

February 10, 1966

Baptist Leader Describes Liberty Hopes In Spain

By The Baptist Press

C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C., recently returned from a trip to Spain and Switzerland where he conferred with a wide assortment of well-informed people concerning new developments in religious liberty. Here is an interview with him, conducted by W. Barry Garrett, regional editor of the Washington office of Baptist Press, with special reference to the developments in Spain. Other Baptist editors were invited to submit questions.

QUESTION: Much has been said of the restrictions on the religious liberty of non-Catholics in Spain in recent years. What are these restrictions?

ANSWER: First it is necessary to understand the purpose of the limitations. Since St. Thomas, the official teachings have recognized that faith cannot be coerced into being. However, the state could enforce the regulations on the members of the church. In addition, the state undertook to protect people from "error." To this end other forms of worship than the Roman Catholic should be prevented.

With the new agreement (Concordant) between the Spanish government and the Vatican in 1953, the state remained the protector of the "true" church. Accordingly, Protestants have had trouble conducting schools or seminaries, importing or printing Bibles and other books, getting and identifying buildings.

Marriage was also left in the control of the church, particularly where baptized Roman Catholics were concerned. Many who were baptized as infants were not Roman Catholic by the time they were ready to marry. For years the church would not consent to a secular marriage for such "members."

In a sense we have the same thing in a small way in the United States--that is the minister is recognized as an officer of the state for marriage contracts. But secular marriage is available and the minister's approval is not necessary.

QUESTION: Is there religious liberty for Roman Catholics in Spain?

ANSWER: From what we have just said, state powers have been used to keep Roman Catholics "faithful" to their church. In one sense they have less freedom than the Protestants, especially the resident foreign Protestant. A Roman Catholic cannot be married without the services of the church. He cannot get a secular education. He cannot choose the books he wants to read, or the motion pictures he wants to see. The theory is that he has accepted such restraints by church and government as good discipline for himself.

Some people are uneasy under this institutional control. Many of the clergy know that they are unduly confined. The cause of religious freedom has many potential friends in the Roman Catholic Church, and in the political order, if they only could make the transition.

QUESTION: Has the Vatican Council's declaration on religious liberty made any real impact on anyone in Spain?

ANSWER: Yes it has--on leadership of all kinds. Spanish leaders have been proud of their loyalty to the Papacy. Even the police have new orders directing them to treat Protestants as "Christian brethren," people of real merit, good and responsible people.

Many of the clergy are trying to arrange for "dialogue," for exchange of information and ideas with Protestants. Spanish Protestants are being invited to speak to Roman Catholic groups. Others are holding back.

Perhaps the most important impact has been on the Spanish hierarchy. A number of Bishops have said candidly that the Spanish people are not prepared for religious liberty. Many

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people are not committed to their Roman Catholic Church affiliation. They lack the knowledge or the roots of conviction to stand anywhere in particular. A mass movement in most any direction could take place, so the question is how to bring renewal to "the church" quickly. The Bishops will go along with the Council as best they can.

QUESTION: What has been the impact on the Protestants?

ANSWER: That, too, is diverse. Some are aware that probably the majority of the Spanish people are in reality "unchurched" even though they have a nominal and cultural Catholicism. For these Protestants the thought of full freedom is a challenge.

Other Protestants actually fear freedom. They have worked so long under restrictions and prohibitions that they would not know how to be effective otherwise. They fear that they may lose their kinship with the New Testament church, and that the nature of the churches would change under conditions of freedom.

QUESTION: There have been hopes that a new law would be forthcoming from the government covering religious liberty. Has that matter been helped or hindered?

ANSWER: It has become more complicated. These proposals grew out of an attempt to improve the nation's image abroad. Spain does not want to be considered Medieval.

But the Vatican Council's declaration enunciates religious freedom as rooted in the dignity of man given by God. This requires recognition of "human rights," and becomes a matter of justice instead of foreign policy. Now segments of the church are pulling apart from the established political policies, asking more freedom for the people and for the church.

Any country that has tried to legislate on "rights" and to get privileged groups to accept "equality" will understand that this takes time. Spain has a tough job on her hands.

QUESTION: We have been getting an assortment of reports about the freedoms and the restrictions in Spain. Are some reports right and others wrong?

ANSWER: They are probably all true, but each is only part of the truth. Let me illustrate. The First Baptist Church of Madrid has just received a legal permit to operate as a place of worship. Someone could say this must mean more freedom. Not really! That church has been there for 80 years and has 460 members. It is and has been a great witness. They were not stopped. They were not "illegal"--they were just "extra legal."

Spain, like all countries, has much unused law. Lawyers may measure freedom by reading law books, but people measure it by practice in a community. This means that the actual freedoms vary in different parts of the nation, and in different periods of time under the same law. Freedom consists in relationships. These can be helped but not made by law.

QUESTION: What, then, are the recent trends in actual practice?

ANSWER: All of the churches are open. It is easier to start new preaching stations. It is easier for Protestant young people to get married. It is easier to get permits for churches. It is easier to print materials, and easier to import Bibles and religious books. The books must be approved by the censor but approval is easier to get. It is easier to buy property for churches, and a bookshop even has a sign on it, but the laws are unchanged.

A new spirit of freedom and confidence is in the air for the Protestant minority now. The Protestants even have an accredited press representative who is free to go to public functions whenever the press is admitted. Preaching to home groups is permitted. Theoretically the group should not exceed 20 people, but if the preacher is respected the officers do not work too hard on their arithmetic.

A Protestant pastor who has worked with hundreds of Protestant young couples claimed that 13 of the 15 judges in the area are very cooperative with the Protestant couples. The two die-hards will probably make the news.

QUESTION: Are the Protestants trying to make a concerted effort to get the laws changed?

ANSWER: I think the answer must be "No." They are too few to feel able to exercise a political influence. Some of the Roman Catholic groups would like the Protestants to press hard, and gain more freedom for Roman Catholics also. Everyone is aware of broad sympathies in the political arena for freedom, but no one knows just what those forces are like, or what

to expect. Furthermore, many of the Protestants have some kind of linkage to movements abroad which makes cooperation among them less easy. There does seem to be a large measure of cooperation and goodwill among the various Protestant elements even though they have distinctive ideas and emphases.

QUESTION: What constitute the basic problems that make this matter so difficult in Spain?

ANSWER: The problems are beyond number, but perhaps these are nearer to being basic:

1. The theory of the state which looks to government to protect people against the errors of mind and spirit is not compatible with freedom. All Americans who want government to promote religion should spend some time in Spain.
2. The word "proselytism" is a genuine source of difficulty. Evangelism by Protestants is called proselytism by Roman Catholics. Perhaps in time the word can mean "corrupted or unethical evangelism" and be condemned by both in favor of a true and free witness.
3. Church and state have leaned on each other so long that they dare not walk alone. Ability to trust the people to associate themselves for religious purposes will grow slowly.
4. The equations of national heritage with national religion has produced a whole set of thought categories which will not change suddenly.
5. The government is in a kind of transition stage. No one knows who or what will follow Franco. Religious freedom is hard to establish or maintain without having it demand such civic freedoms as free speech, free press, free assembly, free political association.

A beautiful country, a gracious people, a booming economy--Spain is on her way. Probably to greater freedom!



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**Church Counselor Says
Family Is In Trouble**

SAN ANTONIO, TEX. (BP)--Speakers at the 18th annual meeting of Southern Baptist Child Care Executives here emphasized the necessity of Baptists' recognizing child care as a challenging missionary endeavor.

Child care administrators from fourteen states met in the El Tropicano Hotel for the two-day Southern Baptist meeting.

B. David Edens, minister of counseling at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, said the family today is in trouble.

"If our families are to be challenged and the child care agency ministries made more meaningful, it will take a revolution in concern and practice. We cannot do this task alone," he explained.

Edens said that Baptists should not depend on the government---federal, state or local, to do the job for them. "Absolute separation is impossible but absolute dependence is morally irresponsible," he said.

Edens said Americans are doing a poor job in caring for orphans and abused and abandoned children. He said that fewer than one-half of the counties have even one child care worker.

"Because dependent children have few spokesmen and no lobby exists to defend their interest, we seem to have the mistaken idea that their needs are less urgent than those of the aged." Edens said an across-the-board grant to all states equally is not the answer.

"There are dramatic differences in the services a child receives from one state to another," he said. For each child under 21, New York state spends \$10.28 annually. Texas spends 24 cents per child annually. Yet, even in New York, surveys have revealed that 1,000 children cannot find adopted homes because of lack of funds.

Edens said the Community Chest and the United Fund have failed to keep up with the rising cost and the population boom. "Children cannot wait," Edens said. "Their needs are immediate for them. Tomorrow is too late."

Paul N. Nunnery, superintendent of Baptist Children's Village, Jackson, Miss., said child care is in a peculiar Biblical sense the job of the church. Nunnery said he was convinced that many pastors do not believe that the ministry of child care is missions and that many laymen do not understand.

"The lay people fail and refuse to understand and the preachers fail or refuse to believe."

Nunnery cited the following reasons:

1. Baptist child care failed for too long to adjust its program of care to changing times.
2. Baptist churches have been convinced through promotion and public relations programs that the needs of children are largely confined to the physical areas.
3. Baptist people have not been struck with the romance of a mission with children and thus have yielded to pressures which keep an ever-growing percentage of the church dollar--which might be used for child care - at home on the local church field.

Religious Public Relations
Council States Convention

NASHVILLE (BP)-Southern Baptists here will be among the major hosts of the 38th annual convention of the Religious Public Relations Council meeting here April 18-20.

Most of the sessions will be held at the Southern Baptist Convention Building on James Robertson Parkway.

The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here will sponsor a Bar-B-Q on the rooftop of the board's headquarters building, and the Tennessee Baptist Convention will sponsor a luncheon at the Tennessee Botanical Gardens and Fine Arts Center at Cheekwood Estates here.

More than 125 religious public relations workers representing many Protestant denominations throughout the nation are expected to attend.

Fourteen Baptists will be program participants during the meeting, held in the South for the first time in the 37-year history of the organization, said W. C. Fields of Nashville, public relations secretary for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

Fields, national vice president of the council, is general chairman for the convention here.

Five Baptists will deliver major addresses during the meeting, including two Baptist laymen who teach in state-supported universities and a former Texas Baptist public relations director.

They are George Schweitzer, atomic scientist and physics professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Dan Grant, political science professor at Vanderbilt University, Nashville; and Lloyd Wright, press and publications director for the U. S. Information Agency, Washington and former Texas Baptist public relations man.

Other major speakers who are Baptists are Sam Proctor, assistant in the Office of Economic Opportunity (War on Poverty), Washington; and Charles E. Boddie, president of American Baptist Theological Seminary, Nashville. Both are Negro Baptists.

Marjorie Saunders, public relations director for Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, will outline an award-winning public relations program sponsored by the Baptist hospital.

Six Baptists will serve as resource persons for workshop sessions in six categories--art, displays, newswriting and press relations, photography, and radio and television.

Other principal speakers for the convention include Robert Gunning, author and readability expert from Blacklick, Ohio; Karl Olsson, president of North Park College in Chicago; and Bat J. Slattery Jr., public affairs chief for the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala.