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"Christian Communism" Growing In Italy, Baptist Pastor Says

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BISACCIA, Italy (BP)--Sitting at his desk in the front of his three-room dwelling, Donato Castelluccio could have been a small town philosopher discussing ideas with his followers gathered about him.

Several local young men--they had just come in to chat--propped their feet near the edge of the round metal brazier, providing the only heat in the room chilled by the fog and snow of the hill country 100 miles east of Naples, Italy.

"The best way to combat communism is to apply communism," the 62-year-old Baptist pastor told the young men.

Asked to explain what he meant, Castelluccio replied that militant, atheistic communism could best be combatted by applying a first century Christian commune-ism.

Apparently, growing numbers of Italians agree. Castelluccio observed that many Protestants and Catholics in Italy are becoming "Christian communists."

Of the 9 million reported Communists in Italy, about two-thirds are Roman Catholic believers, he said.

A few months ago, European Baptist Press Service reported that a Baptist minister on the Italian Island of Sardinia had given up his pastorate to serve as mayor of the town of San Vito. He had campaigned for the office in an effort to bring about social reform to help the people, organizing a new political party called the "Independent Communists for the Development of San Vito."

Here in Bisaccia in southern Italy, as much as 99 per cent of the audience of the church where Castelluccio preaches has been Communist, the pastor said.

Born here, Castelluccio has watched the population dwindle from 10,000 to 6,000 residents, many of them either unemployed or earning little money. As thousands of men have left southern Italy to find work in Switzerland and West Germany, so has interest increased in leftist political parties.

Castelluccio said he believed Christians should share their means with the less fortunate. "To me," he said, "a Christian who does not implement his faith is a practical atheist."

He alluded to the teaching of Christ in Matthew 25 when he asked, "How can you call yourself a Christian if you fail to minister to the least of these?"

The pastor added that "communism" in Italy may mean something different than it does elsewhere. It appeared his definition could include what in other Western lands is called "socialism," being "anti-establishment," or even "a war against poverty and injustice."

Yet, there are some Christian Communists in Italy with Marxist views. Some have been evicted from the Catholic Church for their Communist leanings, although many of the reported 6 million Communists who are professed Catholics still regularly attend mass, he said.

One committee of "Comunism Cristiano," a political movement, distributed election posters promising to offer a government that is "modern, democratic, forward-looking, popular, progressive, and open to all aspects of the oppressed and exploited."

There is still another, conservative group of Christians who consider it wrong to link communism with Christianity.

The pastor said he thought some Italian Christians have identified themselves with the name communism simply because "socialism" to them was not a strong enough word.

Castelluccio, pastor of his home town Baptist church since 1939 (except for two years), does not advocate violence under the communist theory that the end justifies the means. He said he is a pacifist at heart. He recalled once being arrested by the Missolini regime for burning fascist flags.

Though he was critical of militant communism, he still recognized the need for social reform and righting the injustices which communism promises.

A Christian, he said, would not associate himself with militant communism, which used force if necessary to gain its way. Instead, he would hold high the ideal of the golden rule "to do to others as you want them to do to you."

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Swedish Missionary To Congo
Dies Preaching On Eternity

2/2/71

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (BP)-- "The question of eternal life is the most important question we can raise...."

The voice of the retired pioneer Swedish Baptist missionary to the Congo tapered off, and he suddenly collapsed behind the pulpit where he was ~~delivering~~ a missionary message.

A few minutes later, a physician pronounced Eric Bylin, 66, dead.

Bylin left behind him a remarkable missionary career, according to Erik Ruden here, general secretary of the Swedish Baptist Union.

At age 62, Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden, conferred on him the doctor of philosophy degree. Bylin wrote his dissertation on cultural and folks ways in the Congo.

Ruden hailed him as a preacher, scholar, dentist and evangelist. Bylin served as a Swedish Baptist missionary to the Congo from 1934 to 1969. He had studied at the Swedish Baptist seminary here, followed by a year in Spurgeon's College (Baptist), London.

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Oxford School Names White
Principal to Succeed Davies

2/2/71

OXFORD, England (BP)--Regent's Park College here, a Baptist school that is part of the Oxford University system, has named a 37-year-old church history lecturer as its new principal.

Barrie White, a fellow and lecturer at Regent's Park College, will succeed G. Henton Davies who is retiring as principal in the summer of 1972. Davies is author of the Genesis section of Volume I of the Broadman Bible Commentary published in the U.S.A.

According to a report in European Baptist Press Service, White was asked last year to become professor of church history at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., effective in 1972, and White had accepted on the condition that he could remain in Britain if he were invited to succeed Davies as principal at Regent's Park.

The Southern Baptist operated seminary agreed to this stipulation, according to the European Baptist Press Service report, and Southeastern Seminary honored White's commitment to Regent's Park.

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**'Understanding Heart' Needed
In World Affairs, Nixon Says**

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard Nixon, speaking to 3,000 persons at the annual National Prayer Breakfast here, asked God for "an understanding heart" for himself and other persons in positions of world leadership.

The President of the United States, always the guest of honor at these annual prayer meetings, was joined by a host of prominent government officials, religious leaders, business and professional persons and diplomats from more than 100 countries. Southern Baptist Evangelist Billy Graham was among the persons at the head table with President and Mrs. Nixon.

Mr. Nixon said that in thinking of a prayer to use in his remarks to the group his mind turned to the Old Testament story of King Solomon's request for "an understanding heart" to rule best his people.

"Let us have an understanding heart in our relations with other nations, an understanding heart in our relationships between races and religions, parties and generation, and in our relations with each other," the President urged.

Mr. Nixon made his plea for "understanding" as he described what he wants the nation to be when it celebrates its 200th anniversary in 1976.

"We want America to be not just big, not just strong, and not just rich, but a good country in every sense of the word--good at home and good in our relationships with other nations and the world," the President declared.

Before the President spoke, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger cited the 23rd Psalm and prayer as one that gives him personal comfort amid the frustrations and complexities of his work.

The Supreme Court Justice concluded his message, outlining the meaning of the 23rd Psalm, by quoting the passage. He said he preferred to end the Psalm after verse 4 with the promise of God's protection.

The annual prayer breakfast is sponsored by the U.S. Senate and House Prayer Breakfast groups, which meet weekly when Congress is in session.

Graham, in a press conference the day before the prayer breakfast, said he came to Washington for this particular meeting but that he would stay here for two weeks to meet with Senators, Congressmen, presidential assistants and other government leaders. Graham's visit with these groups was arranged by leaders of the prayer breakfast movement.

The purpose of Graham's meetings with government leaders, he explained, is to talk about "the need for spiritual renewal in the country...and the necessity for Christian and moral leadership" in the land.

The new speaker of the House of Representatives, Carl Albert (D., Okla.), voiced the prayer for national leaders at the breakfast. Albert concluded his prayer with the plea that God would "be so close to the leaders of our nation that a golden age of peace will come upon this land."

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**Editorial Urges Finland Baptists
To Merge With Three Other Groups**

2/2/71

VASA, Finland (BP)--Four Swedish-speaking free church denominations in Finland, including the Swedish-Speaking Baptist Union of Finland, should consider forming a united church, an editorial in the Finnish Baptist journal suggested here.

Editor Ernst Jacobson suggested the merger of the Swedish-speaking Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists in Finland. Combined membership of the four groups would be about 7,400. The Baptist group numbers 1,800.

The editor said he saw no theological obstacle to effecting such a merger, but the main difficulty would be the emotional factor, especially among the older generation. Baptist

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youth in Finland already disregard denominational boundaries, he added.

The four church groups involved currently support a joint free church folk high school and are planning to publish a combined newspaper four times during 1971. Their separate journals will continue, but will suspend an issue each time the combined publications are released.

Swedish-speaking citizens of Finland make up less than 10 per cent of Finland's population and reside mostly along the coastline in southern and eastern Finland, according to a report in European Baptist Press Service. There are two Baptist groups in Finland, Swedish-Speaking Baptist Union of Finland, and the (Finnish-speaking) Baptist Union of Finland. The merger proposal was suggested only for the Swedish-speaking Baptists, not the Finnish-language Baptists.

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SBC Foreign Mission Appointments
Drop Compared to 1969 Figures

2/2/71

RICHMOND (BP)--Appointments of Southern Baptists to overseas mission posts in 1970 dropped sharply from a record high in 1969, but the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's total number of missionary personnel reached a new high of 2,501 during 1970.

According to figures released by the SBC Foreign Mission Board's department of missionary personnel, a total of 182 new missionaries were appointed by the board in 1970, compared to 1969's record number of 262 appointments.

The 182 new missionaries, lowest annual total since 1964, included 98 regular missionaries, 18 missionary associates, 64 missionary journeymen and two special project personnel.

These additions brought the total of regular missionaries to 2,211 missionary associates to 165, missionary journeymen to 121, and special project personnel to four.

Noting the small net gain to the missionary force in 1970, Louis R. Cobbs, the board's secretary for missionary personnel, commented on the comparative losses during the year.

Cobbs said that normal rotation of auxiliary personnel including missionary associates, missionary journeymen, and special project personnel, accounted for 71 losses. Missionary associates, for example, serve terms of four years, with the possibility of reappointment to a second term, while missionary journeymen serve for two years before returning home.

Eight missionaries retired, eight died, and 84 resigned. The loss percentage (excluding rotation) was 3.99. Cobbs pointed out that this is well below the 1967 high of 4.30 per cent.

He noted several developments which, in his view, help to explain the drop in missionary appointments last year. To begin with, he said there is usually a fall-off after peak years, and 1969 was a peak year.

Also predictable, Cobbs continued, was the lower number of prospective missionaries being interviewed and processed by several new personnel representatives on his staff. It takes new staff workers a year to get into full swing of their responsibilities, he observed.

An administrative decision to reduce the number of jobs on mission fields to be filled by auxiliary personnel resulted in fewer missionary associates being employed last year than previously, Cobbs added. The board intends to limit auxiliary programs to approximately 10 per cent of the missionary force, he said. About 50 per cent of missionary associates are extending their overseas service, thus making replacements for them unnecessary.

Another development affecting missionary appointments, Cobbs said, is the apparent interest of many seminary graduates in a growing variety of ministries open to them in the states, particularly in urban areas. Most seminarians don't seem to be informed of the variety of challenges for ministries overseas, Cobbs said, particularly in the world's great cities. Urban ministries comprise thrust of newly developing needs for missionaries overseas, he added.

A profile study of the missionaries appointed in 1970 showed that among regular missionaries, the average age of husbands was 32 and of wives, 30. The average regular missionary family had two children. The average single woman was 29 years of age.

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Missionary associates averaged 45 years of age for both husband and wife. Missionary journeymen averaged 23 years of age.

According to Cobbs, the missionaries came from 25 states plus the District of Columbia. Texas led the list with 27, followed by Alabama with 16, Tennessee with 15, Mississippi with 12, and Arkansas, Oklahoma, and South Carolina with 10 each.

Sixty-two of the missionary appointees were graduates of Baptist colleges and universities. Samford led with 11, followed by Baylor with nine, Carson-Newman with seven, Mississippi College and Ouachita Baptist University with five each, and Oklahoma Baptist University with four.

New missionaries were assigned to 29 categories of work, including 46 for general evangelism, 26 for secondary teaching, eight for seminary teaching, six as business managers, 10 as English-language pastors, four physicians and four nurses.

Looking toward 1971 and following, Cobb pointed out that the board's department of missionary personnel is maintaining correspondence with approximately 4,300 young men and women. He said that 2,300 of these are of high school and college age. The remaining 2,000 are in a seminary or graduate school, or they are gaining practical experience.



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