

SECTION I
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PROPOSED RESOLUTION

The "Report" has the following primary theses:

- A. The meaning of the separation of church and state is a historical development with "decisively secular origins". (p. 30)
- B. The separation of church and state means the state must be neutral to the influence of religion. (p. 8: Study Guide p.6)
- C. The Lordship of Christ is over the secular as well as the spiritual world; God has reconciled the world to Himself through Christ; accordingly, the mandate of the Church is to speak on secular or worldly matters (defined in the accepted sense as relating to civil, economic, and political areas), thereby providing for Christians "provisional definitions of the type of behavior required of Christians at a given period and in given circumstances" (p. 39), and thereby also influencing civil authority "as the instrument by which the Christian re-ponsibility - - could be met". (p. 27).

From these, the following corollary theses were developed:

- A. Relevance of the Church is defined as consisting in involvement with the "concrete realities" and "specific human decisions" in these secular areas broadly classified as social, economic and political.
- B. Freedom of the Church consists in its ability to act without hindrance in these areas which have been defined as relevant.
- C. Witness of the Church is measured for effectiveness in terms of the degree of its involvement in such relevant areas.

To evaluate these theses, and the applications thereof in the "Report", the Committee looked primarily to the Scriptures as "The Supreme Judge by whom all decrees, opinions, and doctrines are to be examined". Secondly, in the light of our ordination vows that we "sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of

Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture", we examined the Confession and found much pertinent material, although it was only referred to twice or used as authority in the "Report". Thirdly, we attempted to evaluate the Constitution, particularly the First Amendment, with special reference to allied documents and writings of the founders of the country. Finally, we attempted to apply the doctrines and principles so disclosed to the concepts of the "Report" and to certain questions that appeared to develop when such concepts were carried to their logical conclusion.

Each of our sources of guidance outlined above led the Committee unflinchingly to the conclusion that the principal and the corollary theses of the "Report", and consequently the recommendations based on such theses, appeared to be either in direct conflict with our references, or open to substantial question. A detailed examination of these areas of conflict is contained in Sections 2 - 5, inclusive, and a brief summary of each follows:

HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Old Testament prophets spoke to many moral issues and they spoke to other nations as well as the people of Israel. They spoke, however, as individuals, not as an official or corporate church, with a corresponding lack of political power potential or control of the state. Their address to moral principles was used as the foundation to call the people to repentance, not to political action. They spoke to nations, in no uncertain terms, but they spoke to warn of the judgment which would fall on nations who ignored or defied the sovereignty of God, not (except in the moral sense) to civil matters.

In the New Testament we look particularly for Jesus' own attitude toward His lordship over the secular world, for this thesis really fundamental to all others. Here the Scriptures clearly show that on every occasion where such a question

arose, Jesus was either strangely unconcerned and indifferent (Matt. 22:15-22), or else specifically rejected His Lordship over the present world. (Matt. 4:8-10; John 18:33-40). Was this position changed after His resurrection? The answer recorded in Acts 1:1-8 is clearly negative, and this is confirmed throughout the Acts and the Epistles as we examine the nature of the preaching of the early Church. Its witness was a testimony to the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ, a call to repentance, and a promise of the Holy Spirit. Even in Romans 13 and I Peter 2, the message was for submission to and prayer for the governing authorities, with no reliance upon the state as the vehicle for attaining some earthly resemblance to the Kingdom of God. The Committee feels that the "Report" is grossly deficient in its Scriptural exegesis; and in at least two places where scripture is quoted (Matt. 22 and Acts 1), the "Report" errs in its applicaiton of these passages.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

As previously noted, there are numerous passages in the Confession which appear directly pertinent to either the basic theses or to certain applications arrived at in the "Report"; in almost every case either contradicting or raising doubts as to the validity of such conclusions. Yet, since the "Report" makes reference to but one article of the Confession, we are unable to determine the extent to which its statements were considered, or the arguments by which the apparent conflicts are overcome. Several passages are quoted and commented upon briefly in Section 3. The most significant are:

1. Chapter 31 clearly states that synods and councils are not to intermeddle in civil affairs; the "Report" openly calls for such intermeddling. It is difficult to see how this violation can be explained away. Surely it would be specious reasoning and contrary to the plain meaning of words to define all matters with a

"moral" aspect as being ecclesiastical, leaving only non-moral matters as civil; and even then, such areas would be within the relevance of the church under the stated thesis of Christ's lordship over the secular.

2. Chapter 16 makes very clear that good works are not a means of salvation; Chapter 19 specifies that the moral law is binding on all because of the authority of God, not therefore because of any "welfare" concept of a state neutral toward God; and Chapter 21 tells us that prayer is neither more or less acceptable by the place where it is performed, but is valid everywhere (presumably including public schools).

3. Chapter 35 defines the Gospel, to the extent it is defined anywhere in the Confession, by the use of three key words - salvation, repentance, and mercy - three words which, despite many references to the Gospel and Christ, do not appear a single time in the 41 pages of the "Report".

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

While the Committee does not believe interpretations of a civil constitution should control interpretation of Christian principles, they are obviously of importance to the particular subject matter. Interpretations, particularly of the First Amendment, are quoted extensively in the "Report" (although it is often difficult to see what particular position taken in the "Report" is supported by the quotations used); further, the recent Supreme Court prayer decision is directly in line with the proposal in the "Report". Evaluation of the Constitution and related documents, summarized in Section 4, does not appear to support the concept of neutralism which the "Report" utilizes to justify several specific recommendations. Such evaluation appears, rather, to support the following general statements:

1. The explicit acknowledgment of God as Supreme Being, to whom the state must look for guidance and support, appears throughout the writings of the founding fathers and the Declaration of Independence; and while not explicit in

the Constitution, must logically be inferred from such writings.

2. The essential principle of the First Amendment was to provide freedom from coercion or domination to both the state and the corporate church; and was never intended to divorce the state from God or God's laws. To construe the official acknowledgment of our dependence upon God as the "establishment of religion" is patently false both within the context of the balance of the First Amendment and the historical facts and writings of the time.

3. The First Amendment protects the freedom of the individual to reject God, since acceptable worship must be freely offered; but it does not thereby endorse that false view as valid, since the whole foundation of our institutions rests upon the premise of a Supreme Being, without which premise the system could not long endure.

REASONING AND LOGIC

The final section of this report, Section 5, deals with apparent fallacies in reasoning and logic, and certain very difficult problems which arise in the attempt to carry some of the recommendations through to their logical, if somewhat unexpected and sometimes patently ridiculous, conclusions. These sections are not meant to be taken lightly, for such a technique is not only valid but often quite necessary to forestall gross errors arising out of good but short-sighted intentions. There were indeed many other aspects in the "Report" which members of the Committee felt were candidates for inclusion, but which were omitted in the interest of clarity and to avoid raising what might be extraneous or at best incidental matters. The reader is referred to Section 5 for further details of the matters which were included. They are discussed under the following principal captions:

1. Neutralism
2. Relevance and Freedom
3. Concept of Christian Society
4. Questions of Legalism raised by "Report"

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Based upon the study summarized above and contained in further detail in the sections following, the Committee recommends to Session that it adopt the following resolution, constituting its response to the Report on Relations between Church and State:

WHEREAS, members of the Session of the Bel Air Presbyterian Church, together with its Advisory Planning Committee, have intensively studied the Report on Relations between Church and State, together with the Study Guide, "What's at Issue?", and individual members have also read and reported on the material in the bibliography to the Report; and

WHEREAS, this Session was requested to "concur" or "not concur" on particular portions of the Report, and to furnish alternative text where it does not concur; and

WHEREAS, we find substantial disagreement between the premises used in the Report and certain clearly stated principles contained in the Scriptures and in the Confession of Faith; and

WHEREAS, we find that any attempt to implement many of the recommendations results in raising more serious questions than those the Report attempts to answer; and

WHEREAS, we find that the Recommendations are concerned largely with matters which are reserved under our Church Constitution to the private conscience, so that any alternative text submitted by us would be equally inappropriate in an official statement of position by the General Assembly; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Session of the Bel Air Presbyterian Church declines to concur in or endorse an official pronouncement by the General Assembly concerning the matters contained in the Report, and accordingly declines to state a position on the specific recommendations listed therein;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that we recommend to the General Assembly that the Report be disapproved;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that we recommend to the General Assembly that the Special Committee on Church and State be requested to make a further study of Scriptures and the Confession of Faith with respect to the points of conflict and questions raised in the report attached hereto