BAPTIST PRESS

A BAPTIST* NEWS SERVICE
Concise, thorough, accurate, and current news reports about Southern Baptists or of special concern to the denomination.

FROM
WASHINGTON OFFICE
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March 4, 1958

Public Life Urged
As Christian Calling

WASHINGTON--(BP)--A prominent Protestant minister here has urged the churches to encourage more Christians to enter public and political life.

The emphasis was made in a speech by Edward L. R. Elson, pastor of the National Presbyterian Church, at the Religion and Labor Fellowship recently. Elson is President Eisenhower's pastor.

The Religion and Labor Fellowship is sponsored by the AFL-CIO and is composed of labor and religious workers of the various denominations. They meet once a month.

Elson has been pastor of the National Presbyterian Church for 12 years and has served through parts of four presidential terms and eight congresses. He spoke on his reflections as a Washington pastor.

The churches should encourage their best men to enter public life, declared Elson, "and they should do this with the same sense of Christian calling as they enter other professions."

"If we do not encourage our best people to participate in political life," continued Elson, "we let the opportunists and scoundrels take over, and the nation must suffer the consequences."

Continuing on the theme of the church's responsibility to people in public life Elson said that "once Christian men and women are in public office, let us not abandon them." They are still people with real spiritual needs and they should be prayed for, encouraged and corrected in Christian love when they make mistakes.

"Let us not put our people in public office and then let the lions of political life devour them," Elson urged.

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He further cautioned that people should be slow to accuse any person of using religion for political purposes. He emphasized that people in government have the same spiritual needs as others and that they should be allowed to seek spiritual nurture without implications of political purposes.

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Spiritual Insight
Results In Liberty

PITTSFIELD, Me.--(BP)--A national Baptist leader declared here that liberty can become imprisoned in a legal structure and lose its own life.

The point was made by C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D. C. Carlson conducted three conferences at the Maine Baptist Ministers Conference recently. His theme was the application of the gospel especially as it relates to religious liberty.

"There is an encouraging interest today in the spiritual basis of religious liberty," Carlson declared. "When the church is clear on her sole dependence on her Lord, then she is free. Whenever she becomes dependent on the police power, the military power, or the tax power of the government, she has lost her freedom."

Recognizing the necessity for legislation concerning religious liberty, Carlson pointed out that the Baptist answer to religious liberty problems lies in their spiritual insight as to the nature of the gospel and the practical application of those insights in everyday life.

"The knowledge of the gospel and the preaching of the gospel are both validated in the living of the gospel."

Religious liberty is an outgrowth of individual response to God, declares Carlson. "When love replaces hate, when generosity replaces greed, when hope replaces defeat, when faith replaces fear, it is personal first and then social."

Out of the context of "voluntary response to God" arises the Baptist emphasis on evangelism, foreign missions, democracy, and religious liberty, continued Carlson. It is from this viewpoint that Baptists should approach current problems on religious liberty in the nation.

The problem of separation of church and state in Maine is particularly acute at the present time, revolving around the issue of school bus transportation for parochial school pupils. A test case is being projected in Augusta,

Maine, where the city council voted $250 as a token appropriation for public buses to transport parochial pupils.

The Augusta Taxpayers Association has asked that the city be enjoined from spending the $250 appropriated last June. A ruling from Superior Court Justice Harold C. Marden is expected early in March. Both sides have declared that regardless of the decision the case will be taken to the United States Supreme Court.

Others appearing on the Maine Baptist Ministers Conference program were William Mueller, professor of the philosophy of religion at Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Eugene Dolloff, pastor of the First Baptist Church of New Bedford, Mass.

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Imported Religious
Vestments Duty-Free

WASHINGTON--(BP)--Certain religious articles used for religious purposes will be exempt from import duty if legislation now pending in Congress is passed.

The House of Representatives has passed H.R. 9509 and it has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance, of which Sen. Harry Flood Byrd (D., Va.) is chairman.

The bill provides that "altars, pulpits, communion tables, baptismal fonts, shrines, mosaics, iconostas, or parts, appurtenances....imported in good faith for the use of....any corporation or association organized and operated for religious purposes, including cemeteries, schools, hospitals, orphanages and similar nonprofit activities" shall have free entry into the United States.

The bill is proposed to clarify certain administrative problems in the Treasury Department in connection with the Tariff Act of 1930.

The immediate occasion of the legislation is the fact that "iconostas" are not included in the duty-free list of religious articles in the Tariff Act of 1930. Iconostas are hand-decorated screens and doors used in churches of the Greek Orthodox faith to separate the nave from the sanctuary.

Various churches have pointed out the problems of importing their vestments without paying duty on them. At present the post office in Velva, N. D., is holding a package of embroidered vestments made in France from delivery to the St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church because there is a duty fee of $33.75 on the package. The package has been held by the post office for over a year.

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Currently there is a bill in Congress (S. 3286) introduced by Sen. William Langer (R., N.D.) for the relief of St. Cecilia's church so the priest, Karl N. Hobelsberger, can receive the vestments without paying the $33.75 duty. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

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Convention Presidents
Advance Russian Trip

WASHINGTON--(BP)--The proposed trip to Russia by the presidents of the American and Southern Baptist Conventions will take place a week earlier than originally announced.

Rep. Brooks Hays (D., Ark.), president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Clarence W. Cranford, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church here and president of the American Baptist Convention, will leave for Moscow April 15 instead of April 22.

The two convention presidents, together with Mrs. Cranford, will be in Moscow April 16-20 as guests of the Russian Baptists. Both will speak in the First Baptist Church of Moscow.

Mr. and Mrs. Cranford will leave for Berchtesgaden, Germany, on April 20, where he will lecture April 21-25 to members of the Armed Services personnel and their families, who are stationed in Europe and North Africa. This is an annual religious retreat to stimulate the spiritual life of American overseas military personnel.

Representing the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Hays will remain in Moscow until April 21 at which time he will return to New York.

Following the Berchtesgaden retreat Mr. and Mrs. Cranford will spend two days in Paris, two days in London, and will return to the United States April 30.

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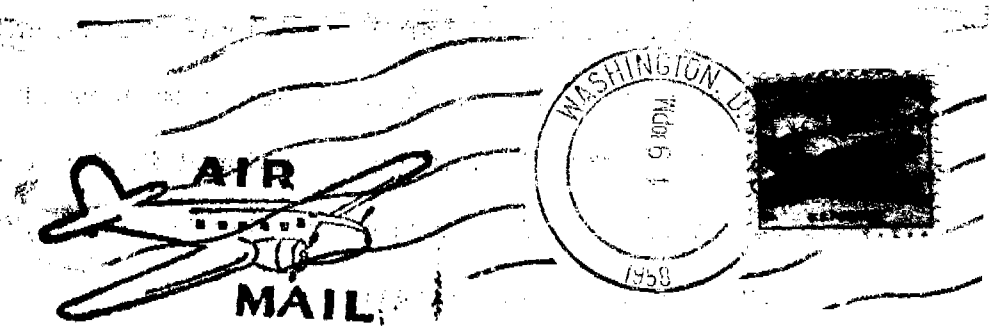

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