

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PORTER ROUTH, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

127 NINTH AVENUE, NORTH



NASHVILLE 3, TENNESSEE

WILMER C. FIELDS
PUBLIC RELATIONS
SECRETARY

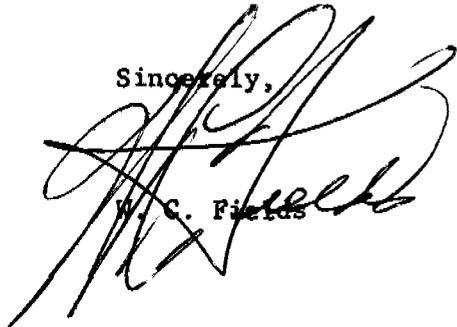
September 10, 1962

Dear Editor:

With the permission of Dean Goodwin I am sending you the enclosed background information.

In view of the divided opinion among Baptists of the world on ways and means of cooperating with other Christians, I thought you might like to have this account of the discussions at Oslo.

Sincerely,


W. C. Fields



SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE BAPTISTS

by

R. Dean Goodwin

The Baptist World Alliance had an intimation that an invitation to send an observer to the Second Vatican Council (beginning Oct. 11) would be extended if a favorable response to the invitation seemed likely. Other world confessional bodies had similar intimations and several of them agreed to accept an invitation and have appointed observers. The Baptist World Alliance Executive Committee (Oslo, August 1962) could not agree that they should encourage such an invitation. (You have had a news release on that subject.) Here is a brief background statement.

Dr. V. Carney Hargroves, by request, stated impartial reasons why we should and should not send an observer to the meeting of the Second Vatican Council. His positive reasons were as follows:

1. The Roman Catholic hierarchy has for the first time recognized the Protestant people.
2. Other Protestant groups will be represented but only Baptists can represent the Baptist point of view.
3. Baptist convictions should and can be expressed if we have an observer there.
4. We need to know what is happening in other religious groups, especially when what is happening is within the Roman Catholic circles. Among the items on the agenda are a redefinition of the power of the bishops, religious liberty, and church-state relations, also revision of liturgy and the liberty of new groups in Africa and Asia.
5. We need a first-hand contact with the Roman Catholic Church.

On the negative side Dr. Hargroves gave the following arguments:

1. The purpose of the council is unity but we know that this is now an ecumenical council and we know what unity means from the point of view of the Vatican.
2. Representatives would be observers and therefore not equals with the Roman Catholics in the meeting.
3. The first sentence of the invitation speaks of "all Christians who are separated from the Catholic church". Could we accept an invitation that is so worded?
4. Some feel that this is an effort to strengthen the power of the Vatican, and Protestants "running toward Rome" would give an impression that would not be favorable to Protestants.
5. There would be a possible adverse effect among many Baptists if we were represented, especially Baptists in South America and other places where Baptists have suffered at the hands of the priests and the hierarchy.

Following Dr. Hargroves' impartial statement, there were several speakers on both sides and some who were neutral. For example, Brooks Hays, Ernest Payne of England, and Edwin H. Tuller, among others, favored accepting an invitation to send an observer. The great surprise was Mr. Ronchi who heads the Baptist work of Italy, who argued strongly that Baptists should send an observer. We would be guests of the Roman Catholics, he said, and forever afterward the Roman Catholics would have to treat their guests with some respect. He said also that Pope John XXIII is against some of the

policies of Pope Pius the XII. For example, John is giving the bishops more status. Ronchi believes that some changes in the Roman Catholic Church have been influenced by the Protestants. He says that there are two wings in the Roman Catholic Church and we should choose to support the liberal wing by our presence.

Among those who opposed our sending a representative to the Vatican Council were the Polish Baptists who feel that they would be hurt by this action; also a man from the French Camerons, and representatives from France and South America. Mr. Zhidkov of Moscow pointed out that in Moscow the Baptists and the Orthodox talk as equals and that if the Pope were in Moscow, he likewise would have to talk with the Baptists as an equal. But in Rome he said the Pope will see us as sons who have come back to bow their heads before him. If it would harm any Baptist people anywhere, we must restrain ourselves.

James Sullivan, of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said that by sending an observer to the Vatican we could make some permanent enemies and some temporary friends. He opposed such action. Also opposing was Baker J. Cauthen, of Richmond, Va.

Joel Sorenson of Sweden said that we have now a dynamic understanding of life all over the world and that he wants to be in contact with other Christian people, therefore he favored sending someone to the Vatican.

Dr. Tuller said that he favored accepting an invitation because he disagrees so strongly with the Roman Catholic Church. He said that Baptists have something to say and we dare not say it only in our own circles. We have a position and we must state it. He said that if we are not there, our view would not be represented.

There was a general feeling that the Baptist World Alliance Executive Committee could act only if there was a unanimous feeling. In the light of this, an action was presented by Ernest Payne of England which was accepted. His motion was that we could not agree to encourage an invitation but that we would pray that the conference would result in a deeper understanding of the will of God in the unity of God's people.

Before the final action there was a statement by Edward H. Pruden, of Washington, D. C., who said that it is true that a majority of Baptist people would not favor having an observer at the Vatican Council but he regretted that this is so. He said that it is wrong to draw the line where we say that we will not sit down and listen. This gives us a reputation of being separatists and unfriendly. He said that we are more gifted in gauging the feelings of our people than influencing those feelings. We have not only a responsibility to our constituency not to disturb them, but to outsiders also.

Walter Harrelson, an American Baptist, is studying in the Vatican this winter on leave of absence from Vanderbilt University. An effort is being made to secure press credentials so that he may get to the meetings and get inside information. He would not have ecclesiastical status. Stanley I. Stuber, another American Baptist, will be there also.

At the same time, there is discussion of setting up a Protestant liaison press office in Rome during the Vatican Council so that the Protestants will get an adequate interpretation of what is going on.

B u i l d i n g t h e K i n g d o m
An Appeal to Church Budget Committees

Dollars invested in putting your State Baptist Paper in your church budget will bear enduring dividends in furthering the Kingdom of God.

Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Christian Education, Benevolences - all the interests of our beloved denomination will be strengthened.

Constant emphasis upon the doctrines of our faith, based upon the clear teachings of God's living Word, will unite our young people.

Basic in everything we are trying to do as Baptists is the ministry of our State Baptist Papers. Put your paper in your church budget.

Louie D. Newton, Chairman
Baptist State Paper Committee
Southern Baptist Convention

Personal photograph sent out by Baptist Press.

Date

September 10, 1962

Name

Chaplain James W. Kelly