



July 19, 1973

**European Baptist Leaders
Discuss Evangelism Barriers**

By Charles Warren

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Nine prominent European Baptist leaders said in an interview here that evangelism faces unique barriers in their countries.

The men spoke at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center here during a three-week visit to the States.

Traveling under sponsorship of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, they came to study Southern Baptist evangelistic methods and participate in a Home Mission Board-sponsored Witness Involvement Now (WIN) personal evangelism school in Atlanta.

The men expressed a need among European Baptists for better methodology and training in personal evangelism and told of the unique problems which Baptists face in Europe.

Theo Van Der Laan, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of the Netherlands, said, "The major barrier hindering the gospel in the Netherlands is the polarization among Christians.

"In every denominational group you can find extreme liberalism and also conservative fundamentalism. Christians waste time debating among themselves and accomplish nothing," he said.

"The lack of strong evangelistic outreach in our churches stems from fear within the church, not from the resistance from without," said Gunter Weiske, secretary for evangelism for the Baptist Union of Norway and chairman of the European Baptist Federation's evangelism committee.

"Due to lack of training, these hindrances from within are more decisive than those outside the church."

Jose Goncalves, president of the Baptist Convention of Portugal, agreed with Weiske. "Often our own church people see only the difficulties in personal witnessing," he said. "When they try they succeed, but they rarely try."

Another problem shared by most of the European Baptist leaders is that Baptists are often overshadowed by the state church. "The state church, with its privileges, has created an inferiority complex for Baptists," said Weiske.

"Baptist teachers in Finland," said Sam Hogberg, secretary of evangelism for the Swedish-speaking Baptist Union of Finland, "aren't allowed to teach religion, but an atheist can if he has his name registered in the state church."

"We are a minority in a Lutheran country," said Niels Bjerg, pastor of Norresundby Baptist Church in Denmark. "The state church has the economic support of the government and many other privileges. People feel sorry for you if you're a Baptist."

"David Lagergren, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Sweden, reported, "There's a major movement to do away with the state church system in Sweden. If this happens it will be a major advance for Swedish Baptists."

A new trend of turning to Christ by their youth was noted by Andrew MacRae, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland; Joachim Zeiger, secretary of home missions of the German Baptist Union and Lagergren.

Several of the men spoke of the influence of the American "Jesus Movement" on European youth.

"There is something of an awakening among young people in Denmark," said Bjerg. "They are evangelistic. They are aware of the need of God's leadership in their lives."

"Evangelism among young people has been freer and less inhibited than among adults. They have felt the influence of the 'Jesus Movement' in America," added Stanley W. Hall, pastor of Dureham Baptist Church, Norfolk, England.

In spite of the difficulties in Europe, the Baptist leaders spoke of the opportunities and challenges they have.

"You in America think of Europe as a mission field," said MacRae, "and rightly so. But it's a mission field of a very special kind. Europe has had the gospel many times and in many ways, but it needs it afresh.

"There is a post-Christian culture in Europe in which people think they've grown up beyond Christianity," he explained. "There is also an anti-Christian culture in which Christians can't worship openly. The Baptist witness is growing in the anti-Christian culture."

Zeiger, encouraged by breakthroughs he's seen in Germany, said, "Recent home missions conferences in Germany, attended by laymen and pastors, gave us new hope for our mission work and evangelistic efforts. We are seeing the results of years of effort."

Concerning the challenge of Europe, Hogberg said, "Finland is the only country on the Russian border that still enjoys religious freedom. This is a major challenge and opportunity."

Zeiger, summing up the feelings of the European delegation about what they hope to gain from their visit in America, said, "Our Baptists need training in personal evangelism. We need a simple, effective method of witnessing. We've heard lots of theories, but we want something practical."

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Tennessee Prison Commissioner
Urges Compassion For Prisoners

7/19/73

By David Gooch

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--The Tennessee prison commissioner, speaking at a conference here, questioned the commitment of Christians who demonstrate a lack of compassion for the person society labels "criminal."

Mark Luttrell, commissioner, Tennessee Department of Corrections, addressed his remarks to persons attending the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's conference on "Southern Baptists Working for Criminal Justice."

"The thing that concerns me," Luttrell said at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, "is the Christian who takes the attitude: 'He committed a crime. Let him suffer. Forget him.'"

"I don't believe that a Christian can really follow Christ's teachings and advocate a lack of compassion and feeling for his fellow man, regardless of what crime the prisoner has committed. He's a creature of God and God loves him," the Baptist deacon from Nashville emphasized.

Luttrell suggested several ways Southern Baptists could become involved in the correction process.

He said Christians can play a significant role through a counseling and friendship relationship with an inmate or a parolee, by visiting and listening to the prisoner, by relating to the families of prisoners or by offering support to the person on probation.

Luttrell also said programs of personal involvement with youth offenders are other possible ways Christians can change lives.

Earlier in the conference, Jimmy Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., had observed, in an overview of Biblical insights into the field of criminal justice, "Seeking to redeem the lost calls for rehabilitation to be the major goal of our penal systems. Churches have a particularly strategic role to play in assisting in this rehabilitation program."

Ashley T. Wiltshire Jr., a Nashville legal aid services attorney, said that Christ's directive to visit those in prison has extremely practical implications.

"If an inmate has a number of visitors, especially significant visitors from outside his family, there's much less of a tendency for the guards to mistreat him. They know that someone other than the powerless inmate might become aware of their actions."

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Like Christ, Paul taught that every person is the Christian's neighbor," Wiltshire said. In Ephesians 4:25-32, "he is saying that we can no longer see criminals as 'them'--objects to be gassed in the back halls of the building, cattle to be herded through the gates of an overcrowded prison, a separate class or element of society. We cannot separate ourselves from them or them from us for we are members one of another," he commented.

Psalm 146 also presents a good argument for participation in crime prevention, Wiltshire said.

Reciting a point that had been stressed earlier by Paul Townsend, assistant chief of Dallas, Tex., police, Wiltshire said that criminologists claim high crime areas are areas where there is no sense of community.

This lack of a sense of community causes persons "to feel that they can do what they please and even if they get caught it won't make any difference because nobody really cares (about them) anyway," Wiltshire explained.

He said the church should seek to cultivate that sense of community. Churches in changing neighborhoods might help a neighborhood form a community organization, Wiltshire suggested.

Several other ways in which the church could be involved in crime prevention Wiltshire discussed included providing recreational programs, day care services for families with young children, job training using skilled churchmen as teachers and routine legal aid.

At least one group of churches cooperatively has hired a lawyer to serve as a poor people's advocate, Wiltshire said.

Wiltshire, who holds a bachelor of divinity degree besides his law degree, said the church needs to stop calling children: "Good little girls," "bad little girls," "good little boys," and "bad little boys."

Many children "have coasted into crime because they were told in church or by church people that they were bad, that they were different."

We need to really recognize "what we've always known--that we are all sinners," Wiltshire said. "Even if we've never broken one of man's laws, we're all still sinners and in need of God's forgiveness."

He also said the church, "should stop initiating, aiding and abetting over criminalization. Churches have traditionally been in the forefront of the effort to get everything they don't like declared illegal," Wiltshire said.

"Personal morals should be taught, inculcated and encouraged by the church, but personal morals cannot successfully be legislated," Wiltshire contended.

"There's a place, an important place, for the church in community crime prevention. It is to do the hard tasks of affirming individuals and restructuring society so that people no longer so naturally get channeled into a life of crime," concluded Wiltshire.

Earlier in the conference, Abner McCall, president of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., discussed the need for court reform and the urgency of maintaining law and order. He is a former FBI special agent, law professor and dean and associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court.

Lee Porter of Nashville commented on the whole concept of criminal justice reform and on McCall's implied call for repeal or extensive revision of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to facilitate maintenance of law and order.

"To have personal security, community security or national security is a legitimate desire on the part of all Americans," said Porter, the Christian Life Commission's director of organization.

"But national security, community security or personal security must never be achieved at the loss of personal freedom or liberty," Porter said.

"It's too great a price to pay."

In wrapping up the conference in the final session, Porter said, "The right thing must be done in the right way. The end doesn't justify the means."

Calling communities and churches to become involved with police, he said, "We cannot allow the police in any community to become the judge and the jury."

He encouraged Southern Baptists to oppose all instances of police brutality. "We cannot allow the police to break the law in the act of enforcing the law," he said.

Porter called for reform of the courts and increased protection of poor and minority persons in the system of justice. "Liberty and justice for all must be the basis for court reform. The rights of the poor and the minority group member must be insured," he said.

"The great American promise--liberty and justice for all--has become the great American lie," Porter said, "in that the poor, the black, the Chicano, do not receive equal justice in our criminal justice system."

Deploring conditions of most prison systems, he called for the church to become involved in improving correctional institutions and in working with those involved in rehabilitation in the prison system.

"Southern Baptists must reject crime wherever it arises--in alleys, streets, in businesses, in government and even in the White House," Porter said.

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Baptist Philanthropist,
Warren Sewell, Dies

7/19/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Warren P. Sewell, wealthy clothing magnate who gave more money to Georgia Baptist Convention causes than any other man in history, died here after a long illness. He was 84.

Sewell, who also gave widely to Southern Baptist Convention causes, endowed the Warren P. Sewell Visiting Professorship in Pastoral Studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., to provide students with practical insights from prominent pastors on pastoral ministry.

No one knows exactly how much the Baptist philanthropist gave to Georgia Baptist causes but it was well over \$1 million. His largest single gift was \$500,000 to Georgia Baptist Hospital in 1960.

He was vice president of the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1959. The convention gave him a special citation of appreciation in 1970.

The American Cancer Society wrote a special book in his honor in 1972, recognizing his contributions in the fight against cancer.

He was buried in Atlanta, where he was a deacon in Druid Hills Baptist Church for more than 50 years. At the time of his death he was a member of the Bowden, Ga., Baptist Church.

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Pastor of Historic Texas
Baptist Church Dies

7/19/73

INDEPENDENCE, Tex. (BP)--The pastor of Texas' oldest church, where Texas hero Sam Houston once attended, and the only one owned by the Baptist General Convention of Texas died here.

Earl L. Allen, 71, pastor of the Independence Baptist Church, established in 1839, and curator of the Independence Historical Museum, suffered a heart attack.

The historical museum contains artifacts from early Texas Baptist days, including a church bell donated by the mother-in-law of Houston after he was baptized into the membership in a creek near the church. Nearby is the original site of Baylor University, Southern Baptists' largest undergraduate school, now in Waco, Tex.

Allen is survived by his widow and his son, Jimmy R. Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and former Texas Baptist president.

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