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Chuck Colson ready to meet  
with document's critics

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Chuck Colson, the Southern Baptist who help spearhead the recent historic and controversial document on evangelical and Roman Catholic relations, says he would like to meet with Southern Baptist Convention leaders, including representatives of the Foreign Mission Board, who have voiced concerns about certain parts of the statement.

He said in an interview with Baptist Press he erred by not circulating the document, titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," more widely before it was released in March during the week before Easter.

In a face-to-face meeting with the document's critics, especially those at the Foreign Mission Board, Colson said he believes he could lay to rest any lingering concerns and questions about the document's intent and wording.

He said he would work on arranging such a meeting when he returns in a couple of weeks from a trip overseas. Colson's suggestion about a meeting with critics was greeted warmly by Don Kammerdiener, FMB executive vice president and one of th first to voice concerns about certain passages in the document.

"I would be delighted to meet with Mr. Colson," said Kammerdiener. "I'm willing to talk to anybody. I have not had any plans to pursue the issue further."

Larry Lewis, president of the SBC Home Mission Board and one of the signers of the document, said he has received a few comments both pro and con but not what he considers to be a significant number of either.

Lewis said he would "welcome the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings stemming from the document."

SBC Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land, who also signed the docum nt, was out of the country and unavailable for comment but has indicated in press statements earlier that he believes the document has been misinterpreted in some places and that open discussion about it would clear up lingering confusion.

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When the document was released, Kammerdiener said he felt the document's evangelical signers gave up "a great deal."

Later, the Foreign Mission Board issued a news story quoting Hispanic Southern Baptist leaders and Latin American missionaries expressing various concerns about the document.

Colson, a former Nixon White House staffer and Watergate figure who now heads Prison Fellowship, an international Christian ministry, said the document represents the fruit of committed people who are disturbed by anti-Christian attitudes in the culture and who want to work together for the common good.

"We don't give up anything on the mission field that we don't gain," Colson said. "We gain a great deal."

Colson, Lewis and Land have all said the document has been misrepresented as restricting evangelicals from witnessing to all people. It does not in any way restrict Christian witness to nominal Christians, they said.

Said Colson, "We would respect the community allegiance of others, but we would not be restricted at all in presenting the gospel to people who are nominal members of a Christian church."

He said the document's evangelical critics have overlooked how much the Catholics conceded in the document.

"Our folks ought to know that in the working out of this language, we were asking some significant concessions from Catholics," he said. Among those concessions was a recognition that it is an error to call Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God and other conservative Protestant groups "sects."

"This document is saying Catholics ought not do that to us," he said. "At the same time, this document is saying that we ought not to say to Catholics that 'just because you are Catholic you can't be a Christian.'"

"You have to remember that in most of these Catholic countries the Catholic church is saying that we are nothing but cults."

Another significant concession was on religious liberty, he said. He pointed out the document says Catholics today are committed to religious freedom. That portion of the document calls for religious freedom worldwide: "Where Evangelicals and Catholics are in severe and sometimes violent conflict, such as parts of Latin America, we urge Christians to embrace and act upon the imperative of religious freedom. Religious freedom will not be respected by the state if it is not respected by Christians or, even worse, if Christians attempt to recruit the state in repressing religious freedom."

Colson urged the document's critics to view the document for what it says, not for what they think it says.

It is not a theological treatise, he said. It is also not an ecumenical document, he said. He described it as a working paper for Christians living in and concerned about a hostile anti-Christian culture.

"This is a post-Christian era," he said. "We are at one of those critical points in history where Christians from different churches have to say, 'We have to make common cause . . . We have to take a united stand with all those who confess Christ as Lord, with all those who believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture, with all those who are conservative and orthodox in theology.'"

He said secularism and "the general philosophical attitude of American life today is hostile to the Christian truth."

Colson said criticisms of the document have focused mostly around three points:

- 1) The discussion about justification by faith.

"When we talk about justification by faith, some people are concerned that the word 'alone' is not used," he said. "We clearly said in the statement that we will use phrases that mean one thing to us and the Catholics will use the same phrases that mean something different to them."

He said the word "alone" was not used because it was understood by the evangelicals and "we saw no point to raising that as a contentious issue."

- 2) References to full conversion.

"The moment at which you surrender to Christ and God works in your life, you are at that point regenerated. You are awakened from being dead in your sins and trespasses to a new life in Christ," said Colson. "But conversion is a lifelong process. I don't think we're fully converted until we're fully sanctified, which only comes when we're glorified (at death). I just don't think we're going to be fully sanctified in this life."

3) Evangelism among nominal Christians, meaning people who wear a label of a denomination but don't participate in a church fully.

"If I were on the foreign mission field, I would not want leaders saying something that I thought would in any way prevent me from doing the work of evangelism and bringing people to Christ," Colson said. "Never was there any intent on our part to prevent that at all. But there is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and proselytizing. I don't think any Baptist would want to condone recruiting people from another church community simply for the purposes of denominational aggrandizement."

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**Baptist workers in Gaza  
observe self-rule euphoria**

**By Marty Croll**

**Baptist Press  
5/18/94**

GAZA (BP)--Southern Baptist surgeon Dean Fitzgerald woke up about 2 a.m. May 18 to the sounds of intense gunfire at an army base a block away thinking about the casualties he'd see at the hospital the next morning.

But his fears abated after a careful peek out his bedroom window revealed crowds of people standing, not hunkering down, in the streets below. What he saw was strange for this bleak, barren, violently contested strip of land between Israel and Egypt.

Only days before, Palestinian agitators had tangled at the base with Israeli forces. This time Palestinian police were firing joy shots into the air.

Fitzgerald saw Palestinians raise their flag on the Majlis, an old senate building inside the base Israeli soldiers started using after they set up their occupation government in 1967. He also watched them blast Roman candles high into the air.

The Majlis and another government installation, the Jawazaat, were the last bases vacated by Israeli forces as Palestinian police began setting up shop in Gaza under a self-rule pact signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization May 4.

"It's like a carnival here," said Southern Baptist worker Paul Lawrence of Leeds, Ala. "There aren't any rides or cotton candy, but that's what the mood is."

Lawrence was among those in crowd around the Majlis, only about 50 yards from his house. The noise woke up the entire family -- his wife, Harriet, of Birmingham, Ala.; Bonnie, 14; Ben, 12; and himself. They got dressed and went out to see what was happening.

As the last Israelis left, happy Palestinians entered the building and walked around, he said. Some climbed on the roof and put up the red, black, green and white Palestinian flag.

"It's kind of like watching a baby being born," said Fitzgerald, of Tulsa, Okla. "We're here at the birth, but who knows what kind of kid it's going to be? But now he's alive and crying."

The Southern Baptist team in Gaza started dwindling after Palestinian extremists launched an uprising against Israeli occupation forces in 1987. Last June the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board leased its nursing school to the United Nations. The school, and earlier a hospital, were a focus of Baptist work in Gaza for more than 40 years, but the flow of personnel to Gaza had slowed to a trickle.

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Southern Baptist workers say they can't predict what long-term effects the end of Israeli occupation might have on work with the Palestinians. But for now, they are hopeful. The Baptist church in Gaza also seems infused with a new wave of hope. Members are starting to talk excitedly about future growth, Fitzgerald said.

"I guess the Holy Spirit is moving," he said. "We've been praying for this for a long time."

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Groups seek scrutiny of Breyer  
on church-state issues, abortion By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Stephen Breyer's limited judicial record on abortion and church-state issues has prompted some specialists in those arenas to call for close scrutiny by the Senate Judiciary Committee of the new nominee to the Supreme Court.

Thirty-seven days after Associate Justice Harry Blackmun announced his retirement, President Bill Clinton named Breyer as his choice. Breyer has served since 1981 on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

Breyer's involvement in no more than four church-state cases caused Americans United for Separation of Church and State to express concern.

"Nominees for the Supreme Court must have a clear understanding of the importance of religious freedom and its constitutional corollary, separation of church and state," said A.U. Executive Director Barry Lynn in a prepared statement.

"The cases that we have uncovered are several years old and deal with somewhat narrow questions. Without a clear court trail to follow, the only way we will learn where Judge Breyer stands on church-state controversies is if the Judiciary Committee does its job properly through appropriate questioning."

The judge's participation in only two abortion rulings also elicited some anxiety, this time from abortion rights advocates.

In 1990, Breyer joined in a majority opinion overturning pro-life regulations which restricted abortion counseling and referral in federally funded family planning clinics. He sent a confusing signal in a 1989 decision in which he did not vote to strike down a law requiring the consent of both parents before a minor could have an abortion.

"We have questions about his views on reproductive freedom," said People for the American Way President Arthur Kropp in a prepared statement.

Breyer's position on the parental consent law "is cause for concern," said National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League President Kate Michelman in a written statement. "Judge Breyer has few rulings on reproductive rights, and we urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to fully explore his views on privacy, women's equality and reproductive rights.

Some pro-lifers had no questions about his support for abortion as a right, however.

"President Clinton has again demonstrated that he is the political captive of pro-abortion special interest groups," said Doug Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, in a written statement. "From press accounts, it appears that groups such as NARAL lobbied against Richard Arnold and Jose Cabranes because they had not actually demonstrated such extreme pro-abortion mindsets as has Breyer."

Arnold, a judge on the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the Eighth District, and Cabranes, a U.S. district judge in Connecticut, were mentioned as candidates for the vacancy.

"Judge Breyer will pass the liberal litmus test on abortion rights, but at least he is on record supporting the right of parents to be involved in their teen-age daughter's abortion decision," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

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"We find some consolation in his reputation for judicial restraint rather than activism. He sees the judge's role as interpreting the law, not making new law. This would be in stark contrast to his predecessor, Justice Blackmun, who is the most activist justice on the current court," Whitehead said.

Blackmun authored the 1973 Roe v. Wade opinion legalizing abortion.

Americans United cited Breyer's involvement in three church-state cases:

-- In *Members of the Jamestown School Committee v. Schmidt* (1983), he concurred with the majority in upholding a Rhode Island law permitting inter-district transportation for parochial school students.

-- In *New Life Baptist Church Academy v. Town of East Longmeadow* (1989), Breyer wrote a majority opinion finding Massachusetts town officials had the right to approve private school curricula.

-- In *Grace Bible Fellowship v. Maine School Administrative District #5* (1991), he joined the majority in ruling a public school must rent its facility to a church outside school hours because other groups had been allowed to use the building.

Though he is hesitant to "generalize too quickly ... from such a small sample," Brent Walker of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs said Breyer's opinions seem to be faithful to the compelling state interest test in free exercise cases and to the Lemon test in establishment clause cases.

In a written statement, Walker, the BJC's general counsel, said he would describe Breyer "as a balanced separationist who seems willing to enforce both religion clauses in a way that takes into account the impact that judicial decisions have on ordinary individuals."

Th CLC's Whitehead, however, said Breyer's record provides encouragement he may not be a strict separationist.

"We find some reason in his record to hope that he might be less sour toward religious accommodation in public life than are supporters of the Lemon test," Whitehead said. "If he just interprets the religion clauses instead of inventing new barriers, religious freedom as intended by the framers will benefit."

The BJC supports the Lemon test as an appropriate standard in separation of church and state cases. The CLC describes Lemon as hostile to religion and seeks to have it replaced with a test providing for accommodation of religious expression without establishing religion.

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**Preacher dies after urging  
people to 'get right with God' By Robert O'Brien**

**Baptist Press  
5/18/94**

HARARE, Zimbabwe (BP)--Abel Nziramasanga preached a message urging people to prepare to meet God -- then died.

The African Baptist preacher's invitation at the close of the May 15 worship service to "get right with God" motivated 50 university students and many others to come forward to respond.

Shortly after finishing the sermon at Harare Baptist Church in Zimbabwe, Nziramasanga welcomed those who came forward, shook hands with his deacons, walked out the back door and fell a short distance away.

People in the choir saw him through a window and ran to help. He was dead by the time Southern Baptist missionary Evelyn Moss got him to the hospital.

Nziramasanga, 69, retired in 1992 as pastor of the Harare church, where he had served 33 years. He was general secretary of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe when he died. He also was one of the first pastors Southern Baptist missionaries worked with when they opened mission work in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in 1950.

Moss described the veteran pastor's final day this way:

"He seemed stronger than I had seen him in weeks; his voice was strong. He had a beautiful smile on his face as he walked down the aisle to the pulpit. He said his message would be short (and that) ... he was all 'full up' himself because he and the Lord had been talking from 2 a.m. until 7 a.m.

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"His message was about the Holy Spirit and his text was John 16:8-9. He said his work was done and that the Lord wanted him to tell his people that he (Nziramasa) and the Lord were OK in their relationship -- and to ask if the people at Harare were ready to meet God.

"The Spirit was very evident. People said they had never heard him preach that way before. There was a glow about him."

Baptist leaders in Zimbabwe have extolled Nziramasa as the "father" of Baptist development in Zimbabwe, including the Harare church and its mission congregations, the Baptist convention, youth work and many other ministries, Moss said.

"Some called him an old horse, but he was an old horse who was ahead of us," one pastor commented.

Apparently, he also was ahead of them in knowing the end was near. In the days before his death, Nziramasa had systematically gone about getting convention business in order while commenting that his time was short, Moss said.

The morning he preached, he borrowed a ball-point pen from church member Stanley Kandulo before the service to write some notes.

"This is the last thing I will write," he told Kandulo, handing back the pen. "Just remember it."

Since his death, which electrified the community, more than 200 people have attended worship services led by local pastors each night in the Nziramasa home. The services were to continue until his funeral May 21 at Harare Baptist Church, which was to include a sermon by Carroll Shaw, a former Southern Baptist missionary to Zimbabwe now assigned to South Africa.

That's the African Christian's way to grieve, Moss said: to surround a family with song, prayer, testimony, remembrance of life and the joy of the Christian faith -- not despair over death.

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She discovered God is best  
at counseling, inner healing

By Luana Ehrlich

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

MINDEN, Nev. (BP)--"I wanted so desperately to be happy," confesses Stephany Fessler.

"But I couldn't find happiness," she says as she describes her 19 years of drug addiction.

To escape the sexual and alcohol abuse she suffered in her dysfunctional family, Stephany began abusing drugs in her early teen years and got married at 18. "I had intentionally gotten pregnant," she explains, "but the marriage was over within a year."

In order to care for her son, Shawn, and to support her drug habit, Stephany worked as a secretary during the day and as a bartender at night. "It got to the point where I couldn't wake up in the morning without drugs," Stephany remembers, "and I was suicidal most of the time." Stephany went to counselors and spent thousands of dollars on therapy, but she continued her destructive lifestyle.

One day one of her girlfriends with whom she used to do drugs surprised her. "All of a sudden, she started talking about this man named Jesus. She quit doing drugs," Stephanie says, "and became really involved in church."

Stephany started going with her to a church in Ridgecrest, Calif., but it caused her to remember incidents from her childhood when she had gone to Sunday school and the kids laughed when she was asked to read the Bible aloud. She equated church with her childhood memories of humiliation and abuse.

"I just never felt like I could measure up," she explains. "I wasn't able to get off the drugs, so I quit going to church."

However, during the years that followed, Stephany maintains, "I was always searching for God. I would sit at home and cry because I wanted to go to church so badly. I knew something was missing, but I didn't feel I could trust them there."

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Stephany married Harold Fessler in 1986 and moved to Gardnerville, Nev. She was looking forward to a new life with her husband, but the pressures of having a blended family of five children and dealing with her own inadequacies caused her to overdose on drugs.

But even while she lay dying, she felt God reaching out to her. "When I overdosed, right before I went under, God showed me the gates of hell, and I heard him say, 'Stephany, this is where you're going.'"

That incident caused her to check into a drug treatment center for drugs and alcohol abuse. As a follow-up to her treatment, she became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, in which she was able to stay off drugs and alcohol. But she says she continued to search for more meaning to her life. "I kept asking myself, is this what life is all about?"

During a crisis in her relationship with her son, Stephany agreed to visit First Baptist Church of Minden where her best friend, Sheryl Wilson, had been attending. "I reluctantly agreed to go with her," she remembers. As she listened to pastor Larry Dailey, her heart was troubled and she couldn't wait to go home.

But: "The Lord talked to me throughout that week. I realized that my best efforts had only gotten me to the point where my own son hated me. I didn't know it at the time, but I was reaching out to God for help."

Dailey and his wife, Chris, visited in Stephany's home following her visit to the church. She was distrustful of them at first, but she says, "It was so evident that they were sincere. They weren't phony."

Stephany continued attending First Baptist and, one Sunday in July 1993, during the singing of the invitational hymn, she walked down the aisle and gave her heart to the Lord. She believes her willingness to make this commitment was partly due to what she continually heard from Dailey's preaching and from the Bible study classes she had been attending.

"I realized salvation was all about knowing the Father intimately. It's not about a head knowledge; it's the heart. That's where change happens in our lives. It's an intimate relationship."

Within two months of her salvation, Stephany's husband, Harold, also was saved. "My husband was so astounded at the change in me," Stephany relates, "that he started going to church. Now there's tremendous healing going on within our family."

Recounting the changes in her life over the past year, Stephany says: "I had been in therapy since I was 15 years old and I had spent thousands and thousands of dollars on counseling and, while it had helped me in some ways, without a doubt the work the Lord has done in healing me from my drug and sexual abuse has been profound. The Lord is the best counselor. He's the only one who could heal me."

Stephany sees tremendous changes in Harold who had been a Catholic. "The things he used to think were important just aren't anymore. He gets so excited when he gets to witness to someone on his construction job. He's always talking about what the Lord is doing in our lives.

"I feel a direction in my life," Stephany says, "and I feel good about who I am in him today. I've never felt this way before. For the first time in my life I have a purpose. This is what life is all about."

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Ehrlich is a free-lance writer in Santa Fe, N.M.

Church members shed agendas  
to experience God's agenda

By Luana Ehrlich

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

MINDEN, Nev. (BP)--"They just can't keep their mouths shut," Larry Dailey observes. "They have to tell theirs." Dailey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Minden, Nev., is describing the enthusiasm of his congregation for sharing the gospel in their community.

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This wasn't always the case. In fact, when Dailey came to the church in December 1991, the membership numbered only 35, with less than half that number attending Sunday school on a regular basis.

At the time, according to Dailey, the people had such an angry spirit among them he had to dismiss his first business meeting because of the cruel and vicious words they were hurling at each other. Today, however, Larry notes, "there is a tremendous unity of the body." In addition, 57 people have been baptized and the church has more than 200 people attending two Sunday morning worship services.

What brought about the numerical and spiritual growth in such a short time? Four months after Larry arrived at the church, he invited 10 of his members to join him in a 13-week course called "Experiencing God."

Dailey had been introduced to the study while a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas. The principles set forth by the author, Henry Blackaby, had such an impact on his life that when his wife, Chris, saw how he was relating to God she realized she had never made a personal commitment to follow Christ, and she was saved.

As Dailey began to take this core group through the study, he remembers, "It began to change their lives. These were not new Christians. In fact, some of these members had been in church for over 30 years. It changed their concept of who God is and what he wants. It showed them that God is much more interested in their character than in what kind of work they can do for him."

Once the initial group had completed the first cycle, five of them began to teach several other groups. Now, after two years, more than 70 people have completed Experiencing God. "As a result," Larry explains, "they are the ones bringing people into the church. The body of Christ is bringing people in and sharing the gospel."

Changes also can be seen in the organization and operation of the church. Larry remarks, "People don't have their own agenda anymore. They want the Father's agenda. They want to see what he's doing. We allow the Father to fill positions instead of us trying to put someone in a position. We wait and ask the Father, and he honors people waiting on his will."

The church recently has voted to add a second staff member and has purchased property on which to build a new building. Dailey says he will continue to use Experiencing God, but he notes, "Experiencing God is not magical or mystical. It is simply a tool God has given us. Experiencing God has taught us that we can have a loving, intimate relationship with the Father if we just spend time with him every day."

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Churches advised to be aware  
of competing yellow pages By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press  
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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Churches should pay careful attention to their yellow pages billing to be sure they are advertising in the telephone directory of their choice, according to a church staffer who reported that competing directories led to confusion on just where their telephone number will appear.

R. Clay Moore, minister of music and youth at First Baptist Church in Senatobia, Miss., said he thought his church was committing to purchase a \$196 listing in the local South Central Bell yellow pages, only to discover later the church had bought a listing with an out-of-state yellow pages organization with no connection to the local telephone company.

Bill Dawson, district manager for South Central Bell in Jackson, Miss., said there are many competitive directories across the country and, while the telephone company cannot trademark the generic yellow pages name or logo, it has gotten rights to the name, "The Real Yellow Pages™" and a specific version of the "walking fingers" logo.

Dawson cautioned customers in the yellow pages market to understand exactly what they are buying.

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"Our customers will never get a separate bill for yellow pages listings. The charge is simply a line item on the regular service bill, so if you get a separate bill, you need to check it out," he said.

Customers can call the telephone company district manager's number listed in the front of their telephone book if they have questions, he added.

Moore said the church realized what had happened in time to buy a yellow pages listing in the local telephone company directory, but he was not happy that the church was obligated to pay for two competing listings.

He said he talked with a number of churches and businessmen who also believed they were paying for a yellow pages listing in their local telephone company directory.

"We are all partly to blame for not reading the small print but, as subject as this is to be misread, it's no wonder," Moore pointed out.

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Dan Quayle to autograph  
at SBC and Baptist stores

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Former Vice President Dan Quayle will autograph his newly published book, "Standing Firm," at the Southern Baptist Convention bookstore and at two other Baptist Sunday School Board-operated Baptist Book Stores in June.

The visits are among the stops on Quayle's national tour to promote his vice-presidential memoirs, published by Zondervan.

His first appearance is planned at the Birmingham (Ala.) Baptist Book Store June 1, where he will autograph books for store patrons.

June 14, he will sign books in the bookstore, following an 11 a.m. news conference, during the first day of the SBC meeting in Orlando, Fla.

In Charlotte, N.C., he will meet Baptist Book Store customers and autograph books June 16 at a time yet to be determined.

Due to anticipated response, books will be inscribed only with Quayle's autograph and cannot be personalized with specific recipient names or messages. People who plan to attend signings should confirm the time and parking provisions with the local stores.

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Zambian military chaplain  
decided to start at the top

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

ATLANTA (BP)--When Green Ngwira became Zambia's first military chaplain, he started at the top.

Assigned to all branches of the service, Ngwira didn't know where to begin until he sensed God telling him to start with the highest-ranking officials. Now Zambia's military commander is a Christian, and the chief of staff is Ngwira's weekly prayer partner.

In 1991, the Zambia president issued a formal declaration making Zambia a Christian country. However, Ngwira said, "In my childhood I didn't know the God we worship now, but I knew there had to be a god somewhere."

In 1970, Ngwira joined Zambia's army. He and his wife became Christians through the influence of home Bible studies and prayer meetings at the base.

Eventually Ngwira felt God calling him to full-time ministry, but he said he was too shy to preach. As the possibility of a military chaplain developed, Ngwira applied for a study leave to attend the Baptist seminary in Zambia.

Attending seminary was a financial sacrifice. At the time his wife was pregnant with their seventh child and he would not receive his full military pay while he was on study leave.

The study leave was approved, and "the Lord provided" for the family while Ngwira was in seminary, he said.

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Ngwira returned to the military as a full-time chaplain in January of 1990. Zambia now has another military chaplain and two chaplain assistants.

Ngwira came to the United States last December to attend the army chaplains school at Fort Monmouth, N.J. Ngwira graduated April 1 and spent a month with the chaplains division of the Home Mission Board. In Zambia, Ngwira said he hopes to recruit more people for chaplaincy and offer them basic training.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

**Missionary shot in robbery  
now recovering in Houston**

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
5/18/94

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Gary Crowell, who was shot and robbed in Peru in March, is undergoing physical therapy in Houston after surgery to repair nerve damage to his left elbow.

Crowell has partial numbness in that arm and some difficulty using his left hand, but recovery from most of the damage is expected within a year. The nerve in his left elbow was partly severed when a bullet passed through the arm. Crowell also suffered a severed femoral artery when a bullet passed through his left thigh.

Two armed men dressed in business attire robbed and shot Crowell March 18 when he was returning from the bank to his office in Lima, Peru's capital. Crowell, from Denison, Texas, is treasurer for the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Peru. Colleagues who heard the shots rushed Crowell to the nearest hospital, where he had emergency surgery to repair the artery.

Crowell lost so much blood that a surgeon told him later: "You would have been history if you had arrived (at the hospital) 10 minutes later."

In the weeks after the ordeal, "We felt God's arms around us time after time," said Crowell.

Crowell, who underwent three surgeries in five days at a Peruvian Air Force hospital in Lima, has been on medical leave since April 7 in Houston. Surgeons at The Methodist Hospital there grafted a nerve from his left arm April 14 to replace the damaged nerve in his left elbow.

Crowell and his family hope to return to Peru in late June. "That's our desire and our prayer," he said.

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**Convention preacher not  
a messenger this year**

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OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--For the first time in veteran SBC observers' memory, the annual sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention will be preached by a pastor whose church cannot send messengers to the annual meeting.

Bobby Boyles was pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, Okla., last year when the Committee on Order of Business nominated him as the 1994 convention sermon preacher. The committee was chaired by the Moore church's associate pastor, Fred Powell.

Since that time, Boyles resigned at the Moore church. In February, he started Eagle Heights Church, a Southern Baptist Fellowship, which meets temporarily on south Western Avenue in Oklahoma City.

SBC registration secretary Lee Porter has pointed out a church which sends messengers must, in the previous SBC year (Sept. 30, 1992, to Oct. 1, 1993), have been a bona fide contributor to the work of the SBC.

New churches and new missions organized after Oct. 1, 1993, will have to wait until next year (1995) to send messengers, Porter said.

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Eagle Heights has petitioned Capital Baptist Association for membership and is contributing to the association and also through the Cooperative Program by sending money to the state convention.

However, according to Porter, neither Eagle Heights members nor Boyles may register as messengers to this year's meeting.

A spokesman for the SBC Historical Commission in Nashville said that bylaw 23 of the SBC constitution lists no qualifications or requirements for the preacher of the annual sermon.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Following are two names to add to the Teller's Committee for the 1994 SBC annual meeting: Bruce Hancock of Camden, S.C.; Randy Carson of San Luisobispo, Calif.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The original artist's files on the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention logo is available on Clip Art Library Section of SBCNet. The logo is available in EPS and Tif formats.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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