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87-88

**SBC Presidents Meet
About New Commentary**

NASHVILLE (BP)—A scholarly, strongly conservative viewpoint of Scriptures was recommended by six past presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention in a meeting that marked one of the first steps toward publishing a new multi-volume commentary by Broadman Press.

In the meeting at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., James W. Clark, senior vice president for publishing and distribution at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, met with Adrian P. Rogers, James T. Draper Jr., Jimmy R. Allen, James L. Sullivan, W. Wayne Dehoney and Herschel H. Hobbs. All former SBC presidents were invited to attend.

Topics for discussion included credentials of potential writers and consulting editors for the commentary, which is expected to have the first volume published in 1991.

The commentary was approved by trustees of the Sunday School Board in their February 1987 meeting in response to a motion made at the 1985 SBC annual meeting and referred to the board.

The trustee motion authorizing the new commentary calls for a strong, scholarly defense of the traditional authorship of the biblical books, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and that writers be inerrantists.

Participants agreed by consensus that all writers and consulting editors contributing to the commentary will be Southern Baptists. Consulting editors will work with Broadman to read the commentary prior to publication to evaluate the contents.

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church and president of the SBC, expressed the hope that the commentary "will not just be an intellectual exercise or another product but a tool we can use to reach people for Jesus Christ."

Clark told the presidents the board "would encourage and allow writers to express other interpretations of Scripture passages as long as the writer concludes confessionally on an inerrantist viewpoint." The presidents indicated agreement with this method of presentation.

Clark also outlined the process for publishing the commentary and introduced Broadman Press employees who will work on the project, including Michael A. Smith, who has been named general editor.

Clark expressed appreciation to the presidents for their willingness to help in the project. Each person present said he would be willing to serve on a continuing commentary advisory committee to recommend and advise Broadman in the selection of writers and consulting editors.

"The board is committed to and enthusiastic about producing a commentary which will make a positive contribution to the life of Southern Baptists," Clark said. "This commentary will take its place alongside others Broadman has published across the years representing still another conservative viewpoint of the Bible."

New Texas Statute
Saves Church Taxes

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)—A tax dispute involving First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas, and the Dallas County Appraisal District has resulted in a new Texas law exempting churches under construction from property taxes.

"The law will keep churches from being caught in a tax trap that diverts mission money into the tax coffers," said attorney Gary Nash, a member of the Richardson church's finance committee and general counsel for the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the new law is especially meaningful at a time when Texas Baptists are involved in Mission Texas, a campaign to begin 2,000 new churches by 1990.

The issue of whether a church under construction constitutes a place of worship went before a Texas district court in 1986 after the appraisal district contended the Richardson church was not using its property under construction as a regular place of worship when the tax year began in Jan. 1, 1985. Therefore, claimed the district, the church property should not be tax-exempt, and the church was liable for about \$100,000 in 1985 property taxes.

Church leaders said the facilities had been used for worship and the church should be exempt from paying the 1985 taxes. The church relied on a Texas Supreme Court case and the facts it presented.

Although the facilities were not completed until late 1986, the appraisal district exempted the church from 1986 taxes, contending meanwhile that until church construction is completed and used for regular worship services, the property is not exempt from taxation.

The case, which was viewed by concerned Baptists as a possible landmark decision on church-state separation, never came to trial because the case was settled outside the court.

But prior to that settlement, the district raised for the first time in court a new issue — whether the 100-year-old church's organizing documents contained on Jan. 1, 1985, all the provisions required by the new property tax code for the church to qualify for exempt status.

Members of the Richardson church were concerned that other churches would be taxed by the same rigid property tax law provisions.

They were instrumental in working with Representatives Stan Schleuter of Killeen and Bill Ceverha of Richardson to remedy the tax on worship places. The Schleuter-Ceverha bill passed both houses of the legislature and has been sent to Gov. Bill Clements for his signature.

The bill exempts property under construction for up to two years and also exempts improvements owned by a religious organization designed and intended to be used as worship places when complete. It also enables churches to correct organizing documents with retroactive effect to satisfy property tax exemption requirements.

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Laymen Challenged To Explore
Creativity In Missions Service

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6/9/87

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Council members for the National Fellowship of Baptist Men have been challenged to explore the creativity they use in their professions for the missions cause of Christ.

The second meeting of the council this spring convened at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission offices in Memphis, Tenn., May 29-30.

The National Fellowship of Baptist Men is a Brotherhood organization seeking to help laypeople utilize their vocations and interests in volunteer missions service. It seeks avenues of service through the Southern Baptist Foreign and Home Mission Boards.

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In a challenge to explore their creativity, Norman Godfrey, Brotherhood Commission first vice president, told participants the creativity they use in their secular occupations is seldom called upon or utilized in religious service.

"Too often the places we worship on Sunday are the least-creative places in our society," said Godfrey. "Everything is always the same ... it's predictable.

"There are too many of us with blinders on," he continued. "We're so concerned with getting to church on time we fail to see the people that are hurting around us. How long has it been since someone has been healed because of our commitment to our faith?"

Council members heard reports on plans and completed projects from fellowship representatives in the areas of construction, business, church renewal, lay witness-evangelism, health care, veterinary medicine, music and the performing arts, and agriculture.

Each of these areas of interest has a national fellowship that operates under the umbrella of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men. State fellowships also exist in a number of Baptist state conventions.

"The exciting thing is now we're not just talking," said Ed Bullock, executive director for the national fellowship. "We have real-live people leading these fellowships.

"People ask me to explain the National Fellowship of Baptist Men," said Bullock. "Our purpose is still to dream with Southern Baptist missions leadership and to offer our expertise in missions service."

In separate administrative actions, the council elected three leaders.

Justus Anderson, missions professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was elected as a seminary representative to the general council.

Ted Evans of Canton, N.C., a Missions Service Corps volunteer with the Home Mission Board, will coordinate the National Fellowship of Baptist Musicians and Performing Artists.

Jim McKinnon, a businessman from Albuquerque, N.M., will coordinate the National Fellowship of Baptist Businessmen.

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CORRECTION: The toll-free number in the 5/22/87 Baptist Press story, "Church Immunity Gone, Conference Speakers Say," is for Alabama only. The regular phone number for the Center for the Study of Law and the Church at Sanford University is (205) 870-2760.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Board Plans Higher Visibility
For Ethnic In Literature

By Frank Wm. White

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6/9/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--As part of a commitment to higher visibility of illustrations and photographs of ethnic people in its publications, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board will add artists for Spanish and Asian language publications.

The two new artists will be responsible, along with editorial staffs, for planning and designing publications, establishing cost estimates and developing product models, said Doris Adams, supervisor of the special ministries art section.

The artists should be able to understand the languages they will deal with, Adams explained. "We need experienced artists who know the culture. Part of planning art for language publications is to know what activities would best illustrate a situation and what colors would be appropriate."

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The new positions are expected to be filled by October 1987, she said. With the additional artists, the special ministries art section, which was begun in November 1986, will include three artists and a supervisor.

The increased need for illustrations of language-culture groups has developed with the expansion of language materials. The board now produces one Korean and 10 Spanish periodicals. American Indian and Chinese periodicals are to be added in 1988, with French and Vietnamese periodicals to be added in 1989.

Many of the board's Convention Press publications are being produced for Korean, Chinese, Hispanic and Black churches.

Photographs and illustrations of language-culture groups for the particular language publications will be the focus of the new art services, said Adams. However, illustrations of Blacks and language-culture groups also will be used more frequently in general publications that are used by all Southern Baptists, including Black and ethnic groups.

Already, the art department has started collecting photographs of Hispanic, Black and Korean church services, youth activities and home situations, Adams said. A trip in May to Southern Baptist churches in Los Angeles provided a file of new photographs.

The special ministries department was created in October 1985 to consolidate Sunday School Board programs for Black, language and special education ministries.

A goal of 3 million language and Black church members has been set for the year 2000. Combined language and Black Southern Baptist church membership currently is about 600,000.

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Carters Return To New York
Habitat Housing Project

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NEW YORK (BP)—Making good on an old promise, former President Jimmy Carter returned to the Manhattan tenement where he worked as a volunteer carpenter with the Christian group Habitat for Humanity.

Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, helped renovate the building into acceptable housing in partnership with 19 low-income families in 1984 and 1985.

The Carters were welcomed back to 742 East 6th Street, on the city's Lower East Side, by the families now living there — people with whom they worked side-by-side during the two highly publicized "work parties" several summers ago.

Touring the now comfortably refurbished apartments where hammer in hand he had once straddled exposed fire-charred beams, Carter also used the occasion to announce his participation in an intensive world-wide house building effort in July.

That event, named Habitat House-Raising Week, will be highlighted by the efforts of the Carters and more than 300 volunteers in Charlotte, N.C., where the group will build 14 houses — an entire city block — in just five days.

Simultaneously, Carter said, house-raising efforts will take place in more than 200 communities around the world in which Habitat for Humanity projects have been established.

Headquartered in Americus, Ga., Habitat for Humanity has been building affordable housing for about 11 years in partnership with people too poor to get conventional loans.

Habitat is supported by the contributions and volunteer labor of a broad denominational range of churches and individuals, as well as corporations and foundations. The program also requires "sweat equity" participation of the low-income families who benefit.

In the New York building, Carter said, each family was required to put in a minimum of 1,000 hours of work, which included 500 hours of work on their own building and 500 hours of work on another building.

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When completed, the houses are sold to the families at no profit under a concept that Habitat calls "the economics of Jesus."

"The Bible says when you lend money to the poor, don't charge interest," Carter, who teaches Sunday school at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., said during his visit to the New York site. "New York bankers listen to that," he quipped.

The impetus for the six-story New York project — Habitat's largest and most visible effort to date — came from Southern Baptist missionary Bruce Schoonmaker.

Directing the New York Graffiti Ministry Center, a mission of Metro Baptist Church on Manhattan's West Side, Schoonmaker sought a Christian alternative to government housing projects to meet the critical housing needs of the poor in his community. Starting a Habitat for Humanity project was the answer.

From its inception in 1983 to the completion of the pilot project last year, the New York Habitat effort was directed by Rob DeRocker, then the executive director of Habitat for Humanity in New York City and a member of Metro Baptist Church. It was DeRocker who first invited the former president to see the project in 1984 and then asked him to consider sending a work party from the Maranatha church.

Instead, Carter decided to come personally as a volunteer, traveling 27 hours on a chartered bus. Carter and some 50 volunteers from Georgia checked into the dormitory-style quarters above the Metro Baptist Church sanctuary and began their week-long work efforts the next day. He returned to the project and to Metro Church the following year to help finish the job.

"We've been hosting Habitat for Humanity work teams ever since," said Gene Bolin, pastor of Metro Baptist. "It's a wonderful program doing the kind of work all of us as Christians should be involved in."

Carter agrees. As a Southern Baptist and a born-again Christian he said recently that involvement with Habitat for Humanity is "an almost perfect way for me to put my religious faith into practice."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

College Ministers' Workshop
Creates New Support Network

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
6/9/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—The first national workshop for church ministers to college students has helped establish a new network for support and sharing ideas, according to some of the 160 participants.

Unlike pastors, ministers to college students do not often have a network of peers to share problems and ideas, explained Art Herron, a Southern Baptist Sunday School Board national student ministries consultant who coordinated the workshop May 25-29 in Nashville.

"We will be able to call each other, share ideas and replenish each other," said Mike Bungarner, university minister at First Baptist Church of Norman, Okla.

The meeting was the first national student ministries-sponsored event specifically for church ministers. Herron said he hopes participants will plan similar state or regional meetings.

An estimated 1,200 church staff members have specific responsibilities for college student ministries. Many others have college students as a part of their responsibilities, Herron said.

The workshop has been an objective of the Southern Baptist Metro College Ministers Association since the organization began five years ago, said president Sam Douglass, university minister at First Baptist Church of Lubbock, Texas.

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"We want to train church ministers and help campus ministers understand how they can work together with church ministers," Douglass said.

Churches will have additional help in reaching college students with collegiate Sunday school lessons that will appear in The Student magazine beginning October 1988. "The literature will provide a platform for communicating to college students," Douglass said.

College ministers are a somewhat new phenomenon and can be welcome help rather than a threat to campus ministers, said Eugene Briscoe, student work director for the Georgia Baptist Convention and president of the association of state student ministries directors.

"We need to realize we are on the same team. In this meeting we talked together and realized how we can work together," Briscoe said. "College ministers are where campus ministers were 20 years ago. They are just now beginning to be recognized as a group. We need them to help reach students on campus."

Participants in one workshop seminar on church/Baptist Student Union evangelistic outreach were told the college campus may be the best location to focus efforts to reach the world for Christ.

Joyce Ashcraft, BSU director at Rice University in Houston, said the college campus has a cross section of the world's population.

The BSU and the church need to work together to coordinate rather than duplicate each other's efforts, she explained. While students may have a temporary involvement in the BSU, a good relationship between the BSU and the local church can help students develop a lifelong relationship with the church.

Although the workshop focused on the work of church ministers, about one-third of the participants were campus ministers and state directors of student ministries.

The workshop theme, "Student Ministries: Blending Strengths," dealt with the role of church ministers and campus ministers working together to reach college students, Herron said.

Sessions dealt with reaching students, understanding the needs of students, gaining campus visibility, working with campus ministers and other topics related to student ministries as well as sessions for participants' personal development.