

Concerning Governmental Deference to Roman Catholics

The messengers of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches—North, assembled in the Wealthy Street Baptist Temple, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 15–18:

We view with deep concern the growing practice of our governmental agencies in giving unwarranted and disproportionate prominence, deference, and favoritism to the Roman Catholic Church, its priests, and members. And we protest against this trend as shown in the following representative matters:

1. The introduction and favorable report to the sub-committee on the House Bill No. 2328 introduced by Rep. Walter A. Lynch (NY) and House Joint Resolution No. 49 introduced by Rep. Samuel Dickstein (NY) which read as follows:

LYNCH BILL

“ Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that title 18, Criminal Code, is amended by the addition of the following:

‘Sec. 335a. That in addition to the matter described as non-mailable pursuant to section 211 of the Criminal Code as amended (USC, Title 18, sec. 334) all papers, pamphlets, magazines, periodicals, books, pictures, and writings of any kind, containing any defamatory and false statements which tend to expose persons designated, identified, or characterized therein by race or religion, and of whom reside in the United States, to hatred, contempt, ridicule, or obloquy, or tend to cause such persons to be shunned or avoided, or to be injured in their business or occupation, are hereby declared non-mailable matter, and shall not be conveyed in the mails or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier, and shall be withdrawn from the mails under such regulations as the Postmaster General shall prescribe.

Whoever shall knowingly deposit or cause to be deposited for mailing or delivery anything declared by this Act to be non-mailable matter, or shall knowingly take the same or cause the same to be taken from the mails for the purpose of circulating or disposing of, or aid in the circulation or disposition of the same, shall be imprisoned for not more than five years or fined not more than \$5,000, or both fine and imprisonment.’ ”

DICKSTEIN BILL

“Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that in addition to the matter described as non-mailable pursuant to section 211 of the Criminal Code, as amended (USC, Title 18, sec. 334) all papers, pamphlets, magazines, periodicals, books, pictures, and writings of any kind, and every article and thing designed or adapted or intended to cause racial or religious hatred or bigotry or intolerance, or to, directly or indirectly, incite to racial or religious hatred or bigotry or intolerance are hereby declared non-mailable matter and shall not be transmitted through mails nor delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier. Whoever shall knowingly dispose of, or cause to be disposed of, by mailing or delivering for mailing anything declared herein to be non-mailable, or anyone who shall take or cause to be taken from the mails, domestic or for the purpose of circulating or otherwise disposing thereof, or for the purpose of assisting in the circulation or other disposition thereof, shall upon conviction therefore be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both fine and imprisonment.”

These bills, although designed to deal with certain obvious evils in our country are so written as to be, in our considered opinion, a clear violation of the principle of freedom of the press and speech, and an attempt to muzzle and intimidate any who would deal with the evils of the Roman hierarchy or doctrine, editorially or historically. Further, it would make impossible the continuance of missionary endeavor in Latin America, inasmuch as it would preclude publication of information concerning conditions and the need for the Gospel in Latin America.

2. The fact that, although the Roman Catholic electees at Washington compose a strikingly small minority, nevertheless the growing practice of favoring Roman Catholics has made the number of appointees out of all proportion to their constituency and right to rule.

3. The further fact that the President of the United States has appointed a personal representative to the Vatican, whose privileges and responsibility make him nothing less than an ambassador, we believe to be a violation of our government’s historic position of refusal to deal with the Papacy, as a state with political rights and functions.

4. The recently issued order of the Selective Service Bureau abolishing pre-theological deferments as of July 1, which due to the Roman Catholic system of considering mere boys as students for the priesthood in a training period

extending over ten years, grants them unconditional deferment, while our Protestant pre-theologicals are drafted. This is especially inequitable at a time when we Protestants are in desperate danger of losing one school generation of preachers.

5. In view of reports from various mission societies concerning their inability to secure passports for missionaries to Latin America even though, as in the instance of Colombia and Bolivia, there is no governmental hindrance on the part of those countries, we hereby go on record as protesting against the seeming discrimination of the United States Department of State in withholding passports from, or unwarrantedly delaying passports to, Protestant missionaries seeking to enter certain Latin American countries which have not themselves passed restrictive legislation against the entrance of such missionaries.

Further, we urge the State Department to stand firmly by our time-honored American principle of religious liberty and freedom, not only that all may worship as they see fit, but also propagate their religion without hindrance, provided coercion or force is not employed. And we feel that the Good Neighbor Policy should not be so interpreted as to abrogate these basic American principles involved in separation of church and state as our guarantee of religious liberty.

Also we urge the Department of State to do its utmost to secure equal rights for Protestant missionaries along with the Roman Catholic clergy, in countries where discrimination is not practiced against said missionaries; specifically in this connection to use our nation's great influence upon the governments of those Latin American nations, which are now excluding Protestant missionaries, to have them rescind such acts of exclusion as un-American, undemocratic, and un-neighborly, and having no place in the post-war world.

Finally, we declare our conviction that the Good Neighbor policy of our government should never be used as a cloak for religious intolerance or be allowed to operate in favor of one religious group as against another.

*Wealthy Street Baptist Temple
Grand Rapids, Michigan
May 15-18, 1944*