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**More Hearings Urged Before
Prayer Amendment Passage**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A wide range of religious, education and civil liberties groups has urged Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., to hold full hearings before clearing a constitutional amendment on school prayer for Senate action.

Anticipating a Judiciary subcommittee will reject President Reagan's proposal on school prayer in favor of a version allowing silent prayer and meditation and providing "equal access" for students to meet voluntarily for religious purposes, representatives of 26 organizations declared in a letter to Thurmond that amending the Constitution is "a serious action" and warrants full hearings on the language considered.

Earlier this spring, the Subcommittee on the Constitution chaired by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, held two days of hearings on the White House proposal, but Hatch and other members of that panel have indicated they are likely to send a different version to the full Judiciary Committee.

Requesting additional hearings, the 26 organizations charged that "presenting a proposed amendment to the Senate for a vote without holding hearings on the specific language requires Senators to vote without being able to consider carefully the viewpoints of a wide spectrum of persons on both the need for any amendment and the merits of the specific language."

Groups making the request ranged from the conservative Christian Legal Society to the American Civil Liberties Union. Organizations affiliated with most U.S. Protestant and Jewish bodies, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, were also represented.

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**Killer Weather Stalks
Texas, Mississippi**Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Weather poured disaster across Mississippi and Texas the last week in May and Baptist disaster relief units played key roles in the aftermath.

Southeast Texas was swept by tornadoes and flooding while the Pearl River basin in Mississippi overflowed in what was almost a rerun of the 1979 Easter flood.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas disaster relief mobile unit, with an emergency relief task force of volunteers from across the state, set up at Bethel Baptist Church in New Caney (near the center of the worst tornado activity) and worked alongside local Baptists for two days feeding and assisting victims.

In Mississippi the state convention's relief unit served 15,000 hot meals to flood victims and relief workers from the parking lot of Colonial Heights Baptist Church in Jackson--the same location the unit used in 1979. Twenty-one task force members put in 336 man-hours and 135 church volunteers totaled another 540 hours.

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An estimated 1,500 homes and businesses were flooded in Mississippi, with the Pearl River reaching 39.6 feet at one gauge. Each day Red Cross volunteers carried meals from the Baptist outdoor kitchen to where they were needed. Hundreds of personal care kits made up by Mississippi Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action were also given out.

Two other aspects of the disaster ministry were utilized in Jackson--counseling and childcare. Most counselors reported high spirits in the flooded neighborhoods, though Bill Davidson, minister of education at Colonial Heights church, said he could easily tell those who have "close walks with God" from those who do not.

Childcare was also located at Colonial Heights with 16 children attending the first day while their parents began cleanup.

In Texas, officials were amazed at the relatively few deaths and injuries despite the more than one dozen tornadoes that pillaged the Houston-Conroe area. Many could share the sentiments of Jim Palmer, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in New Caney, who preached the Sunday after the storm: "I don't have water or electricity, and I can't take a shower--but I've got Jesus and that is all I need."

No Baptist churches reported significant damage but Peach Creek Baptist Assembly near New Caney had several buildings damaged and at least 200 large trees blown over.

In the week following the tornadoes, the San Jacinto River and Caney Creek swelled out of their banks. Three area Baptist churches served as shelters and relief centers and volunteers and aid came from numerous other Baptist churches throughout Texas.

An interesting insight on Baptist response to the disasters occurred in Mississippi. Jim Didlake, consultant to the Mississippi convention's Brotherhood Department was interviewed by a reporter who asked where the funding from the disaster relief came from. When he told her about the Cooperative Program and the state missions offering, she reported exclaimed: "I'm a Southern Baptist and I'm excited about knowing where my money is going. This is super. This is what missions is all about."

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God's Good News Includes
Economic Good, Says Fuller

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
6/6/83

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists must be willing to forego new homes and cars if they expect their witness to remain credible in the eyes of the world's poor, charged Millar Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, an ecumenical Christian ministry aimed at building a better "habitat" for the poor.

Fuller told persons attending the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Spring Forum on Urban Evangelism economic sacrifice "is the essence of biblical evangelism." Citing Jesus' encounter with the Gadarene demoniac--"a man lost in every sense of the word"--Fuller said, "Jesus did not hesitate to make a tremendous economic sacrifice to save one person."

The young Jewish man had no business being around pigs, explained Fuller, so Jesus got rid of the source of his problem--the pigs. After the herd of swine charged down a hill and into the ocean, Fuller noted, the Bible says the man was found to be in his right mind.

"There is no person so insignificant that we should not spend any amount of money to save them in a total way," added Fuller.

He also noted Jesus' encounter with a rich Jewish ruler where Jesus called the young man to give all his money to the poor and become a disciple. "Jesus didn't say throw it away because it is evil, but to share it with the poor," Fuller said, noting God calls Christians today to give away their wealth to help the poor.

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"God is not happy with people living in wealth next door to poverty," asserted Fuller. "We must be concerned about both sides of the fence in our evangelism."

Fuller said while building houses in Africa he learned parrots could be trained to say "I believe in Jesus." He added, "We've got a lot of people running around saying, 'I believe in Jesus.' But they live in big houses in the suburbs, not loving one another and putting limits on their love. True evangelism is delivering the message at the heart level and not at the mouth level."

Fuller cited statistics revealing increases in urban populations throughout the world. "The rule is everybody's coming to town," said Fuller. "Because people are in the cities, we, the people of Christ, must be there, too. We must be physically present in the cities to evangelize."

Fuller noted while Habitat for Humanity is located in rural Georgia, he oversees projects in seven countries and in 32 places in the United States--most in urban areas--where volunteers build no-frills housing financed over a 20-30 year period at no interest. "If we are faithful to Christ, we will evangelize in the city no matter where we live," he said.

While Southern Baptists have been strong preachers against sin, social issues still fail to receive their prophetic voice, lamented Fuller, claiming evangelism techniques rarely address economic sins.

Fuller said when John the Baptist was questioned about how to be saved, he answered in "nonreligious" terms: giving away one's extra coat and sharing one's food with those who are hungry. Fuller suggested giving away one's extra coat might also include giving away one's extra house to people without homes.

"We have to evangelize like John the Baptist," said Fuller. "The gospel does have something to do with houses, cars, and TVs. But how often do we say, 'This house you have in the suburbs is sinful.' We have to redefine sin. The essence of sin is not loving your neighbor. There's no way you can love your neighbor as yourself when you spend everything on yourself."

Fuller said God's "final exam" would be based on how much people cared for other people and not on how many church services and religious events people attended. "All that is important, but that's not what's on the final exam," he said. "That's what you do to get ready for the exam. The final exam will be based on how many people did you feed, provide shelter for, clothe and visit."

Shelter is a part of God's good news to the poor, said Fuller. If it rains, he said, a person can't quote scripture to stay dry or quote scripture louder to keep warm when the weather turns cold. "If you don't feel you're living in sin by living in a house," said Fuller, "then you should help your neighbor who has no house to have a house."

While cities are besieged by poverty, Fuller noted another danger facing the city. He said the United States and the Soviet Union alone possess more than 50,000 nuclear weapons.

"We can destroy every Soviet city 35 times," he noted, "and the Soviet Union can do so 20 times to United States' cities." Yet President Reagan wants to increase the manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons, he explained.

Though the United States stamps its coins with the words "'In God We Trust,' we're armed to the teeth," he added. "We really trust in weapons."

Fuller said by the year 2000, more than 100 countries will possess nuclear weapons. The future seems bleak, he said. Yet, "Faith and fear don't mix. One eliminates the other."

"Our cities are targeted by enemy bombs, but they're also targeted by God and our payload--the gospel of Jesus Christ--is more powerful than all the atomic bombs. What are we waiting for? Today is the day of salvation and we're on duty."

Fuller insisted at the heart of Habitat for Humanity's goal is evangelism for Jesus Christ. Building a decent house in a decent community for God's people, said Fuller, "is a way to get close to people. If we can convey to people in our cities that we really care for them, then we'll be in a posture to evangelize.

"But if we live in the suburbs with two cars, three TVs and run raids on the city, it doesn't ring true," he said. "We've got to do what Jesus did for us. We've got to move in to those parts of town where we wouldn't want to live and say, 'I wouldn't want to live in a rat infested place and because I love you, I don't want you to live there either.'"

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'Contradiction' Plagues
Conversion Understanding

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--"Serious theological contradiction" plagues Southern Baptists' understanding of conversion, according to church historian Bill J. Leonard.

In a faculty address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Leonard's speech on "Getting Saved In America" described the changes which have occurred in the American interpretation of conversion. It also offered proposals for retrieving a biblical concept of the experience.

Southern Baptist evangelicalism has been shaped by several historical influences, explained Leonard, associate professor of church history at the seminary.

The earliest came from those New England Puritans who required "conscious conversion" of all who would claim Christian faith. "Conversion came through a process, usually lengthy, instituted upon the elect completely at God's initiative," he said. "Sinners could neither request or receive salvation of their own free will."

Leonard pointed to another "significant influence" which came from the 19th century revivalists who increasingly stressed the relationship between God's grace and individual free will. Utilizing the theology of Jacob Arminius, these preachers called for immediate conversion in a dramatic, obvious event. It was monitored by the process of sanctification, whereby believers increased in holiness and discipleship, he explained.

Methods for securing these immediate conversions led to the use of such "means" as the invitation and the prayer of faith, Leonard said, noting "greater emphasis was placed on salvation as event than as a developing process."

Southern Baptists "heirs of both traditions" have utilized the language of Calvinism but redefined it in more Arminian terms and struggled to hold in tension such "diverse doctrines of salvation," he claimed. They believe all Christians should experience salvation, but have been "torn between conversion as nurturing process and dramatic event."

"Consequently, they often have tried to have both--a nurturing experience, culminating in a decisive moment," he said. Such a solution has been "traumatic" for many persons of both viewpoints. Some, nurtured to faith, are required to have an event and those dramatically converted who are expected to grow up immediately.

Furthermore, an emphasis upon single-event conversion has obscured Southern Baptists' vision of activity of grace before and after the event, Leonard suggested.

"For many Southern Baptists, conversion is less a process of experience with grace than event which satisfies a salvific requirement," he said. "Our church aisles are filled with persons who seem never quite satisfied with their conversion event. One wonders as to the proportion of annual baptisms which reflect second or third 'conversions,' not first-time converts."

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Such interpretation of conversion as an event threatens to "undermine the gospel's inescapable aspects of ethics, discipleship and character," he said.

Leonard challenged fellow Baptists to "rediscover a theology of conversion experience" that goes beyond the concept of conversion as a mere one-time transaction.

He urged them to "distinguish between conversion experience and event," thus seeing conversion event "as one step on the continuum of conversion experience."

Also, ministers must recognize the diversity of conversion language within their congregations and never take for granted "basic theological consensus," he said. They should utilize the language of conversion cautiously, within the broad context of biblical faith.

"The church's theology of evangelism and mission must not be taken for granted," he warned, noting "Conversion begins with God; it is a mystery of grace which places emphasis on a pilgrimage of faith."

Finally, Leonard cautioned against presenting salvation in terms "shaped more by American culture than by biblical imperative." Christians must not proclaim a message of conversion "encrusted with cheap grace and pluralistic confusion," he said, lest they "do more harm to the gospel than good."

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Hyman Appleman Dies
After Three-Week Illness

Baptist Press
6/6/83

KANSAS CITY (BP)--Hyman Appleman, the Russian-born evangelist who conducted crusades around the world, died May 27 in Kansas City. He was 81.

Appleman came to the United States in 1914, earned a law degree from DePaul University and was converted while stationed in Oklahoma with the U.S. Army. He later was pastor of several Southern Baptist churches in Oklahoma and was state evangelist for the Baptist Convention of Texas in the 1930s.

A reported one million people made profession of faith in Christ during his crusades in the United States, Korea, Germany, India and other parts of the world.

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