

FROM WASHINGTON OFFICE
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Politicians Ask For
Legal Religious Nation

by W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Members of Congress continue to introduce bills to establish by law that this nation is religious and that it recognizes God.

Baptists throughout their history have opposed official religion. They have insisted that response to God must be voluntary. They believe that a genuine religious experience is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people rather than response to constitutions, kings or government authority.

The latest in a series of proposals to establish the religiousness of the nation is a bill to add the words "under God" to the preamble to the Constitution. Sen. J. Caleb Boggs (R., Del.), for himself and 11 other Senators, made the proposal.

Boggs explained that his purpose was to "add a spiritual dimension to the Constitution that the Supreme Court would consider in deciding any cases before it."

Earlier in the 88th Congress Rep. Frank M. Clark (D., Pa.) made a similar proposal.

The legislative concern for the recognition of God has taken on several interesting turns during the 88th Congress. Sen. J. Howard Edmondson (D., Okla.) proposed an amendment to the Constitution that would read: "Nothing in this Constitution shall ever be construed to prohibit the recognition of Almighty God."

Zeal for a national motto, "In God We Trust," has picked up considerable support. While the motto has been ^{required} on all coins since 1955, the 87th Congress instructed the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to include the motto on various denominations of paper money.

During the 87th Congress the House of Representatives in a gesture to strike at the Supreme Court ordered "In God We Trust" to be inscribed in gold letters above the chair occupied by the Speaker of the House.

Then, further slapping at the Supreme Court, bills have been introduced ordering the Architect of the Capitol to inscribe in the structural stone or marble of the Supreme Court building the words "In God We Trust." Others ask that the inscription be put inside the courtroom itself "in gold letters of sufficient size to make the phrase legible throughout the courtroom."

Rep. Robert F. Ellsworth (R., Kan.) and Rep. F. Bradford Morse (R., Mass.) introduced identical bills in the House of Representatives to do what the First Amendment already does. Their bills provide "that no officer, agent, or employee of the United States, or any state thereof, shall prohibit, restrain, or interfere with the free exercise of religion."

Nineteen Senators earlier in the year proposed a constitutional amendment that would provide for religious laws in all of the states. The exact wording of their proposal is as follows:

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"Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prevent the enactment by any state of any law with respect to religion; except that no state shall enact any law establishing any organized church or religious association of any faith, denomination, or sect as a preferred or favored church or religious association, or enact any law prohibiting the free exercise of religion."

One of the reasons given by the Senators for state religious laws was that "government's role of neutrality should be between the denominations and sects of the religious and not between the religious and the nonreligious."

Another bill would require the inscription "In God We Trust" to appear not only on the money of the nation but on all postage stamps, stamped envelopes, and postal cards.

A perennial proposal is the so-called "Christian amendment." It would amend the United States Constitution by establishing Christianity as follows: "This nation devoutly recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Saviour and Ruler of Nations, through whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God."

Although these proposals are always made with great vigor, no hearings on any of them have been held, except the "Christian amendment" several years ago. No one expects any of them to be passed by the Congress this year. However, with the convening of the 89th Congress next January another batch of similar bills will be dumped into the legislative hopper.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following story up-dates the one sent Aug. 14 with heading "NDEA Provides Broader Aid To Church Schools." You may want to substitute this new story for that one.--Barry Garrett

NDEA Extension Awaits
Senate, House Accord

(8-20-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Similar bills passed by the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives provide for broader federal aid to church schools under the National Defense Education Act.

The bills would expand and extend programs of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) and also the program of aid to federally impacted areas. Differences in the two versions will have to be worked out in a conference committee. Backers of the bills hope some agreement can be reached after the Democratic convention.

Both bills would extend the "forgiveness" feature for student loans to college students who later became teachers in private schools or colleges. Presently up to 50 per cent of the loans could be canceled only for students who later taught in public schools.

Though differing on amounts, both would increase the loans available for such purposes. They further would remove the \$800,000 ceiling on funds available to any one college or university. The funds are provided on a matching basis to public and private colleges for low-interest student loans.

Currently, matching grants are made available to states for public schools and 10-year loans to private schools for purchasing equipment for teaching science, mathematics and foreign languages. Under the Senate bill, this would be expanded to include equipment for history, civics, geography, English and remedial reading. The House version would expand the program to remedial reading, English when it is taught as a second language, wall maps, globes, testgrading equipment, and specialized equipment for audiovisual libraries.

Both measures would write into law the existing policy that graduate fellowships may not be granted for study at a school or department of divinity.

Programs of testing, guidance, and counseling would be extended under the Senate bill to elementary schools, public junior colleges and technical institutes. It would also extend the testing program to private junior colleges and technical institutes. The House would extend the programs to elementary schools only. The programs now are limited to secondary schools, beginning at the seventh grade level.

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The program of teacher training institutes would be broadened under both bills. The Senate would broaden guidance institutes to include teachers in elementary schools and colleges, while the House would include only elementary schools. The program now is for guidance counselors in secondary schools.

The Senate further would broaden the institutes program to include history, civics, geography, English and remedial reading. School librarians, education media specialists and teachers of handicapped children would also be included. The House version would broaden it only to include remedial reading, English when taught as a second language, library personnel, and teachers of specialized training for "disadvantaged youth." Now the institutes are limited to modern foreign languages. Both public and private school teachers would be eligible.

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Says Religious Freedom
Demands Social Duties

(8-20-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Free exercise of religion is assured to the individual only as he helps assure free exercise for all others in society, according to a seminar group of Tennessee Baptists.

In a study paper on "Free Exercise of Religion and the Citizen's Obligation to Society," the group discussed some basic questions concerning the freedom of the individual and his place in society.

This is one of eight study papers prepared by seminar groups across the country for the Religious Liberty Conference here Oct. 7-9. The conference is sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director.

The group posed the following questions: (1) What are the rights of the individual to be religiously extreme or irregular? (2) What rights of the community are lost when religious extremes are exercised? (3) Who guarantees the individual his rights to be religiously irregular? (4) What protects the community from the "way out" individual? (5) If a line has to be drawn where should it be drawn and who draws it?

They stated that the citizen has an obligation to society to serve the public interest. Yet, some would put that obligation above individual freedom and deny freedom to those who hold other views, they pointed out.

"Because freedom is basically a moral question, the line between public obligation and personal freedom is sometimes hard to see," they said.

The paper presents the idea that free exercise puts man into "tension" with society and with himself. "As a private person he wants to be free; as a public person he wants to conform," it said.

It points out two sides to the free exercise problem, one that can be controlled by law and one that cannot. "Law makes provisions for the conscientious objector and for other aberrants, but not for the man who is subjected to group pressure or community pressure," the paper said.

The Baptist group cited several problems in the range of free exercise and public conflict:

(1) religion-oriented problems of social deviation, such as the early practice of polygamy by the Mormons, and Sabbatarians who observe a holy day other than Sunday;

(2) religion-oriented problems related to the national security, such as conscientious objectors;

(3) religion-oriented problems of public peace, such as some religious groups who object to the pledge of allegiance to the flag;

(4) religion-oriented problems of public health, such as blood transfusions to save a baby's life even though the parents may have religious objections; and

(5) religion-oriented problems of personal privilege, when personal privilege just be forfeited because it interferes with the well-being and public peace of society.

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Those who overstress free exercise tend to forget that without government there could be no free exercise, the group said. They pointed out that freedom cannot exist in a lawless society.

Government must always be limited because: (1) government is not the exclusive power in the affairs of its citizens, (2) government cannot be perfect, and (3) government is people, not things, they said.

The seminar group said free society must be guaranteed by law and must apply to all citizens. It must guarantee to each person "the freedom to follow his own will in all things, and never be slave to the unclear and mandatory wills of others."

The "fine line between anarchy and submission" must be drawn by the society and not law, they said.

The seminar group included: Daniel R. Grant, Vanderbilt University; G. Allen West, Woodmont Baptist Church; William Dyal, Christian Life Commission; L. J. Newton, Baptist Sunday School Board; Davis C. Woolley, Historical Commission, SBC; Gomer L. Lesch, Baptist Sunday School Board; Rabun L. Brantley, Education Commission, SBC; Woodrow W. Phelps, Belmont College; Walter Haralson, Vanderbilt University; and Martin B. Bradley, Baptist Sunday School Board.

Albert McClellan, program planning secretary of the Executive Committee, SBC, was chairman of the group.

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Baptist Schools Get College Housing Loans

(8-20-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Two Baptist schools are among five church-related schools approved for college housing loans, according to announcement from the Community Facilities Administration here. A third Baptist school made application for a loan.

The University of Redlands (Calif.), an American Baptist school, was approved for a \$450,000 loan. The federal funds will be supplemented by \$75,000 of the school's funds. The loan was granted for a new women's resident hall.

Benedict College, a Baptist school in Columbia, S. C., was also approved for a loan of \$450,000. This is to build two new residence halls and will be supplemented by \$33,800 from the school.

Application for a \$235,000 college housing loan was filed by Salem (W. Va.) College, a Seventh Day Baptist school. The application has not yet been processed.

Other church schools receiving loans include Methodist, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic.

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