



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 5, 1970

### 15,000 Hear Graham As Ministry Agency Launched

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--An overflow crowd of more than 15,000 persons turned out to hear Evangelist Billy Graham speak during the inauguration of the Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry, but Graham had little to say about the new ecumenical organization.

Instead, Graham preached an evangelistic sermon and gave an invitation to which an estimated 600 to 800 persons responded.

Only at one point in his message did Graham refer to the new interdenominational approach being used by the agency being launched at the rally here.

Graham said he thought it was good "for us to come together once in a while and learn something about each other.

"The strangest thing is that as I look over this audience I can't tell the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant or a Baptist and a Presbyterian," Graham said.

The new agency, which stresses cooperation to meet spiritual, human and social needs, but not organic union, has attracted members from a cross section of denominations ranging from Roman Catholic to Nazarene and Southern Baptists.

President of the executive board for the agency is Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In an interview, Hobbs said that so far, four Southern Baptist churches and the pastor of one other church have joined the organization. The pastor joined as an individual, which is possible under the structure of the new agency.

Hobbs added that several other Baptist churches are interested in the organization and may join at a later date.

"A lot of churches, Baptist and otherwise, are standing back waiting to see if this program will work," Hobbs said. He admitted that the organization has yet to prove itself, but when it does, "I think this will become a pattern for other cities across the nation."

During the rally, Kenneth L. Forshee, minister of Holland Hills Christian Church here, read a statement to the crowd concerning the organization, saying it was not a warmed-over version of the old Council of Churches, but is an entirely new structure for the seventies "through which the churches can proclaim the Gospel, honor the Lord Jesus Christ, and meet the needs of their neighbors in Metropolitan Oklahoma City."

Persons representing eight denominations had parts on the program at the rally. An 1,100 voice choir, mostly from Baptist and Methodist churches, sang. Dignitaries from the city and surrounding communities, including several mayors and judges, were introduced. Tulsa Evangelist Oral Roberts was among those introduced.

Once the announcements, recognitions and the installation of the agency's executive board had been completed, the meeting at the State Fair Coliseum took on the flavor of a typical Billy Graham Crusade.

In his usual style, Graham opened with a few jokes, then recounted the perilous conditions of the world today, including political, social, religious, scientific and moral changes that are taking place.

Warning the crowd to keep their eyes on the Middle East, Graham said that the war in Vietnam is only a side show compared to what is building up in the Middle East.

He then detailed five things which never change--the nature of God himself, the word of God, the moral law of God, man's sinful human nature, and the way of personal redemption and salvation.

The crowd burst into applause when Graham said the nation needs to clean up the trend in drugs and pornography, and that it needs to start in the Supreme Court.

The response to Graham's invitation was so great that the supply of literature was exhausted and the 150 counselors on hand to talk with those making decisions were too few. In addition to an estimated 600 to 800 persons making decisions in the main auditorium, about 50 persons listening to the service in an overflow auditorium also responded. Agency officials said they were not prepared for the large numbers responding.

The four Southern Baptist churches listed by Hobbs as having joined the organization were Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany Baptist Church, Capitol Immanuel Baptist Church, and First Baptist Church, all in Oklahoma City. The pastor of Nichols Hill Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Charles Graves, has joined as an individual.

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Graham Visits Woman, 80;  
Heads For White House

2/5/70

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham interrupted a busy schedule here to pay a surprise visit to an 80-year-old woman in Oklahoma City's Dalles Nursing Home.

At first, Mrs. Nellie Muters was speechless when the famed evangelist walked into the room, took her by the hand, and said: "I'm Billy Graham, and I've come to visit you."

But when she got over the initial shock of the unexpected visit, Mrs. Muters could hardly stop talking. She's probably still talking about the surprise visit from the second most admired man in the nation.

Graham agreed to visit the woman after her daughter had called former Southern Baptist Convention President Herschel Hobbs after hearing Graham was to be in town for a rally.

The daughter told Hobbs, pastor of First Baptist Church here, it would mean a lot to her mother if Graham could just stop by the nursing home and visit the partially paralyzed woman.

Graham had a busy schedule, but he took time to go by and have prayer with the lady. He had been in Dallas that morning, held a press conference in Oklahoma City that afternoon and dropped by the nursing home on the way to speak at a rally that evening.

That night he drove to Tulsa to catch a plane to New York for television appearances, and planned to go to Washington for the weekend.

In Washington, he would visit President Richard Nixon, just a few days after visiting the 80-year-old woman in the Oklahoma City nursing home.

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Serviceman Contributes  
To SBC in Lieu of Speed Fine

2/5/70

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here recently received a \$30 money order from a serviceman in Vietnam, but did not know where to credit the payment.

So, they wrote to the serviceman and ask how the money was to be used. He replied:

"I got caught speeding and the Commanding Officer gave me a choice of paying \$30 to a worthwhile association, or he would give me an Article 15 (which is bad) and a \$50 fine.

"Please use the money as you see fit," he wrote. "I am a daily reader of Open Windows (the board's daily devotion guide). My wife and I are both Baptist and enjoy the book very much."

The Sunday School Board sent the money order to the SBC Executive Committee as a contribution to the Cooperative Program, the unified budget which provides funds for Southern Baptists' world-wide programs.

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Illinois Baptists Denied  
New Name For Convention

2/5/70

CARBONDALE, Ill. (BP)--The secretary of state for Illinois has denied permission for the Illinois Baptist State Association to change its name to the "Illinois Baptist Convention" as approved by the state Baptist meeting last November.

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Secretary of State Paul Powell of Springfield ruled that the new name was not acceptable "for corporate use" because of a protest filed in his office by American Baptists in the state, who claim the name is too similar to their own name--Illinois Baptist State Convention.

Selection of any other name will not wait on state convention action, said Illinois Baptist State Association Executive Secretary James H. Smith here.

"In the meantime, we have no other alternative but to continue with our present name," Smith said.

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Church Ousts Member Who  
Says Bible Not Infallible

2/5/70

ZION, Ill. (BP)--Following a statement by F. Eugene Garman setting forth eight reasons why he does not believe that the Bible is the infallible work of God, the members of First Baptist Church here voted to withdraw fellowship from him.

Garman said in a release he distributed prior to the action he was attempting to refute the published comments by Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell, who urged liberals who do not accept the Bible as infallible to leave the denomination.

Garman called the church business meeting in which he was excluded "a heresy trial," and said it was setting the stage "for further purges in the Southern Baptist Convention as its present leadership seems united in creating an atmosphere ripe for witch hunting and brain washing."

The matter was brought to the attention of the church in a January business session when deacon James Turman made a motion that "the church entertain a complaint concerning Gene Garman's dis-belief of God's inspired word, the Bible, as being infallible."

It was Garman himself who seconded the motion made by Turman. Several members of the church said he seemed to want to bring the issue to a head to test the church to see if he would be ousted.

Garman, a graduate of Baylor University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, studied for the ministry, but never held a full-time pastorate.

He recently wrote a book entitled Rocking the Pulpit, in which he traced his own reasons for deciding to leave the ministry, and told "about Southern Baptist preachers who don't always tell the truth."

In the February church business meeting, Pastor Ben R. Stripling called the members to the altar for prayer before the discussion begin. Stripling described the discussion as calm.

After the letter of complaint was read, Garman listed eight reasons why he believed the Bible is not infallible. The reasons were:

- "1. The King James Translation cannot be described correctly or honestly as infallible.
- "2. No translation of the Bible can be described correctly or honestly by the word infallible.
- "3. There is no text in the Bible which can be described correctly or honestly by the word infallible.
- "4. No manuscript of the Bible can be described correctly or honestly by the word infallible.
- "5. Original writings do not exist.
- "6. All translations, texts or manuscripts of the Bible are not infallible. There is no evidence that can be described correctly or honestly as infallible.
- "7. Therefore an infallible Bible exists only as a figment of the imaginations of wishful-thinking persons.
- "8. I could be wrong, so show me an infallible Bible. Show me what you are talking about. You can't. Deacons, Sunday School teachers, preachers, First Baptist Church, W. A. Criswell--you can't.

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"You have me on trial, but actually I think you are all on trial," he said. "What is also on trial is the right of a Southern Baptist to make up his own mind, disagree, decide on all issues, speak truth, and speak honest convictions."

Pastor Stripling said he replied: "We believe anyone may believe what he wishes about the Bible; that is his right."

Stripling said that Garman's challenge has brought conflict in the church. He has argued in the Sunday School and Training Union that the Bible is not infallible, and caused divisions among the members, Stripling said.

"This was the reasons given to him and the reason for withdrawal of fellowship," Stripling said. "In no sense was Mr. Garman on trial for his beliefs."

Following Garman's listing of the eight reasons he rejects the infallibility of the Bible, several members stood to tell what the Bible meant to them personally. No one, however, attempted to answer Garman's eight points directly, "only in general," Stripling said.

Garman did not immediately indicate what his plans are now that he has been ousted from the church. His wife said she did not know yet what they would do.

Garman is currently working as a pipe fitter at the Commonwealth Edison nuclear power plant here.

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Nation's Top Leaders  
Declare Need For God

2/5/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--At the annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast here President Richard M. Nixon joined some of the nation's top public officials in proclaiming need for prayer and dependence on God during these times of turmoil and challenge.

As a nation under God, "we are not interested in conquering the world," the President declared, but in giving to other nations "an example of spiritual leadership and idealism which no other nation has provided."

Speaking to over 2,600 persons, Nixon chose as the theme for his remarks the familiar exhortation of St. Augustine: "You must work as if everything depends on God."

The President of the Baptist World Alliance, William Tolbert, Vice President of Liberia, was one of the honored guests seated at the President's table.

Other guests represented leaders in the fields of business, labor, the military, education and science, members of the diplomatic corps, U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives. In addition, a number of governors and big-city mayors were present.

Congressman Albert H. Quie (R., Minn.), presiding officer, noted that the larger group of the 2,600 had come from around the world and were "joined in Christ's love."

Quie expressed the hope that from this meeting would come "a specific esprit de corps" and that it would produce "more freedom to talk about God with less embarrassment."

After reading from the 15th chapter of John, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird observed that 20 centuries had passed since these words were spoken by the Prince of Peace. He referred to the progress men had made since the First Century and reminded the audience of the problems of hunger, disease and poverty which are still unsolved.

"Despite phenomenal progress in a material sense," Secretary Laird said, "20th century man feels disturbed in the depths of his being." He cited the violence, "the inhumanity to man," and the feeling that many people have that "the quality of life is deteriorating."

"It is only in our acknowledgement of our dependence on the divine presence that we as a nation can look forward to the good life," Laird declared.

The secretary of defense then said that "we believe that church and state must be separate, but we do not believe that God and state must be torn asunder."

After listening to the remarks from his cabinet members and elected officials in Congress, President Nixon said it meant "a lot to him to hear other top officials speak in their faith.

Since 1953 members of the weekly House and Senate prayer breakfast groups have sponsored this Presidential Prayer Breakfast in the nation's capital.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The story mailed 2/3/70, "VIRGINIA EDITORIAL, REVIEW RAP CRISWELL BOOK," Dateline RICHMOND, was prepared by BP, NASHVILLE.



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