

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**"Open Door to Excitement
Of Future," Routh Urges**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Urging Southern Baptists to "open the door to the excitement of the future," the executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee outlined five objectives for the future during an address here on his 20th anniversary.

Porter W. Routh, speaking to the 63-member SBC Executive Committee here, reflected on his 20 years of experience as the 11.6 million-member denomination's top executive, and then outlined the five "dreams" and objectives for the future.

Routh told the packed crowd of nearly 235 persons that it was the first time in his 20 years as executive secretary of the denomination that he had made a "formal address" to the SBC Executive Committee.

After sharing "some deep convictions about the nature of our fellowship and procedures of our cooperative work," Routh told the group he was not sure Baptists have yet learned to prepare for the shock of present and future change.

He pointed out that Southern Baptists have spent "great chunks of time" and resources in looking at the general trends in the world affecting the work of the churches and in evaluating the critical issues faced in the churches today.

He commended the past involvement of "the grass roots" in outlining future denominational goals and plans, but said "the needed actions are still ahead."

His five objectives called for (1) development of a process to involve more deeply the convention in planning for the future, (2) more coordination of planning, promotion and action by associations, state conventions and the SBC (3) a more adequate theological base for planning, actions and relationships, (4) the renewal of a sense of mission, and (5) the goal of personally being more effective.

Calling for more coordination between local, state and national levels, Routh stated: "We need to retain the best elements of diversity, but at the same time, there are some things we can do together more effectively if we are willing to forego our very human pride for the benefit of our compelling coordinating objective.

"We need a dynamic plan of cooperative action, as we have had a dynamic plan of cooperative giving for missionary outreach," he said.

Urging a theological base for planning, the 60-year-old Baptist executive said that "evangelism and social concern not solidly based on a sound theological foundation is superficial and ultimately counter-productive.

"We must be concerned about the nature of God if we are to manifest the meaningful concern in the nature and destiny of man," he said. "Bridge building with laymen and clergy, church and young people, ins and outs, blacks and whites, must find strength and direction in theological convictions."

Urging a "renewal of mission," Routh defined his term, adding that "mission" is not something a Baptist church or group does beyond its own borders. "Mission is something that is implanted in our hearts," he stated.

"We may have to take a closer look at the proliferation of programs and agencies in seeking to get this mission in focus, but whatever it takes, we ought to get started," he declared.

Earlier in his address, Routh stated that the agencies of the convention exist "primarily to serve the convention and the churches."

He added that it actually is "somewhat an illusion" to say that the agencies and the convention are directed on the broad base "of the expressed will of the churches," since only about 25 to 25 per cent of the churches which qualify send messengers to the annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention. "The per cent of rank and file church members present at any convention is almost infinitesimal," he said.

"Whether the composition of a give convention really represents all of the churches may be open to academic discussion and question in any given year," he added. "A vote of the majority, a minority or even a unanimous vote does not necessarily mean an assurance of the will or blessings of God."

Voting, he added, is the only way under Baptist polity "to express our concerns and clarify our objectives." Routh observed that two committees in a half-dozen years had studied the problem of representation of the churches at the convention, but have not discovered any major adjustments which have wide support.

Routh concluded the address with a personal note, saying "My final dream, my ongoing objective, is that I might serve in a more effective way in the years remaining than I have in the past. To that end, I pledge my best."

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Hawaii Crusade Seeks
1,000 Young Christians

9/22/71

DALLAS (BP)--Baptists and other evangelicals from Hawaii have announced plans to recruit hundreds of young Christians from mainland states for an evangelistic thrust in the islands Dec. 25.-Jan. 1, said Dan Liu, former chief of police for Honolulu and a member of Olivet Baptist Church here.

Liu and Don Rohrs, pastor of Monanalua Gardens Missionary Church of Hawaii are co-chairmen of the Hawaiian Holidan Hoolaulea Committee. At press conferences in Texas, they said efforts would be made to secure at least 1,000 young people from Texas, Oklahoma and California to participate.

Liu, who is former president of the Hawaii Baptist Convention, said "for some time, it has been the earnest prayer of our churches for a great evangelical thrust throughout Hawaii. The Hoolaulea (which means gathering together for a purpose) will be a meaningful step in that direction."

W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will speak on New Years Eve at a Jumbo watchnight service in the Honolulu Concert Theatre. The following night, combined youth choirs will give a concert with the Honolulu Symphony under direction of Composer and Arranger Paul Mickelson, former organist for Billy Graham.

Criswell said the tendency is to make Christmas a time of blasphemous, orgiastic excess instead of honoring Christ.

"Our purpose in going is to put Christ in Christmas," he said.

Liu cited as primary reasons for the evangelistic effort a growing juvenile delinquency for which "a relationship with Christ" is the solution. He also noted that Hawaii will have 100,000 tourists from Christmas through New Years.

Rohrs noted that only about seven per cent of Hawaii's nearly 800,00 people are Protestant, "and this includes those who come to church only on Easter."

Bill Pearson, minister of music at Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, will serve as music coordinator to qualify the youth choirs. "Besides singing at hotels, shopping malls, parks, on Waikiki Beach and at military installations, the young people will go into the highways and byways to share their witness for Christ," Liu said.

Liu said many of the youth choirs will raise expenses for the trip through fund raising projects.

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House To Vote On
Prayer Amendment

WASHINGTON (BP)--A major step toward the first change in the Bill of Rights in the nation's history was taken in the House of Representatives here on September 21 when a "discharge petition" for a constitutional prayer amendment was signed by 218 Congressmen.

The discharge petition relieves the House Judiciary Committee from further responsibility for the proposed amendment and forces the question directly to the floor of the House for debate and vote. It is expected to come to a vote on November 8.

If the proposed amendment receives a two-thirds majority in the House, which almost everyone here expects, the amendment will then go to the Senate, where it will be referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It will be handled by the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of which Sen. Birch Bayh (D., Ind.) is chairman.

Bayh in the past has been opposed to previous versions of a constitutional prayer amendment. No hearings for the present proposal have yet been scheduled in the Senate. Unless the proposal is attached as a rider to some other legislation it probably will be 1972 before the Senate can act on it.

In the House of Representatives, Emanuel Celler (D., N.Y.) chairman of the Judiciary Committee, who has opposed prayer amendments, said: "It would be a great error to approve this amendment. The danger of government interference in religious practices of schools should not be viewed lightly. Certainly it should not be a substitute for the home and the church."

Rep. Chalmers P. Wiley (R., Ohio), who has been the chief sponsor of the prayer amendment and who initiated the discharge petition, said, "Most people feel that the Supreme Court ruled that prayer in public schools and buildings is no longer permissible."

He continued: "I can recall that as a child in elementary school the teacher opened the day's activities with a prayer to the Supreme Diety and the pledge of allegiance to the American flag. There was something reassuring about that and I think we need a return to this foundation stone of our democracy."

Constitutional prayer amendments have been pushed since the 1962 and 1963 decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court removing government authority and supervision of school prayer and devotions. Among those promoting such amendments have been Veterans and American Legion groups, the Retired Teachers Association, the Back to God Movement, Citizens for Public Reverence, Project Prayer, National Parents for Prayer, the National Association of Republican Women, the National Grange, and the National Association of Evangelicals.

Most of the major religious bodies and many of the nation's religious leaders have upheld the Supreme Court's decisions and have opposed prayer amendments.

Last year a similar prayer amendment passed the Senate by a vote of 50-20. It was attached to another proposed constitutional amendment--equal rights for women. Observers in Washington, however, say that this is not really a fair judge of Senate sentiment because most of the Senators knew that the amendment would not pass the House.

The proponents of the prayer amendment, headed by an Ohio housewife, Mrs. Ben Ruhlin of Cuyahoga Falls, have indicated that no effort will be spared to push the prayer amendment through to a successful conclusion. They have threatened political repercussions to any politician who dares to oppose the movement.

On the other hand, the opponents of prayer amendments have been slow to organize and have been unsuccessful in arousing a strong national sentiment to bring counter pressure to bear on the Congressmen and Senators. Indications are, however, that this lethargy could be changed in the next few months.

Steps from this point for the approval of the prayer amendment will be final action in the House of Representatives, with a two thirds majority, action by the Senate with a two-thirds majority and then referral to state legislatures for approval. Three-fourths of the states legislatures must approve the amendment before it become a part of the Constitution. Advocates of the amendment at this point do not anticipate much opposition in the states.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Prayer Amendment Will Affect
Future Church-State Relations

by W. Barry Garrett

The decision of the House of Representatives to force the proposed constitutional prayer amendment out of the Judiciary Committee directly to the floor of the House for debate and vote calls for careful and unemotional analysis. In matters affecting religious liberty and proper church-state relations we should be as careful as possible to make sure that we are not motivated by inferior impulses.

Frequently, the motives of people are good, but the methods they choose to implement their wishes are highly questionable. This is the situation in the case of the prayer amendment. We must assume that people are sincere when they want school children to pray. However, we deplore the use of government authority to achieve this objective. Religious practices, even on the part of school children, must be free from government interference, sponsorship or authority.

The innocent-looking proposed prayer amendment is not so innocent upon close inspection. Let us take a hard look at the actual situation. Here is the exact wording of the proposal and a brief analysis.

"Nothing contained in this Constitution shall abridge the right of persons lawfully assembled, in any public building which is supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds, to participate in nondenominational prayer." (House Joint Resolution 191)

Of course, there is no way to predict what other amendments will be attached to H. J. Res. 191 during the debate and voting processes on the floor of the House and the Senate. Therefore, this analysis is necessarily confined to the text of the resolution as it is now proposed.

My appraisal of the significance of this development in relation to the First Amendment, religious liberty and church-state relations is as follows.

It appears that the nation is about to approve a constitutional prayer amendment that is premised on a falsehood and that results in a basic alteration of the religion clauses of the First Amendment.

The falsehood is that the Supreme Court has denied the right of voluntary prayer to school children. The truth is that the Court restrained government from authority and supervision of religious activities in public schools.

The proposed prayer amendment is projected for the purpose of reversing what the Supreme Court is erroneously accused of doing. The fact is that the proposed amendment does reverse what the Court actually decided. The Court took away government authority in religion in schools. The amendment gives government a measure of authority and "establishes" non denominationalism in public buildings.

The prayer amendment introduces additional principles of constitutional law into the life of the nation. These principles are: (1) the concept of "lawful assembly" which is not now in the Constitution, (2) the location by law of certain religious rites (and rights), and (3) the determination and restriction of the substance of content of prayer that can be offered in public buildings.

Here is a partial list of side affects of the proposed amendment:

1. It denies the principle of voluntarism in religion by restricting the kind of prayers people can participate in and by giving the government authority to determine the content of the prayers that people can voluntarily pray in public buildings.
2. It introduces a religious divisiveness into the life of the nation that could result in serious national disunity along religious lines. The religious groups themselves have never been able to achieve a concensus on a definition of prayer, much less "nondenominational" prayer. Some arm of government will now have to make that determination, if the amendment becomes a part of the Constitution.
3. The amendment creates a situation for school administrators that will be difficult or impossible to resolve in many cases.
4. The new principles of constitutional law put into the Constitution by this amendment will affect future actions of government relating to religious practices--judicial, legislative, and executive--in ways that cannot now be predicted.
5. The amendment could affect the religious practices in any building that is built in whole or in part by public funds--a school, a hospital, a day care center, nursing home, a children's home, etc. The limits of nondenominationalism could be imposed in all such buildings.
6. The amendment authorizes by constitutional law a perverted form of nebulous religion--nondenominational prayer.



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