

FROM WASHINGTON OFFICE
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Seeks Baptist Answers
To Religion In School

WASHINGTON (BP)-- A leaflet on the issues involved in religion in the public schools will be produced by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The committee in semi-annual session here instructed the executive director, C. Emanuel Carlson, to prepare a paper setting forth a Baptist "rationale" in an approach to the problem of Bible reading, prayer and religious programs in the public schools.

The study will be reviewed by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs next October before it is published for general distribution.

The issue of religion in the schools is coming into sharp national focus as two cases on the problem are considered by the United States Supreme Court. The Court will rule on a New York case involving a non-sectarian prayer approved by a school board and on a Pennsylvania case involving daily Bible reading in public schools.

In presenting this problem to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Carlson said, "The growing popularity of 'religion' in all forms, the rising excitement usually called 'anti-communism,' the juvenile delinquency statistics, etc., are giving rise to an urgency in many minds for the inclusion of 'religion' in the public school curriculum."

"At the same time," Carlson continued, "minority groups such as the Unitarians, the Jews, the Ethical Culturists, et. al., are pressing for the exclusion of 'religious' practices and observances which have been largely traditional in the American public schools."

Carlson has worked on this problem previously. He was a consultant with the Committee on Religion and Public Education of the National Council of Churches. This committee spent several years conducting studies and conferences on the subject and produced a study document on the "Relation of Religion to Public Education," which has been widely read and commended in Baptist circles.

More recently Carlson has worked with the Council of Churches, National Capital Area, in preparing a position paper on religion in the schools to be presented to the school boards in the District of Columbia and surrounding suburbs.

To date, however, there has been no similar study made on the Baptist "rationale" for an approach to the problem. It is this vacuum that the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is seeking to fill by its projected leaflet.

Human Need Programs
Face Liberty Problems

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Religious liberty principles in programs to meet human need involving both the government and the churches should be safeguarded, according to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

At the same time the Baptist group insisted that help to needy persons should be an important concern both of the government and of the churches.

The action was taken at the semi-annual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs as it considered the report of the fifth annual Religious Liberty Conference which met here last fall. The conference studies "Church-State Aspects of the Churches' Involvement in Human Need."

Although the committee did not adopt the conference findings as the position of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, it did "receive" the report and "approved it in general" as a guide for the staff.

Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, discussed the role of the churches during national emergencies and in the distribution of governmental supplies and services abroad. He reported for Edward B. Willingham, executive secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who is chairman of the World Issues Committee. Cauthen presented a four-fold recommendation of the World Issues Committee which was approved as follows:

- (1) The churches should refrain from becoming an instrument of the government;
- (2) The churches should assert their purpose to serve to the maximum in meeting public disaster;
- (3) The churches should assert their basic purpose in making known the message of redemption; and
- (4) The churches should address themselves to the task of cultivating a strong Christian faith to meet any emergency.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs agreed that in cases of national or international emergencies the churches and their agencies should cooperate with governments to provide for human needs. But "in the conduct of its long range ministry," the committee said, "we would not look to the government to supply the means for Christian charity."

Courts Redford, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, reported for the Domestic Issues Committee, which reviewed the conference report on church-state problems in caring for dependents and the aging and in programs related to health.

The report identified the church-state problems in this area as seen (1) in providing financial means for institutional care, (2) in determining religious instruction of dependent children, (3) in cooperating with courts in various fields, and (4) in setting up receiving homes.

The committee agreed that there are areas of meeting human need where the church and state can share in mutual responsibilities, that the state should establish basic health standards for institutional care, and that grants to individual children for short term services in church institutions would not violate separation of church and state.

It was further agreed that "direct grants or subsidized loans which increase the capital assets of the church at the expense of the taxpayers are to be rejected."

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American Baptists
Strengthen BJCPA

(3-14-62)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- The American Baptist Convention has taken steps to strengthen the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, according to Edwin H. Tuller, general secretary of the convention.

The explanation was made to the semi-annual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here.

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In the recent reorganization of the American Baptist Convention a semi-independent organization, the Council on Christian Social Progress, was absorbed into the General Council of the convention. It is now the Division of Christian Social Concern. The American Baptist Public Affairs Committee has become a department of this new division.

The practical effect of this change is that the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs now has a channel to the American Baptist Convention through its General Council rather than through an agency of the convention.

Tuller told the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs that this new move in no way changed the 1956 agreement of the American Baptist Convention which was also approved by the Southern Baptist Convention and the other Baptist bodies working through the Joint Committee. He said that the new arrangement sets up a method of appointing the American Baptist Convention's 15 members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

"There is no attempt to minimize but rather to increase the total impact" of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs on American Baptist life, Tuller said. "You will have in the future a much clearer and direct route than in the past," he concluded.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is a cooperative denominational agency maintained in the Nation's Capital by seven Baptist bodies. In addition to the two conventions above the Baptist General Conference, the North American Baptist General Conference, the National Baptist Convention of America, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., and the Baptist Federation of Canada work together in the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee is working with a budget of \$74,645 in 1962. This money comes directly from the funds of the cooperating conventions. The committee reports to the cooperating conventions, and the conventions in turn make their own appropriations and elect the members who constitute the Joint Committee.

C. Emanuel Carlson is the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, with offices in Washington, D. C.

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Presbyterian Group
Loses Court Appeal

(3-14-62)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- The United States Supreme Court declined to review a decision by the state courts of Florida that members of a Presbyterian church who withdraw from their parent denomination cannot claim ownership of the church property.

The Supreme Court's action leaves standing as final word in the dispute over control of the Miami Beach (Fla.) Presbyterian Church a decision by the District Court of Appeals for Dade County. In effect the decision says that a different rule of law is required for a church with an "ecclesiastical" form of government than for churches with a congregational form.

The decision emphasizes that when members of a local congregation are chartered by a national governing body and accept its Book on Church Order, they sacrifice control over their local church, in event of a disagreement.

The long legal dispute arose when members of the church voted 139 to 6 to dis-affiliate with the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) because of their objection to its membership in the National Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies. The vote took place on August 2, 1954, on the eve of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Ill., at which time members of the church made it plain they did not want delegates of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. to represent them.

They voted to change the name of the congregation to the Miami Beach Independent Presbyterian Church and continued to worship with the Presbyterian order of worship.

However, minority members of the congregation, and the Presbytery of the Everglades, local governing body of the Miami area, sought a court injunction to bar Willis E. Garrett, the pastor, and members of the congregation from conducting an "independent church" on the premises.

Circuit Judge Pat Cannon who heard the case ruled in favor of the minister and the majority of members, holding that they were conducting a Presbyterian church and observing that when it came to such matters as adopting a revised confession of faith "the majority rules."

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Judge Cannon was overruled, however, by a unanimous opinion of three judges of the District Court of Appeals. They ruled in favor of the Presbytery despite the existence of an article in the 1941 charter of incorporation of the church specifying that upon a vote of three-fourths of the members its affiliation with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. could be severed and it could connect itself with any other synod it chooses.

The judges held that when founders of the church applied in 1935 to the Presbytery of the Everglades for permission to establish a church and when they organized that church, they made themselves subject to the Book of Church Order and "the ecclesiastical government recognized thereby."

"The majority who withdrew were no longer members of the mother church and, therefore, after withdrawal, had no right to the use of the church property," the judges held, with respect to the \$187,000 edifice.

"In a representative form of church government, individual members of a particular church or congregation are free to withdraw their membership at any time from such church or congregation," said the judges, "but they are not permitted to take the church property with them."

The Florida Supreme Court reviewed the case, but said it could find no constitutional issue and affirmed the Court of Appeals.

In their appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court, attorneys for Garrett and the congregation said their religious liberty was violated by Florida which insisted that they must accept "the overbearing...hierarchy of the Presbytery" and "integrate against their free will with national organizations" or lose control of their church property.

However, refusal of the high court to accept the appeal means the case is closed and will be remanded to the original local court for issuance of an injunction ousting the pastor and congregation.

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