal delegates, or advisers. The "observers," who mostly come from non-member groups, were not numerous among Baptists--Dr. Billy Graham and perhaps two or three others. I see no rush to membership among Baptist groups.

Q. Do you feel that real communication took place in the meetings between the many different Christian groups represented at Delhi?

A. I would not want to generalize in response to that question, but rather let me be specific. I had two roommates at the Maidens Hotel. One was a Baptist educator from Burma and the other was a Presbyterian pastor from Greece. We lived together for 10 days, in good Christian fellowship. I have some new friends, and I learned much about the situations and the experiences of Christians in those distant areas. We did have good communication. This happened in hundreds of rooms in Delhi. Many new friendships undoubtedly developed.

The meetings broke down in Sections, Committees and subcommittees. When a dozen or 15 people meet for several hours a day for several days there is pretty good opportunity to explore each other's minds. The Sections were larger and there was less direct contact. The plenary sessions of the 600 delegates had to use the earphones, the translators, and four languages, yet debate remained surprisingly effective. Viewpoints come much more alive when you hear them stated personally and with conviction instead of second-hand.

Q. Were you satisfied with the resolution which was adopted on religious liberty?

A. Yes, I was glad the World Council of Churches could say unitedly as much as it said. It was a strongly worded statement on religious freedom as a practical civil right. As such it is a highly important message to the member churches, to the new nations and the old ones, to Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic church leaders, to the West and to the East, and not least to over-zealous politicians in all lands who want to make religion a tool for purposes of state policy.

The recognition of religious liberty has come quite recently to some segments of Christendom. There is as yet no substantial consensus on the theological bases of concern for religious liberty. However, this short declaration described religious liberty as a "consequence of God's creative work, his redemption of man in Christ and his calling men into his service," and said that attempts to "coerce or eliminate faith are violations of the fundamental ways of God with men." Years of study and discussion can deepen and broaden these current insights. Such studies are being planned. If Christian leaders everywhere become clear that people must be won for Christ and not coerced into the Kingdom, it will be a great day for the Christian faith and for inter-church relationships.

The declaration's enumeration of consequent civil rights asked for a "comprehensive interpretation" of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18. It declared that this is a "fundamental" right for men everywhere, and it enumerated a good illustrative list of specific freedoms which must be included. I thought it was a good brief statement of what we are asking for.

Q. How do you see the import or significance of the World Council of Churches? What are its desires and purposes?

A. The New Delhi Assembly discussed and approved a new "basis" of membership. It reads as follows: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

The old basis simply said it is a "fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." Some felt that the change tended in the direction of a creed.

The goals which are sought on this "basis" show up in the three Sections, one designated to each: (a) Witness, (b) Service, (c) Unity. The assumption is that a Christian witness to the world requires that the Churches make their unity in Christ clearly manifest. The World Council hopes that the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches will facilitate a more effective witness. Also, there are service agencies within the Council which implement the Christian compassion of the Churches (e.g., Division of Interchurch Aid), and those which implement other concerns (e.g., Commission of the Churches on International Affairs). Much is said about "diakonia" (service) as the manifestation of the love which makes witness genuine.

While the World Council of Churches rejoices over its increasingly long list of member Churches, now nearly 200 denominational groups, there is no secret that a hope prevails in the fellowship that the list will be shortened by church unions. While the World Council of Churches does not attempt to negotiate these unions, clearly it does bless them, and it hopes that mergers will result from increased mutual understanding and acquaintance.

The World Council of Churches is pretty much aware of the Reformation but it makes an obvious effort not to be anti-Catholic. The Vatican sent five "observers," and varying degrees of optimism regarding developments in the Roman Catholic Church could be read between the lines. In actual practice the "World Council of Churches" has considerably stolen the Roman Catholic thunder on the subject of "catholicity." Perhaps without intension, the Roman Catholic church has been cast in a "sectarian" role.

The World Council has come to be quite a big thing. It now involves an annual budget of \$750,000. It has been controversial among Baptists ever since it began in 1948, and apparently it will be more so as rival structures begin to feel its strength, and as political interests seek more religious undergirding.

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William Jewell College
Approved For HHFA Loan

(12-8-61)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- A Missouri Baptist school and six other church-related institutions were approved for a total of \$3,000 in college housing loans during November, according to the Community Development Administration of the U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency.

William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., was approved for a \$420,000 loan, to build 36 apartments for families of married students. Walter Pope Binns is president of the college.

Other church-related institutions approved for loans include: three Presbyterian, and one each of United Church of Christ, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran.

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