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September 22, 1987

87-141

Top Missions Leaders Seek Ways
To Accelerate Spread Of Gospel By Bob Stanley and Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--In an unprecedented meeting, leaders of 20 of the world's largest missions organizations and interdenominational groups sought ways Sept. 17-18 to work together in accelerating the spread of the gospel to all people.

As the first step, they called on Christians worldwide to join in 24 hours of prayer and fasting just before Pentecost Sunday each year as a "focused intercession for global evangelization" between now and A.D. 2000. The period of prayer would begin at 6 p.m. Friday and end at 6 p.m. Saturday.

"From time zone to time zone, it could become a chain of prayer and fasting encircling the earth," the statement said.

The missions leaders also made tentative plans for a consultation early next year in which experts will explore the kinds of research information available about the unevangelized people of the world and whether a common data base could be set up that all could share.

At a press conference concluding the interdenominational Global Missions Conference, several leaders said one of the most valuable benefits of the meeting was "just getting to know each other." Jerry White, general director of the Navigators, said this means that if conflicts or needs arise, the leaders can pick up the phone and talk to someone they already know.

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, said he is convinced global evangelization is an attainable goal if Christians commit themselves to all that is necessary to carry out Jesus' Great Commission to take the gospel to all people.

"We're not just talking about something. We really believe it can happen and should happen in our day," he said.

William R. Bright, founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, agreed. "We have the technology and the money," he said, "but the main stumbling block is the lack of prayerful dedication on the part of Christians."

"More people are hearing the gospel than ever in history, more people are receiving Christ (as Savior) ... but we must accelerate what is being done," Bright added.

The Southern Baptist Convention and a number of other denominations and international mission groups have set goals of doing their part to take the gospel to all people by the end of the century. Parks said that as he heard of more and more groups with similar efforts, he also began to hear some say, "Is there any way we can work together better ... could we somehow work together and strengthen our witness to the whole world?"

"These kinds of questions have caused me to begin asking, How can we do this?" he explained at the opening session. He said he began to feel that this was one of God's pivotal moments in history, and in July wrote 36 chief executives of the largest groups doing missions around the world about the possibility of a meeting.

He got responses from all but one. Many had conflicts on the suggested date for the meeting, but he said he felt that having 20 of the 36 groups represented is "a remarkable gathering."

The leaders represented groups with about 20,000 missions personnel overseas and annual budgets totaling more than \$510 million.

From the start of the meeting, the necessity for prayer and the power and moving of the Spirit of God were stressed. The leaders spent much of the dialogue time praying.

H. Eddie Fox, who represented the Methodist General Board of Discipleship and the World Methodist Council, said: "The tasks of world evangelization are too big for us alone. Without any doubt, the Spirit of the Lord is moving across the church around the world to move out in mission and evangelizing now."

One of the major concerns discussed was how to reach hidden people groups. Unless greater efforts are made to reach these groups, estimated Edward R. Dayton, vice president-at-large for World Vision International, more than 2 billion people will never have a clear explanation of who Jesus Christ is and why it is important for them to know him.

As outreach to these people increases, he said, it will become increasingly important for mission groups to share information with each other to avoid duplicating their efforts, especially in research.

Parks quoted J. Philip Hogan, executive director of the division of foreign missions of the Assemblies of God, who had to leave the meeting early, in pointing out that with today's communication network, transportation possibilities and the number of organizations at work, "it is literally, actually possible to share the gospel with everyone in the world."

Participants in the meeting were Hogan and Norman L. Correll from the Assemblies of God division of foreign missions; Bright and Carl Osterberg of Campus Crusade for Christ, International; John M. Smee of the Church of the Nazarene world missions division; Warren W. Webster of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society; Robert H. Bowman of Far East Broadcasting Co., Inc.;

Erwin H. Rempel of the General Conference Mennonite Church; John A. Lapp of the Mennonite Central Committee; White and Donald McGilchrist of the Navigators; Vinson Synan of the North American Renewal Service Committee; Morton S. Taylor and John R. Hendrick of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.;

John Cumbers of SIM International (formerly Sudan Interior Mission); Parks and William R. O'Brien of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; J.W. Denny of the Church of God in Christ; Peggy Billings and Keith Rae of the United Methodist Church Board of Global Ministries; Alan Travers and Arnie Robertson of Trans World Radio;

Dale W. Keitzman and Charles Wickman of World Literature Crusade; Fox of the Methodist General Board of Discipleship and the World Methodist Council; Edward R. Dayton of World Vision International; David Bendor-Samuel and Steven Sheldon of Wycliffe Bible Translators, International; and James W. Rogers of Youth With a Mission.

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

Senate Gets Mixed Messages
On SBC Endorsement Of Bork

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
9/22/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--In the aftermath of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee's endorsement of Supreme Court nominee Robert H. Bork, mixed messages have been sent to the U.S. Senate as to whether the Southern Baptist Convention has endorsed the nominee.

Immediately following the Aug. 20-21 PAC meeting in Nashville, the SBC Executive Committee staff -- under instructions from the PAC -- sent a letter to all U.S. senators informing them of the PAC's adoption of a resolution "to strongly urge the Senate Judiciary Committee and the United States Senate to confirm" Bork's nomination.

Enclosed with each letter was a copy of the PAC's full resolution, in which the committee identified itself as having been "duly elected and appointed to represent Southern Baptists on First Amendment concerns, particularly church-state issues, religious freedom issues and those issues relating to the 'right application of Christianity to the life of the nation.'"

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But in a letter to members of the Senate, BJCPA Executive Director James M. Dunn wrote: "Please don't be misled. The Southern Baptist Convention has not endorsed Judge Robert Bork.

"While some groups have deliberately attempted to make the 7-5 vote of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee appear to be an official action of the convention and your office has received notification to this effect, you need to be fully informed."

According to a review of SBC annuals by Lynn E. May Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, the convention has never publicly supported the election or confirmation of a public official. A resolution passed by the SBC in 1976 "reaffirmed the long tradition of non-endorsement of any political candidate."

In his letter, Dunn went on to state, "The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is the Washington-based agency that serves nine Baptist conventions and conferences including the Southern Baptist Convention and we have taken no action regarding Judge Bork's nomination."

Les Csorba III, a PAC member from Alexandria, Va., said he thinks action by Adrian Rogers, SBC president, would clarify any confusion about the PAC resolution on Bork's nomination.

"I know he (Rogers) supports our efforts and that he plans to do something," Csorba said. "I think that it is necessary if this is truly a Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee resolution that it receive the support of the head. That would clarify a lot of the confusion which has existed between the Baptist Joint Committee and the Public Affairs Committee if the head of the denomination would make a statement."

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, told Baptist Press that as a private citizen he does support Bork's confirmation. "As an individual, I have already written both of my senators and encouraged them to confirm Judge Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court."

He said he believes his letter was on the letterhead of his church, not the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I am deeply grieved that in America since Roe v. Wade that lives have been taken from some 20 million pre-born babies," Rogers said. "This is not a mere political or academic matter with me. I do not look at it dispassionately. We are dealing with life and death."

Rogers, who is a PAC member but was not present at the August meeting, continued, "Yet, on the other hand, I realize how careful we as Southern Baptists must be to maintain our integrity in the public arena. Perhaps the (PAC) resolution could have been framed in such a way as to accomplish its purpose without being quite as specific and could have spoken more specifically to principles, rather than a specific person.

"I do feel that the weight of our Southern Baptist pronouncements certainly lines up behind what I have heard and read about Mr. Bork," Rogers said.

"I do think that technically what the Public Affairs Committee did is not the same as endorsing a man who is running for a political office by popular election. What they did was to encourage the Senate at a specific point of moral action.

"It is unfortunate that this also involves a specific name, but historically, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has sought to encourage moral action where it was warranted," Rogers stated.

Csorba, executive director of Accuracy in Academia, said the PAC's major efforts related to the Bork resolution have been sending the letter to Senate members and encouraging Southern Baptists prayerfully to consider writing letters to their senators supporting Bork's confirmation.

Csorba also said he and Samuel T. Currin, PAC chairman, sent a press release to 15 to 20 newspapers following the PAC meeting in Nashville. The release was sent on SBC Executive Committee letterhead, Csorba said, because the PAC does not yet have its own letterhead.

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"As recording secretary, part of my duty is to promote the work of the committee," Csorba said. "We don't have our own promotion capability. Eventually when we do get our own funding, we will have a greater operation. We will have our own press spokesman, who may be me or someone else."

In addition to receiving the PAC resolution and Dunn's letter, staff members of some Senate offices also have been told by at least one lobby group that the SBC has endorsed Bork's nomination.

When asked about statements he has made concerning an SBC endorsement of Bork, Dan Casey, executive director of the American Conservative Union, said: "I think it's splitting semantic hairs to say whether the Public Affairs Committee is on record for Bork or the Southern Baptist Convention. I see the equivalent as being the executive council of the AFL-CIO. When the AFL-CIO goes on record as being opposed to Bork, obviously they haven't polled all their members."

Casey said his information about the PAC action was "third hand" and he "didn't have time" to contact the SBC Executive Committee to confirm its accuracy. "My understanding was that the conflict was between the Joint Baptist Committee and the Public Affairs Committee," he said, "that it was sort of a sour grapes turf war that all organizations have regardless of religious affiliation or goals in life."

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Bork's Faith, Church-State
Views Surface In Hearings

By Stan Hasteley and Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
9/22/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--During the initial phase of confirmation hearings on his appointment by President Reagan to the Supreme Court, Judge Robert H. Bork assured members of the Senate Judiciary Committee he is not an agnostic.

Under questioning about his writings, speeches and written decisions, Bork also set forth an outline of his views on church-state relations.

Bork, 60, who for the last five years has been a judge on the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, told senators, "I am not an agnostic." The comment came during an exchange with Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., an announced Bork supporter.

Noting he had been described as an agnostic in a recent Time magazine article, Bork said the description "arose from the following conversation, and the reporter agrees that it arose from the following conversation. He said, 'You're not terribly religious, are you?' And I said, 'Not in the sense you mean.' That's it. He went, 'Bang, he's an agnostic.'"

Sen. Howell Heflin, D-Ala., one of only three senators on the 14-member panel believed to be undecided on the Bork nomination, also raised the issue of Bork's alleged agnosticism during remarks made on the first day of hearings, warning against making the nominee's religious beliefs a litmus test for confirmation.

Pointing to a provision of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States," Heflin said that clause and "the spirit of the freedom of religion clause in the First Amendment should be carefully observed in pursuing any inquiry, whether it be legitimate or not, as to one's personal religious feelings."

Another panel member, Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., said he wanted a justice on the high court "sensitive to our traditions of separation of church and state."

Simon, a candidate for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination, said further: "I have an understanding of the yearnings people have for values in our society, and I want to preserve those values. But I also recognize there are things that government can do well, like providing student aid. There are things that government cannot do well, and one of those things is to promote religion. I want to make sure the nominee is sensitive to our traditions in that field."

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Later, Simon questioned Bork about his criticism of some church-state decisions by the Supreme Court. Bork called a newspaper account that he endorsed school prayer in a 1985 speech "entirely false."

"I have never taken a position on school prayer," the former law professor said. "I have never taught school prayer cases. I have never written about them. I have never even thought my way through the problem."

Bork said further, "There are only two (church-state) cases I have ever criticized, ... and they are both very marginal cases." In one of the two, a 5-4 decision rendered in 1980, the court struck down a Kentucky law requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments on public school classroom walls. The other case, testing the constitutionality of a New York City program that sent public schoolteachers into parochial schools to provide remedial instruction, resulted two years ago in a 5-4 decision against the practice.

Responding to Simon's stated concern about his overall view of church-state relations, Bork said: "The only thing I am convinced of is that the principle of non-establishment (of religion) is essential. I know the framers (of the Constitution) thought so, and particularly with the memory of religious wars in Europe, ... I think the principle of free exercise is also vitally important."

As to how he would approach church-state cases on the high court, Bork said he would make up his mind on a case-by-case basis.

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Thomas Explains Churches'
Concerns During IRS Meeting

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
9/22/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--An initially hostile discussion of tax provisions relating to churches ended on a positive note during the first meeting of a newly created Internal Revenue Service advisory panel on tax-exempt organizations.

Members of the Commissioner's Exempt Organizations Advisory Group began by criticizing Internal Revenue Code provisions that relate to churches. But after hearing concerns raised by a Southern Baptist church-state attorney, IRS Commissioner Lawrence Gibbs and other panel members indicated a desire to work with church representatives on reconciling issues of mutual concern.

Drawing early criticism were provisions that exempt churches from filing informational tax returns and protect churches from intrusive tax audits. One member charged that the provision exempting churches from filing information returns violates the First Amendment's establishment clause, while another suggested all churches should have to file annual information returns.

An IRS official also criticized churches' potential political involvement. He said since campaign contributions are not deductible but church contributions are, he is concerned churches could become a "national channel for channeling money into political campaigns."

Discussion within the group also charged Congress with limiting IRS ability to investigate churches. IRS officials told the panel that without legislative changes, abuses of the tax law by churches would continue.

Following the initial round of discussion, Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, was given an opportunity to respond.

Thomas began by criticizing IRS failure to include even one church representative on the advisory group, which is made up of tax-law experts.

"I am both surprised and disappointed that no representative of churches is on this advisory committee insofar as church concerns are a major item on your agenda," Thomas said. "I want you to know that churches are sensitive to the concerns that have been expressed around the table. We recognize the government's legitimate interest in preventing fraud, private inurement and other misconduct."

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But Thomas cautioned the group against intruding into the internal financial affairs of churches.

"The First Amendment provides churches with protections against government intrusion and entanglement that are not available to secular organizations," he said. "Therefore, any change in existing law must be done carefully. We don't want to move precipitously in an area of law that has been carefully crafted over several decades."

Thomas told the committee that churches are concerned about public perception of misconduct by religious organizations. "Don't confuse mainstream religious America with what went on at the PTL Club," he said. "The vast majority of religious organizations are in perfect compliance with the tax codes."

Also expressing concern on behalf of churches were Gary S. Nash, general counsel for the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and secretary of the Church Alliance, and Deirdre Halloran, associate general counsel for the United States Catholic Conference.

"We want to be constructive, but we do not want to be looking in from the outside," Thomas concluded. "We need to be involved in the process."

Following Thomas' remarks, Commissioner Gibbs expressed his appreciation for the input and his desire for the IRS and the religious community to begin a "constructive dialogue" on issues of mutual concern. "I think we have ended on a very positive note," Gibbs said.

Several advisory group members also expressed their support for involving churches in deliberations with the IRS.

Thomas told the panel: "We've done this kind of thing before. The process we went through in solving the integrated auxiliaries problem is an excellent model for an on going dialogue between the IRS and the religious community."

After the meeting, Thomas sent a letter to Robert Brauer, IRS assistant commissioner for employee plans and exempt organizations, suggesting the creation of a study group comprised of representatives from the IRS, Treasury Department and churches to explore the various questions raised during the advisory group's meeting.

Thomas told Baptist Press he is confident current law contains adequate safeguards to protect the general public from what he called charlatans.

"There are plenty of laws currently on the books prohibiting mail fraud, fraudulent solicitation, the use of a tax-exempt organization for personal gain and the like," he said. "We don't need to invite the IRS into church business meetings in order to solve the few problems that exist."