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Opposed to his health plan,  
CLC, others tell Cooper

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
2/22/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and six other pro-life organizations have told Rep. Jim Cooper, D.-Tenn., they are opposed to his increasingly popular health care reform proposal unless it excludes abortion coverage.

In a recent letter to Cooper, the organizations said his legislation would include abortion as part of a mandated benefits package even though the Tennessee congressman recently has said it is abortion neutral.

It is virtually certain the commission established by Cooper's bill and appointed by President Clinton would include abortion as one of the benefits in the government-mandated package, the letter said. Even if it did not, Cooper's plan would be required to cover elective abortion, the groups said, because it mandates the uniform benefits package include all "medically appropriate" procedures. Courts, "time and time again," have construed such language to cover elective abortions, they said.

"Thus, your bill requires the same remedy as the president's bill -- an amendment to explicitly exclude abortion from the scope of any government-mandated or government-defined benefits package," the groups said. "The effect of such an amendment would be to leave employers, groups and individuals free to purchase abortion coverage on the private insurance market, as some do now (although most do not)."

The CLC already had announced its opposition to President Clinton's health care plan because his proposal includes abortion in its basic benefits package. In the letter, the groups also said the proposal offered by Sen John Chafee, R.-R.I., and Rep. Bill Thomas, R.-Calif., was unsatisfactory because it includes language similar to that in Cooper's bill.

In addition to the CLC, other groups signing the letter were the National Right to Life Committee, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, Eagle Forum and American Family Association. They also sent the letter to Sen. John Breau, D.-La., the chief sponsor of Cooper's bill in the other chamber.

The recent endorsement by some of the country's top business leaders has enabled the Cooper plan to gain momentum to the detriment of Clinton's proposal.

Under the Cooper plan, Americans who purchase health insurance would pay for abortions through their premiums, the pro-life groups said in the Feb. 17 letter.

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"Moreover, even those who did not buy health insurance would subsidize abortions through their taxes -- negating the Hyde Amendment -- since your bill would extend the government-defined benefits package to low-income persons at taxpayer expense," they said.

The Hyde Amendment, first adopted in 1976, prohibits Medicaid funds from paying for abortions except in cases of rape, incest or a threat to the mother's life.

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CBF to create foundation  
to tap charitable giving

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
2/22/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Foundation to raise endowment funds for the organization of Baptist moderates was approved during the 62-member CBF coordinating council meeting Feb. 18-19 in Nashville.

The council also approved a \$5.6 million budget for the first half of 1995, including \$2 million expected from its global missions offering. The CBF is then scheduled to move to a July 1-June 30-based fiscal year budget.

A one-time \$100,000 gift to the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention is included in the budget. The gift was designated by the council's global missions group, voicing appreciation for WMU's contribution to world evangelization.

With the approval of the foundation, an ad hoc committee that drafted the proposal now will formulate a charter and bylaws to be presented at the council's May 3-4 meeting prior to the CBF General Assembly May 5-7 in Greensboro, N.C. No General Assembly vote will be needed on the foundation, CBF leaders said.

Ad hoc committee chairman Henry Huff said the amount of funding the foundation can raise will depend on hard work and "the names you and others can give to us" of potential major donors via their wills and other charitable giving avenues.

Huff, a Louisville, Ky., attorney, formerly was involved for many years in fund-raising for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"A number of people have spoken to me and given me the names of individuals they feel would be interested" in donating through the CBF foundation, Huff told the coordinating council. Interest from the endowment, he said, could be used for theological education scholarships, for example, or for college tuition for children of CBF missionaries.

The \$100,000 grant to WMU was initiated solely by the CBF global missions group, CBF missions coordinator R. Keith Parks told the council, and WMU had no knowledge such a gift was being made.

The CBF-WMU relationship "is as wholesome as it could possibly be," Parks said, noting the only area where WMU policy rules out missions education assistance to CBF is in promotion of the CBF missions offering each December. The "ultimate health" of Baptist life, Parks said, depends on solid missions awareness such as fostered by WMU.

Parks said future CBF-WMU cooperation might be possible, for example, in WMU magazines carrying inserts for CBF subscribers. CBF has used WMU's studio for production of a video, Parks also said.

The Jan. 1-June 30, 1995, budget anticipates \$8.9 million in receipts from all sources, with nearly \$3.28 million to be forwarded as designated to Southern Baptist Convention, state Baptist convention and other causes.

The six-month CBF budget includes:

- \$4.2 million for various CBF missions efforts.
- \$100,000 each for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and the George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University and \$15,000 each for Baptist study centers at Duke University and Emory University's Candler School of Theology.
- \$137,134 for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

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-- \$30,000 for the Baptist Center for Ethics.  
 -- \$65,000 for Associated Baptist Pr ss.  
 -- \$45,000 for the Baptist World Alliance.  
 -- \$202,250 for general and administrative expenses and \$184,050 for communications.

Baptists Today, pending informational requests it is to provide, will be added to the upcoming budget. The journal will receive \$25,000 in CBF funds and a one-time \$10,000 grant for capital expenditures, according to the council's action.

During 1993, the CBF received \$11.2 million from its various contributors, with \$6.6 million remaining with the organization, the rest being distributed as designated by churches and individuals to SBC and other causes. Planning for the 1995-96 CBF fiscal year will begin this October.

To its 1994 budget, the council added a one-time grant of \$15,000 to help start a Center for Christian Ethics being organized by Foy Valentine, retired SBC Christian Life Commission executive director. The center will be housed at Baylor.

Cecil Sherman, CBF coordinator, distributed statistics to the council showing CBF funding from individuals and from churches in 1993. The statistics reveal for the first time, he noted, the sizable portion of CBF funding from individuals, many of whom are in churches that refuse to route funds to CBF.

In Alabama, for example, CBF received a total of \$76,848 from 145 individuals, while \$479,754 was routed to CBF by 30 churches.

In various other states where individuals contributed a total of more than \$50,000, the breakdowns are Florida, \$214,264 from 127 individuals, \$361,713 from 47 churches; Georgia, \$194,573 from 353 individuals, \$1,088,564 from 114 churches; Kentucky, \$56,357 from 132 individuals, \$445,924 from 88 churches; Mississippi, \$56,549 from 64 individuals, \$102,577 from 22 churches; North Carolina, \$105,918 from 245 individuals, \$1,546,215 from 221 churches; Oklahoma, \$80,387 from 112 individuals, \$353,375 from 15 churches; South Carolina, \$91,531 from 173 individuals, \$752,122 from 78 churches; Tennessee, \$146,932 from 196 individuals, \$786,450 from 63 churches; Texas, \$231,735 from 377 individuals, \$1,952,259 from 165 churches; and Virginia, \$126,468 from 219 individuals, \$400,159 from 216 churches.

In other comments to the council, Sherman voiced five concerns:

1) Of continued CBF growth, he said, "I don't think that can be presumed. It will be increasingly difficult for churches to come to CBF. What we are asking people to do has penalty attached to it ... ." It runs counter to the desire of pastors and lay people to avoid controversy, he said. "This is not a peaceful exercise." In some instances, CBF may need to start churches where there are no CBF-oriented churches, he said.

2) He said he is not sure the average Baptist understands "the difference between a CBF Baptist and a Baptist of the old order." He defined CBF, in "compressed" fashion, saying, "We are not a theology-standardizing organization. We are a missions delivery system." The latter, he said, is "appropriate to Baptists, the other is altogether inappropriate."

3) Targeting "the rise in independent moderate Baptist churches," he said, "Far more moderate Baptist churches are just backing off from cooperative missions than are coming to CBF. They are privatizing church. ... The privatizing of church life is the death of cooperative mission," he said.

4) "CBF needs to design a mission to the clergy," he said, noting ministerial flight from the profession as a result of "the moral breakdown, the fatigue burnout, the church-pastor confrontation that leads to dismissal in way too many instances."

5) "CBF churches need help in doing church," he said, citing particularly declining churches in downtown areas and neighborhoods in transition. "Those churches don't have to die. ... Those churches can get well," he said, adding that in his travels, "I see a startling number of these churches."

In other business, the council:

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-- heard a nominating committee report that Patrick Anderson, a professor at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Fla., will be recommended as moderator-elect to the general assembly in May.

-- approved the creation of a Ministry with Ministers group to focus on such matters as placement of ministers in churches, personal and professional growth, involvement in crisis and conflict situations between churches and ministers, stress, healthy lifestyles, ethical and moral issues and retirement.

-- approved the creation of staff positions of coordinator for business services, associate missions coordinator for missions education promotion and associate coordinator for information systems. Administrative committee members during their meeting discussed whether more staff members are needed in "sales" -- i.e., expanding CBF's number of churches participating in CBF -- rather than other administrative positions. Several committee members voiced a need for a CBF "blueprint" for the process of expanding the staff.

-- approved "seed financing" of \$40,000 in 1995 for the establishment of a Christian education faculty position at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, \$30,000 in 1996 and \$20,000 in 1997, with the seminary thereafter to assume financing for the position.

-- heard a report that Gary Leazer, former director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department who was asked to resign over his involvements in the Freemasonry issue, will receive \$2,000 per month for six months from the CBF's "safety net" fund.

-- scheduled subsequent Coordinating Council meetings Sept. 8-10 in Atlanta and Feb. 16-18, 1995, in either Dallas/Fort Worth or San Antonio.

-- appointed five new missionaries, including a couple to work with internationals in the Atlanta area and a couple for evangelization of a people group in Asia. The CBF missionary force now totals 31 in the United States and abroad.

John Tyler, a St. Louis layman chairing the council's "visioning task force," reported the group will seek to help the council and CBF define "who we are and where we are going" and what might "differentiate" CBF from other Baptist bodies. The group will be working on possible CBF vision and mission statements, core values and strategic imperatives -- "a common target that we can approach in a common way," Tyler said.

Cecil Staton, publisher of Smyth & Helwys, reported to the council that the moderate publishing house is launching a 30-volume Bible commentary series, a 14-15-year project with the first volume to appear in 1998.

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#### ANALYSIS

Billy Graham and Kim Il Sung:

odd friendship made in heaven?

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press

2/22/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--On the surface, it seems one of the strangest friendships since John the Baptist entertained Herod with his thundering sermons.

Billy Graham, Christian evangelist and man of God. Kim Il Sung, communist dictator and secular "god" of North Korea.

Graham visited Kim -- for the second time -- during a late-January trip the Southern Baptist preacher took to North Korea. Their three hours together included a "delightful luncheon," according to Graham, and discussion of religious and political issues.

Kim "can be tough but he has a tender place in his heart," Graham said. The evangelist is reading Kim's autobiography (he's up to volume four), and claims it "reads like a novel. You can't put it down."

Perhaps that's because Kim's book is a novel. No one in the West knows the actual events of his long life, which is shrouded in heroic myth and legend. Few Western heads of state have met Kim even once. He rarely leaves his capital, Pyongyang, and receives few emissaries from democratic nations.

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Yet the man who has ruled North Korea absolutely for half a century, who crushed the once-vibrant churches there, who created a personality cult rivaling Mao's and Stalin's, who helped start the Korean War and regularly threatens a new one -- this man has warmly welcomed evangelical Christianity's most famous spokesman not once but twice.

What's more, Graham delivered a private message from President Bill Clinton to Kim -- as he carried one from President George Bush two years ago -- and relayed Kim's reply to Clinton.

This time Graham's service as a presidential courier took on much greater diplomatic and political significance. It came at the height of international tension over North Korea's persistent refusal to allow U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities. Despite Pyongyang's denials, military and intelligence groups suspect North Korea may already have one or more nuclear weapons. Clinton's message reportedly stressed the need for progress in negotiations over the inspections.

Two weeks after Graham's visit, the North Korean government announced it would accept international inspections.

The agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency doesn't cover all nuclear sites and was only the first step of many needed to resolve the crisis. But it was a step in the right direction. And it's safe to assume deep sighs of relief were heard in the Pentagon as well as in Seoul.

Did Billy Graham help bring it about and thus help avert another war on the Korean peninsula?

Realism would suggest intensive behind-the-scenes diplomacy and the escalating threat of harsh economic sanctions or the use of force -- not a preacher on visitation -- brought North Korea around.

Graham himself stressed that he went not as a diplomat or politician but as a private citizen and a Christian.

"One of my reasons for going at this time was to express my concern for peace in the region and to make whatever small contribution I could to better relations between our two nations," he said during a post-trip press conference in Hong Kong. "I do not pretend to know the exact formula for solving the present tensions."

Still, the Wall Street Journal observed in an editorial, it is "notable that Mr. Kim would use a man of God to convey a message to President Clinton." Kim could have chosen any number of other world leaders, diplomats or third governments through which to communicate.

While in North Korea, Graham once again was allowed to preach. He also lectured students and teachers at Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang, spoke to 1,000 people at the Great People's Study House (North Korea's version of the Library of Congress) and was interviewed on national television.

He spoke of how Christians -- currently a tiny, tightly controlled community in North Korea -- make good citizens who help change society for the better as they are changed within by Christ.

"I was especially pleased to preach in a new church which has been completed recently on the site of the church which President Kim's mother attended," Graham said. "He told me she took him to this church as a boy."

The new church is only the third officially sanctioned church in the entire country. All of them are in Pyongyang, and some North Korea watchers believe the churches hold services only when foreign dignitaries come to town.

Graham was criticized several years ago for preaching in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe before communism there collapsed. Critics charged that his visits played into the hands of repressive regimes wanting to appear tolerant. The same charge can be made about his pilgrimages to North Korea and his friendship with Kim Il Sung.

"Yet Billy Graham has a way of touching the hearts of men and women everywhere," concluded the Wall Street Journal.

"If he can touch the heart of one reclusive old atheist communist who once listened to the Word of God with his mother, the world will be better for it."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

North Korean situation  
emerges in bits, pieces

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press  
2/22/94

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Information from a society as closed as North Korea's emerges in bits and pieces.

The following are a few such fragments, as reported by a Christian expert on North Korea:

-- Hunger is increasing in the countryside because of antiquated agricultural methods, mismanagement, bad weather, poor harvests and the loss of preferential economic treatment from Russia and China.

Pyongyang, the capital, "is a showcase city and people there are generally better fed," said the expert. "But you get out of Pyongyang and there is a great deal of near-famine."

A recent North Korean defector told news reporters people in some areas were eating boiled animal feed with corn and beans mixed in. "That is more than poverty," the expert said.

-- Persistent reports of demonstrations and unrest in some areas are at least partially true. But the unrest probably results from growing hunger, not a drive for freedom. "North Korean people have been without freedom so long, I think they've forgotten what freedom is," said the observer. "All they know is a controlled society."

-- The few open churches remain tightly controlled, but secret house churches continue to meet and multiply, "some back up in the mountain valleys, some in the larger cities."

At least 30,000 Christians and perhaps as many as 1.5 million live in North Korea, one Korean-American Christian estimated last year. Another count estimated Christians number about 200,000 -- or 1 percent of the population.

-- Bibles are going into North Korea. "It's slow, maybe one or two at a time, but they are going in."

What is now North Korea was once the heart of Korean Christianity. Pyongyang was known as "the Jerusalem of the East."

But Christianity was suppressed there after Korea divided and communists took over following World War II. Many believers fled south, died under persecution or were killed during the Korean War.

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Speakers say Christian impact  
tied to breaking racial walls

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
2/22/94

DALLAS (BP)--When it comes to eliminating gangs, drugs and violent crime, the church doesn't have a prayer until Christians of every race and ethnicity unit in love, according to speakers at a multi-ethnic gathering in Dallas on Feb. 15.

About 100 people representing several predominantly black Baptist conventions, state and regional Korean Baptist fellowships, African Baptist churches in Texas, the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Convention of Texas participated in the banquet.

"If the church does not get together, we will not do very much to solve the problems in our communities," said James W. Culp, director of the BGCT black church relations department, who presided at the meeting.

Anyone who dares to bear the name of Christ must live in the loving spirit of Christ, according to keynote speaker Jerold McBride, BGCT president and pastor of First Baptist Church in San Angelo.

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"We do not speak for Christ until we say, 'Whosoever will may come' without economic requirements, without cultural requirements, without racial requirements, without any kind of requirements," McBride said.

The church benefits from a diversity of gifts, talents, temperaments and cultural backgrounds, McBride said. "A church with plenty of room does not try to compress everyone into the same mold," he said. "May God increase our brotherhood until we love each other beyond our differences."

Relationships formed at the Dallas gathering -- the first of a proposed series of multi-ethnic meetings around the state -- could be the starting place for greater racial understanding, several speakers noted.

"Coming together like this as the family of God shows that we can celebrate our diversity without devaluing our differences," said Howard E. Anderson, vice president of the Black Baptist Fellowship of Texas of the BGCT and pastor of Singing Hills Baptist Church in Dallas.

Hyo Young Kim, president of the Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas and pastor of Saebit Korean Baptist Church in Hurst, Texas, said the gathering was an answer to prayer.

God's people must live as one, said Rudy Sanchez, president of the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Houston.

"We must be a unified body in the eyes of God, the world, our children and our children's children," Sanchez said.

Noting the many cultures represented at the meeting, James Semple, director of the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission, compared it to the picture of heaven presented in Revelation with "all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" gathered before God's throne.

"This is a little bit of what heaven will be like," Semple said. "We must begin in the household of God to love one another."

S.M. Wright, president of the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Texas, first vice president of the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America and pastor of Peoples Baptist Church in Dallas challenged longtime friends at the banquet to work and pray for a time when all of the black Texas Baptist groups could meet together with the BGCT, a challenge Culp accepted.

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Preach sermons as stories,  
Miller tells seminarians      By Jon Walker & Sheri Paris

Baptist Press  
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--It is our deeply rooted need for conclusions that makes the use of sermons as stories so important, said author Calvin Miller, speaking at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary as part of the Theodore F. Adams Lectures on preaching and the pastoral ministry.

"There is something in us that resents the unfinished novels and symphonies of life," Miller, professor of communications and ministry studies and writer-in-residence at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said at the Wake Forest, N.C., campus Feb. 15-16. "We all want settled conclusions to the critical issues of our lives. We want stories and certainly sermons to end with recognizable conclusions of hope and joy."

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the one great "non-fiction epic" that offers a conclusion of hope, Miller noted, adding many preachers tilt too far toward an exegesis-precept approach in their sermons when they need to balance them with stories.

"You cannot be a precept person or a storyteller alone," Miller said. "Those things go together."

Miller said preachers "are the storymakers of hope" who speak to the "ultimate desperation" of our time by telling the story of Jesus Christ.

"The greatest blessing we can give is the guarantee that the future will be there and it is a place of hope," Miller said.

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