

April 9, 1974

Missionary Visits Moscow;
Has 'Religious Experience'

By Mrs. Charles P. Long
for Baptist Press

My recent visit to the Baptist church in Moscow was one of the richest and most rewarding religious experiences I've ever had.

I was in Russia with a special tour sponsored by the American Woman's Club of Brussels.

My husband and I previously had met one of the pastors of the Moscow Baptist Church while attending a meeting in Yugoslavia in 1967. Since that time I have had a deep concern for the Christians behind the Iron Curtain and a great desire to attend that church.

When I started making arrangements for the trip, I wrote the Russian Baptist Union to get the address and time of the services.

Our scheduled activities in Moscow were uncertain, and I did not know until noon on Sunday that I would be allowed to skip the afternoon tour and attend church. Mrs. Larry Yoder, a fellow missionary in Belgium, decided to go with me.

I asked our Russian tour guide if she could help us get a taxi. She referred us to the service bureau of the hotel. The lady there suggested a tram instead of a taxi, explaining that it would take at least two hours to get a taxi and that the tram would be the only way to get to the 2 p.m. service on time.

She wrote the tram numbers and street address down for us, and with the help of two young boys we found the tram station. We got on the right tram but were going the wrong direction. We quickly corrected our error and finally arrived at our destination.

When we got to the church we were greeted and welcomed in broken English. We were taken to a parlor upstairs where we signed a guest registry. I looked for President Nixon's name, but we didn't have time to look closely.

I was amazed at the number of guests that had signed the book. When the services were to begin, we were taken to a pew reserved for visitors.

If I could only express the feeling I had as the service began. The church was overflowing with people of all ages. There were elderly ladies dressed in dark coats and scarfs, attractive young girls with brightly colored wool hats, Young men and soldiers as well as other middle-aged and elderly men.

The choir of about 50 men and women of all ages began to sing.

The different age groups were especially interesting to us because our Russian tour guide had told us only old women attended the few churches left in Moscow.

During the service several different men read the Bible, prayed and preached. The choir sang four hymns, one of which I recognized as "Let the Saviour In."

Throughout the service, the older women took turns sitting in the pews, since ladies were standing in the aisles at the end of each pew.

It was such a moving experience--people wiped away tears throughout the service. To me they seemed to be so thankful that they had been given the opportunity to come to church.

How grateful I was that I had been able to share the service with them. With all our differences, we were one in Christ.

The time had gone so quickly. It was 4 p.m. The closing hymn was "Revive Us Again." How exciting it was to sing with them. Even though "hallelujah" was the only word I could understand, I sang the words in English with a real sense of being truly revived.

Following the service one of the men said to us in broken English that he had seen us singing. He seemed thrilled that we could sing together even though we could not talk together. (BP)

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Mrs. Charles P. Long is a Southern Baptist missionary to Belgium.

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Wayne Oates Resigns
Southeastern Faculty Post

4/9/74

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Wayne E. Oates has reconsidered his earlier acceptance of a professorship at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., although already elected to the school's faculty.

In a letter to Southeastern officials, Oates declined to accept a position as distinguished professor of psychology of religion, which he was scheduled to assume in August.

Oates, professor of psychology of religion at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville since 1948, had been elected to the Southeastern post late last year by the Southeastern trustees' executive committee and was confirmed by the full board March 14 of this year.

The 56-year-old professor, who had resigned from the Southern Seminary faculty, effective July 31, to accept the Southeastern post, said in Louisville he will remain there where he will continue his writing and serve as a theological consultant at Norton Psychiatric Center of the University of Louisville.

He has been connected with the psychiatric center for several years in a part-time capacity.

Author of 21 books in the field of pastoral care, Oates, a native South Carolinian, has served as an instructor at Wake Forest College and as visiting professor of pastoral counseling at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary.

He has served as a pastor of churches in North Carolina and Kentucky and as religious counselor, chaplain and theological consultant for medical institutions. Oates is a graduate of Wake Forest College. He attended Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C. and holds bachelor of divinity, master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Seminary

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One Observer's Analysis

4/9/74

Shall We Have Women
Deacons in Baptist Churches

By Robert L. Cate*
For Baptist Press

Most of us have noted with interest the changes that have occurred among the churches of our denomination concerning the place of leadership of women. Women have been ordained to the ministry and women have been ordained as deacons in a number of churches.

Though women have had significant leadership in our churches over the years, these recent steps into a male dominated area have caused much anxiety, a lot of serious thought and prayer and some antagonism and bitterness.

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Most of us have an opinion concerning this movement. The vocal proponents and the vocal opponents have made a big splash!

In general, there has been a large, silent majority. Some of us have not faced the issue because it was far away, someone else's problem. Others of us have not faced it because there have been other items of a more pressing nature confronting us. A few may have ignored it, apparently hoping that it would go away.

It won't.

It is an issue that should be faced calmly, without the pressure of an immediate crisis. That crisis can come with suddenness when someone nominates a woman as deacon in your church. Let us face the issue now.

"Shall we have women deacons?" is a question which each church must decide for itself. By the very nature of Baptist life, neither our denomination, nor our state convention, nor our local association can decide it for us. As a congregation of believers, we must study the evidence and arrive at our own conclusions.

There are two fundamental bases for facing the question and arriving at an answer. First, we must study the biblical teachings which shed light on the issue. But this shall not be enough, by itself. We must also decide which of two basic approaches we are going to make with these teachings.

Some would say that we can do nothing which the Bible does not expressly command. Others would suggest that we can do anything which the Bible does not expressly forbid. Perhaps the real truth may lie somewhere between these two extremes. The fundamental basis for arriving at a solution is a study of the basic needs and opportunities which your church has at this time. Factors must be considered today that were not significant 10 years ago. They may not be significant 10 years from now. But we are living and ministering today. Today is all we can answer for.

Three major passages shed light on the issue and two other minor ones may be of significance. The first of the major passages is Acts 6: 1-6. Although these seven men are nowhere called deacons in the New Testament, it is normally understood that they were such. This idea is strongly undergirded by the use of the words "diakonia" (ministration) and "diakoneo" (serve) in vv. 1 and 2. Although the word "men" in v. 3 might possibly be understood as applying to persons rather than specifically males, it is obvious that each person which the church selected was a man (v.5).

The second major passage which we must consider is I Timothy 3:8-13. Here we find the moral and spiritual standards which were required of deacons. There are two verses which must be dealt with here, vv. 11 and 12. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."

Verse 11 has traditionally been understood as referring to the wives of deacons, based upon the familiar King James version. However, the Greek does not call them wives, but uses the more general term, "women."

Among the leading scholars, there has been a major division of opinion as to whether or not this refers to wives of deacons or to deaconesses. Dr. A. T. Robertson, Baptists' most outstanding Greek scholar, considered the verse most likely to be referring to women deacons.

On the other hand, verse 12 says, "Let the deacons be the husband of one wife" (or "one woman") or ("one deaconess"). The same word is used here as in v. 11. If v. 11 is referring to women deacons, then v. 12 must be understood as indicating that such person must have only one mate. If v. 11 refers to deacons' wives, then v. 12 offers no problem. But before we reach a conclusion, we must examine the other passages.

The third major passage at which we must look is Romans 16:1. "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The word which is translated "servant" is "diakonos." We must decide whether he was using it in a technical sense, calling her a deacon, or in a general sense as the King James Version would indicate. For centuries, a major portion of Greek scholars have considered this to be referring to a woman deacon, primarily since she was not called just a "servant," but a "servant of the

church." This seems to be a very clear reference to a woman deacon who was from the church at Cenchrea.

Finally, those who seek to find evidence for women deacons in the New Testament frequently refer to two minor passages, Philipians 4:2-3 and Titus 2:3-4. The Philippian passage carries no weight at all, for there is no reference in the Greek which would in any way indicate that the women referred to were considered to be deacons. They were just devoted women.

The Titus passage is somewhat different. It says: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."

Verse 3 uses the feminine form of the technical term "elder." The masculine form is frequently interpreted as being parallel to the office of deacon. If this is so, then the feminine form could easily refer to women deacons.

Beyond the New Testament references which we have listed, there are several references among the historical records of the early churches which show that the practice of having women deacons was fairly widely practiced.

Ignatius of Antioch, who died as a martyr sometime between 110 and 117 A.D. sent greetings to the "deaconesses in Christ." Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia from 111 to 113 A.D., referred to "deaconesses." The Apostolic Constitutions, a very early document, contains many references to deaconesses. Thus it appears that very early in the development of the church it became a fairly common practice for some churches to have women deacons.

We are driven to the conclusion that the practice of having women deacons developed within the New Testament times and became fairly common in the period just after the close of the New Testament era. It also is apparent that it was not universally practiced.

The New Testament seems clearly to allow such a practice. Paul may have taught it. He certainly recognized the fact that the church of Cenchrea practiced it. He commended the woman deacon, Phoebe, to the church at Rome, that they should receive her graciously.

The early churches seem to have adopted the practice if and when their own needs dictated it.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: Robert L. Cate, pastor of First Baptist Church, Aiken, S. C., originally wrote the article above for the Baptist Courier, the state newspaper for Southern Baptists in South Carolina. He is former pastor of churches in Kentucky and Georgia and earned a doctor of theology degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

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"Modern Day Lepers" Need
Understanding Counselors

4/9/74

ATLANTA (BP)--The alcoholic--"a modern day leper"--needs an open minded, non-judgmental counselor to help him wind his way out/the "valley of the shadow of death," speakers said here at a seminar.

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The two-day seminar on counseling alcohol and drug abusers, first in a series of four this year, was sponsored by the Christian social ministries department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Since the minister is often the first professional an alcoholic sees, "just being there with him is the most important thing you can do," said Ron Stevenson, chaplain and supervisor for clinical pastoral education at the Georgia Mental Health Institute, Atlanta.

"That's what the 23rd Psalm is about," he told Christian social missionaries attending the seminar.

"The minister needs to be able to stand with the alcoholic even through the valley of the shadow of death without the demands of having him change," added George

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Dominick, chaplain and director of the institute's crisis intervention and detoxification unit.

The main difference between the alcoholic and the counseling minister is that the minister is "not chained to only one solution to his problems," said Dominick.

Dominick and other speakers stressed that the minister becomes acquainted with other professionals in counseling because "it's hard to work alone."

"The alcoholic can go to the Salvation Army, a rescue mission, or a Baptist center for help," said Dominick, "and unless you communicate with your counterparts," the alcoholic finds it easier to manipulate and get what he wants.

A minister often hits the alcoholic with 'you're a sinner,' Stevenson said, and "he gets the same sort of thing from other people. A doctor says 'you're killing your body' and a psychologist says 'you're killing your I.Q.'"

Stevenson, who described the alcoholic as "a modern day leper," said that a minister must open his mind somewhat and get beyond the judgmental stage. "If you really resent someone, how easy is it for you to be his pastor?"

The missionary participants, who have varying degrees of involvement in counseling, had varying responses to the seminar.

One said that a person with "the proper relationship to God, will have a sense of self worth" and therefore stop drinking.

Another said that he believed "a preacher should admit that he doesn't have the answer to everyone's problems."

All agreed that more knowledge in the field of alcohol and drug counseling should be made available to ministers.

Other facets of the seminar included a description of and the mental processes involved in addiction and observation of an educational meeting for alcoholics and their families.

Purpose of the series of conferences, according to Jack Grisham of the Christian social ministries department, is to sharpen the skills of missionaries in dealing with alcoholics and other drug abusers, make them better resource persons and stimulate interest in churches in the areas where they work.

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CORRECTIONS

In the Baptist Press story dated 4/8/74 and headlined "Tornadoes Leave 'Footprints' on Southern Baptists Too," delete graph 1 on page 7 and substitute the following corrected report from the tornado area: "A Baptist pastor and his wife were killed when a tornado slammed through Alta Baptist Church, near Berry, Ala., during mid-week prayer services.

"Houston Brand, in his 70s, was killed instantly and his wife died the next day. Alta church is not aligned with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Brand at one time was pastor of Corona Baptist Church in Walker Association, his last Alabama convention-aligned pastorate.

Another minister, Johnny Bozeman, was speaking at the church when the tornado struck. Twenty-six of some 30-40 people at the service, including Bozeman, were injured."

Pick up with "Tanner Baptist. . ."

In Baptist Press story of 4/8/74 headlined "Newton and World Mission Journal Pace RPRC Awards," 2nd from last graph in story, 1st line, change "Company" to "System."

Thanks.

--Baptist Press